Informational Interviews

What are Informational Interviews?
Informational interviews provide valuable information to help you decide if a particular career is right for you. It is a chance to talk with people who are currently working in your field of interest and a chance to learn more about a specific career without making a long-term commitment of your time and money. You can find out about the responsibilities, rewards, and problem areas inherent in a specific career by asking questions of people already established in that field.

The purpose of Informational Interviews
An informational interview is an interview that you initiate and where you ask the questions. The purpose is to obtain information, not to get a job. Use an informational interview to:

- explore careers and clarify your career goals
- obtain information about your career field and the skills needed to do the job
- discover employment opportunities that are not always advertised
- broaden your professional network
- identify your professional strengths and weaknesses

Identifying people to interview
Brainstorm about people you already know – family, friends, and fellow students, social contacts, present or former supervisors...etc. Also search alumni of the university, faculty & staff, and contacts through community and professional organizations.

Arranging the interview
Contact the person to set up an interview by phone, or a letter – followed up by a phone call.

Typical format for the “phone call”
Hello, my name is (your full name). I am a student at (your school) wanting to learn more information about (profession). (The person who referred you) suggested that I call you because of your experience in the field of (profession). [If you do not have a reference, explain how you heard of this individual.]

I am interested in this field of work and would like to learn more about what a typical day is like for a (occupation title) and the necessary credentials for a position in this field. I would like to meet with you, at your convenience, to ask some questions. Could we arrange a time? [Appropriate length of the interview is typically 30 minutes.]

Courtesy of the National Association of Colleges and Employers
For more career information, visit the Wright State Career Center at www.career.wright.edu
Sample Questions to Ask

About Job Function
1. What are the major responsibilities of your position?
2. How do you spend a typical day / week?
3. What jobs and experiences led you to your present employment?
4. What was your undergraduate / graduate major?
5. What part of your job is the most satisfying? Most challenging?
6. If you could do things over, would you choose the same path? What would you change?
7. Where or how are job openings communicated within your organization? The profession?

About the Field
1. What is the typical career path in this field?
2. What steps did you take to enter this career field?
3. What is developing / changing in this field?
4. Are there any special problems, concerns, or challenges of which a person should be aware when considering this occupation?
5. What other occupations are closely related to this one?
6. What advice would you offer to someone entering this profession?
7. Which professional journals and organizations would help me to learn more about this profession?

Networking
1. Would you be willing to review my résumé and provide feedback?
2. Can you give me the names of other people who share your enthusiasm for this kind of work? How can I contact them? May I use your name when contacting them?
3. May I stay in touch with you and let you know about my progress?

Reminders
You will find it useful to prepare a résumé. When informational interviewing, you may share your résumé: 1) to offer an overview of your background; 2) to seek advice on preparing an effective résumé for a position in the profession; 3) to leave as a “calling card”.

Always present yourself professionally. Be prompt, and do not take up too much of the person’s time. Dress appropriately for the setting. Usually, conservative business attire is the norm. Be enthusiastic and shake hands confidently. Plan to do informational interviews with more than one individual to get various opinions and a balanced perspective.

Always send a thank you letter
Be sure to send a thank you letter in which you refer to any especially interesting or useful information. This is a good way to keep in touch and be remembered by people. Thank them for their time. Let them know how beneficial the information they provided was to you. Request that they keep you in mind if they come across any information that may be useful to you in your career search. Include your address, phone number and email so they may easily get in touch with you.

To schedule an appointment with a Career Advisor, call 937-775-2556.

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