

INFORMATIONAL INTERVIEWING

Purpose

An informational interview is a brief (20-45 minutes) interview (although not an actual job interview) with an individual in your particular field of interest. It may be an individual in the specific type of job you are looking for, or someone involved with the hiring and supervision of the position you are interested in. Informational interviews are designed to accomplish the following:

- To explore careers and clarify your career goals
- To discover employment opportunities that are not advertised
- To expand your professional network
- To build confidence for your job interviews
- To access the most up-to-date career information
- To identify your professional strengths and weaknesses

Be sure that the employer knows from the start that you are looking to gather information, not ask for a job!

Potential Informational Interview Questions

Organization Overview

- What are the functions of your organization/department?
- What does your organization do?
- What products or services does this organization produce?
- Can you tell me about the background/history of this organization?
- Who are your customers?
- Who are your competitors? Where do you rank among the competition?
- What unique factors would you say set this organization apart from others?
- Do you have any organizational literature that would help me to learn more about this company?
- What basic assumptions or beliefs would you say are shared and supported by people in this industry or organization?

Position(s) Overview

- What do you do in a typical work day or work week in your position?
- What positions do you supervise (if any)?
- What are some of the other types of positions in this industry?

- What type of entry-level positions would exist in this field/organization for someone just graduating from college?
- Do you have a copy of an organizational chart that would show me the progression of jobs from beginning to the top, as well as the reporting and supervision lines?
- Do you have any information on job specifications or job descriptions that I could have?

Occupational/Organizational Interests

- How did you personally become interested in this field?
- What attracted you to this organization/company in particular?

Working Conditions

- Are there any travel obligations with your position?
- If there is overtime, is it due more to the nature of this field or the nature of this particular organization?
- What is the typical dress code in the industry/at this organization?

Outlook of the Company/Field

- Have there been any noticeable trends in this industry?
- What is the outlook for this field/organization regarding growth, advancement or upcoming changes in general?

Satisfaction Level

- What do you find most rewarding about your work? Least rewarding?

Job Preparation / Requirements

- What specific skills or aptitudes would someone need to enter this field?
- What personal qualities or attributes (temperament, attitudes, values, beliefs) seem to serve a person well in this type of work?
- What expectations does this organization have of its employees?
- What special training or specific education (degree or coursework) is required? Is a graduate degree required?
- What kind of part-time work experience could help someone to prepare for this field?
- Are any particular licenses or certifications essential in this field?
- My strongest interests involve _____. Would this job allow me to use these skills? How well suited is my background for this kind of work?
- Are there any special problems or concerns that someone considering this kind of work should prepare for?

Advice/Recommendations and Referrals

- How would you advise people entering into this kind of career?
- What should a person look for in an organization such as this as they consider positions?
- Do you have any suggestions for my resume?
- Do you have any suggestions about my interpersonal skills?
- Are there any questions I didn't ask you that you feel I should?
- Would you mind if I contacted you / met with you again in the future if I need additional advice or information?
- Based on our conversation today, is there anyone else you think would be helpful for me to talk with? Would you be willing to let them know I will be in contact with them?
- May I mention your name as the person who referred me?

Networking and Informational Interviewing information adapted from University of South Carolina (www.sc.edu/career) and Minnesota State University, Mankato (www.mnsu.edu/cdc)