



KELLEY SCHOOL OF BUSINESS

INDIANA UNIVERSITY

Career Placement Office
IUPUI

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Informational Interview Overview

Goals of an informational interview

- To learn about a particular organization, field or career
- To learn how others have achieved success within an organization, field or career
- To receive career advice from seasoned, successful professionals
- To gain experience and self-confidence when interviewing
- To begin building or expand your professional network
- To ask for additional contacts (i.e. Who else do you know or who would you suggest that I speak with?)
- To access the hidden job market

Preparing for an informational interview

1) Identify an occupation, field, or type of work that interests you. People will be willing to talk with you if you have an identifiable purpose. You'll need to let them know why you are interested in speaking with them, such as the fact that you are interested in their job/career or the company they work for. You do not have to send them an agenda, but they will expect you to be prepared.

2) Identify the people you would like to interview. Potential contacts are everywhere. Let as many people as you can know that you are interested in a particular career or company and you'll be surprised at how many people offer to introduce you to someone. The Career Placement Office, professors, parents, co-workers and classmates are great sources you can use. You'd also be wise to keep up with local news through the Indianapolis Business Journal and the Indianapolis Star.

3) Contact people of interest via email or phone. While some individuals may prefer an initial phone call, you'll usually be safest with email. It doesn't put anyone on the spot and you have time to write out your initial email to ensure that it is clear and professional. Be sure to explain why you are contacting them, including the name of anyone who might have referred you. Be flexible with your schedule and leave them with multiple options for scheduling the interview.

4) Prepare questions in advance. You don't have to take your list of questions with you, but it's okay to do so. People are generally very open to talking about their careers, but you should be fully prepared to initiate and guide the conversation. See the list of sample questions below.

5) Be ready to listen. Remember, you've asked someone to take time out of their busy schedule in order to speak with you. Don't be so preoccupied with plowing through your list of questions that you miss some important advice that they are willing to share with you.

6) Prepare to answer some questions yourself. You'll need to be ready to articulate what your goals are for the meeting, what interests you in a job, career or company and openly discuss your previous experience, strengths and weaknesses.

6) Have your resume ready. Be sure to take several copies of your resume with you and don't be afraid to ask for feedback on it. This is an excellent way to get your resume in front of them without blatantly asking for an interview.

7) Dress professionally and send a thank you note when you get home. Enough said.

Sample Questions

Questions about a specific job or employer.

- On a typical day in this position, what do you do?
- What training or education is required for this work?
- What types of positions are available within this organization?
- What personal qualities/attributes are important for success in this job?
- What is the normal work load/routine in your job?
- What's the demand for people in this occupation?
- How much travel is normally expected in your job?
- What part of this job do you find most satisfying? Most challenging?
- What qualities and skills does your employer look for in new hires?

Questions about your contact's individual career experiences.

- How did you get your job?
- If you could do things all over again, would you choose the same career path for yourself?

Inquires about a career field.

- What are the basic prerequisites for jobs in this field?
- What entry-level opportunities are best for learning about this field?
- How do you see jobs in this field changing over time?
- What types of training do companies offer people in this field?
- What opportunities for advancement are there in this field?
- What are the salary ranges for various positions within this field?
- What advice would you give someone entering this field?
- What are the journals and organizations associated with this field?
- What sort of training and work is expected during the first few years?

Questions about your particular situation

- Would you mind offering some feedback on my resume?
- With the information you have about my education, skills and experience, what other fields do you suggest I research?
- What do you think of the experience I've had so far in terms of entering this field? What sort of experiences should I be seeking?
- Can you recommend other people I might contact for further information? May I mention your name?