

Informational Interviews

Often the most current information about a career field, especially in a specific geographic location, may not be available in print or online resources. The best information comes from people who are actually working in that career field.

An **informational interview** is an informal conversation with someone working in an area of interest to you who will give you information and advice. It is an effective research tool in addition to reading books, exploring the Internet and examining job descriptions. **It is not a job interview, and the objective is not to find job openings.**

You may feel awkward making arrangements to talk with people you don't know about their work. However, most people actually enjoy taking a few moments out of their day to reflect on their professional life and to give advice to someone with an interest in their field.

Examples of Questions to Ask:

- What attracted you to this industry, your company, and your job?
- What do you enjoy most about this industry, your company, and your job? What motivates you about your position?
- What are your educational and career backgrounds? Is this background typical for most people in your position?
- What are your short-term and long-term career expectations?
- What are your primary responsibilities?
- What does a typical day or week look like for you?
- How much time do you spend in meetings, on the phone, and traveling?
- How often do you work in teams versus working independently?
- What skills are most critical to your success?
- What weaknesses in a person's skill set would make him or her ineffective in this business?
- How do you keep your skills current? What do you read? Does your company require continuing education workshops?
- Are there any common misconceptions about working for this company or the industry as a whole?
- What are some of the defining characteristics of individuals who have been hired by your company in the past for this position? How do you determine a candidate's potential for this position, considering education, personality, and culture?
- What do you expect of people starting out in this field?
- What are some of the ways I can become familiar with the industry jargon?
- Is there anything else you think would be helpful as I consider this program?
- Looking at my resume, what advice would you have for me on the next steps if I were interested in career opportunities with your company?