

What is Information Interviewing?

Information Interviewing is a way to gather data about an occupation or industry prior to deciding your career goals. Informational interviewing can help you overcome four common obstacles:

- 1.** You may lack knowledge about a career field in which you have some interest. Informational interviewing allows you to learn more about the job titles, duties, career paths and personality traits of people in that industry.
- 2.** You may feel that you lack relevant work experience to get the career position you want. Informational interviewing will enable you to ask for specific suggestions toward acquiring this experience or framing your own transferable experience. Sometimes a lack of experience can be compensated for by knowledge of an organization's structure, services and problems.
- 3.** In many fields few jobs are openly advertised. A job hunter may not come into contact with these jobs if he/she does not know where to look. Some experts estimate that only about one job in six is ever advertised in a classified ad, personnel office or on a placement office bulletin board. The rest are "discovered" and filled through word-of-mouth between professional colleagues. Informational interviewing can help you develop contacts among influential people who might provide assistance when you later begin your job hunt.
- 4.** Most job hunters ask only personnel representatives and receptionist for information about job opportunities. Very often these individuals do not have knowledge about the total range of jobs available, the feasibility of non-traditional jobs or of the existence of jobs that are not advertised. Informational interviewing allows you to get such information from people who are in the know; i.e. people performing the kinds of jobs in which you are interested or their immediate supervisors.
- 5.** Review the questions provided here and note the ones that are most important for you to find out.
- 6.** You may take a resume with you but since the purpose of this program is for information only it is not necessary. Asking your contact to review your resume for its marketability is appropriate and can be very beneficial. You should always have an up-to-date resume available.
- 7.** Let us know if you have any problems either reaching alumni or during the visit.

Questions for the visit

Remember you are searching for information which will help you understand the realities of working in that field. You will be doing the interviewing. Here are some questions you may want to consider:

- 1.** What is your job like?
What do you do on a typical day?
What kinds of problems do you deal with?

What kinds of decisions do you make?

2. What are the most important personal satisfactions and dissatisfactions connected with your occupation?

What part of your job do you consider dull or repetitious?

What percentage of your time do you devote to your job?

3. What social obligations go along with a position in your occupation?

Are there professional organizations that you are expected to join?

Are there other things you are expected to do outside of work hours?

Do you consistently work overtime, on the weekends or take home work?

4. What things did you do before you entered this occupation?

What were the jobs you had that led to this one?

What did you like best and least about your previous jobs?

5. What sorts of changes are occurring in your occupation?

Is there a demand for people in this field?

Do you view this field as a growing one?

How do you see the jobs in this field changing over the next ten years?

What can I do to prepare myself for such changes?

6. How does a person progress in your field?

What is the best way to enter this occupation?

What are the advancement opportunities?

What are the major qualifications for success in this particular occupation?

How long does it usually take to move from one step to the next in the career path?

What is the top job you can attain in this field?

What are the basic prerequisites and skills for jobs in the field?

What entry level jobs qualify one for this field?

What types of training do companies give to persons entering this field?

What are the salary ranges for various levels in this field?

7. Could you suggest other people who I can talk to who work in this field or in related fields?

May I read a job description for some of the position in this field?

8. Is there information which I could read that would make me more knowledgeable in this area?

Follow-up

1. Keep records of your meetings. You may want to spend some time evaluating what you have learned and organizing the names and addresses of new contacts. These may prove helpful when you actually begin your job search.

2. Send thank you notes! These should be sent promptly to each person you talked with at any length. A few lines can indicate your appreciation of his or her time and the value you derived from the interview. Try to reinforce something that you talked about in the interview. This courtesy can also help you to be remembered.

3. If you establish a positive relationship you may want to recontact with these individuals periodically. Tell them the results of your visits with the people they recommended you contact. If you find articles in newspapers, magazines or journals which might be of interest to an individual with whom you have interviewed send along copies. If you keep in touch with these people, and remind them of your interest in their field they might share with you additional information as they get it.

