

WHAT IS AN INFORMATIONAL INTERVIEW?

An informational interview is a way to gain first-hand information about a career or a particular organization. It is not a way to gain employment, rather it is a networking strategy. As an intern, one of the best resources are the PEOPLE you meet. There are many people at your internship site who were in your position at one point in time, and have progressed through various paths to make their dreams happen. An informational interview will give you a chance to have a frank and open discussion about the field, the challenges associated with a particular discipline, networking secrets, and other topics that you have always wanted to know first-hand.

WHO SHOULD I ASK TO INTERVIEW?

You should complete informational interviews with people who are in jobs/professions that you're interested in. They can be people you meet at your internship site or individuals you've identified on your own. For example, if you're interested in teaching at the college level, you could talk to one of your professors, or a recent graduate who is now teaching. Those you choose to interview should not be friends or family.

THE PROCESS

ARRANGE MEETINGS: Always be professional and polite in your interview requests. People are busy, so it is appropriate to request a 30-minute meeting. The time will go very quickly, so be prepared with your questions.

BE A PROFESSIONAL: Make sure to bring a resume, note pad and a pen for notes. Your style of dress can be more casual than a real interview, nevertheless you should look professional.

HOW TO BEGIN: Start by introducing yourself and why you set up the interview. Then mention that you have some questions that you would like to ask. The questions will dictate the flow of conversation.

FOLLOW THROUGH: At the end of the conversation, make sure to ask if there are any other people and/or organizations they can recommend for future informational interviews. If so, ask for their contact information and if you may use their name to connect with them.

EXHIBIT PROFESSIONAL ETIQUETTE: Follow-up by sending a thank you letter or email.

QUESTIONS TO CONSIDER

Here are a few examples of general questions you can ask your interviewee. Adapt these questions and ask your own to ensure you receive information that is beneficial to your own professional development.

- First describe your current role and what experience was necessary to secure your position.
- When you were in college, what did you think your career was going to be?
- Describe a typical work day (week).
- What do you find most rewarding about the work? What are your biggest challenges?
- How do you find out about jobs in your field?
- What other types of jobs could you apply to with your experience?
- How well suited is my background for my kind of career?
- What could I expect my entry-level salary to be like? What might an average salary be with several years of experience?
- If you could give me some advice about entering this field, what would it be?
- Based on our conversation, is there anyone else you would recommend I speak to? If so, may I use your name when I contact them?
- Are there any other organizations or companies you think I should investigate?

RECORD YOUR INTERVIEW

Use the following [Informational Interviews Summary](#) sheet to record who you interviewed, and some of the highlights of your discussion. You can also use this sheet to write down notes during the process. Upload the worksheet, or your own documentation of the interviews, to www.micanetwork.com.

QUESTIONS FOR YOU TO GAIN INFORMATION

Choose from these areas to learn about careers, opportunities, and people. Organize your questions in PRIORITY ORDER. Ask more sensitive questions after you have established rapport and built trust.

A. Information about the Company and the Person

1. What are your responsibilities as _____ ?
2. How did you get started and develop your career?
3. What do you hope to accomplish in your position?
4. Is there a management style within your field that you prefer or use often?
5. Who are your customers? (Do business with?) (What companies do you service?)
6. How is your staff organized?
7. What is exciting about your position?
8. What new products are on the drawing board?
9. Are there any new materials that you are using?
10. On what kind of projects are you currently working?
11. How long have you been with the company?
12. How did you become interested in your field?
13. What do you like best about your work?
14. How long have you been in this position?
15. What kind of equipment, (software, machinery...) do you have/use?
16. How do you promote your product or service?

B. Information about Current Progress and Events

1. In what areas do you see expansion?
2. What types of companies have been successful in _____ ?
3. What are they doing right?
4. What has made them successful?
5. What is happening in your industry?
6. Where do you see it heading?
7. What is going on in the field of _____ ?
8. What types of companies are involved in international projects?
9. What has been the role of your department in relation to _____ departments?
10. What types of industries appear to be growth-oriented?
11. Where do you see corporate financial prospects heading?
12. What have been the contributing factors that have enabled your company to have a strong financial position?
13. What other companies have a strong financial organization?
14. What makes a successful company in your industry?
15. What are the key marketing principles that make a successful company?

C. Information on Present/Future Problems, Trends, Implications

1. What changes do you foresee in this industry?
2. What solutions have been presented to these problems?
3. What trends do you see emerging?
4. What kinds of problems have you seen other companies face in _____ ?
5. What problems do you see the _____ field/profession encountering in the future?
6. What are the problems facing industry/business today?
7. What are the roles that (government, associations, etc.) play in dealing with these problems?
8. What are the trends emerging in _____ ?
9. What problem areas is your industry currently facing?
10. What kinds of actions have been taken/proposed to solve these problems?

D. Advice Questions

1. With my skill and background, how would I fit into the _____ industry?
2. What salary range could I expect? Where would that position lead in 5 years?
3. What obstacles might I anticipate and how could I overcome them?
4. At what type of companies should I be looking? What are the names of some of those companies?
5. Would you suggest any courses or programs that would further help me develop my career?

E. Fitting In

1. Considering my background, how well do you think I would fit in this company and/or profession?
2. How does your company compare with others we've discussed?
3. Would the work involve any lifestyle changes, such as frequent travel or late-night business entertaining?
4. Considering all the people you've met in your line of work, what personal attributes are essential for success?
5. Taking into account my skills, education and experience, what other career paths would you suggest I explore before making a final decision?
6. In your field, what are the qualities that make people successful?

F. Extending Your Network: Ask these questions

1. Do you know anyone at ABC or XYZ companies? I am interested in working for a company like this.
2. What professional journals and organizations should I be aware of?
3. Who else would you recommend I speak with? When I call, may I use your name?