** Tips on Informational Interviews**

**What is an Informational Interview?**

Informational interviews are a method of gathering information about a particular career or occupation by interviewing someone currently employed in a field you plan to pursue. They can be used for three types of career research: seeking information about a specific occupation, information about an industry, or about a specific company. In all cases, they should never be used as a way to ask for a job.

**What are the benefits of conducting informational interviews?**

* You get to practice your interviewing skills without any pressure, as you are the interviewer. However, it’s likely you’ll get to practice answering some questions as well.
* You will learn about an occupation from the inside-out, from someone currently performing that job, rather than simply looking at occupational data and job descriptions.
* You can discover what motivated an individual to pursue or choose an occupation, and the path they took to achieve their current position.
* You can develop a greater awareness and familiarity with the terminology or vocabulary that may be unique to that particular field.
* You will also impress the career professionals you interview by demonstrating your motivation and desire to learn more about your chosen field.
* You are likely to find out about occupational opportunities you never knew existed.
* You will learn a lot about yourself and gain greater confidence in participating in interview situations.

**How do you find people to interview?**

* Start with family and friends, acquaintances, any service providers you know performing the kind of work you’d like to do.
* Request referrals from faculty, or search CWU’s Wildcat Career Network for contacts at companies that may interest you.
* Search for alumni and career professionals in your field through LinkedIn.
* Research company or agency websites, or professional association websites in fields or industries where you want to work.
* Research a specific person, if you have one in mind.

**How do you schedule an informational interview?**

* Cold call or email a concise, professional, message that can be responded to easily
* Don’t let worries about contacting a stranger discourage you. People who love what they do love to talk about what they do.
* Reaching out to someone you want to get to know is flattering for them.
* You just need to make sure that you send the right message to the right person.

**How do you prepare for an informational interview?**

* Research the person you want to interview using Google, LinkedIn, or the company website where they work.
* Determine what you want to gain from the interview.
* Prepare a short list of questions that are not answered on a company/agency website, or easily answered elsewhere.
* Test your videoconferencing equipment and use a professional-like backdrop.

**How long should informational interviews last?**

* Ask for 20 minutes. Let them do the talking.
* Manage your time. Be respectful of theirs. Let them do the talking. Alert them when the 20 minutes is up.
* If their schedule allows, they may often give you more time.
* Be careful not to overextend your welcome.

**What questions should you ask?**

There are hundreds of questions you could ask, depending on the field you plan to pursue. But **never ask for a job!** Here is a list of some good questions to ask in your initial interviews.

* What motivated you to pursue this field, and what path did you take to achieve your current position?
* What do you like most about your job? Like least?
* What are the most important skills you use daily?
* What recommendations do you have for someone who is just starting out in this field?
* Can you suggest anyone else who you believe would be another good person for me to interview?

**What do you do after the interview?**

* Always thank the career professional for their time
* Ask them to forward you any information they think might help you to learn more about the occupation or field
* Send them a thank you email within 24 hours
* Keep them informed of your progress
* Connect with them on LinkedIn
* Follow-up with any referrals they provided

**Links to some articles on informational interviewing**

* [**https://www.monster.com/career-advice/article/informational-interviewing**](https://www.monster.com/career-advice/article/informational-interviewing)
* [**https://career.berkeley.edu/Info/InfoInterview**](https://career.berkeley.edu/Info/InfoInterview)
* [**https://www.themuse.com/advice/5-tips-for-nonawkward-informational-interviews**](https://www.themuse.com/advice/5-tips-for-nonawkward-informational-interviews)
* [**https://www.themuse.com/advice/3-steps-to-a-perfect-informational-interview**](https://www.themuse.com/advice/3-steps-to-a-perfect-informational-interview)
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