Exploring Career Options Through Informational Interviewing

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Poll: Where are you in your career journey?

- New to working full-time in my field (0-3 years)
- Ready for career advancement
- Thinking about a career transition
- Content with where I am right now but open to learning more about my field
- Other
Why I *Love* Informational Interviews!

A little bit about me

► My introverted self loves focused one-on-one conversations that allow me to do some advanced planning
Through informational interviewing, I’ve:

► Met interesting people and expanded my network
► Learned about associations/classes/books
► Gained knowledge I couldn’t have developed on my own (e.g., insights into company culture and team dynamics)
► Discovered skills I needed to cultivate
► Assessed what I want/don’t want in a job
► Refined how I speak about myself and pose questions during the job search process
► Gained confidence for job interviews
► Been asked to send in my resume for jobs (and then got them!)
What do we mean by informational interview?

An informational interview is an opportunity to learn about a potential job, workplace, or field of interest. It’s a chance to build rapport and receive advice by having a conversation with someone who has an “inside” perspective.

► Not a request for a job
Other Terms to Use

- Career conversation
- Career information meeting
- Job exploration meeting
Poll: Have you ever requested an informational interview before?

- Yes
- No
**Poll:** Have you been asked to do an informational interview before?

- Yes
- No
Poll: What concerns do you have that need to be addressed? (Mark all that apply)

► How do I prioritize informational interviewing given other time commitments?
► Will I be perceived negatively when I initiate contact with someone I don’t know?
► What if the person says no?
► How do I use the short timeframe effectively?
► What if it’s uncomfortable?
► What if it’s not very productive?
► What if I ask a “dumb” question?
► Other
How do you decide who to contact for a conversation?

► Research people in your field of interest
  ► Websites, articles, and news reports
  ► LinkedIn
  ► Professional associations
  ► Alumni groups
  ► Networking events and Meet Ups
► Ask people you know for suggestions
► Follow your curiosity
Reflection Questions

► Who do you admire because of their work style or career achievements?

► What, specifically, inspires you and ignites your curiosity about that person?
Prepare to Introduce Yourself and Make a Request

► Think of relevant information about yourself to share
► Identify something specific that has piqued your interest
► Decide what, exactly, you’d like to request
► Be clear about your purpose and motivation
► Be courteous
Contact Tips

► Email the request and include a link to your LinkedIn Profile under your signature
► Use language that suits the industry
► Be as flexible as possible to accommodate the person’s schedule
► Meet in person if possible; a video or phone call works well too!
Learning and Development Conversation

Hello Dr. ---,

I came across your profile while researching learning and development within companies—an area I am eager to learn more about.

Your work in L&D is very impressive, and I am particularly intrigued by how you have blended your own interests in wellness with talent development throughout your career—something that really appeals to me. I’ve been developing courses and educational media for adult learners for many years, and I have also worked in career coaching and advising, which is something I greatly enjoy. I’d love to know more about talent development at --- and other companies in which you’ve worked.

Would you be willing to talk with me a bit about your career path and this field? I know you must be busy, and I would make myself available for a 20-minute phone/video call whenever it’s convenient for you. If this request comes at a difficult time, perhaps we could schedule this further out; and maybe there’s someone on your team who would be willing and available to talk with me in the shorter term?

Thank you in advance. I look forward to connecting with you.

Sincerely,

Joanna Siebert
Confidential informational interview request

Dear ---,

I hope you are doing well!

Recently, I was speaking with ---, Senior Director of ---, about the --- Department and your name came up in relation to my own interests. I currently work as the --- at ---, and I also have experience as a ---. I am very curious to learn more about the services your office offers, as well as the career decisions that have led you to your current position.

Would you be available to meet with me for some informal discussion? I'd be happy to take you to coffee or meet at your office if the timing works out, or we can chat briefly by phone if that's more convenient for you.

Thank you very much.

Sincerely,

Joanna Siebert
Reflection Question

► What is one question you’d most like to ask someone?
   ► Consider questions related to a position, workplace, or field of interest (i.e., something you’d like to explore for the future).
Prepare Questions in Advance

► Do your research beforehand
► Look at lists of questions and customize them to fit your needs
► Start with a warm up question - one of your key goals is to establish rapport
► Identify your highest priority questions
  ► What can you learn only by speaking with this person?
► Be realistic about the time you have
Sample Questions

► What do you enjoy about your position/workplace/field?
► What are some of the key challenges you encounter?
► What qualities or skills do you look for in a successful candidate when you are hiring?
► What are the most important developments you expect to see in this field over the next few years?
► I’d like to make a transition to this field and I’m not sure I have the experience with --- that employers look for. What advice would you offer someone in my situation?
► When I looked at your profile, I noticed that you used to work in --- field. What prompted you to change fields?
► What have been the most valuable insights you’ve gained throughout your career?
During the Conversation

► Try to make it feel professional *and* comfortable
► Listen and be present
► Be flexible with the flow of the conversation
► Ask unplanned questions that fit the conversation
Concluding the Conversation

► Keep track and be respectful of the time you’ve agreed to
► End with the question:
  ► Given my interest in ---, who else would you recommend I speak with? What resources would you suggest I look at?
► Offer sincere appreciation for their time and the information they’ve shared
Following Up

► Send a targeted thank you note within 24 hours (email or LinkedIn message is OK)
► Contact people/groups and view resources that have been recommended
► Maintain contact over time as appropriate
  ► Connect on LinkedIn
  ► Send updates
  ► Share articles that may be of interest
► Only send your resume if the person requests it
Poll: How confident would you feel conducting an informational interview?

- Very confident
- Somewhat confident
- A little confident
- Not confident
- Not sure
Feel free to contact/connect with me:

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