

# INFORMATIONAL INTERVIEW

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# Informational Interviews

## *What is an Informational Interview?*

Informational interviewing is a technique that is used to gather career information from professionals in the field. Contact someone in a selected career field and ask if he or she is willing to give you time to discuss careers. Emphasize the fact that you are not looking for a job, but for information which might assist you in your career decisions and job search. Conducting an informational interview will not only enable you to learn firsthand about a particular kind of work in a specific career and/or organization, but it is also a great networking tool.

### **THE PROCESS**

- Identify people who work in fields or companies of interest to you.
- Contact your leads and explain

you are seeking personalized information about their field.

- Ask if you can meet at their worksite for an informational

interview which would take about twenty minutes.

- Review your research on the field/industry and research the specific company you will visit.
- Call the day before to confirm.
- Arrive 10 minutes early.

### **FOLLOW-UP**

- Ask for a business card when leaving the individual's office.
- Write and send a thank you note to each individual with whom you spoke, and send by mail/email within 24-hours after the informational interview.

## Why conduct an Informational Interview?

One out of every 200 resumes results in a job offer. One out of every 12 informational interviews, however, results in a job offer. (Compiled from Quintessential Careers — [quintcareers.com](http://quintcareers.com))

Informational interviewing is the ultimate networking technique, especially considering that the purpose of informational interviewing is not to get job offers. Job offers just happen to be a delightful side benefit to the valuable practice.

The informational interview is designed to produce information. This information will help you choose or refine a career path. You can learn how to break in and find out if you have what it takes to succeed.

It is an expanded form of chatting with your network contacts. This process of spending time with one of your network contacts in a highly focused conversation will provide you with key information you need to launch or boost your career.

You accomplish several things when you go out on informational interviews.

- You obtain a great deal of information about your career field and the skills needed to do that job effectively. It is also helpful, for creating your resume.
- You gain a perspective of work that goes beyond the limitations of job titles, allowing you to see not only what skills are required for the job, but also how you might fit into a work setting.
- You gain insight into the hidden job market (employment opportunities that are not advertised).



### How do I set up an Informational Interview?

Start by making contact with people in the career field. You can do this in a number of ways:

■ **First:** connect with people you know who are in the career field you are interested in learning more about.

■ **Second:** think about people you know or can easily meet who may know someone in the field you're interested in.

■ **Third:** search the Internet, career fairs or professional organizations just to name a few.

- You have the opportunity to make personal contacts with working professionals.
- You become aware of the needs of the employers and the realities of employment.

■ You gain confidence in talking with people while learning what you need to know. This exposes you to a variety of jobs and personalities of companies making the search for your "niche" that much easier.

# Locate Contacts

**Instructions:** List six prospective employers who work in your area of interest. These leads can come from people you know, the Internet, or any other source. You are to call each prospect until your interview(s) have been scheduled.



## *Contact 1*

**Organization Name:**

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**Individual's Name:**

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**Phone Number:**

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## *Contact 4*

**Organization Name:**

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**Individual's Name:**

---

**Phone Number:**

---

## *Contact 2*

**Organization Name:**

---

**Individual's Name:**

---

**Phone Number:**

---

## *Contact 5*

**Organization Name:**

---

**Individual's Name:**

---

**Phone Number:**

---

## *Contact 3*

**Organization Name:**

---

**Individual's Name:**

---

**Phone Number:**

---

## *Contact 6*

**Organization Name:**

---

**Individual's Name:**

---

**Phone Number:**

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# Informational Interview Phone Script

When you are not looking for employment, but simply want to obtain information about a type of job, it is called an “informational interview.” It is easy to talk to someone you know, but making a cold call requires some preparation. The benefits are well worth the effort and you will find that it gets easier each time. Use the following as a guide to help you set an appointment for your informational interview.

## SAMPLE SCRIPT

[Ms. Forbes,] I’m [Jill Smith.] I am taking a course in Career Exploration at Moore Norman Technology Center in which one of my projects is to interview someone in a field of interest to me. I am very interested in [Medical Assisting], and since you are knowledgeable in the field, I would like very much to hear some of your personal views. I know you are very busy, but would it be possible to have 20 minutes of your time in the near future to discuss aspects of your job? When would be a convenient time for me to come by the clinic and talk with you?

**Now, personalize a script using the contact’s name, your name, and area of interest.**

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# Contact Worksheet

**Instructions:** Document your employer informational interview(s).

Organization Name \_\_\_\_\_

Organization Address \_\_\_\_\_

Phone Number \_\_\_\_\_

Person Contacted \_\_\_\_\_

Person's Title \_\_\_\_\_

Interview Date \_\_\_\_\_ Interview Time \_\_\_\_\_

Organization Name \_\_\_\_\_

Organization Address \_\_\_\_\_

Phone Number \_\_\_\_\_

Person Contacted \_\_\_\_\_

Person's Title \_\_\_\_\_

Interview Date \_\_\_\_\_ Interview Time \_\_\_\_\_

Organization Name \_\_\_\_\_

Organization Address \_\_\_\_\_

Phone Number \_\_\_\_\_

Person Contacted \_\_\_\_\_

Person's Title \_\_\_\_\_

Interview Date \_\_\_\_\_ Interview Time \_\_\_\_\_



# Sample Confirmation Script



**Receptionist:**  
ABC Widget  
Company, how  
may I direct your call?



**You:** Ms. Forbes  
office, please.



**Ms. Forbes:**  
This is Ms.  
Forbes, may I  
help you?



**You:** Hello,  
Ms. Forbes  
my name is  
Jill Smith and I am  
calling to confirm our  
appointment at 9 a.m.  
tomorrow.



**Ms. Forbes:** Yes,  
tomorrow at  
9 a.m. is fine.



**You:** Thank you,  
I look forward  
to meeting  
with you.



**Ms. Forbes:**  
I'll see you  
tomorrow,  
good bye.



**You:** Good bye.

## Telephone Etiquette tips

- When you call:
  - Know what you want to say, so there are not lots of "ahh"s, "umm"s and pauses, while the other person waits.
  - Don't talk too quickly, too slowly, too quietly or too loudly.
  - Do not use inappropriate language
  - Do not sound unhappy, angry, sad or bored.
  - Do not chew gum, eat, smoke, or drink while talking on the phone.
- If they have to call you back:
  - Make sure the people who answer your phone are not rude, unprofessional, or negative.
  - You have a way for them to leave a voicemail.
  - You do not have an inappropriate voicemail message that gives a negative impression of who you are.

# Informational Interview Worksheet

Person Interviewed: \_\_\_\_\_ Date of Interview: \_\_\_\_\_

Person's Title: \_\_\_\_\_ Organization: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_ Phone Number: \_\_\_\_\_ Email: \_\_\_\_\_

## *Questions To Ask*

1. How did you decide to become a [ \_\_\_\_\_ ]? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

2. What is a typical day like for you? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

3. What kind of skills would I need to be successful in this industry? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

4. What is a typical entry-level salary in this profession? How do the salaries progress after five years?  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

5. What do you like most/least about your job? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

6. What preparation would you suggest for someone interested in entering this field? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

7. Do you have any special advice for entering this field. \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

8. Whom do you recommend I contact for more information about job opportunities in this industry?  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

9. May I contact you if necessary in the future? \_\_\_\_\_

***Be sure to thank the person for their time before leaving.***



# Questions to Answer After the Interview

1. Is this a career you would be interested in? (circle one)      YES      NO

If so, why? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

If not, why? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

2. What are some things you can do to prepare to achieve this career goal?

Education: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Skills: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Experience: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Training: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Community involvement: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Activities: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

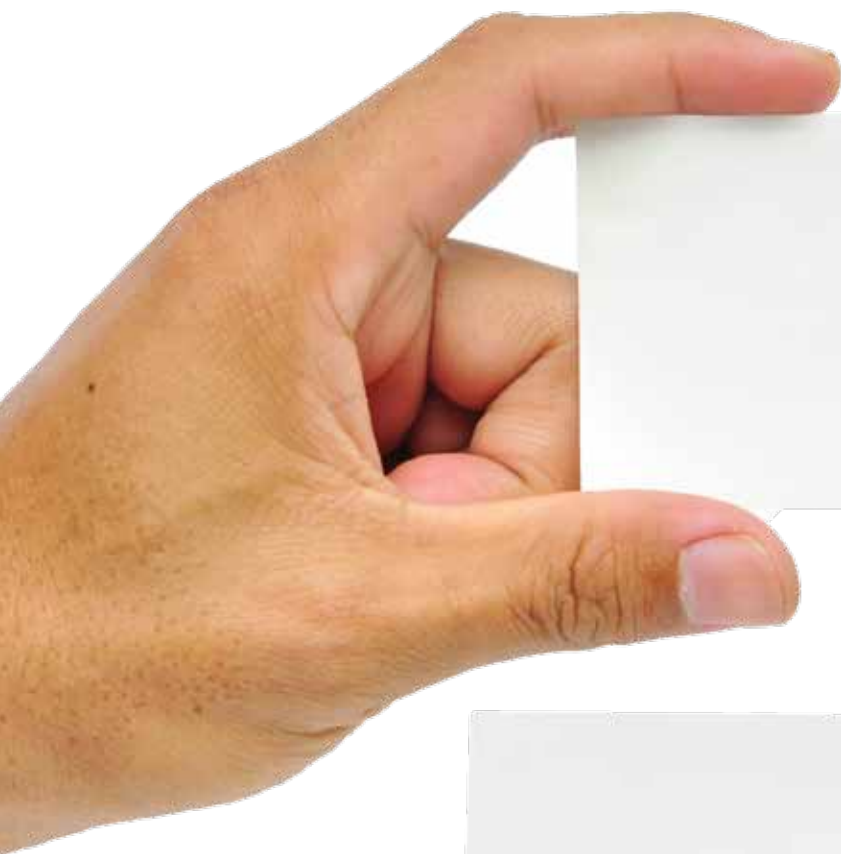
3. What are you already doing that will help you obtain a career in this field? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

4. What skills were mentioned in the interview that you already possess that could be added to your resume?

Skills: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

# Business Cards

Attach the  
business card(s)  
you collect here.



# Common Screen-Outs

## ON PAPER (RESUME, APPLICATIONS, LETTERS):

- No evidence of recently having done the job you are applying for
- Appear better suited for a different job or more interested in a different field
- Over-qualified
- Post-graduate degree with no practical experience
- No evidence you were good at your job
- Mediocre or poor schools grades
- No recent work / education history
- Pattern of staying less than 1 year
- No work history in this country
- False statements which can be checked
- Hobbies that are controversial, dangerous or could interfere with work
- No references, or they are all unemployed, or listed as your social worker, psychiatrist, addiction counselor, etc
- Criminal convictions, chronic illness, or legal case brought against an employer
- Limited availability regarding hours or days
- "Reason for Leaving" raises a concern, fired, e.g. laid-off more than twice, gap after pregnancy & still of child bearing age
- Gaps in work history
- "Reason for Leaving" does not match other information, e.g. "Left for better opportunity," without starting a "better job"
- Asks for the top of their wage/salary range
- Several past employers are "out-of-business" so reference cannot be checked
- Unprofessional look: misspellings, poor grammar, typos, untidiness
- Incomplete application, or saying "See Resume"
- Resumes with poor or inappropriate lay-out, or looks similar to others they've read
- Too long (will be put in the "Read Later" pile which is seldom read)

## IN-PERSON (INTERVIEWS, INTERNSHIPS):

- Personality doesn't fit with the company culture or doesn't match what they expected based on the resume or cover letter
- Presentation (dress, non-verbal, style) does not match the company's image, or doesn't match what they expected based on the resume or phone conversation, e.g., weight, age, ethnicity, gender
- Visible tattoos and piercings
- Body odor, cigarettes, or too much perfume/cologne
- Demonstrating limited knowledge about, or interest in, the company or job
- Poor eye contact when greeting or talking
- Nervous habits, e.g. playing with hair, a twitching eye, or drumming fingers
- One word answers and offering no examples, stories or proof
- Talk too much, argue with, or interrupt the interviewer
- Acting desperate, angry, or showing no emotion at all
- Speaking negatively about past employers, co-workers or supervisors
- "Name drops" too much
- You don't seem to know what is written on your resume or application
- Bringing children or friends to the interview
- Being rude or obnoxious to the receptionist while waiting to be interviewed
- Being late for the interview
- Not knowing current terminology, proper names for tools or procedures, or lacking the level of knowledge or skill expected
- Failing to demonstrate that you offer a hard to find skill or attitude
- During internship, failing to demonstrate that they will be one of their best workers and are worth the money to be paid

## REFERENCES:

- The person who recommends you is an average to poor employee, or a troublemaker
- The reference shares problems you have had either on the job (e.g. being late, not getting along with others, fired) or in your personal life (addiction, illness, depression)
- The reference doesn't know the job you're going for, hasn't talked to you recently, or isn't familiar with your skills for the job
- The reference talks about your skills for a different job, rather than the one you are applying for
- Reference does not return phone calls
- The reference focuses on why the company should give you a chance, rather than what you can do for the company
- Your current employer is too excited about, or supportive of you leaving
- Your current employer is reluctant to say anything about you, as if fearful of being sued.

## INTERNET:

- Offensive email address
- Information on your personal website, blog or social network site which conflicts with company image, values or goals
- Negative information discovered when they do a search of your name
- Lack of Internet or computer skills, seen in your inability to download documents or links they send, or your slow response (should respond within 24 hours)
- Poor spelling, grammar or writing skills demonstrated in emails, a web interview, or on-line chat
- Information on your Internet site or given during a web chat that conflicts with info on resume or given during the interview

# Tips For Writing Thank You Notes

- **When to Send It:** Write and send your note no later than 24-hours after the interview.
- **Paper and Envelope:** Use a good quality notepaper with matching envelope. Avoid “cute” covers. A simple “Thank You” on the front will do. Off-white and buff colors appear more professional.
- **Typed vs. Handwritten:** A handwritten note is fine unless your handwriting is illegible or sloppy. If so, type it. Make sure all spelling is correct. You may want someone to proofread it before mailing.
- **Salutation:** Unless you personally know the individual you are thanking, do not use his/her first name. Write “Dear Pam Smith” or “Dear Ms. Smith.” Include the date.
- **The Note Itself:** Keep it short and friendly.
  - **Paragraph 1:** Thank the individual for taking the time to visit with you.
  - **Paragraph 2:** Share something you gained from the interview.

## SAMPLE THANK YOU NOTE

June 19, 2002

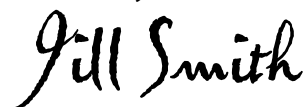
Dear [Ms. Forbes,]

Thank you for taking the time to discuss your position and organization with me. It was a pleasure meeting you and seeing your clinic first hand.

The information you shared with me provided a new perspective of the position, a better understanding of the requirements of the job, and increased my interest in [medical assisting.]

Again, thank you for your time. I appreciate the information you shared with me and look forward to the possibility of one-day becoming a medical assistant for a facility such as yours.

Sincerely,



Jill Smith

- **Paragraph 3:** Thank the individual again and express an interest in working in his/her field or with the organization in the future.

- **Your Signature:** Always sign your thank you note. Use your first and last name. Avoid initials and make your signature legible.

## Interview Do's and Don'ts

DO

- Be on time
- Research the company
- Dress appropriately
- Study potential questions
- Respect all people in the office
- Thank the interviewer
- Be straightforward
- Listen intently
- Be professional
- Follow up
- Send a thank you note

DON'T

- **NEVER ask for a job:** Don't mix informational interviewing with job seeking. Employers will grant informational interviews when they firmly trust that you will not ask them for a job. The minute you begin trying to get a job, the employer will feel misled. If you discover a job that you do want to apply for during the interview, wait until the informational interview is over. The next day, call the employer and tell your contact that the informational interview not only confirmed your interest in the field, but also made you aware of a position that you would like to formally apply for.