Effective Informational Interviewing

A presentation from the
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go.osu.edu/alumnicareermanagement
Your Career Management Team

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Career Management

• Programs/Resources
  ▫ Web resources, job board, webinars, programs, career fairs, individual career advising (in-person and remotely). Visit: go.osu.edu/alumnicareermanagement for more info.

• Career Changes
  ▫ Launching
  ▫ Transition
  ▫ Underemployment
  ▫ Unemployment
  ▫ Encore Career

• A Lifelong Process
  ▫ Assessment
  ▫ Exploration/Research
  ▫ Personal Branding
  ▫ Networking/Job Search
  ▫ Professional Development
Today’s Agenda

• Defining informational interviews
• Preparing for an informational interview
• Managing your expectations
• Networking before, during, and after
• Effectively following up
• Tools to help you along the way
What is an informational interview, anyway?

Informational interviews are short, focused conversations that you can (and should) have with someone working in an area of interest to you.

Use them to get information on:

• Building a career in a desired industry
• Company culture of a specific workplace
• Expectations of a specific type of job
Benefits of Conducting Informational Interviews:

• Learn from another person’s experiences
• Assess the culture of your target company
• Get some “insider tips”, and get an edge in the hiring process
• Gain access to the “hidden job market”
• Learn about industry trends
• Expand your professional network
• Build confidence for employment interviews

Source: Right Management
The Hidden Job Market

The “hidden market” is any place where jobs get posted without first being advertised.

- 80% of jobs are found through hidden market
- Networking is critical to master it
- LinkedIn, AlumniFire – tools for networking
Interviews are a Two-Way Street

• Job-seekers gain valuable information about a desired company or industry

• The “insider” learns about the seeker, and determines to what level they can help him/her
How do I prepare for an informational interview?

- Do your research on industries and companies that interest you (Hint: if you’re not sure where to begin, check out O*Net Online’s interest profiler)

- Choose (and reach out to) professionals to interview

- Create 5-6 interview questions to ask your insiders

- Prepare your 30 second “elevator pitch”
Networking: Identifying Your Insiders

- Spend 15-20 minutes per day interacting with connections online

- Invite potential allies to coffee chats where possible to conduct informational interviews

- No pressure! Though you should be transparent about your job search, it is best not to ask for a job outright in informational meetings

- Instead, ask for advice or introductions to decision makers
How should I dress for an Informational Interview?

Suits are not mandatory, but business casual is a MUST!

For Women
Acceptable wear includes: skirt or dress slacks, blouse, sweater, jacket (optional) with closed toe shoes.

For Men
Acceptable wear includes: dress slacks, a button-down shirt, dark socks, and dress shoes.
What should I ask at an Informational Interview?

• Can you please share your academic as well as professional journey? How did your career path lead you to your current position & organization?
• How would you describe your organization’s culture?
• What does your typical day look like?
• After doing some research on your organization, can you tell me more about ____________?
• How do you see this job changing in the next 3 to 5 years?
• What do you enjoy the most about your position and the organization? What challenges do you face on a regular basis?
• What advice/recommendations do you have for someone that wants to explore a similar professional role?
• Would you recommend anyone else that I should connect with to learn more about this position as well as the organization?
Following Up: After the Interview

It is important to follow-up after an informational interview to maintain connections & relationships.

How to follow up: It is recommended that one should follow up via email after 2 weeks.

Why send a follow up email: Time to thank the individual & remind them what you appreciated learning from that individual about that particular industry as well as the organization.

How to prepare: During your meeting, you should be taking some notes about what you learned from that individual about that particular industry. Additionally, be sure to write down specific discussion topics which then can be mentioned in the follow up email to help build that connection/relationship even further.
Questions?

To access our online resources, visit:  
[Coach’s Corner blog & podcast](u.osu.edu/alumnicareermanagement)  
[office website](go.osu.edu/alumnicareermanagement)