

Conducting an Informational Interview

Informational interviews can be helpful for new industry professionals to learn about particular jobs and companies. They are not job interviews, but rather are meetings for discovery. Informational interviews can be used to explore career options, to learn if various companies and roles are a correct fit and to discover additional certifications, courses and programs that may be beneficial for employment in certain roles. Here are some helpful tips for requesting and conducting effective informational interviews:

- **Plan**

Make a list of people or companies you'd like to connect with. Look for people in roles you're interested in and for companies that align with your values. Your network of friends and family is a great resource; start by asking them for suggestions. You can also find contacts through professional associations in the field you're interested in.

- **Research**

Once you know who you want to contact, gather their contact information and learn about their backgrounds. Use resources like Ten Thousand Coffees and LinkedIn, or look for articles about them and the company they work for. Learn about the company culture by looking up the website and searching for their mission, vision and values.

- **Reach Out**

Send an email or make a phone call requesting an informational interview — make sure you know what you're going to say to ensure professional, effective communication. Start by introducing yourself and explaining how you found them or any connections that you have. Make it clear that you're looking for an informational interview only and are not requesting a job. Specify a length for the meeting (typically half an hour) and leave it up to them to choose a time and location that best fits their schedule.

- **Be Prepared**

As the interviewer, you need to be ready to direct the flow of the conversation and have questions ready. Ask questions about the industry, the company and their position. Inquire about their education, their career path, and any advice they might have for you. Ask about any accomplishments or experiences that you discovered during your research (i.e. keynote speaking engagements or awards). Inquire about any suggested connections or other industry professionals they think you should connect with.

- **Bring Your Résumé**

Bring a copy of your résumé with you to the meeting, but don't offer it. It's best to be prepared with a copy in case they bring it up or inquire about your experience, but you don't want to present it unprompted as this is not a job interview.

- **Follow Up**

After the interview, send a follow-up note or email to thank them for their time. Make it personal and tell them what you learned and why you appreciated meeting with them.

- **Stay Connected**

Touch base from time to time to maintain the relationship. Keep yourself up to date on any career advancements or company announcements. Send congratulatory emails when you hear of any accomplishments and keep them informed of your successes and career development.