



## Informational Interviews:

Even in the age of technology, most jobs/internships are still attained via networking. Informational interviews, a form of networking, are key components of any successful job/internship search.

An Informational Interview is a conversation you have with a professional who can provide information and expertise about career options, industries, employment conditions, employers/ professional organizations, or their personal experience. Informational interviews can help direct your job search and establish rapport with alumni in your prospective field. While the contacts you make from these interviews may help you find a job down the road, the purpose of the interview is to gather advice and information – and not to ask for a job outright.

### **POTENTIAL OUTCOMES OF INFORMATIONAL INTERVIEWS:**

- Gain insight that will help you to decide whether a particular career is for you.
- Learn valuable, candid, and up-to-date information about a particular career or industry from a person in that field.
- Find out more about the culture of a company.
- Begin to develop a network of contacts within a particular career field.

### **PREPARATION:**

- Identify people you would like to meet who are working in a career field that interests you.
- Research the career field and the company's website of the person whom you are interviewing and prepare a list of questions you want to ask.
- Contact the person and set up an appointment in-person, over the phone or via email.

### **REQUESTING AN INFORMATIONAL INTERVIEW:**

- Writing an email to prospective contacts is often the best approach. Even if they already know you, it is courteous and lets them prepare for your request.
- Identify yourself as an Ole Miss student and explain where you found their name and why you are writing. I recommend that you attach a resume to provide more information about your background.
- Mention that you are broadly interested in their field and that you would like to schedule a visit in their office to get some advice and information about their career field. A 30 minute face-to-face informational interview is recommended; however, when schedules or geographical location preclude the possibility of this, a telephone interview can also be effective.
- You may want to indicate some days and times that work for you as a place to start, but let them know that you are flexible would like to work around their schedule.
- When emailing, remember to be professional. First impressions are crucial!
- Confirm the date, time, and location of the meeting. Follow through if you book a time.
- Keep in mind that you do not want to ask directly for a job. This is an opportunity to gather information and get advice from an experienced person working in a field of interest to you.
- The Informational Interview is a professional appointment: Arrive on-time, and dress and act professionally. If you must cancel, call the contact with days of advance notice.



### **SAMPLE QUESTIONS:**

The following questions are intended as a guide. Your questions should be customized to suit the individual and industry. You will probably only get through a handful of questions and the meeting might change directions depending upon the contact, but you should be prepared.

- What is a typical day like in your current job?
- What drew you into this line of work?
- How did you break into this field/industry?
- Can you describe your career path?
- What skills have been most important in your field?
- What skills do you look for in an MBA hire?
- What do you like most about your job?
- What are the most difficult challenges in your position?
- What kind of experience would employers in this field look for in a job applicant?
- What is the market like? What areas do you feel promise the most growth?
- What are the opportunities for advancement within the field?
- What is the best advice you received regarding your career?
- To what professional organizations do you belong?
- Who else would you suggest I speak with to learn more about this field? May I use your name when I contact them?
- Would you be willing to look over my resume and to provide advice on how to market my skills?

### **FOLLOW-UP:**

- Send a thank-you note to every person who grants you an informational interview. Not only will this express your appreciation for their assistance, it will also help to establish you in their minds as a courteous, professional person. You may email a thank you letter, but it should be formal. Hand written notes provide a nice touch.

### **RESOURCES TO FIND CONTACTS**

Friends/Family/Faculty-Alumni are great start for contacts for an informational interview. Speak with your parents, relatives, friends, parent's friends, college faculty and advisors, and career advisors to let them know you are seeking information about an industry/career. You may also identify potential contacts with the help of the Career Center, Alumni Association, and the Office of Undergraduate Career Preparation.

Don't forget to always send a thank-you note to those who help you or meet with you to show your appreciation for their expertise and time given.



## **How to Reach Out for an Informational Interview**

“1 out of every 200 resumes...results in a job offer. 1 out of every 12 informational interviews, however, results in a job offer,” from A Foot in the Door, by Katharine, Ph.D.

### **A Sample Phone Script Requesting an Informational Interview**

I recommend using the telephone to arrange interviews as it is often the most persuasive and time-efficient method of contacting an individual. It is easier to delete an e-mail than to say "no" to a pleasant, friendly professional who wants to know more about your career.

If shyness is an issue, I use a written phone script. There are many excellent phone scripts available in employment books and websites, such as:

*"Hello, my name is (NAME). I am a student at the University of Mississippi majoring in Finance and looking to enter (FIELD). Your company really stands out in the industry because (REASON) and I'm looking for information on this field. So I'm wondering if you would have 20 minutes to meet with me to talk about your career?"*

### **A Sample Email Requesting an Informational Interview**

Dear Mr. Gonzales,

Wesley Dickens, Coordinator of Career Preparation and Internships at the University of Mississippi School of Business Administration provided me with your email address. As a college senior studying managerial finance seeking to learn more about careers in this field, he thought you might be able to provide me with useful information. If you are able to find time, I would like to meet with you in person for 20 minutes to interview you about your career.

Thank you for considering my request. I look forward to your reply.

Sincerely,

Javier Romano



## A Sample Letter Requesting an Informational Interview

These are letters addressed to individuals you would like to meet with to explore career options. Make it clear you want only 30 minutes of their time and that you are **not asking for employment**, only an informational interview that will help guide your job search.

### Sample 1

2838 Camphor Lane  
Oxford, MS 38655

Ms. Kathy Brown  
Harbor Federal Bank  
4035 Nova Road  
Oxford, MS 38655

Dear Ms. Brown:

I am currently a student at the University of Mississippi majoring in banking and finance. A family friend, Dr. Randall Hansen of Ole Miss, suggested that you might be willing to meet with me so that I can learn more about banking.

I understand your time is valuable, but I would be extremely grateful if you allowed me 30 minutes of your time to meet with you at your convenience. During this meeting I would love to get your input on the banking industry to help guide my career decisions.

Thank you so much for considering my request. I will call you the week of October 10 to see about scheduling the informational interview. If you need to reach me before that time, please feel free to contact me via phone (662-555-2922) or via email xxxxx@gmail.com.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,

An Ole Miss Student



## Sample 2

Your Address  
City, State Zip

Current Date

Ernie Zimmerman  
Littler Mendelson  
21 East State Street  
Charlottesville, VA 85000

Dear Mr. Zimmerman:

In my research of companies which have exemplary reputations in marketing research, I discovered Littler Mendelson. I am very interested in pursuing a career in marketing and would love to speak with you about your career and any tips you might have as I choose courses and make summer internship decisions.

I am requesting an informational interview and would only take about 30 minutes of your time. I hope to get a sense for what your company is like and what a typical day entails. I am attaching my resume so you have context on my background.

I can be very flexible with my schedule to match your availability. My contact information is 662-555-5555 and xxxx@go.olemiss.edu in case you have any questions. I look forward to hearing from you and to meeting in person soon.

Sincerely,

Beth Brown

Attachment