

Informational Interviewing

A beneficial method of exploring career options and networking.

What is it?

Good career decisions result from having good background information regarding your field of interest. Valuable career information can be gathered by talking with working professionals in occupational fields you are interested in. Conducting informational interviews is a great way to gather information about a particular industry or occupation. Although it is not asking for a job, it is a great networking opportunity. The following suggestions will enable you to successfully identify, contact, and interview these individuals.

Where/How to Begin

- Connect with friends, family members, teachers, coaches, and counselors who may be able to suggest contacts.
- Search for professionals in your industry on LinkedIn (see CCC LinkedIn guide).
- Search on company websites for staff contact information.
- Interview as many people as you can to gather helpful information.
- Ask for an interview via email or phone by saying something like “Hello, my name is _____. I am currently a student at Whitney High School. I am interested in the field of _____. I would love to meet with you to discuss what you do and the field in general.”
- Arrange a mutually convenient time to meet either on the phone or in person.
*Hint: Offering to buy them lunch or coffee shows you appreciate their time.
- Research the person and company/organization to be familiar with them before the interview.

Additional Suggestions

- Be organized with your questions and prepared to take notes.
- Your positive, enthusiastic attitude will create a good impression. People are more apt to help others after they get to know them on a more personal basis. This is a great way to get referrals and begin the networking process.
- Be conscious of time constraints.
- Dress and act professionally.

Informational Interviewing Continued:

Suggested Questions to Ask

1. How did you get into this field?
2. What do you enjoy about your job? What do you find to be the most difficult aspect?
3. What is a typical day like?
4. How many hours per week do you work? Is travel required?
5. What salary range could I expect to make in this field?
6. How would you describe the company culture?
7. How is this field growing or changing? Do you see any trends?
8. What kind of individual (in terms of talent/personality) would be best suited for this kind of job?
9. Do you recommend any professional associations, conferences, or journals I should keep up with?
10. What do new professionals need in terms of training and education?
11. Are there any other jobs that are similar to yours but with different job titles?
12. What advice would you give a high school student interested in this field?
13. Who do you know that I might benefit from talking with?

Follow Up

- Write a thank-you note which may be handwritten or typed.
- Stay in touch with your contacts, update them periodically on your status, and inquire about any updates that would be helpful for you.

Evaluate

Whether the informational interview was successful or not, assess how well it went. Look for what went well and how you can improve for your next interview. Feel free to discuss the interview with the College and Career Center or your Counselor. Ask yourself a few questions, such as:

- What would I need to be qualified for his/her job?
- Do I understand what the job entails?
- Would I enjoy working in this field?
- What would I not enjoy about working in this field?
- Did I get additional ideas for alternatives?