

# Informational Interviews

## *Information Sheet*

The informational interview is a method that can be used to gather occupational and industry specific knowledge.

### **An interview enables you to:**

- **Discover jobs you didn't know existed.** Eighty percent of jobs are not advertised.
- **Expand your professional network.** The “small world theory” aka “six degrees of separation” suggests that we are all connected to each other by as few as six handshakes. The trick is, to benefit from this connection, you must first shake hands!
- **Obtain modern and practical insider information** that is not available in printed material. This includes professional associations and sources of reading material that will keep you up-to-date and connected.
- **Seize opportunity**, “Don't wait for extraordinary opportunities. Seize common occasions and make them great. Weak [people] wait for opportunities; strong [people] make them.”  
*Marden, Orison Swett.*

**There is no prescribed method to conduct the “perfect” informational interview, and each interview is unlike any other. The following are some tips to keep in mind throughout the process:**

#### **Before:**

- **Identify who you might be interested in interviewing.** Start with people that you already know such as friends, family, or members from any organizations you belong to.
- **Don't be afraid to ask.** People generally like to help others and are often flattered that you are interested in their opinion.
- **Research the organization and the industry.** This demonstrates interest and savvy.
- **Set yourself one or two goals** for the interview and prepare three to five questions to accomplish your objectives. This is particularly helpful for those who get nervous and keeps anyone on task.

#### **During:**

- **Do NOT ask for a job.** If you are looking to make a career move be open and honest, however, stick to general career and organizational questions.
- **Practice good listening skills.** “**You mentioned** a major challenge in the industry is..., **how** is this currently being addressed or **why** do you think....”
- **Try to obtain at least two referrals.** “Do you know of any other individuals within the industry that might be receptive to meeting with me?”
- **Stay on task and on time.** Arrive 5-10 minutes before your interview, stick to your questions and leave when you said you would (typical interview duration is 20-30 minutes).

#### **After:**

- **Don't forget to say thank you.** Complete a follow-up e-mail, letter or phone call to thank your interviewee for their time and valuable insight. Include any information you promised to send them (this should be completed within 24 hours of your interview).

### **Possible questions, to get you started:**

- \* What interested you in this line of work and how did you get started?
- \* What would you say is the most rewarding (or challenging) part of your job?
- \* What is one thing you wish you knew before you entered this profession, or thought would have been very valuable to know when getting started?
- \* In your opinion, what are some of the major challenges facing this industry?

#### **General Networking Tips:**

- \* Smile!
- \* Maintain open body posture
- \* Introduce yourself
- \* Shake hands
- \* Carry ~ 30 business cards (everywhere)
- \* If given a card, say thank you, look at it and store it somewhere safe
- \* Be present, ask questions, try to be helpful
- \* Travel in pairs, but separate
- \* Prepare to ask or answer questions regarding:
  - Where you work
  - What brings you to...[event]
  - Icebreakers (politics, sports, weather, news)