



The Purpose of the Informational Meeting

First things first: what is an informational meeting? Also known as an “informational interview,” it’s not really an interview at all, but a conversation to get advice, insights and contacts, and you are in charge of the agenda and asking questions. Do not ask for a job. Consider this CAREER RESEARCH.

It’s always better to schedule these kinds of conversations in person, but it’s possible to have an informational meeting via phone or Skype.

Another important detail: schedule these meetings before there’s an actual job in the mix. In other words, once you are applying for an opportunity, that’s not the time to contact someone at that company for a chat. At that point, it’s probably too late to really benefit from any inside information you might learn.

Here are five things to accomplish at an informational meeting.

1. Learn About Industry Trends

The point in meeting people is to ask them questions you wouldn’t be able to find answers to elsewhere. Do some research to learn about the company and industry before the meeting. Then, ask questions that you can only be answered by someone who actually does the work or is in the field. You can learn about in-demand skills and technology in your field, projects and issues specific to the company. This is your chance to ask career-related questions, for example:

“I have heard having my PMI certification would greatly enhance my marketability. What are your thoughts and what have you seen?”

2. Learn About the Person’s Career Path and About a Typical Day

Plan to talk with someone who is on a career path you are interested in. Having a conversation with someone about his or her career is one way to know if the career is what you think it is or one that will meet your expectations. You will also want to speak with people who work inside your target companies to learn if it’s a place where you’d excel and succeed.

Don’t forget, people typically enjoy talking about themselves. Ask for the person’s story; engage in a conversation about her goals, what she’d do differently and what advice she has for you. You could discover what you need to do next to achieve your career goals, learn what you need to know to succeed in your dream job or organization. For example:

“How did you wind up where you are today? What advice do you have for someone like me who would love to emulate your accomplishments?”

See more sample questions below.

3. Gain Insider Information Specifically About Landing a Job

You can’t count on it, but you never know what someone will tell you if you ask the right questions. Maybe there’s a special quality or skill the organization seeks when they hire. Maybe you can find out a name of a great, influential ►



contact who makes important hiring decisions. Or, perhaps you can find out that the company plans to open up a new internship opportunity. For example, you might ask:

“What qualities are most important for someone working here? Is there anything specific I should know about your company culture?”

4. Learn About Other Contacts

At the end of every networking meeting or informational meeting, ask if the person knows someone who might be able to provide resources or suggestions for you. Your next contact is your next rung on the networking ladder. Even if the informational meeting was not as helpful as you had hoped, you still have a chance to salvage the situation. Make a point to include a question such as:

“Do you know anyone else I should include in my research about _____?”

And if they do supply you with a name, ask if it is okay for you to use their name when you reach out.

5. Secure a New Supporter

The very best result you can hope to happen at an informational meeting is that you will gain an ally for your job search. It goes without saying: the more prepared you are for your meeting, the more likely you are to convince your contact to invest time in helping you.

This networking contact may not hire you, but could be very influential in helping someone else hire you, via introductions, by convincing someone to meet you and by advocating for you. It's not something you can expect from every meeting, but if you enter into the conversation with genuine interest and curiosity about the person and the organization, plan well, communicate effectively and impress your contact, anything is possible!

Defining the Purpose of an Informational Meeting

Why do you want to meet with this person?

- Discuss how your skills may translate to a new but related industry
- Brainstorm about your career options
- Discover the company's culture (and where potentially you may fit)
- Obtain information about the growth or hiring trends of other companies in your industry
- Brainstorm names of other industry related companies
- Identify key players you want to meet (such as decision-makers in your target companies)

What questions you could ask.

- Who do you know who works in (fill in the appropriate field/industry/company)?
- Would you look at my target list and tell me if you have any contacts in these companies?



- Can you name other companies that might be interested in someone with my background?
- Do you know the names of any good recruiters in my field?
- Do you have any ideas about industry associations, or strategies I may not have considered?
- Do you know the names of any industry specific websites I could investigate?
- Can you suggest what other positions might match my skills and background?
- What do you see as the future trends in this industry?
- What skills are employers looking for in this particular industry?
- Can you provide me with the names of other people who might be willing to speak with me?