

Informational Interviewing

An *informational interview* is an opportunity to sit down with a professional in a career field that interests you in order to learn more about a particular industry, career path, or even a specific company. It gives you a chance to “interview” potential employers and is a great way to supplement your career research by gaining first-hand knowledge of what it’s actually like to work in various careers. The purpose is to gather information, not to ask for an immediate job (although 1 out of every 12 informational interviews results in a job or internship opportunity).

Benefits of Informational Interviewing

- Helps confirm your interest in a certain career path (or helps you see that you aren’t as interested as you thought)
- Gain an inside “day in the life” perspective of a career field or company
- Expand your professional network by building employer contacts and relationships
- Potentially uncover job/internship opportunities

Scheduling an Informational Interview

- Schedule several (5-8) informational interviews for each career path so you have a well-balanced view of the career and a larger network of contacts
- To identify and reach out to professionals, use the following list as a starting point:
 - Personal contacts (family, relatives, friends, etc.)
 - Acquaintances (neighbors, professors, co-workers, school peers, social groups)
 - Cold contacts (look people up on LinkedIn, company websites, directories, etc.)
- To email someone asking for an informational interview:
 1. Start with your connection, such as OCC alumni or the person who referred you
 2. Be concise in your email and write professionally
 3. Let them know your intent (for information and insight, NOT a job)
- Sample email message:

Dear Ms. Cervantes,

I am a student at Orange Coast College and am very interested in a career in marketing. I am looking to connect with OCC alumni who are successful in the marketing field and my Business professor, Dr. Rogers, mentioned you would be good to talk to.

As I explore this career path, would you be willing to meet for about 15-20 minutes to share insight into current marketing trends and offer advice to a fellow OCC Pirate? I am generally available between 2-5p during the week and can meet you in-person or talk over the phone. Thank you in advance for your time and I hope to connect with you soon!

Respectfully,

Marie Smith

Preparing for an Informational Interview

- Research the company and the person you’re meeting to you have some context
- Prepare a list of 5-10 questions you’d like to ask (job duties, entry requirements, starting salary, job openings, internship opportunities, etc.)
- Prepare responses to questions about yourself (e.g. “Why are you interested in this field?”)
- Bring a copy of your resume, but only offer it when asked (or you could ask the employer to critique your resume and identify areas for further development)
- Dress professionally – wear clothing that is appropriate for this career field
- Make a good first impression – be early, respectful, grateful for their time, etc.
- Send a thank you note/email within 24 hours of the meeting
- Follow up every 1-6 months to continue building the relationship, provide updates, etc.

Informational Interview Report Sheet

Prior to your informational interview, make a list of questions you want to ask during the interview. Below is a sample list of questions you might want to ask. Add any others that you like information about. Use this form to record your interview results.

Career Researching: _____

Date of Interview: _____

Company: _____

Contact Person: _____

Phone: _____

Title: _____

Email: _____

1. What are typical entry-level positions in this field?
2. What are the typical job duties that someone in this position performs?
3. How does a person enter this field? What training/qualifications would you recommend?
4. What skills are necessary to be successful in this field?
5. What personality traits/qualities are useful for people in this profession?
6. What are some of the enjoyable aspects of this work?
7. What are some of the less enjoyable aspects?
8. Have you noticed any hiring trends in the field?
9. How did you get into this field and what is your professional background?
10. What is the best career advice you've received and how did you apply it?
11. What is the current forecast for employment in this field? (How many people were hired in the past six months? Are there current job openings? Openings anticipated in the next six months?)
12. What projects are you working on now?
13. What topics/trends/technology do you need to stay informed on in order to do your job well?
14. Is there anyone else you'd recommend I speak with to learn more?