

Once you have identified a contact – whether it’s someone in your existing network or a new connection – you will want to schedule an informational meeting. An informational meeting provides you with the opportunity to gain an insider’s perspective on a specific career path or field as well as receive valuable advice on how to approach your job search and career. This handout will cover how to request and prepare for an information meeting.

REQUESTING AN INFORMATIONAL MEETING

The recommended approach to requesting an informational meeting is via email. Your email should be concise and include the following information:

- Who you are
- How you found them/connection
- Why you want to meet/what info you hope to learn
- How much time you are requesting
- Would you like to have an in person or telephone meeting?

In addition to the information listed above, you should also mention that you will follow up with them within a few days by telephone. The people you are contacting are busy professionals and your request may not be on the top of their list of action items. Remember, the informational meeting is more beneficial for you so you need to be proactive about scheduling the meeting.

You may encounter people who will not be able to meet with you. Don’t get discouraged. There are plenty of people who will meet with you so keep trying!

In order to increase your chances of securing an informational meeting, target people with whom you already have a strong connection (i.e., family, friends, former colleagues, etc.) This will also help you get comfortable with the informational interview setting.

PREPARING FOR AN INFORMATIONAL MEETING

Here are a few things to consider as you prepare for an informational interview:

- Learn as much about the person’s professional background, including their current employer as well as their employment history. Check LinkedIn to see if they have a profile as it will often provide you with a nice summary of their work history.
- Prepare a list of questions to ask. Think about what insight and advice they can provide based on their background and experience. Here are few sample questions to get you started:

1. How did you get started in this field, and what do you think has made you successful throughout your career?
2. What are some ways that other people you know have gotten started in this field
3. What are the pros and cons of working in this field?
4. What traits, skills, or experiences do employers in your field look for in candidates?
5. If you were me, what would you do to try to break into this field now?
6. What publications, professional associations, or events should I check out for additional information on this field?

- **DO NOT ASK FOR A JOB** during the informational meeting. Remember you initially asked to speak with them for informational purposes. In addition, your goal for the information meeting is to develop a networking relationship with an individual that you can leverage at a later time for potential employment opportunities.
- At the close of informational meeting be sure to thank the individual for their time and insight. This is also a good time to ask them if they have any recommendations of other individuals for you to reach out to for additional informational meetings.

AFTER AN INFORMATIONAL MEETING

As mentioned earlier, conducting informational interviews is the best way to build your professional network. Outlined below are tips and strategies to continue to build and strengthen the connection after an informational interview:

- Send thank you note or email highlighting what you gained from the meeting.
- Send them an invitation to connect on LinkedIn (not Facebook) so you will be able to track them as part of your network going forward.
- Keep detailed records of everyone you meet through your networking efforts. Create and maintain a simple spreadsheet with the name of the individual, relevant background information, the date of your interaction and any notes that will help you recall the interaction at a later date if needed.
- If the person provided the names of additional people to contact make sure you follow up them after you have spoken with their recommended contacts to thank them for the introduction and update them on the meeting.
- Keep them updated on your job search progress. Checking in with your contacts every couple of weeks during an active job search is a great way to remind them about you and your career goals. Your update must include information about your proactive job search efforts – applications, interviews and networking efforts – to demonstrate the initiative you are taking. You might also include follow up questions or request advice. However, avoid sending a basic check in email that simply states that you are still looking for a job and appreciate any leads. This type of check in email will not impress anyone in your network!