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Informational Interviewing



George Fox University
Career Services

Career Services: Vocation & Calling Fitness

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Elements of an Informational Interview

- What is an Informational Interview?
 - An information interview is an informal meeting with a person who performs work you may have an interest in doing.
 - Some elements of the information interview are:
 - You have questions for which you need answers.
 - You ask the questions.
 - You control the meeting.

- Benefits of an Informational Interview:
 - Some benefits of an information interview may be:
 - Gain information about development ideas.
 - Make a career decision.
 - “Try on” a job without accepting it.
 - Get advice or feedback.
 - Learn about other areas of the Company.
 - Let others know you’re out there.
 - Learn about potential jobs from the people who do the work.
 - Broaden your network of “contacts.”

Preparing for an Informational Interview

- ❑ Obtain names of people to talk to from friends, colleagues, professors, etc.
- ❑ For each name obtained, gather information about their department/division. Talk to others and/or read available material.
- ❑ Call the person for an interview. Be specific about your objective for the interview. Make it clear you are looking for information, not a job. Mention how you received the person's name. Ask for 30 minutes of the person's time at his/her office when it is most convenient for him/her.
- ❑ Be prepared with a clear set of questions for the interview. The people you interview will remember your interest, preparation, and planning.
- ❑ Consider providing your contacts with a copy of your objectives and questions, as this may help them prepare for your meeting.
- ❑ Dress professionally.

Conducting an Informational Interview

- Begin by thanking the individual for taking the time to meet with you. Tell him/her you would like to get information about opportunities in the field.
- Begin to ask your prepared questions as well as questions that come up as you talk.
- Be flexible enough to let the interview take a different direction if the individual wants to ask you questions. If he/she is obviously interested in your skills and interest, feel free to share them and give him/her your resume. If the particular area interests you, tell the individual what aspects you find interesting.
- Be professional. Act as if you were in a formal interview.
- Ask the questions that are the most important first, because when your time is up, you must say, "Thank you for sharing your time and for sharing this information."
- Be on time, and don't stay longer than the interview schedule unless the interviewee requests it.
- Close the interview by thanking the person for his/her time and valuable information. Ask for the names of other contacts who might offer additional help and whether you can use his/her name as a reference.

Following the Informational Interview

- ❑ After the interview, record the information you received. Treat this effort as a research project with carefully recorded and filed data.
- ❑ Always send a brief thank-you note within 48 hours. It helps keep the door open for future contacts.
- ❑ Keep in contact with the people you've interviewed. They've invested time in you and your future and will want to know what's happening.
- ❑ Obtain interviews with the additional contacts you've just received. It is best to talk to as many people as possible to get a good picture of the work you are considering.

Sample Questions

- ❑ Would you share about your background—education and experience?
- ❑ How did you move into your position? How did you get started in your field?
- ❑ What is your personal vision? Where do you see yourself heading?
- ❑ Would you make the same career choice again? Why? Why not?
- ❑ What other fields have you worked in over the years? If you have changed, what led to the change?
- ❑ What other experiences or training have you had that were helpful to you?
- ❑ What are some of the key skills that make you so good at what you do?
- ❑ What personally excites you about what's going on in your organization/field right now?
- ❑ What pleases you most about the direction your organization/department/ company is taking?
- ❑ In your opinion, what are some critical issues facing your organization/ profession?
- ❑ What skills and/or experiences would you say are critical to the success of your company/organization?
- ❑ Describe an average day's activities. Would it be possible for me to observe sometime?
- ❑ What do you like best about you are doing? What do you dislike?

More Questions

- ❑ What advice would you have for someone considering your field/ organization, or a similar position?
- ❑ What might be a typical entry-level position in this area?
- ❑ What kinds of training or experience would be important to a person entering your field/organization now?
- ❑ How is the management style here different from that in other organizations for which you have worked?
- ❑ From your experience with individuals in the field, what personal attributes do you think are essential for success?
- ❑ What projects do you expect to be working on in the future?
- ❑ Who are your key customers and suppliers?
- ❑ What are your main products or services?
- ❑ How do you use technology to add value to your business?
- ❑ What are some of the problems you have observed?
- ❑ What kind of growth patterns are you seeing in the field that I should consider in my decisions?
- ❑ Are there others in this field you would suggest I talk to?
- ❑ Who else should I know in order to make an informed decision about going into this field?
- ❑ Knowing I have an intense interest in this field, what advice can you give me regarding a career?

INTERVIEW SUMMARY

Interviewee: _____ Title: _____
Organization: _____
Telephone: _____ Address: _____
Referred by: _____
Referred to: _____
Interview Dates: _____ Objective: _____
Why Chosen: _____

Key Questions / Topics Discussed:

Key Observations:

What did I miss, what to change for next interview, or problems:

How did this interview help in my career exploration?

Other contacts or referrals:

What future communications are appropriate with this contact?

Resources:

- http://www.quintcareers.com/student_informational_interviewing.html
- *Backpack to Briefcase: Steps to a Successful Career*, (2006). www.lifeaftergraduation.com (can be checked out through the GFU Career Services office, STV 220)
- <http://www.jobweb.com/resumesample.aspx?id=784>
- <http://www.bls.gov/opub/ooq/2002/summer/art03.pdf>
- http://www.georgefox.edu/offices/career_services/ (click the link "Information Interviews at The CareerProject.org")
- <http://amdt.wsu.edu/research/dti/>

Contact Us

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