

# INFORMATIONAL INTERVIEWING



Informational interviewing is exactly what the name implies: interviewing for information. It is 15 - 20 minute meeting that you initiate and lead with someone in a position/occupation/company that you are interested in. The person can provide you with "insider" information and advice on who is hiring, where the opportunities will be and who you should connect with. It can be an effective tool to tap into the "hidden job market", which represents a large amount of un-posted positions. *Please Note:* Informational interviewing is **not** about asking directly for a job, it is about building relationships and learning about your sector.

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## WHERE DO I FIND POTENTIAL CONTACTS?

- Ask friends, family, neighbors, colleagues, professors, former employers if they know someone working in the field that you want information on.
- Research companies that are in your desired occupation through business directories, yellow pages, journals, professional associations and conferences. Search on the internet, at libraries and attend community meetings.

## HOW DO I ASK FOR AN INFORMATIONAL INTERVIEW?

Here is a sample script. "Hello, my name is \_\_\_\_\_, and I am interested in gathering information on the field of \_\_\_\_\_. I am studying \_\_\_\_\_ at Dalhousie University and I am looking for some advice on how to become a \_\_\_\_\_. Would it be possible for me to meet with you for 15 minutes to talk to you about your profession and any suggestions that you would have for me?"

## WHAT QUESTIONS CAN I ASK?

1. **Job and Industry Information and Advice:** What experience, paid or volunteer, would you recommend I have? What are the most important factors used to hire people in this industry (education, past experience, personality, special skills)? What skills/abilities are utilized in this work? What other types of jobs are there in this industry that I might be suited for? What are the daily duties of your job? How did you get started in this field? What suggestions do you have to help make my resume more effective? Do you have any other advice for me? How would I go about finding a job in this field?
2. **Build your Network:** How do I build my network? Are there any professional associations for this industry I should know about? Are there any conferences/ events that I should I be attending Based on our conversation today, what other types of people do you believe I should talk to? Are there 2 more people that I should speak with about this? May I have permission to use your name when I contact them?

## TIPS FOR INFORMATIONAL INTERVIEWING

- Never ask for a job, that is not the intent of the informational interview
- Be conscious of not exceeded the requested time and arrive a few minutes early.
- Dress as if it were an actual job interview. First impressions are always important.
- Take the initiative in conducting the interview; prepare a list of questions in advance and lead the interview.
- Once inside the organization, look around. What kind of working environment is it-- dress style, communication patterns, company culture, etc?
- Always ask for 2 referrals and contact them.
- Be a great listener.
- Follow-up with a thank-you note/email.
- Record the information that you obtained: names, comments, and new referrals for future reference, and make appointments to interview the referrals.