



**Career Services**  
102 Sanford Hall  
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## **CONDUCTING AN INFORMATIONAL INTERVIEW**

### **The Informational (information gathering) interview**

- Enables you to become more knowledgeable about your field(s) of interest.
- Helps you clarify and define your career goals
- Allows potential employers to be introduced to you in a pleasant, low-stress atmosphere
- Is an excellent way for you to establish a network of contacts that could lead to future employment

In order to conduct successful information-gathering interviews, you should follow the steps outlined below:

#### **1. Analyze your skills and interests to clarify career goals.**

#### **2. Research the “World of Work”**

- Select occupational fields which fit your career interests and needs and research these fields. Begin your research using available written materials. The Career Resource Library (102 Sanford Hall) has books and information on hundreds of career fields and job titles.

#### **3. Identify career professionals who are knowledgeable about your targeted job/career or organization.**

- Use Alumni Career Mentoring through Career Services Website: <http://bemidjistate.edu/career>, employer contact lists, talk to employers at career fairs, attend professional association meetings and use your personal contacts to develop a list of people you can call for an informational interview

#### **4. Set up an appointment**

- Call or write your contact person and tell them that you are interested in his/her career field and would like to meet with him/her to discuss opportunities in this field.
- Be resourceful, sincere, and above all, show interest in what your “target” person does. People usually enjoy the opportunity to discuss their work. If they are too busy to meet you during their office hours, explore the possibility of meeting over lunch or after work.
- If a person cannot meet with you, ask whether you can ask them a few quick questions over the telephone. Find out exactly how many minutes you have.

- If they absolutely cannot talk with you, ask them for names of other people you might contact within the same career field.

#### **5. Prepare for the interview**

- Thoroughly research the organization by studying annual reports, brochures and other materials. Talk with people who are acquainted with the organization.
- Write a resume and bring it with you. You may want to have a Career Services counselor review it first.
- Prepare and rehearse a list of questions to ask the person you will interview. Examples of questions are on the back of this handout.
- Dress appropriately for the interview.

#### **6. During the interview.**

- Remember, this is not a job interview! Your purpose is to acquire information. It is okay at appropriate times, to indicate your strengths and interests but do not over do it. Please be sensitive to the interviewee’s time constraints.
- Before you leave, ask your contact if they could refer you to others in the same career. By doing so, you can establish a referral list and build a job search network.

#### **7. Thank you letter. Do not forget to write one! Your contact has given you valuable work time.**

- Can be handwritten or more formal.
- Also can do an email.

#### **8. Follow-up.**

- Keep a record of each organization you visit.
- Contact people on you referral list and interview them.

## SUGGESTED QUESTIONS FOR THE INFORMATIONAL INTERVIEW

### Present Job:

1. What do you do during a typical work day/week? What do you spend most of your time doing?
2. What skills are most essential for effectiveness in this job? What are the most important parts of the job?
3. What are the most difficult or challenging elements to the job? What are the toughest problems you must deal with?
4. What are the most rewarding aspects of the job? What do you enjoy least? Does the job have a high burn-out rate?
5. What are the people like who usually excel in this career field? What personal qualities does one need to succeed?

### Preparation:

1. What credentials, educational degrees, licenses, etc. are required for entry into this career field?
2. What kinds of prior experiences are absolutely essential? Do I need to have related experience in order to get hired for an entry-level position?
3. How does one go about getting experience in this field before and/or after college graduation? How much do employers value internships? volunteer work? summer jobs? unrelated work experience?

### Hiring Decisions:

1. If you were to hire someone to work with you today, which of the following factors would be most important in your hiring decision and why? Are these the only factors you look for on a resume or in an interview?
  - A. Specific major or degree level
  - B. Past work experience
  - C. Personality, personal attributes
  - D. Specific skills
  - E. Applicant's knowledge of your organization, department, job, etc.
  - F. Other \_\_\_\_\_

### Supply/Demand:

1. What types of employers hire people for your line of work? What type of industries are they in? Where are they located?
2. How do people find out about these jobs? Are they advertised? If so, where? Besides advertisements/postings, how else does one hear about openings? What professional associations are there for this career field? Do you belong to any?
3. How does one advance in this field? Is relocation to another state or company necessary? What is the turnover rate like?
4. How much do salaries vary in your work by employer, geographic region or industry? What is the salary range for a person with my background?
5. Do many people in your line of work accept positions abroad? Is this considered a good career move?
6. What kind of non-salary benefits are common in this type of work (high job security, health benefits, sick leave, vacation time, profit sharing, retirement plans)?

### Career Future:

1. How rapidly is your present career field growing? Is the growth greater in certain industries or geographic areas?
2. How would you describe or estimate future prospects? Where will the jobs be in five or ten years?
3. If the work you do was suddenly eliminated, are there related career areas that you could pursue?
4. How far can a person go in your career area? What is the career track like? Do people in certain areas advance faster?

### Life Style:

1. What obligations does your work place upon you, outside of the ordinary work week?
2. How much flexibility do you have in terms of dress, work hours, vacation schedule, place of residence, etc.?
3. Does your company offer flex or comp time? Day care? Is relocation necessary? Does the company help with relocation?

### Advice to Me:

1. How well suited is my background for this type of work? What do I need to do to become competitive?
2. What educational preparation would be best? Are there certain majors, minors or elective classes I can take to improve my chances?
3. What kind of experiences, paid employment or otherwise, would you most strongly recommend?
4. If you were in college again and had to prepare all over again, what would you do differently?

### Referral to Others:

1. Based on our conversation today, what other people do you believe I should talk to?
2. Can you name a few people who might be willing to see me? May I have permission to use your name when I tell them how I got their name?

