Informational Interview Templates

PURPOSE: To support you to prepare to participate and benefit from an informational interview.

INSTRUCTIONS:

- STEP 1: Identify Who to Interview – Once you decide which careers you would like to know more about, speak with your network to see if there is anyone they would recommend. Use your professors at school as a resource. If there is a company of particular interest, visit the website and see if there is contact information available.

- STEP 2: Get in Touch – Whether you call or email, ensure that you are professional and to the point in introducing yourself, your interest in the individual's area of expertise, and desire to meet. See the Sample Email below.

- STEP 3: Prepare for the Interview – Prepare a standard set of interview questions and build off of them (see the Sample Information Interview Questions below). Identify the things that are critically important to you in a career so that you can ask questions to determine if related career opportunities are in-line with your priorities (the Career Drivers & Foundations Template can support you with this). Further, do your research prior to the interview so that you can ask specific questions related to the individual's area of expertise and / or organization. Also, prepare yourself for questions that you may be asked.

- STEP 4: The Interview – Be on time, end on time, and offer to pay for the coffee. Ask if you can take notes to capture key pieces of information. Don't be afraid to ask questions you hadn't prepared in advance, and make sure to ask questions to help decode potential jargon and to ensure your understanding.

- STEP 5: Reflect on the Interview – Reflect on what you learned from the interview and how that impacts your perceptions and interests in the specific role, the career path, and the field. See the Sample Reflection Questions.

- STEP 6: The Thank You – Within 5 days, send a thank you card to those people that have taken time out of their busy schedules to meet with you and share their expertise. Let them know how much you appreciate it and in what ways their information, ideas, and advice will support you.

STEP 2:   Sample Email

Subject Line: Informational Interview

Dear (Name):

I was referred to you by (you colleague..., your professional association..., etc.).

I am a (student at..., recent graduate of..., a communications specialist seeking a career change, etc.). (Specific area of R) has been of interest to me since I (took a class..., joined a network..., etc.).

(You / Your organization) has an outstanding reputation for (make specific points here that demonstrate that you have done your research). I would enjoy meeting with you for a brief informational interview to discuss your experience in the field and hear your advice on (outline specific areas of interest).

I will be in area around your office (dates) and would welcome your thoughts and perspective on (area of HR).

Thank you in advance for your time. I look forward to hearing from you.

Best regards,

STEP 3: Sample Information Interview Questions

The following are sample informational interview and follow up questions that can support you to keep the conversation rolling. Insert specific questions based on your research to the general questions that follow.

Can you tell me about a typical day or week? *Do you have set hours or flexible hours? Is there a set routine? How much variety is there? What roles do you typically interact with?*
What do you like most / find most satisfying about your job and / or your field?
What are some of the demands / frustrations associated with your job and / or your field?
What was your career path? *What other roles might your current role lead to?*
How did you learn / prepare to do your work? *If you were starting out now, would you prepare in the same way? What do employers look for in terms of training and experience when reviewing potential candidates in this field?*
What makes someone successful in your field? *What traits do they typically possess? What do employers look for when reviewing candidates in this field?*
How would you describe the culture at your organization? *How does your role play a role in the culture of the organization?*

How do you keep current in your field? *What associations should I belong to? What material should I be reading?*

What are the current employment prospects in the area? At your organization / at other organizations in the area? Outside of the immediate geographic area?

Is it possible to predict future needs for workers in this field? Is it fast growing / slow growing / changing with the nature of work? Are there implications due to technology innovations?

What advice do you have for someone starting out?

Do you have any job or learning strategies to share for someone with my background?

Can you suggest other people I might contact? May I use your name when I contact them?

Is there anything else that it would be useful for me to know / that you wish you had known?

STEP 5: SAMPLE REFLECTION QUESTIONS

The following are some sample questions to guide your self reflection following an informational interview.

What is your initial gut reaction about the job and the field following the interview - in 5 words or less?

What are the most important facts and understandings that you have confirmed or learned?

Consider your personal requirements for career fulfillment (your interests, strengths, values, etc.), where is there alignment and where is the lack of alignment?

Alignment	Limited / No Alignment

What is your reaction to the demands and frustrations described? Do you want to deal with them?

Has the interview resulted in any changes in your opinion of the role, career path, or field?

What do you need to do to make yourself a competitive candidate?

What is the next step in your career planning process?

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