**How To Conduct an Informational Interview with a Hiring Presence**



**What is an informational interview (with a hiring presence)?**

An informational interview is a meeting with someone working in a specific industry in a hiring capacity. Informational interviews with a hiring presence can be a great tool to learn more about the skills, qualifications, and expectations of a certain job—to learn “insider information” about a position that is not included in the job description. They are a great way to determine if the job, industry, or organization aligns well with your personality, responsibilities, and goals. You can also use them to understand what you may need to position yourself as a competitive candidate for the role you want.

*Informational interviews equip you with the knowledge to act with confidence as you navigate the job search.*

Step 1: Find Someone to Interview

1. Leverage your existing network
   * Think about the people you know. Is there a friend, family member, mentor or teacher who is in a similar field you are looking to get into? If so, reach out to them and ask if they know a hiring manager that oversees the position you are interested in. Would they be willing to connect you?
   * Ask your Specialist if they know anyone.
2. Browse job boards such as [LinkedIn](https://www.linkedin.com/), [Indeed](https://www.indeed.com/?from=jobsearch-empty-whatwhere), or [IowaWORKS](https://www.iowaworks.gov/vosnet/default.aspx) to find relevant people or businesses and reach out, asking if they are willing to sit down for a 20-30-minute chat to talk about a specific position they oversee/hire for.
   * To determine if they have relevant information that will be helpful to you, make sure to clearly state what position you are interested in learning more about. Ask if they think they are the right person for you to talk to, or if there is someone else they know that they can connect you with.
3. Once you’ve found someone to meet with, confirm the date and time. Consider sending them an email reminder a day or two before the informational interview.

Step 2: Prepare a List of Questions to Ask

1. Start by brainstorming what your biggest needs and priorities are in a job (revisit your Career Exploration Worksheet, if helpful). What questions can you ask to figure out if this job is a good fit for you?
2. Research the company to understand their values and mission. Many organizations have a “Careers” page on their website with more information. What questions come up for you during this process?
3. Ask questions that show you have researched the company. This will show that you are taking your job search and their time seriously.

Here are some sample questions that you might ask during an informational interview with a hiring presence:

1. Learning about the job fit:
   * What do you typically look for in a candidate to see if they’re a good fit for this position?
     1. What hard and soft skills are most important?
   * What are the primary responsibilities of someone in this job position?
   * What challenges do folks in this role typically face? What makes someone successful in navigating these challenges?
2. Learning about the company:
   * In your opinion, what sets your company above its competitors?
   * How does your company center employee satisfaction and a positive work culture?
3. Learning about professional development/advancement opportunities:
   * What kinds of advancement opportunities does your organization offer for employees?
   * How long do employees typically stay with your company? And what keeps employees at your company?
4. Other questions to determine if this job/industry will be a good fit for me (e.g., what are the working days/hours, typical job duties and routines, company policies, etc.)

Step 3: Conduct the Informational Interview

1. Introduce yourself
   * Give the person a bit of context about who you are, where you are with your career, and what you hope to get out of the conversation with them.
2. People love to talk about themselves and their experiences. Start the conversation by asking them to tell you about their own experience at the organization or what they enjoy about working in the field.
3. Refer back to the prompts from Step 2. Ask the questions you’ve drafted about:
   * The role and/or company
   * Opportunities for advancement
   * Other topics/information that will help you understand if this job is a good fit for your needs/wants

Tips:

* If you meet in person, show up early to make a good impression.
* If connecting via video chat or phone call, confirm who (either you or the other person) will be hosting the video meeting or calling the other person.
* Express appreciation at the beginning and end of the interview.
* Consider asking the person if they have anyone else who you could connect with in order to learn more about the role/industry.
* Take notes.
* If speaking via video chat or phone call, make sure you are in good lighting and/or with no distractions.
* The goal of the interview is not only to learn more about a job, but to build a friendly connection with someone in the industry. Make sure to be personable!

Step 4. Follow-Up

Send a follow-up thank you email within 24 hours and ask any additional questions that may have come up for you after the interview. If they offered to connect you with anyone, thank them for the connection.

Step 5. Reflect on the Interview

1. Jot down your initial thoughts and feelings about the job and informational interview. Do you have a good feeling about the job/field? Are you excited? Are you no longer interested in the job?
2. What did you learn about the job? What surprised you?
3. Is there anything that would be challenging for you if you were to have that job?
4. Reflect on your lifestyle, responsibilities, personality, and skills. Does this job seem like a viable career option for you?
5. What next steps can you take?