

Information Interviewing

Research has shown that some of the most successful job seekers had first spent time talking to people in various businesses and organisations before they began actively seeking jobs. Through talking to others, they gained a better idea of how their skills, interests and experiences fit into specific industries and career fields. They also knew first-hand what type of work environment different jobs offered. This process of gathering information through personal contact is known as **information interviewing**.

Information interviewing is a great way to find out about your career field from experienced industry professionals by targeting your job search to the particular companies, businesses, organisations, and positions which are most suited to your specific skills and abilities. It also helps you develop confidence in approaching others - a skill which proves valuable when developing job leads.

Research the area you want to work in, by asking:

- What types of jobs do the people do?
- What do their roles actually involve?
- What sort of career structure do they have?
- Are there any professional organisations you could contact?
- What about qualifications and training?
- Who are the potential employers?
- What are their specialities?
- Which ones are you going to target?
- Who are you going to contact there?

Try to get contacts within the area you want to work in:

- Many jobs are never advertised - if you wait for jobs to appear in the paper or vacancy list you will miss a lot of opportunities.
- Make yourself known to your potential employers by networking and/or creative job searching.
- Build up a network of contacts, making use of everyone you know (family, friend, neighbours, teaching staff, past graduates).
- Get extra contacts through trade directories, careers fairs, exhibitions and employer presentations.

Make use of your contacts:

- Decide what you want to achieve from each of your contacts.
- Ask if you can have some of their time to gather information.
- Make a good impression and jump at any opportunities they may offer you.
- Write and thank people when they've given you their time.
- You're not asking for a job - you're asking for advice
- Keep a record of what you're doing and the information you find out.

Creative Job Search involves:

- Researching jobs and employers.
- Devising a strategy of how you'll get and use your contacts.
- Networking to find people.
- Getting these people to advise and help you and to meet with you to see that you are really serious.

You'll still need:

- Resume and covering letter.
- Good interview skills.

Creative job searching helps you make your application better and job interview answers more relevant.



Remember ...

While getting work experience and/or information, stop and think:



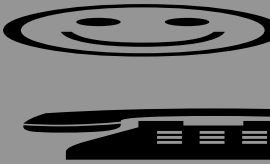
Does what you're finding out about this type of work show that it really suits your aims and interests?

Information Interview Questions

During your work experience you might ask...



Information interviewing can be done through face-to-face contact, over the phone, or through email.



About the work role:

- Can you tell me some of the things you do in a typical week?
- What are your main responsibilities, actual tasks and priorities?
- What are the skills needed?
- What are the most and least satisfactory aspects for you?
- Is it different from what you expected?

About career development:

- How long do people stay in this organisation?
- What additional responsibilities can staff take on?
- How is the work changing?
- What sort of jobs do people in this field move on to?
- What qualities or attributes do you need to succeed in this field?

About getting in:

- How did you get into the industry / field?
- Is it different now?
- What experience, qualities and qualifications do employers look for?
- Are there any useful stepping stone jobs or voluntary experience I should look for?
- If you had to overcome any barriers (age/gender/ethnicity)... How?
- Where are the vacancies advertised?

About the organisation and its culture:

- Is the structure of the organisation changing now?
- Can you tell me about your company's equal opportunities policy (job sharing, promotion, development, etc.)?
- ...about attitudes to (e.g.) older graduates?
- ...about salaries on entry and about progression?
- What are the misconceptions people have about working here?

And finally...

- Can you suggest other people I can talk to?
- Can you suggest books, websites or professional organisations to consult?