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What is an Informational Interview and How Can they Help My Career?

An informational interview is a short 20-30 minute meeting (either in person or via phone) to learn more about a person's career path or a specific career role and to see if an organization is a good fit for you. Informational Interviews can also help you to build your professional network.

Where Can I Find People to Conduct Informational Interviews?

- People you meet at conferences or other events
- Join LinkedIn groups that match your career interests and look at member profiles
- Look at company webpages to see if they have a staff directory
- Ask people you are conducting informational interviews with to recommend additional people

How to Ask for an Informational Interview?

Write a brief email, *"Dear [Insert Name], I see that you are a member of the XYZ LinkedIn group. I am researching careers in the abc field and I'd like to set up a brief 20-30 minute call to ask a few questions to learn about breaking into this field. I would greatly appreciate your time and expertise. Please let me know some days and times that work for you in the next week or two to chat and the best number to reach you."*

SAMPLE INFORMATIONAL INTERVIEWING/ NETWORKING QUESTIONS (Starter list. Add your own)

- Tell me about your organization (do research first, don't ask questions that are easily found on their website)
 - How is it organized? What departments/ offices may be a good fit for my skills and interests?
 - How does your organization differ from similar ones?
 - What is the reputation of your organization?
 - What do you like most about working there?
 - What are some challenges/ frustrations about working there?
 - What is the work atmosphere/ culture like?
 - Are there opportunities to grow in your career?
 - What kinds of skills sets/ experience does your organization value?
 - How do colleagues interact? Is it a friendly place to work? Do staff eat lunch together?
- What is your specific role at your organization and what is your background?
- How did you get your job?
- Here's a little about my background . . . Are there opportunities for people with my skills and experiences at your organization or other partner organizations that you can recommend?
- Here's a copy of my resume. Please let me know which skills may be missing that your company values.
- Can you please give me the names and contact info for other people that I can follow up with to learn more about your organization/ partner organizations that may be a good fit for me?
- Thank you for your time and please keep in touch. I'd appreciate hearing from you if you learn about any opportunities that match my interest areas.

Post-Informational Interview Follow-Up:

- Be sure to email a quick thank you note afterward and keep in touch. Track contacts in a spreadsheet.
- Find ways to get back in touch every couple months to send info on articles or conferences of interest or let them know if you followed up with a recommendation they made.