

Acing Informational Interviews *Online!*



Osborne Village
RESOURCE CENTRE

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Informational Interviews

If you were thinking of purchasing a new car, you would want to take a test drive to see if it met your needs. An informational interview is exactly like taking a test drive before taking the leap into another job or career. Informational interviews are a wonderful tool for both career exploration and job search. Unlike a job interview, an informational interview is conducted in a relaxed atmosphere for you and the person you are speaking with. You are in the driver's seat asking specific questions about an occupation.

Informational Interviews for Career Exploration

A client came to OVRC for career counselling and decided to get a Master's in Business Administration. As she conducted interviews she found that she didn't have enthusiasm for either. Both degrees led to work that she felt was procedural and policy oriented. She wanted a career that was hands-on, imaginative, and would provide her with a variety of tasks. After researching a career as a Curator, she interviewed seven people working in the field and made the choice to pursue the occupation. She enrolled into the Master's Degree program at the University of Winnipeg and was very happy that she had taken the time to conduct informational interviews. It prevented her from wasting money, and from going into an occupation in which she would not have found career satisfaction.



Informational Interviews for the Job Search

An individual was looking for work in the non-profit sector and decided to conduct informational interviews. During the interviews she assessed the culture of each organization and what jobs she would be a qualified for. Some organizations were eliminated as potential places of employment while others showed great potential to be a good fit. One of the organizations she had visited was actually going through staff changes and invited her back for a job interview. It's been three years since she took the time to conduct informational interviews and she is still in love with her job and very happy.



A Startling Statistic!

1/200+ resumes results in a job offer.

1/12 informational interviews results in a job offer!

These are fabulous results for a research tool that focuses on getting information and creating a contact network, rather than getting a job!

Source: Quintessential Careers: http://www.quintcareers.com/information_background.html

Asking Advice Makes a GOOD IMPRESSION

In a study conducted by Harvard Business School professors Alison Wood Brooks and Francesca Gino, “Our research suggests that the instinct to not seek advice is wrong. Fears about appearing incompetent by asking for advice—though extremely common—are sorely misplaced. Here’s why:

When you ask for advice, people do not think less of you, they actually think you’re smarter. By asking someone to share his or her personal wisdom, advice seekers stroke the advisor’s ego and can gain valuable insights. In their minds, advisors actually think, “I’m brilliant (of course), so this guy’s smart for asking for my advice.”

“This finding is important because seeking advice encourages information exchange, learning, and meaningful connection between us and our friends and colleagues. In addition, there is an additional side benefit: asking for advice allows us to make a surprisingly positive impression on our mentors.”

Wood Brooks, A., and Gino, F. “Asking Advice Makes a Good Impression.”
Scientific American, 7 Oct 2014. Web.

PREPARATION

Because time is a valuable commodity for everyone today, it is important to prepare for the interview. Going to an interview without doing your homework, will not only annoy the person you are interviewing, it will also put you at risk for losing a good networking contact, or a future reference. Don't take that chance – prepare.

Do as much research as possible before approaching someone for an interview. The interviewee will be impressed by your initiative, sincerity, determination, and genuine desire to learn about an occupation. The first step in preparing for an informational interview is to research. Pick up a copy of the ***Resources for Research*** booklet, for ideas on where to get information on career or job in a specific field.



Put yourself in the mind of the employer

Consider the benefit of an informational interview ***for them!***

- The opportunity to meet a proactive job seeker
- Save money on advertising costs when posting the job ad
- Save time for human resource personnel required to screen applicants
- Network with a like-minded professional *right in their own office*
- The opportunity to exchange innovative industry ideas
- Meet a job seeker who is passionate, driven, and qualified!



RESOURCES FOR RESEARCH

If you are referred by a personal contact, always ask the person who connects you to a potential interviewee if you can use their name when making contact.

Or, if you find information in an article, refer to the publication, and cite your source, when introducing yourself.

 **The Chamber**
The Winnipeg Chamber of Commerce



**INDUSTRY
SECTOR
COUNCILS**



RESEARCHING THE COMPANY

1. What is the location of the company/organization?

2. What products and/or services does the company/organization provide? What is the market audience?

Products:

Services:

Market Audience:

3. What key words (words that are repeated), are used? What do I like about these key words?

Key Word:

Key Word:

Key Word:

Key Word:

4. Does the company have any current news releases, and what do they say?

5. Is the company/organization on Facebook, Twitter, or LinkedIn? What can I tell about the company/organization from its social media sites?

Facebook:

Twitter:

LinkedIn:

6. Does the company/organization state its vision, mission, and values?Vision:

Mission:

Values:

7. Do the vision, mission and values align with mine?Vision:

Mission:

Values:

8. Can I get a sense of the corporate culture from the information I found? Does it fit with my values?

9. Does the company/organization have a Careers section? What information does it provide (benefits, opportunities for advancement, training)?Benefits:

Opportunities for Advancement:

Training:

Other:

PREPARATION: SELECT A SAMPLE MESSAGE

Here are some samples of messages with whom you would like to connect, whether by telephone, email, or LinkedIn.

PERSPECTIVE

Hi [Recipient Name],

We've never met, but your profile came up when I was looking for scientists at a top bioscience manufacturing companies. I was interested in getting your perspective on how the newly imposed CFIA regulations affect Research & Development efforts at companies like yours.

I am doing research on careers in this field and I was wondering if you would be willing to give me some career advice.

Would you be willing to meet with me for 15-minute informational interview?

[Your Name]

EXPERIENCE

Hi [Recipient Name],

We've never met, but your profile came up when I was looking for top fundraising professionals. I'm really impressed with your background and would love to learn what drew you to a fundraising career. Your organization is so creative with fundraising ideas!

I am doing research on careers in this field and I was wondering if you would be willing to give me some career advice.

Would you be willing to meet with me for 15-minute informational interview?

[Your Name]

PROJECT

Hi [Recipient Name],

We've never met, but your profile came up when I was looking for people with successful experience in coordinating events in Winnipeg. I just started using virtual event technology and was hoping to get your thoughts on its usefulness. I am doing research on careers in this field and I was wondering if you would be willing to give me some career advice.

Would you be willing to meet with me for 15-minute informational interview?

[Your Name]

RESPECT

Hi [Recipient Name],

We've never met, but your profile came up when I was trying to find experts in the legal assistant field. Given that you've been a legal assistant for 25+ years, I was hoping we could connect so that I could learn more about your work.

I am doing research on careers in this field and I was wondering if you would be willing to give me some career advice.

Would you be willing to meet with me for 15-minute informational interview?

[Your Name]

PERSPECTIVE

Hi [Recipient Name],

We've never met, but your profile came up when I was looking for top specialists in the field of Occupational Health and Safety. I was interested in getting your perspective on the new methods of workplace psychological health that were recently published by SAFE Work Manitoba.

I am doing research on careers in this field and I was wondering if you would be willing to give me some career advice.

Would you be willing to meet with me for 15-minute informational interview?

[Your Name]

IF THEY SAY NO!

If the individual is not willing to conduct an informational interview, thank them for their time, and ask if they could suggest:

- Another person you could contact, and ask permission to use their name
- Names of publications or associations where you might find more information

IF THEY SAY YES!

Express gratitude and enthusiasm, and adapt to their schedule.

- Would they like to see a copy of your resume?
- What day is best for them?
- What time is best for them?
- Confirm the date and time
- Confirm their email address

YOUR BRANDING STATEMENT

*To identify your skills and attributes,
please use the lists featured on pages 17 and 18.*

JOB TITLE / FIELD / INDUSTRY

YEARS OF EXPERIENCE

THREE CORE SKILLS

THREE ATTRIBUTES

GREATEST STRENGTH or MOTIVATION



IDEA:

To develop a clear and concise Branding Statement,
sign up for the **BRANDING YOURSELF** workshop at
Osborne Village Resource Centre.

COMPILING INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

Your time at an informational interview will be limited, so go prepared with a **prioritized** list of about 5 questions. This will ensure that you get the information that is most important to you.

Asking open-ended questions will create a friendly atmosphere, and encourage the interviewee to provide his/her knowledge and opinions about the occupation and industry.

Questions, Questions, Questions

Keep in mind that your list of questions will change as you speak with individuals and gather more information. The following list of questions is suggested as a starting point:

1. Can you tell me about your background and how you got into this field?
2. Tell me about your job. Are there areas of specialization within this occupation?
3. What attributes and skills are required to succeed in your occupation?
4. What do you particularly enjoy about this occupation?
5. What does a typical day (typical week) look like? What are the typical daily pressures?
6. What challenges does the job present?
7. What are the education and training requirements for this position?
8. What other occupations could you pursue with the experience and skills you have developed in this field?
9. Are there many opportunities in this field?
10. What other skills will be needed in the future?
11. What would be a good entry level position for this line of work?
12. What advice would you give to a person looking for an entry level position in this field?
13. In summary, the major points I have learned are... do you agree?



IDEA:

Highlight your favourite questions and write them down into a small notebook.

ZOOM PREPARATION CHECKLIST

- Ensure that your Zoom meeting is set up in a place that is quiet and free of interruptions
- Ask a friend if you can Zoom together to perform audio and video checks
- Test your ability to schedule a Zoom meeting (private, with a password)
- Have a resume to reflect your transferrable skills that are relevant to the occupation
- Make a copy of your resume to send to the person you are interviewing
- Develop and practice your **branding statement** on page 10
- Write the questions you want to ask in a small professional-looking notebook
- Get your professional interview outfit ready

QUESTIONS YOU MAY BE ASKED

In an informational interview, you are the interviewer, not the interviewee. However, the person you are interviewing may show curiosity about your objectives, so be prepared to answer some questions they may have for you.

Here are some examples of questions you may be asked. Prepare and rehearse your responses in the lines provided below.

How can I help you?

Why did you want to see me?

Why are you considering this field?

What is your job search plan? What have you done so far?

THE INTERVIEW

Remembering a few things, while at the interview, will ensure that you get the information you are looking for and also create a positive impression with the person you are interviewing. Here are a few guidelines to follow:

To start the interview:

- Use your **branding statement** to give a brief outline of your experience, qualifications, values and attributes
- Explain why you think this occupation is a good fit for you
- Ask if you can take notes during the interview

During the interview:

- Ask your questions** and jot down information in point form
- Summarize the information you have gathered, and let the person know what you would like learn more about
- Keep track of the time and **let the person know when the agreed upon time is up**

To wrap up the interview:

- Quickly summarize the information you have been given
- Ask the individual if there is anything else they would like add
- Ask for another contact and get permission to use the person's name when introducing yourself to the contact
- Ask for specific names of publications or associations that relate to the occupation you are researching
- Thank the individual for their time and assistance

Immediately after the interview:

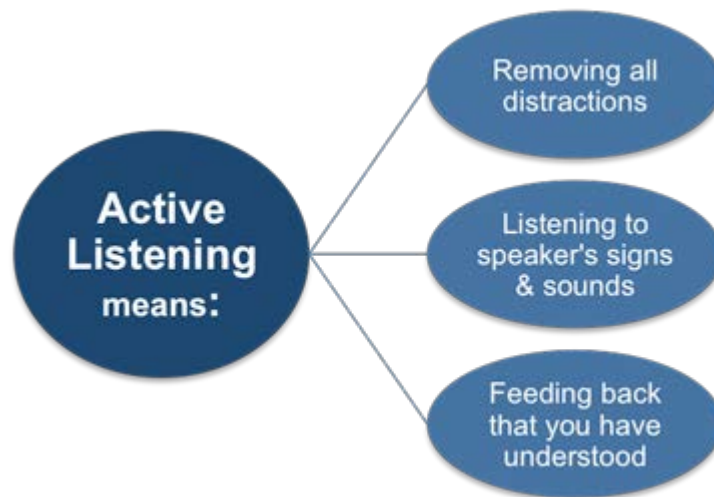
- Review your notes and make additional comments as needed
- If the individual has agreed to you calling at a later date, with more questions, highlight the questions you still need to ask

Record your findings:

- Using the ***What I Have Discovered*** table on page 17, keep a record of all contacts and information you have been given

BE AN ACTIVE LISTENER!

Demonstrating **active listening** is an easy way to show your interviewee that you are respectful, conscientious, and professional. Remember, ***you are the interviewer, not the interviewee***. Focus on your list of prepared questions for your interviewee and do not allow yourself to get carried away talking about yourself.



BEFORE LEAVING!

Remember to ask the interviewee these two questions before leaving:

1. Do you know of another person I could contact for an informational interview in the same field?
2. Could I let the person know you recommended I contacted them?



FOLLOW UP

Send the individual a hand-written thank you card stating your appreciation for the informational interview. Let the individual know what information you found helpful and acknowledge any contacts or resources they provided. If, the individual asks that you keep in touch, let them know you will keep them updated and follow through.

Turn to page 16 for an example of what to write in a thank you card.



IDEA:

Put your **phone number** and **email address** underneath your signature on your Thank You card. This will make it faster and easier for the employer to contact you!

FOLLOW UP TIPS FOR MAINTAINING CONNECTIONS

1. Add the person who you interviewed to your LinkedIn account.
2. Endorse the person's skills!
3. Follow the organization on social media and "like" their status updates.
4. Ensure that your Thank You Card includes your NAME and EMAIL address.
5. Schedule regular check-ins. Send your connection an email and update them on your progress. Be sure to thank them again!



WHAT TO WRITE IN YOUR THANK YOU CARD

Date

Dear _____:

Thank you for taking the time to meet with me and answer questions regarding a career in _____ . I definitely have a better understanding of the responsibilities and opportunities. I appreciate you referring me to _____ and allowing me to use your name when making initial contact. As you suggested, I will also contact the Association of _____ , and sign up for the newsletter to get the latest news in the field of _____ .

As we discussed, I will update you in a few weeks to give you an update on my research. Thank you again for your generosity and knowledge. It has been very helpful.

Sincerely,

Your Signature

(204) 555-1234

myemail@gmail.com

APPENDIX

Identify Your Skills

Accounting	Maintenance
Accounts Payable / Receivable	Management
Addiction Counselling	Manufacturing
Administration	Marketing / Promotions
Administrative	Mediation
Adobe Creative Suite	Medical Terminology
Advocacy / Resources	Merchandising
Aesthetician	Microbiology
Analytical	Microsoft Excel
Assembly	Microsoft Word
Bookkeeping	Negotiation
Caretaking / Custodian	Network Technician
Carpentry	Nursing
Child Care	Painting
Cleaning	Payroll
Clerical	Plumbing
Computer	Production
Concrete	Program Coordination
Culinary	Programming
Customer Service	Project Management
Data Collection	Public Relations
Design	Quality Control
Documentation	Recreation
Driving	Research
Editing	Roofing
Electrical	Sales
Employment Counselling	Sampling / Analysis
Event Planning	Security
Family / Marriage Counselling	Serving
Financial	Shipping / Receiving
Fundraising	Software Development
Hair Styling	Support Work
Health and Safety	Teaching
Health Care Aide	Transportation
Human Resources	Warehousing
Internet / Social Media	Web / Database
Laboratory	Welding
Logistics	Written Communication
Machine Operation	Youth Support

APPENDIX

Identify Your Attributes

ABILITY TO RELATE TO OTHERS

Accepting
Amiable
Collaborative
Cooperative
Courteous
Devoted
Diplomatic
Fair
Empathic
Good listener
Leader
Outgoing
Patient
People-Oriented
Pleasant
Respectful
Sincere
Supportive
Tactful

ATTITUDE

Ambitious
Assertive
Candid
Cheerful
Confident
Conscientious
Considerate
Consistent
Dependable
Genuine
Goal-Oriented
Life Long Learner
Objective
Open-Minded
Persistent
Positive
Practical
Professional

WORK HABITS

Accurate
Competent
Diligent
Efficient
Focused
Methodical
Meticulous
Orderly
Precise
Proactive
Productive
Prompt
Punctual
Systematic

FLEXIBILITY/ RESOURCEFULNESS

Adaptable
Flexible
Proactive
Resilient
Resourceful
Self-Reliant
Self-Starter
Versatile
Thorough

ENTHUSIASM/DRIVE

Competitive
Courageous
Determined
Driven
Energetic
Enjoy Challenges
Enterprising
Enthusiastic
Motivated
Profit-Oriented
Proven Negotiator
Risk Taker
Spirited

PROBLEM SOLVING

Analytical
Articulate
Calm
Creative
Decisive
Imaginative
Investigative
Logical
Perceptive
Persuasive
Problem Solver
Quick Learner
Rational
Solution-Oriented
Speculative
Trouble Shooter

WHAT I HAVE DISCOVERED

Use the table to keep track of the information you acquire at informational interviews.

OCCUPATION _____

Interview Contact Person	Positives	Negatives	Potential Contact(s)
1.			
2.			
3.			
4.			
5.			
6.			
7.			

WHAT I HAVE DISCOVERED

Use the table to keep track of the information you acquire at informational interviews.

OCCUPATION _____

Interview Contact Person	Positives	Negatives	Potential Contact(s)
1.			
2.			
3.			
4.			
5.			
6.			
7.			

TESTIMONIALS FROM OVRC CLIENTS WHO CONDUCTED INFORMATIONAL INTERVIEWS

How did the person you were contacting react to your request?

- *"Absolutely enthusiastic! She couldn't have been more excited to share her knowledge."*
- *"The person I contacted was very happy to hear from me. He was very accommodating and gave me several dates to which I could come to his office to meet."*
- *"She was really excited to talk to me about her experiences. She was eager to meet with me."*

Were you able to detect any indicators that the meeting was successful?

- *"Immediately after the meeting, I felt good about my experience. It wasn't until weeks later that I realized she was paying attention to me...she started sending me job postings and "inside" information."*
- *"I was offered a free training course at the company and a seat at one of their major conferences. "*

How do you feel about the informational interview now that you look back on it?

- *"If I had not talked to her I would have always been wondering and curious about the industry and educational requirements."*
- *"It made me more confident going forward into other informational interviews and job interviews."*
- *"I feel great about the informational interview. It helped build confidence. It helped open the door to some fantastic opportunities I would not have had otherwise."*
- *"Upon my return from each in-person interview I was humbled that people, some strangers, had taken the time to support me on my journey to finding myself!"*
- *"I would do it again in a heartbeat!"*

