

# INFORMATION INTERVIEWS

## WHAT IS AN INFORMATION INTERVIEW?

The purpose of the information interview is to get information about career options or employment opportunities within a desired field or industry. An information interview is not the same as a job interview. Contacting employers for the purpose of an information interview should follow a different approach than if you were approaching employers for a job. In your approach you should make it clear to the person that you are sourcing information about a particular field or industry to assist in your career planning and that you value any information they may share with you. This can be an effective way to network with potential key contacts in the industry.

During the interview your interviewee may suggest companies or organisations that are hiring but at no stage should you ask the employer directly for a job during an information interview.

## BENEFITS OF CONDUCTING AN INFORMATION INTERVIEW

- Helps broaden your range of professional networks to assist you in your career planning efforts.
- Gives you an opportunity to speak with experts in your field.
- An opportunity to get 'inside' information on how to break into an industry / company / or field.
- Gain a closer insight into current labour market trends in an industry.
- Help with preparation for a WIL (Work Integrated Learning) placement.
- Alerts you to potential gaps in your knowledge or experiences and allows you an opportunity to learn some useful strategies for skills improvement.

## PREPARING FOR THE INFORMATION INTERVIEW

- Identify an industry or occupation to target.
- Think about the most effective way to make your approach to potential contacts, whether by email or over the phone.
- Prepare a brief introduction of yourself - your skills, abilities, qualifications and your reasons for requesting an information interview.
- When setting up a meeting remember that you will need to be flexible to fit into their busy schedule. Be respectful of the time they are offering to spend with you. If some employers hesitate to meet with you because of time constraints then you could also ask if a 15 minute phone interview might be more convenient.
- Research the person, business or industry you are exploring. Think of ways you can research this.
- Think in advance of what makes you unique and how you will promote yourself. This will help you to identify your professional strengths or your skills and talents. It is more likely that a contact would recommend or refer you to people in their networks if they are impressed you and what you have to offer.
- Remember that you are the interviewer and you should prepare your questions in advance.
- Be prepared to conduct the interview there and then if suggested.

## AT THE INTERVIEW

- Be confident, interested and receptive. Show the interviewee that you appreciate the time they have set aside for you.
- Restate to the person that you are seeking information about the field or industry as a way of enhancing your career options and to help you with deciding your path. It is important that the contact knows your motivation for seeking information.

- Ask permission to take notes during the interview.
- If you have an agreed time limit then make sure you don't go over the time unless you check that your contact is happy to.
- Ask open ended questions to elicit information.
- Ask for other referrals if appropriate.
- Ask your most critical questions first. This is always a good idea particularly if your time is cut short at the interview.
- Always have a spare copy of your resume with you.
- Thank the person for their time at the conclusion of the interview.
- What hours are generally involved in working within this job or industry?
- Do you mainly work indoors or outdoors, or is it a combination of both?
- What do you find most challenging about your job?
- What level of control do you have over how things get done within this job or industry?
- What gives you a sense of accomplishment in this occupation?
- Does the job allow you to be creative in what you do?
- What advice would you give to someone looking for an entry level position in this company?

## TYPICAL QUESTIONS TO ASK

If you are not sure what questions to ask, then you may choose some examples from the following list:

- What personal qualities do you need for this type of job or industry?
- What are the future prospects or trends and issues for this industry?
- How popular is this job? What is the competition like in this field or industry?
- What are the great things and not so great things about the job?
- Can you tell me something about the corporate culture of the company?
- Does the organisation have an affiliation with volunteer groups?
- How did you get into this type of work / why? What is your background?
- What skills/training/education/qualifications are needed for this job / field?
- What do you actually do in this job? For example what are the main tasks?
- Do you have a lot of contact with people or do you mainly work alone?
- Was this occupation all that you expected it to be?
- What is the work atmosphere like, relaxed, competitive, exciting, stressful?
- How are achievements recognised in this company?