

## Questions to Ask During Informational Interviews or Networking

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In addition to what you learn by doing your reading and research, informational interviewing will generate realistic advice on your options and give you confidence to move forward. You have three main goals: 1) Learn core information about the nature of the career field, 2) develop key job hunting strategies for the field, and 3) learn how best to sell your background. It is important to carefully select the right words to yield the best response. Don't ask them for a job. Think specifically about what you need to know about this field to make a wise career decision. Do some research prior to the meeting so you can use the interview for questions that cannot be easily asked elsewhere. Here are some sample open-ended questions that will lead to a healthy discussion.

### *Nature of the Profession*

1. How did you choose this career field?
2. What types of prior experience are necessary?
3. What did you do to prepare for this career? How have past jobs lead you to your next position?
4. If you could do anything differently, what would you change about your career?
5. How do you spend a typical work day? Work week?
6. What do you like and dislike the most about what you do?
7. What skills and talents are required for success in this job and field?
8. What degree, certificate or courses do employers look for in this field? How important is a graduate degree?
9. What are the greatest pressures, strains or anxieties at work? What are the toughest problems with which you must cope?
10. What is the most rewarding part of your job?
11. What accomplishments are you the most proud of?
12. What are the current issues in your field?
13. Are the jobs in this field concentrated in certain geographic areas?
14. How much work do you take home? How many hours do you work each week? What exactly are the time demands?
15. How often do you travel and for how long?
16. How much flexibility do you have in terms of dress, hours, vacation schedule, etc.?
17. How often do people in your line of work change jobs? Why do people leave the field?
18. Is your field growing? In what ways?
19. Are there any professional associations that you would recommend?
20. If the work you do was suddenly eliminated, what different types of work could you do?

### *Nature of the Organization*

1. Can you describe for me the organizational mission, structure, size and geographic locations of the company?
2. How would you describe your work environment?

3. What are the titles and responsibilities of the people you work with/for?
4. What is the average length of time employees stay with the organization?
5. What does the company do in terms of training and professional development?
6. How often are performance reviews given? What are the criteria for promotions?
7. What new products or services are being developed?
8. How does your organization compare with its competitors? How does it differ?

### ***Selling Your Background***

1. Given my background, which positions would I be best suited?
2. What would be the appropriate way to pursue these positions?
3. What do you look for when making a hiring decision?
4. Who is the person to which I should address my cover letter? May I use your name in the cover letter?
5. What is a typical salary range for the positions that would fit my qualifications?

### ***Job Search Strategies***

1. What kind of job hunting strategies would you suggest?
2. How do people find out about these jobs (ie., networking, classifieds, conferences, Internet, etc.)?
3. How does one advance in your field? What type of earning potential can I expect?
4. May I show you my resume? Do you have any suggestions on how to improve it?
5. What specific parts of my background do you think I should sell the most?
6. What organizations would you recommend to me?
7. Given my situation, who do you know that I should know? May I use your name when I contact them?
8. What should I avoid doing?
9. Do you have an interview tips?
10. Do you have any final career advice?