

# Benefits of Informational Interviewing

- Get firsthand, relevant information about the realities of working within a particular field, industry or position. This kind of information is not always available online.
- Find out about career paths you didn't know existed.
- Get tips about how to prepare for and enter a given career.
- Learn what it's like to work at a specific organization.
- Gain insider knowledge that can help you in writing your resume, interviewing, and more.
- Initiate a professional relationship and expand your network of contacts in a specific career field; meet people who may forward job leads to you in the future.

## Six Steps for Informational Interviewing

### One: Research Career Fields

Do some initial research on the career field or employer using internet and print resources.

### Two: Identify people to interview

- Pursue your own contacts. People you already know, even if they aren't in fields of interest to you, can lead you to people who are. This includes family, friends, teaching assistants, professors and former employers.
- Identify names of EWU alumni. Eastern graduates will often take a special interest in Eastern students. Utilize [LinkedIn](#) to find them.
- Review the [Community Directory at The Fig Tree](#), a directory of public and non-profit organizations in the Inland Northwest.
- Contact members of professional or trade [associations](#).

### Three: Prepare for the interview

- Develop a brief introduction of yourself and your hopes for the meeting.
- Plan open-ended questions to ask. (see *below*)

### Four: Initiate contact

- Contact the person by phone or email.
- Mention how you got his or her name.
- Ask whether it's a good time to talk for a few minutes.
- Emphasize that you are looking for information, not a job.
- Ask for a convenient time to have a 20-30 minute appointment.
- Be ready to ask questions on the spot if the person says it is a good time for him/her and that s/he won't be readily available otherwise.

## Sample Email Script for Requesting an Informational Interview

"Hello. My name is Amanda Cantu and I'm a freshman exploring a major in Criminal Justice at EWU. Would it be possible to schedule 20 to 30 minutes with you at your convenience to ask a few questions and get your advice on how best to prepare to enter the field of law enforcement? I have become very interested in law enforcement careers, and would like to learn more about the field. "

## Five: Conduct the informational interview

- Dress neatly and appropriately, as you would for a job interview.
- Arrive on time or a few minutes early.
- Restate that your objective is to get information and advice, not a job.
- Give a brief overview of yourself and your education and/or work background.
- Be prepared to direct the interview, but also let the conversation flow naturally, and encourage the interviewee to do most of the talking.
- Take notes if you'd like.
- Respect the person's time. Keep the meeting length within the agreed-upon timeframe.
- Ask the person if you may contact them again in the future with other questions.
- Ask for names of other people to meet so as to gain different perspectives.

## Six: Follow-up

- **Keep records.** Right after the interview write down what you learned, what more you'd like to know and your impressions of how this industry, field or position would fit with your lifestyle, interests, skills and future plans.
- **Send a thank-you note** within 1-2 days to express your appreciation for the time and information given. Based on whether the informational interview was relatively informal or more businesslike, this may be a brief handwritten note, an email, or a business letter.
- **Keep in touch** with the person, especially if you had a particularly nice interaction; let him or her know that you followed up on their advice and how things are going as a result. This relationship could become an important part of your network.

## Questions To Ask During An Informational Interview

Select questions that are appropriate for your target career field and stage of decision-making. You can ask about such topics as the nature of a person's work, how to get started in the field, or effective approaches for the job search. Use some of the following questions or make up your own.

- What are your main responsibilities as a...?
- What is a typical day (or week) like for you?
- What do you like most about your work?
- What do you like least about your work?
- What kinds of problems do you deal with?
- What kinds of decisions do you make?
- How does your position fit within the organization/career field/industry?
- How does your job affect your general lifestyle?
- What current issues and trends in the field should I know about/be aware of?

- What are some common career paths in this field?
- What kinds of accomplishments tend to be valued and rewarded in this field?
- What related fields do you think I should consider looking into?
- How did you become interested in this field?
- How did you begin your career?
- How do most people get into this field? What are common entry-level jobs?
- What steps would you recommend I take to prepare to enter this field?
- How relevant to your work is your undergraduate major?
- What kind of education, training, or background does your job require?
- What skills, abilities, and personal attributes are essential to success in your job/this field?
- What is the profile of the person most recently hired at my level?
- What are the most effective strategies for seeking a position in this field?
- Can you recommend trade journals, magazines or professional associations which would be helpful for my professional development?
- If you could do it all over again, would you choose the same path for yourself? If not, what would you change?
- I've read that the entry-level salary range for this field is usually in the range of \_\_\_\_\_? Does this fit with what you've seen? (Don't ask about the person's actual salary.)
- What advice would you give someone who is considering this type of job (or field)?
- Can you suggest anyone else I could contact for additional information?