

# Understanding your Industry

The purpose of the information interview is to obtain details about career options or employment opportunities within a desired field or industry.

## What is an Information Interview?

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 to the way you contact 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.

## Benefits of Conducting an Information Interview

- Broadens your range of professional networks to assist you in your career planning efforts.
- Gives you an opportunity to speak with experts in your field.
- Provides an opportunity to get 'inside' information on how to break into an industry, company or field.
- Allows you to gain a closer insight into current labour market trends in an industry.
- Creates opportunity with preparation for a WIL (Work Integrated Learning) placement.

## Preparing for the Information Interview

- Research the person, business or industry you are exploring.
- Prepare a brief introduction of yourself —your skills, abilities, qualifications and your reasons for requesting an information interview.
- Think about the most effective way to make your approach to potential contacts, whether by email or over the phone.
- When setting up a meeting, remember that you will need to be flexible to fit into their busy schedule. 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.
- 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 with you and what you have to offer.
- Remember that you are the interviewer and you should prepare your questions in advance.

## At the Interview

- Be polite, confident, interested and receptive. Show the interviewee that you appreciate the time they have set aside for you.
- Restate 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 the interviewee chooses to.
- Ask open-ended questions to elicit information.
- Ask for other referrals if appropriate.
- Ask your most important 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.

## 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 and why? What is your background?
- What skills/training/education/qualifications are needed for this job/field?
- What do you do day-by-day in this job? 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?
- 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?

## Further information

See the Resumes section on our Jobs and Career advice web pages

[www.rmit.edu.au/students/life-and-work-opportunities/jobs-and-career-advice](http://www.rmit.edu.au/students/life-and-work-opportunities/jobs-and-career-advice)

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