

Career and Employability Essentials: Informational Interviews



Informational Interviewing allows you to:

- Find out whether you like the industry/occupation/organisation.
- Learn what would be required to get into this occupation.
- Find out possible issues they have that you could find a solution to.
- Make contacts, which may lead to a job in the future.
- Understand the career pathway of those in your chosen industry.

Research

Target organisations and occupations you are interested in, and then research what they do.

Find the name of someone who works in a particular organisation or occupation from:

- Friends, acquaintances, fellow students, work colleagues, members of your interest groups, people you meet in everyday life, Facebook, LinkedIn. Ask them if they know people working in the area you are interested in.
- Organisations website/social media.

Contact

1. Call the organisation directly.
2. Ask for the contact if you have one or ask for the person in charge of a particular department.
3. Explain that you are seeking information and advice. Ask for a meeting of about 30 minutes.

Make sure the person understands you are seeking information only, not asking for a job. To respect their time, try and keep within the agreed time frame. Options for meeting could include in person, online or by telephone. A suggested email or conversation could go something like this:

Hi/ Kia Ora (person's first name),

I am a current Unitec student / recent graduate of a (qualification name) and am doing research into the _____ industry. I have been looking into organisations that relate to my field /interest me and came across (company name). I am wondering whether you may be available to meet with me briefly for around thirty minutes to discuss a few questions I have about the industry and what you do. I could come to you or alternatively, I am happy to connect via phone or online.

Prepare

- Prior to the informational interview, prepare a list of questions to ask.
- Refer to the next page for examples of questions or create your own.
- Questions should be based on finding out whether this organisation/industry/occupation is in line with your skills, values, and goals, as well as the reality of working in that occupation and/ or organisation and career pathways.

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Thank them

After the meeting, send a thank you email to acknowledge their time and information. This reinforces your name and can provide a positive impression about you.

Informational Interview question examples

Highlight 4-5 questions you want to ask or prepare your own.

Questions about the job

- Could you describe what you do on a day-to-day basis, your main tasks.
- What are the things you most like about your work?
- Which part(s) of the job is most challenging for you? Why?
- What are the most important skills needed to do this work well?
- What personal attributes do you think are essential to succeed in this role?
- What experiences have you had that you think have been valuable to your learning?
- What was your career pathway into this job?

Questions about the field/industry area

- How do most people get into this field of work? Networking, advertised positions, other?
- What area of study/degree would you suggest people have to get into this area?
- What trends are there in this field that would be important for me to know about?
- What is the demand for employees in this industry now?
- What has motivated you to stay in this field of work?
- In what ways is your occupation changing?
- What are the best resources for me to research this career area?
- Which professional journals and organisations should I know about? And can I join them?

Questions about the organisation

- From your point of view, what qualities and values do you look for in this organisation?
- Could you describe the culture of this organisation and specific benefits of working here?
- What types of positions do you think I would be qualified for in an organisation such as this?
- What development opportunities do you think I could expect in an entry-level position in an organisation such as this?
- Are there other job titles or roles that I should be looking at that are similar or related to this area of work?

General questions

- To enter this occupation, what do you recommend as my next step?
- Can you suggest other organisations you think may be useful for me to research?
- Would you be happy to look at my CV? Do you have any suggestions of changes?
- Are there people you know whom I could also talk to in this area? When I call her/him, may I use your name?
- What else do you think I need to know to make an informed decision about possibly getting into this field of work?