



Informational Interviews:

Even in the age of technology, most jobs are still attained via networking. Informational interviews, a form of networking, are key components of any successful job search.

An Informational Interview is a conversation you have with a professional who can provide information and expertise about career options, industries, employment conditions, employers/ professional organizations, or their personal experience. Informational interviews can help direct your job search and establish rapport with alumni in your prospective field. While the contacts you make from these interviews may help you find a job down the road, the purpose of the interview is to gather advice and information – and not to ask for a job outright.

POTENTIAL OUTCOMES OF INFORMATIONAL INTERVIEWS:

- Gain insight that will help you to decide whether a particular career is for you.
- Learn valuable, candid, and up-to-date information about a particular career or industry from a person in that field.
- Find out more about the culture of a company.
- Begin to develop a network of contacts within a particular career field.

PREPARATION:

- Identify people you would like to meet who are working in a career field that interests you.
- Research the career field and the company's website of the person whom you are interviewing and prepare a list of questions you want to ask.
- Contact the person and set up an appointment in-person, over the phone or via email.

REQUESTING AN INFORMATIONAL INTERVIEW:

- Writing an email to prospective contacts is often the best approach. Even if they already know you, it is courteous and lets them prepare for your request.
- Identify yourself as an Ole Miss MBA student and explain where you found their name and why you are writing. I recommend that you attach a resume to provide more information about your background.
- Mention that you are broadly interested in their field and that you would like to schedule a visit in their office to get some advice and information about their career field. A 30 minute face-to-face informational interview is recommended; however, when schedules or geographical location preclude the possibility of this, a telephone interview can also be effective.
- You may want to indicate some days and times that work for you as a place to start, but let them know that you are flexible would like to work around their schedule.
- When emailing, remember to be professional. First impressions are crucial!
- Confirm the date, time, and location of the meeting. Follow through if you book a time.
- Keep in mind that you do not want to ask directly for a job. This is an opportunity to gather information and get advice from an experienced person working in a field of interest to you.
- The Informational Interview is a professional appointment: Arrive on-time, and dress and act professionally. If you must cancel, call the contact with days of advance notice.



SAMPLE QUESTIONS:

The following questions are intended as a guide. Your questions should be customized to suit the individual and industry. You will probably only get through a handful of questions and the meeting might change directions depending upon the contact, but you should be prepared.

- What is a typical day like in your current job?
- What drew you into this line of work?
- How did you break into this field/industry?
- Can you describe your career path?
- What skills have been most important in your field?
- What skills do you look for in an MBA hire?
- What do you like most about your job?
- What are the most difficult challenges in your position?
- What kind of experience would employers in this field look for in a job applicant?
- What is the market like? What areas do you feel promise the most growth?
- What are the opportunities for advancement within the field?
- What is the best advice you received regarding your career?
- To what professional organizations do you belong?
- Who else would you suggest I speak with to learn more about this field? May I use your name when I contact them?
- Would you be willing to look over my resume and to provide advice on how to market my skills?

FOLLOW-UP:

- Send a thank-you note to every person who grants you an informational interview. Not only will this express your appreciation for their assistance, it will also help to establish you in their minds as a courteous, professional person. You may email a thank you letter, but it should be formal. Hand written notes provide a nice touch.

RESOURCES TO FIND CONTACTS

- **Rebel Network:** <https://rebelnetwork.olemissalumni.com/olemiss/auth/login>
- **Ole Miss Career Links:** visit the Career Center website to register for Employ UM where Career Links resides: <https://www.myinterfase.com/olemiss/student/home.aspx>.
- **Linked In, Ole Miss Business School Alumni Career Network (Group):** www.linkedin.com Alumni are invited to become members of the Business School Alumni Career Network.
- **Ole Miss Alumni Board Members:** We can try to match you with willing board members if you provide us with industry ideas. Contact Bethany Cooper bcooper@bus.olemiss.edu