

The Informational Interview

Learn from Experts in Careers You are Considering!

The purpose of an Informational Interview is to gather career information and advice on the profession, career path or industry of an occupation you are considering. This interview is usually done in person but may also happen over the phone or through Skype.

Guidelines for Conducting an Informational Interview

■ UTILIZE YOUR NETWORK TO FIND PEOPLE TO INTERVIEW

Friends, family and relatives are great people to start with when looking for professionals to interview. Faculty in a degree you are passionate about may also be willing or can refer you to individuals. Bryant University alumni are another great group to target. Find them on LinkedIn.com groups or on the Bryant Alumni Career Link on the Alumni Relations office website. Professional associations related to your industry would also provide contacts.

■ CONTACTING A POTENTIAL INFORMATIONAL INTERVIEWEE

Email is the easiest way to initially reach out to a professional you wish to connect with for an informational interview. Be sure to state who you are, how you acquired their contact information and the purpose of your correspondence. Mention anyone who has referred you to them. Once you have made this initial connection, be patient and wait for a response. Two weeks is not an unusual timeframe to wait for a response from a professional. Let them know you are available at their convenience and will work around their schedule. An informational interview typically takes 30 minutes to one hour.

■ PREPARING FOR THE INFORMATIONAL INTERVIEW

Be sure to do research before an informational interview to create your list of questions regarding a profession, industry or company. Asking “open-ended” questions will encourage conversation as opposed to simple “yes” or “no” answers. This is not the time to ask for a job or internship. Remember, your purpose is to acquire firsthand knowledge about a field you are interested in pursuing.

■ ADDITIONAL TIPS AND APPROPRIATE QUESTIONS

Dress professionally, arrive on time, offer a firm handshake and good eye contact. Pay attention to the work environment. Could you see yourself working there? How are people conducting themselves? Do you feel it is a good fit for you?

Sample Questions

How did you get into this field?

What do you like most about your work?

What do you find the most challenging?

What does a typical day consist of?

What are the primary responsibilities of your job?

Are there sources of information you can recommend?

What coursework would you recommend as preparation for this field?

What would an entry-level position offer in terms of salary and opportunity for advancement?