

The Informational Interview and Networking

Job-Hunting without Rejection

The purpose of an informational interview is to gather information from people in the know, to network, and to make contacts with insiders who may be of assistance when it comes time to land an interview or a job. In the course of the informational interview, be as focused as possible. If you express multiple interests, you can expect to get good career advice, but if you hope to be employed with your interviewer's organization, you must focus the questions and conversation on his or her professional experience within that organization.

Identify interviewers

Think broadly to develop a list of companies and organizations that you consider good prospective internship sponsors or employers. Prioritize your list and work back from the least attractive to the most attractive in making your contacts and scheduling your interviews.

Make the contact

Write a letter to an insider about yourself. Include details about how you got the name of the person you are addressing. Enclose your resume to provide information about your background. State in your letter that you will call to set up a meeting at the earliest convenience and call as soon as you think that he or she has received the letter.

Gather information

Pull together information on your target industry, company, or organization, and any internships or permanent positions that you think you will be interested in applying for now or in the near future. Make a list of questions that you want to ask and take them to the interview. Questions should be designed to gather information, show that you have done your homework, and get the interviewer talking about his or herself.

Meet with your contacts

- Dress and behave the way you would for a job interview, even if you meet in an informal place.
- Bring extra copies of your resume.
- Bring a list of questions.
- As a sign of consideration, after the agreed upon time is up, ask if your interviewer must go.
- You can ask many questions, but be sure to ask, "Given what you know about me, if you were in my place, what would you do? To whom would you recommend I speak?"
- If you are meeting in a restaurant, offer to pay for the coffee.
- Thank the interviewer for his or her time.
- Write a thank you note.