

INFORMATIONAL INTERVIEWING GUIDE



An informational interview is an informal conversation with someone working in an area of interest and an effective research tool for exploring careers and industries. It is often one of the first conversations in slow and steady networking.

Identify People to Connect With:

- Friends, family members, professors, upper class students, supervisors, alumni, people you meet at career fairs and events, and people who work for companies you are interested in.
- To identify alumni: Go to Michigan State University on LinkedIn > Alumni Tab > Filter by Degree, Location, Company and more!

Before the Informational Interview

- Research the person and company (LinkedIn, Google search) – Use **WHO Logic**:
What does the person/company do? (title, LinkedIn headline and about description)
How do they do the work? (special skills, strategies, energy/vibe, company culture)
Outcomes produced? (contribution to company, community, awards, recognition)
- WHO Logic research helps you answer a very important question; **Why** are you interested in the person and the company?

During the Informational Interview

Be authentic! You can launch the conversation by asking curiosity questions about the company, the industry, the person's professional experiences. Find out what this person cares about. Here are some ideas for conversation topics. You can ask about:

- Industry trends: be ready to share your insights too (this is a conversation)
- Company trends: (same as above)
- Ask questions about the person's meaningful past projects, current, and upcoming projects
- Ask them what they want to learn to help them continue to advance professionally
- Ask for advice
- Ask them if they think there is anyone else at the company and/or within the industry you should speak with to broaden your understanding about the company/industry/functional area
- If they volunteer something about personal stuff/life; listen carefully

Take Notes! Remember, this is often the first step in slow and steady networking. The information you gather can help you build the relationship. When you know what this person cares about you can reach out periodically and share relevant information.

Take a Pulse During the Conversation! Does the **vibe** feel good? Is this person engaging in the conversation? Do you feel comfortable? Do you want to work toward building a relationship with this person?

After the Informational Interview

People want to know their time was valued. Send a thank you after the conversation and offer gratitude for advice given. It's also helpful to share with your contact that you followed the advice and what value you gained from the advice.

Sample Thank You: Dear [insert name]: Thanks very much for taking time to chat with me about your experience with [name of company]. I learned a great deal about the company and your career progression as well. Thanks also for recommending I reach out to [name of person]/Thanks for recommending I join the [name of professional association]. I did connect and we have a meeting scheduled next week/I checked out student memberships and joined yesterday. I look forward to continued communication with you and appreciate any referrals and recommendations you can share. Again, thank you!

For sample questions and additional information, utilize CSN's [Guide to Informational Interviewing](#)