

INFORMATIONAL INTERVIEWING GUIDE

An informational interview is a conversation with someone working in a field or role that interests you. It's a powerful way to expand your network within specific jobs, companies, or industries. These connections can offer valuable insights and guidance—and may even lead to future opportunities—while also giving you a chance to explore different career paths. *By the way, AI can only go so far to help you get a job and advance your career – it's really all about human connection.*



Use the steps below to guide your informational interviewing efforts.

Step 1: Identify people working in jobs and companies of interest - Then reach out

- Ask 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
- Find MSU Alumni: Go to LinkedIn and search for Michigan State University > Alumni Tab > Filter by What they Studied, What They Do, Location, Company, etc.; select connect to reach out
- Join the [MSU Engineering Connection LinkedIn Group](#) and reach out using the message function
- Not sure what to say if you add a message ➡

Sample LinkedIn Outreach Message: Hello, [insert name/mention affiliation]. I'm also a Spartan with a strong interest in [name of company]. I would like to connect and learn about you and your experiences. Thanks, and Go Green!

Step 2: Once you are connected – ask for a meeting (the informational interview)

- After the person accepts your connection, ask for a 15-30 minute meeting (video conference, phone, in person); let them know your goal is to learn more about them and their company

Step 3A: Before the informational interview – Prepare!

- Research the person and the company they work for (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?
- Develop specific questions for the person using the ideas below -

Step 3B: Before and 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 them to provide an overview of what they do every day, what does their job entail

Step 3B: Before and during the informational interview, cont.

- Ask questions about the person's meaningful past projects, current, and upcoming projects
- Ask them what they love about their job, and perhaps what they don't love so much
- 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 of several interactions you may have with this person. 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?

Step 4: 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 that you followed the advice and what value you gained from the conversation.

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!

To review ideas for building relationships and additional outreach content (after the initial informational interview) please see the [message suggestions guide](#).

Not Quite Ready for an Informational Interview?

*An informational interview is tough if you aren't sure about the types of jobs and companies you might be interested in. If that's you, please begin this process using the resources noted below –

- Explore career paths, jobs, and companies on the [EGR careers site](#) – make a list of the jobs, companies, and/or industries of interest
- Select “Career Center” in [Handshake](#), then select the “Resources” that help you explore majors and careers (e.g., *What Can I Do with this Major* and *Focus 2*)

Once you identify a few job titles, companies, and/or industries of interest, you are ready to start the process using the steps outlined above.