

# 7 Secrets To A Successful Informational Interview

An informational interview is a meeting where a job seeker asks for *advice* rather than employment. Rather than get a job offer, a job seeker uses informational interviews to:

1. Learn more about a company or job function
2. Inquire about job leads
3. Network

For job seekers, informational interviews can secure meetings with managers, shape positive first impressions, and develop relationships that may pay off in the future. Managers are open to informational interviews because:

1. They do not require a big time investment. Informational interviews can be done during lunch or during an afternoon coffee break.
2. They can give managers an opportunity to identify new talent, either for now or in the future, without a formal recruiting process.
3. Informational interviews allow managers to give advice. Who doesn't like to have their ego stroked?

## 7 Secrets To Successful Informational Interviews

Here are my tips on how you can succeed in your informational interviews:

### 1. Ask For An Informational Interview

After you've identified who you want to meet, ask friends, family, ex-coworkers, & fellow alums if they have contacts at a certain company or a particular line of work. Utilize social networking tools, such as LinkedIn, Facebook, and Twitter to find contacts. In the introduction e-mail, keep it short and simple. Provide some background information on yourself and explain why you want to meet.

### 2. Clearly Define What You Want To Get Out Of The Meeting

If you don't know what you want, the person on the other side of the table will have a hard time helping you. I'd recommend going for easy wins such as learning more about a company or a job function. So prepare questions such as: "What do you like working for company X?" or "When you think about successful folks in position Y, what made them successful?"

### 3. Getting A Job Should Not Be Your Immediate Goal

Job seekers often ask for a job at the beginning. Resist that temptation. If the manager does have a job, asking for it at the beginning is premature, especially if you haven't proven yourself. If he or she does not have a job, you and the manager have to overcome the early letdown. Instead, focus on asking good questions and creating a good impression. Then, at the end, do ask if the manager is hiring, but don't push it.

#### **4. Go With The Flow**

Some managers use the informational interview as an informal job interview. If the manager wants to deviate from your prepared list of questions and ask you more formal job questions, let him or her do so. Who knows? You might get a job offer at the end of the interview.

#### **5. Prepare, Prepare, Prepare**

Informational interview can range from an informal career chat to a structured interview. Prepare for any scenario. Have those general career questions ready, and at the same time, don't be surprised if the [interviewer asks tough questions](#) like, "What's your biggest weakness?" Remember the saying, "Luck is what happens when preparation meets opportunity."

#### **6. Dress For Success**

It's always worth reminding: dress professionally.

#### **7. Don't Forget To Follow-Up And Send The Thank You Letter**

Don't forget to send a thank-you e-mail or letter after the informational interview. In addition, send updates every couple of weeks. The manager invested time into your career; he or she will be interested in your progress. And who knows, that manager may not have had openings a while ago, but he or she may be hiring now.