

# INFORMATIONAL INTERVIEWING

Networking can strike fear into the heart of any job seeker. If you have a preference for solitude, haven't done much networking before, or you're having a crisis of confidence, it can be extremely intimidating.

Can you relate? If you have reservations about networking, try conducting informational interviews instead. A slightly different take on networking, this strategy can help you in getting started talking to your contacts. These one-on-one conversations will help you to build your confidence.

The greatest number, 24.5%, of all external hires (job seekers that were not already employees of the company) come from referrals, according to the [2013 CareerXroads Sources of Hire study](#). Conducting informational interviews can keep you top-of-mind as openings arise and improve your chances of getting hired this way.

This strategy makes so much sense, and is so natural, pretty soon, you'll be a networking pro. To get you started, in this post I'm going to give you some ideas of who to consider doing an informational interview with. Watch for more info on this topic to come, or read my previous article, [here](#) to answer common questions about this concept.

Anyone from a student to a C-Suite executive can benefit from doing this type of networking. Active job seekers, career transitioners, and careerists desiring a promotion are people I commonly teach this strategy to, but anyone with a question about their career will get results from informational interviewing.

## **Who should I ask to do an interview with?**

You have lots of options for whom to contact. These professionals can provide help if you are unsure of your career goals, or direction if you are. These are just a few to start with:

1. **Career coaches or counselors.** Coaches are available for hire, of course, but often they have [resources](#) or connections they may share openly with the public. For example, I have a page on my website that lists many free or very low-cost resources about a myriad of industries and topics [here](#). I also have [resume samples](#) on my site, [here](#), and while they are copyright protected, you can get some great ideas from them. Counselors through a local college or university often have great insights on the different industries and career options. Professionals at the Department of Workforce Development can offer great ideas for training programs, skills employers are looking for, and information about upcoming job fairs.
2. **People in your network** . Identify people you know that you can talk to about their jobs, ask to introduce you to their connections, or tell you about organizations they belong to. Start with contacts that work in the industry you are interested in, preferably at your target

company, since these folks are in the best position to help you. Once you exhaust those contacts, move to your connections who aren't in your industry, or at your target company, but know someone who is, and ask for an introduction.

3. **Professionals you admire from afar.** Even if you don't know them yet, others are often open to answering a few questions about their job. These are individuals you see as successful, people who have mentored you, or leaders in your field. They are used to these types of requests, but because they are asked so often, it's critical to keep your meeting with them brief. You can ask them about the secrets to their success, what they'd do differently if they had it to do over again, and what advice they have for you.

Your desired interviewee can be contacted via [LinkedIn](#), email, or phone. You might meet in their office, in a coffee shop, talk over the phone or via [Skype](#), or simply exchange a series of emails. There are many questions you could ask, but remember to build rapport before asking anything too controversial. They are doing you a favor, so set a time limit and stick to it. Of course, be polite and send a thank-you email.

Remember that you are looking to your contacts for their expertise and advice. You'll be the one asking the questions, then letting them share their wisdom. When you show this respect, people are often eager to share their knowledge and lend a helping hand.

Watch for more ideas on this subject, including how to ask for an informational interview, in upcoming posts. What questions about this do you have? Can you think of other people you could meet with