

Informational Interviewing

In today's job market it is who you know that will increase your chance for success and shorten your job search. Spending hours searching through on line employment ads is very time consuming, not mentioning the exponential increase in competition, but will be much more effective if you have a network that can refer you to the company. Another reason to spend time building a network is that 80% of open positions are not advertised. Employers prefer to have a referral than advertise the position then wade through a pile of resumes. Referrals get the job interview. One effective way of building this network is the informational interview.

Informational Interviewing is an informal conversation with people already established in that field who will give you information and advice. It is not only an effective **job search strategy** but and excellent **career development tool**.

If you are a Kendall student who needs information to make an informed decision about your future or you are job searching and need to get visibility and build your network, informational interviewing is an excellent strategy for both scenarios.

Most professionals enjoy sharing their success story and having that "feel good" moment knowing they are helping someone. Since it is an informal conversation, not an interview, you will find people very open to talking to you and giving advice when asked.

Building and nurturing these relationships while in school is the key to an effective professional network that will serve you well in your future. And just think, as alum, you may be in the position to do the same for someone else.

BENEFITS

- It removes the mystery surrounding the job or career in which you are interested.
- It will help you clarify your career goal.
- It allows you to speak more knowledgeable about the job you want.
- It gives you explicit job descriptions information which you need to develop a more focused resume.
- Expand your professional network and build your visibility in your industry.
- Build your confidence for future job interviews.
- Advice on making your portfolio and resume more marketable for today's market
- Get's you in front of the employer without the rejection factor and stress of an actual interview.

IDENTIFYING PEOPLE TO INTERVIEW

- Career Services Office
- Kendall Alumni
- Faculty
- Friends, Family, Former Co-Workers, Neighbors
- Career Days Professionals
- Professional Directories and Membership lists
- Business Web Sites and Local Business Publications
- Yellow Pages
- Networking Events
- Chamber of Commerce Directory

SETTING UP THE INTERVIEW

- *By Phone* (The best time to contact employers is Tue-Thurs 8 am – 5pm)

The following is an example of a typical phone conversation when making that appointment:

"Hello, my name is _____ and I'm currently an Industrial Design student at Kendall College of art and design. Tom Higgins suggested that I call you and make an appointment. I will be graduating soon and want to make an informed decision about my future in Industrial Design and need some advice. This call is to ask you if you might have some time to meet with me and provide

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information on various aspects of your industry and get advice on my resume and portfolio". "I would like to set up an appointment at your convenience."

- *By Letter or Email*

Send a letter requesting an informational interview. In the letter mention how you obtained their name or who referred you. Describe briefly your background, interest in the industry and what you would like to gain from this interview. Call three to five days after sending the letter to make an appointment.

Sample introductory letter: http://www.quintcareers.com/information_letter.html

- By having someone who knows the person *make the appointment for you.*

PREPARING FOR THE INTERVIEW

- Show your interest and enthusiasm by researching the company and the person who you will be interviewing.
- Prepare a list of questions for this interview. http://www.quintcareers.com/information_interview.html
- Bring your resume and portfolio, note pad and pencil. Asking for a pencil at the interview shows that this interview was not important enough for you to prepare
- Show respect by dressing appropriately
- Know where you are going, don't be late because you are lost or cannot find parking
- Remember they are taking time out of their busy day to help you.

THE INTERVIEW

- Dress appropriately, first impressions are everything.
- Arrive on time.
- 20 to 30 minutes is the usual time for this type of meeting
- Do not stay one minute longer than the time you asked for.
- Establish rapport with the interviewer by letting them know who you are, your interests, and educational experiences. Be genuine and interested.
- Be a good listener – no slouching back in chair
- Present your portfolio and resume for critique: ("could you give me some advice on making my portfolio and resume more marketable for this industry").
- Before leaving, ask the person to suggest names of others who might provide you with additional information.
- Ask permission to use contact's name when approaching these new contacts.

FOLLOW UP

- Send a thank you note, this person could be an important future contact
- Make an appointment with contacts suggested - follow-through
- Keep the contact informed of your progress and how their referrals helped.
- Send them an updated resume of the changes they has suggested

RESOURCES

A complete tutorial on Informational interviewing

http://www.quintcareers.com/informational_interviewing.html

Note: Respect the people and relationships you build throughout your college and professional career. Burning bridges can break your network. The network that can help you can also work against you because your network is networked.