

INFORMATIONAL INTERVIEWS

An informational interview is an informal conversation intended to help you gain insight about a company's culture, values, and what it's like to work there. It allows you to learn about potential career paths, get insider tips that can help you tailor your application materials, and prepare for interviews.

BENEFITS OF INFORMATIONAL INTERVIEWS

The purpose of an informational interview is to gather information to help you make well-informed decisions. Informational interviews are an opportunity for you to ask questions of someone working for an organization or in a position that you would like to learn more about. These conversations can lead to job shadow, mentor, internship, and research opportunities, and may help you expand your professional network. It's important to remember that an informational interview is NOT a job interview and is NOT an opportunity for you to ask for a job.

WHERE DO I FIND A CONTACT?

You can access PLU's alumni networking tool LuteLink

- Log in at www.lutelink.plu.edu. Select Connect from the menu bar, and then Community to search for alumni to connect with by major, job title, or organization.
- You can view alumni profiles to learn more about them and send a message directly through the website.
- Don't forget to reach out to your people in your current network of friends, co-workers, professors, advisors, and family too. Let everyone know what you're hoping to learn about and you might be surprised at the contacts people share with you!
- LinkedIn has a filter that allows you to search for PLU alumni to connect with, and organization's own websites may help you identify people that hold positions in which you are interested.

HOW DO I REACH OUT?

You can message contacts directly through LuteLink or LinkedIn. If you are personally referred to someone, you can send an email introducing yourself (specify that you're a PLU student if you're contacting an alum), a brief explanation of what you hope to learn, and then make your request for an informational interview.

Dear Mr. Anderson,

I hope this message finds you well! My name is Sophia Lopez, and I'm a business major at Pacific Lutheran University. I came across your profile on LuteLink, and I was wondering if you would be willing to speak with me for 20-30 minutes about your experiences in accounting? I look forward to your response, thank you for considering my request!

*Sincerely,
Sophia*

HOW TO PREPARE?

Informational interviews are a way to provide context to what you are reading online about your area of interest. You are encouraged to ask questions during the interview that you could not answer by doing an online search, or questions that support what you previously learned. If the interview is happening in person or virtually, dress in business casual attire to show that you are taking the meeting seriously.



DURING THE INTERVIEW

Informational interviews typically take place over video or phone calls, but they can also be conducted in person. However, you should never visit someone's personal residence. You are not encouraged to conduct an informational interview over email. Arrive early, bring your questions, and be attentive; the interviewee may answer questions you had planned to ask later. Before asking your questions, start by giving an overview of yourself. You are encouraged to take notes and to get a business card so you can send a thank you.

SAMPLE QUESTIONS TO ASK

Background and Career Journey

Can you tell me about your career path that led you to your current role?

How did you get started in the field? Is this typical of most people?

How do you maintain a work-life balance in this role?

What motivates you to stay engaged and passionate about your work?

Day-to-Day Responsibilities

What does a typical day or week look like for you?

How do you prioritize your tasks and responsibilities?

What do you most enjoy about your work?

Challenges and Achievements

What have been the biggest challenges you've faced in this role?

Can you share a specific achievement or project that you're particularly proud of?

Industry Trends

What are some current trends or developments in our industry that you find exciting?

How do you see this industry evolving in the next 5-10 years?

What is a challenge this field is facing?

Skills and Qualifications

What skills and personal qualities are most important to succeed in this field?

Are there any specific certifications or training programs you would recommend?

Would you recommend doing an internship to gain more knowledge or experience?

Does your organization offer internships or research opportunities?

Work Culture and Environment

How would you describe the company culture here?

What do you enjoy most about working in this industry?

What attracted you to work for this company specifically?

How would you describe the company's growth strategy or future plans?

Career Advice

What advice would you give to someone looking to enter this field?

What are the opportunities for advancement in the field? Could you describe a typical promotion path?

Who makes the decision to hire someone for this kind of job?

Have you noticed whether or not it is necessary to change companies in order to advance in this industry?

What are some professional associations that you would recommend?

Final Thoughts

Do you have any final advice or words of wisdom for someone starting out in this field?

AT THE END OF THE INTERVIEW, CONSIDER ASKING:

- Can you suggest two other people I would benefit from speaking with?
- May I use your name when contacting these people?

These categories and examples should help you structure a comprehensive informational interview that not only provides you with valuable information but also shows your interest and preparation. Adjust these questions based on your specific interests and the person's background to make the conversation more engaging and insightful.

AFTER THE INTERVIEW

Send a personal thank you. A handwritten note is encouraged, but email is also acceptable. Thank you notes are exceptionally important in maintaining your network (which now includes this person). Gently remind the interviewee who you are, how you met, and thank them for their time. This could also be a great opportunity to connect with them on LinkedIn (refer to our LinkedIn handout to learn more).