First things first...

WHAT IS IT?

It's a way to gather information about a company, industry, job and a way to build your network. Insider tip: do not ask companies if you can do an 'informational interview' as they likely will not know what that is. Instead ask if you can come and meet with them to learn more about: their organization, role, career path, and the skills and experience they look for in candidates when building their team.

Why Do It?

Out of 200-1000 resumes, someone lands a job offer. But it ONLY takes 12 Informational Interviews!

- Get information for your job hunting and career planning (including your academic choices)
- Learn about an organization and how you might fit in and what qualifications/skills would be helpful to work with them
- Gain experience and self-confidence in interviewing with professionals and discuss your career interests
- Establish contacts in your area of interest that can be useful in your job search. Broaden your network.
- Access more up-to-date career information
- Identify your areas of professional growth
- Build relationship with potential employers and make yourself stand out from the crowd

WHO DO I REACH OUT TO?

Someone who works in a sector, in a career area or in a specific organization or job you are interested in. How to find contacts:

- Ask your friends, family, colleagues, faculty for potential contacts or a referral.
- Relevant websites
- Look for articles in associated magazines or professional journals or other online resources
- Attend professional meetings, conferences, events in the field of your interest
- LinkedIn
- Mentors or potential mentors in your area of interest

HOW DO I GET A MEETING?

Call or write a letter (or an email) of interest to ask for an appointment. See our Hot Tips - Issue 5.

If you call, explain that you would like to make an appointment to gather information about their field of work and for your career planning. Make it clear that you are not asking for a job at this time.

Try to schedule a 20-30 minute appointment by phone or in person at a convenient time for the person you wish to talk to.

Now you know that Informational Interviewing is one of the most effective tools to tap into the Hidden Job Market!

See flip side - Page 2 - for how to prep for your Informational Interview
HOW DO I PREPARE FOR THE INTERVIEW?

Make sure to have 5–10 informational interview questions ready (see the great list below). Be ready to do some active listening. Be curious, receptive and open - ideally you will want the interviewee to do most of the talking.
Highlight your enthusiasm, passion and interest in their field.
Get a notebook and pen ready. Note-taking helps your listening.
Do some research. Learn a bit about the company and industry. That will help you refine your questions.

WHAT ARE THE RESULTS?

After some interviews you will have more insight into the qualifications, skills and other experience you may need to pursue a particular career. If you are ready to start your job search you will have valuable information on what to highlight in your cover letter and resume and on how to prepare for a potential interview.

POSSIBLE QUESTIONS

- Why did you choose this career?
- How did you get into this particular role / field?
- What current projects are you working on?
- What is it like to work at your company?
- What past work experiences have helped you most?
- What are the best qualifications/experiences/skills to enter this occupation/field?
- What's the biggest challenge for your job?
- How would you describe the perfect person for this job?
- What's the most important preparation for a role like yours?
- What do you wish someone would have told you before you started this career?
- What's the biggest reward of your job?
- What would surprise people about your daily work?
- What's the biggest downside of your job?
- How will this job change over the next 10 years?
- Could you refer me to a couple other people who could give me tips about this job?

FOLLOW UP

Follow up with a thank you letter (hand written) & email to thank them for their time.

If your Informational Interview rocks and you want to STANDOUT?
See our HOT TIPS: ISSUE 5 - Design a Letter of Interest