



So you want to learn about a career in public health, make industry-specific connections, or network to gain insight on how to break into a field? An effective next step for all these situations would be to arrange some informational interviews.

Informational interviews are professional meetings that you set up, generally without a job or internship on the horizon. They allow you to glean industry information from someone on the inside. You can ask questions that will help you gain clarity and inform your next steps. Subjects for these questions can include – common paths into the field, needed skills sets to be successful, challenges of the work, typical day on the job, advice professionals would give to their younger self, and so much more.

Ultimately, these meetings help build your professional relationships – your network. Almost all professionals remember what it feels like to be starting a career or trying to navigate the vast and evolving world of work. And many are willing to give you 20-30 minutes of their time to help. So take a chance and set up some interviews!

### TIPS TO NAVIGATE THE NETWORKING PROCESS

- Alumni, past coworkers that are in new positions, and family friends are great places to start.
  - When choosing the professional to interview, ask yourself: Why is the person's career interesting to me? Can I see myself in their role? What more would I like to know about this career path?
- Be clear about what you are asking for -- a brief meeting to learn about one's path or industry.
- Convey gratitude and flexibility for all communications. In person, phone, Zoom or Skype – there are lots of ways to hold these meetings.
- Have your questions ready in advance of the meeting. Use the below questions as a guide but as you practice your informational interviewing skills, other questions will come to mind spontaneously.
- Be prepared to share information about yourself and your interest in their field. Bring a copy of your resume but don't feel like you have to share it with them.
- Be professional during the meeting. You never know what opportunities your networking could lead to. You should take notes, or you may want to get permission from your interviewees to record the conversations, which will allow you to participate in the discussion without distraction. Pay careful attention to what's said by the person you speak to and ask questions when something isn't clear. People are often happy to discuss their positions and willing to provide you with a wealth of information.
- Always follow up with a thank you! Everyone's busy and an electronic or handwritten thank you is important!
- Stay in touch. When you land a job, be sure to let the people you met with know!

Try to keep the conversation friendly, brief, and focused on the contact person's job and career field. There's no pressure with networking and information interviews so **try and have fun!**

### JOB QUESTIONS

- How did this type of work interest you and how did you get started?
- What jobs and experiences have led you to your present position?
- What are the duties/responsibilities in your job? What does a typical day or week look like for you? What percentage of your time is spent on which responsibilities?
- What kinds of problems do you deal with? What kinds of decisions do you make?



## NETWORKING AND INFORMATIONAL INTERVIEWING TIPS AND SAMPLE QUESTIONS

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- What knowledge, skills, abilities, and other qualifications are desirable for this job?
- What do you view as the critical skills for a position in this field?
- What is your favorite and least favorite element of your job?
- Why did this type of work interest you, and how did you get started?
- How did you get your job? What jobs and experiences have led you to your present position?
- Can you suggest some ways someone new could obtain necessary experience?
- What part of this job do you personally find most satisfying? Most challenging?

### CAREER FIELD QUESTIONS

- What are typical entry-level jobs in this field?
- What is the typical pattern of career development in this field?
- What abilities or personal qualities do you believe contribute most to success in this field/job?
- What are the trends and hot issues in this field? What journals or websites do you regularly read to keep up with trends and developments in your field?
- What do you like most about working in this industry? What do you dislike most?

### COMPANY QUESTIONS

- Why did you decide to work for this company?
- What do you like most about this company?
- How does your company differ from its competitors?
- Why do customers choose this company?
- Are you optimistic about the company's future and your future with the company?
- What does the company do to contribute to its employees' professional development?
- How would you describe the working atmosphere and the people with whom you work?
- Is there a basic philosophy of the company or organization and, if so, what is it? (Is it a people-, service- or product-oriented business?)
- What can you tell me about the corporate culture?
- What is the average length of time an employee typically stays in the job you hold?

### LIFESTYLE QUESTIONS

- What obligations does your work place upon you, outside of the ordinary workweek? What are your working hours like?
- **How often do people in this field change jobs?**
- How much flexibility do you have in terms of dress, schedule, vacation, etc.?

### CAREER PREPARATION ADVICE

- How did your education prepare you for this work? What kind of background is necessary to enter this field?
- How can I acquire the required skills? Are there courses, or experiences, paid or otherwise, which you would recommend?
- If you were to hire someone to work with you today, what factors would be most important in your hiring decision and why?
- Is a graduate degree recommended? Are there specific programs that are valued in this field?
- What other related types of work should I consider and research?



### **JOB SEARCH ADVICE**

- Given my education and experience, would I be a competitive candidate for entry-level positions in this field?
- Are there specific job search strategies or web sites that I should be utilizing? How can I identify advertised and unadvertised vacancies in this field?
- What types of employers hire people in this line of work?
- How can I identify/access both advertised and unadvertised vacancies in this field?
- Can you suggest anyone else whom I can contact for additional information? May I use your name when I contact them?

### **RESUME REVIEW QUESTIONS**

- Would you mind taking a look at my resume? If they agree, is this an appropriate resume for the jobs I will be seeking? What about the length, paper quality, layout, print-type?
- If an employer received this resume, how do you think she or he would react to it?
- How might I best improve the form and content of my resume?

### **GENERAL QUESTIONS**

- I am told that XXX, XXX and XXX are my strongest assets (fill in the blanks with skills, areas of knowledge, personality traits, and values). Where would these traits and skills be helpful in this organization?
- Where might my skills fit in other fields? Where might they be helpful in other organizations?
- What's the best advice you'd give to someone interested in this field? Are there any written materials you suggest I read? Which trade or professional journals and organizations would be helpful to me as I learn more about this field?
- Who else do you know who is doing similar kinds of work or uses similar skills? What other kinds of organizations hire people to perform the functions you do here? Do you know of other people whom I might talk to who have similar jobs?
- If you could do things all over again, would you choose the same path for yourself? Why? What would you change?

### **REMEMBER...**

- Before your meeting, write out specific questions you want to ask to better understand the person's occupation. You should prepare to ask at least one question from each of the above categories.
- During the meeting, ask a few questions but remember to pause and let the conversation flow naturally.
- Be authentic, have fun, and send a thank you note afterward!