



UNDERGRADUATE NETWORKING AND INFORMATIONAL INTERVIEWING GUIDE

Networking and Informational Interviews

By definition Networking means to develop contacts and exchange information with other people for purposes of developing business or expanding one's career opportunities. Networking is tapping into your connections for helpful information or advice on an ongoing process to form contacts and then maintain the relationship by keeping contacts aware of your progress. If done successfully, networking can be the most effective career exploration and job search tool.

WHERE TO START-

Prepare A Plan:

- Define your field of interest. Consider work environments, career areas, and positions in particular organizations.
- Determine the kind of information you want to obtain.
- Review the resources in the Career Library to get background information on a wide variety of organizations.
- Clarify your own interests and skills; create questions that can lead to information about how they relate to the jobs and career paths you are exploring. (Refer to the attached sample questions)

NEXT-

Identify Potential Contacts: Potential contacts can include:

- Friends and relatives
- Faculty
- Alumni—you can find alumni who are involved in specific career fields through [LUnet](#)
- Former employers, colleagues, customers, and/or clients you have worked with
- Members of professional organizations
- Members of your fraternity or sorority
- Contacts found in directories, registers and professional magazines, newsletters and journals

MAKE A CONNECTION-

Begin to connect with your contacts:

Once you have identified a good prospect, take the next step and ask for an informational interview. You can do this by phone, email, or by letter with a follow-up phone call. Assume the person is busy but will enjoy giving you advice. Below is an example email to a potential contact.

Dear Ms. Gable:

In order to gain some more information about the public relations field, I recently searched the Lehigh University Career Advisory Network (LUCAN) for alumni volunteers. Your name was among those listed. I am hoping I might further my knowledge of a profession in which I will seek employment upon graduation.

My interest in public relations stem from my experience as an intern with Local Public Relations in Bethlehem, PA. I was able to participate in planning and coordinating Bethlehem's annual Musikfest. Through this experience, I developed skills in writing press releases and copy for brochures. I also had the opportunity to create and maintain positive relationships with clients. I would enjoy the opportunity to ask you a few questions about your experience.

By talking with professionals, I hope to verify that my career goals are appropriate and realistic. I will call you on Tuesday, February 13, in hopes that we can set up a convenient time for us to speak. I have enclosed my resume so that you may have a broader picture of my experience before we talk. Thank you very much for your time and consideration.

Sample Questions:

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I'd like to get a feeling for what it would be like to have a job like yours. No two days are alike, but would you give me an idea of what a typical day would be? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What is management's philosophy toward the employee?
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Would you please describe the people you interact with in your department or organization, and those outside the company? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Is the company planning to expand, maintain or downsize?
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What opportunities do you have to influence or direct policies or procedures? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How would you describe the work climate?
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What are some of the problems or decisions you may face each day? And what skills are required for handling them? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How did you start with the company?
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What are the most satisfying aspects of your work? What are the most frustrating? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What has been your career path?
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What skills do you need to do your job (or your subordinates need to do their jobs)? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How have you put your education to use?
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What hours do you normally work? Is overtime common and, if so, is it regular, seasonal, or sporadic? Is there flexible scheduling? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • If you were to start over, what career changes would you make?
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What are the professional organizations in the industry? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What are the upward and lateral moves at your company, and how difficult is it to advance?
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What is the typical salary range for an entry-level position? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • My major (or degree) is (marketing, etc.). How could I put that to use within your company?
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What stresses do you contend with? Do you face deadline pressures? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I am very interested in (or skilled at)(name you area of concentrated study or skill). How could I put my interests to use?
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What educational requirements must be met for the position? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Is there someone you know at another company in this industry who would be willing to talk with me as you have?
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Is continuing education, such as an MBA, useful in your company? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What trends affect your company's direction?
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Who are the company's competitors and how are their actions predicted or handled? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What is management's philosophy toward the employee?

SAMPLE NETWORKING QUESTIONS

(from Networking, by National Business Employment Weekly)

THE PERSON

Early questions in networking to gather information (don't ask of later contacts once you know)

- What are your responsibilities and what do you actually do during a representative day of work?
- What's the typical career progression in this field? If there isn't one, where do you see your career going?
- What functions or activities are included in your work?
- How did you get into this field? What made you decide this was the kind of career for you to pursue?
- What training, special credentials, or experience were required to get hired in your field/your position?
- What are the greatest satisfactions you derive from this kind of work?
- What don't you like about this field or about your job?
- What other career options will your present role allow?

THE INDUSTRY

- What are the most desired skills, abilities and personal qualities in this field? What are the basic prerequisites for gaining employment in this field? What training or development do companies in this field generally provide?
- What are the most common problems or issues confronting people in this field?
- What forces do you see affecting this field or your job in the foreseeable future? New technology? Government regulations? Changing competition? Changes in the work force?
- What are the best sources for learning more? Who are the best kinds of people to network with, to learn all I can about this field?

THE GENERAL MARKET

- What general economic, operational, and employment trends do you see in the industry? Who are the industry leaders? Why?
- What sort or size of company do you think would be most interested in skills and experience like mine?
- What's a realistic compensation range for someone with my skills and abilities?
- What do you see as the long-term trends or prospects in my field?

THE PRODUCT

- Is my frame of reference clear to you? Does my career path make sense?
- Is my job search objective clear? Is it realistic? Have I articulated my Technical Skills clearly? Have I provided convincing examples of my experience and transferable abilities?
- What skills or technical credentials do you think I need to be an attractive candidate for the kind and level of position I want?

WHERE DO I FIT

- Understanding my skills and background, how good are my chances of securing employment in this field?
- What barriers do I have to overcome to break into this industry?
- What entry-level opportunities are common?
- What if any, new technical credentials do you think I would need to move into this field?
- What are the most effective techniques for obtaining work in this field? Are there any companies or employers you feel would be good targets for my efforts?

TARGETING SPECIFIC LEADS

- Are you personally familiar with any companies in this area, or with some individual in any of those companies? Have you heard of any events or developments that suggest a particular company might have a need for someone like me?
- What have you heard about the company (in terms of reputation, market share, profitability, hiring trends, management style or “culture,” strategic plans, effect of external factors or conditions)?
- Do you know of any openings or opportunities for someone like me right now?
- Where’s the best place to look for news of jobs or openings?