Informational Interviews

What is an Informational Interview?
An informational interview is one in which you meet with someone in a position or industry you are considering. It is a way to talk with people who are working in the careers you are interested in and gaining first-hand information. Who better to give you a good sense of the challenges and opportunities of a job than someone who does it? You will want to focus on the specific information that you are seeking and prepare questions accordingly.

Why an Informational Interview?
An informational interview will give you the opportunity to:

- Discover the realities of a particular job or industry and determine what the career you’re considering is really like.
- Get suggestions on job search strategies from someone who has been in your situation.
- Determine whether a particular career is a good fit for you. Does it match your interests, skills, goals, etc.? Will it offer the lifestyle you are seeking?
- Ask for specific suggestions on what you can do to acquire hands-on experience in the field.
- Increase your confidence and interviewing skills by talking with professionals about your goals.
- Gain networking opportunities by asking for names of others who may be helpful.
- Obtain a mentor if you feel that you made a connection with the person. Ask if you may stay in contact and reach out for advice.

What can I discuss about the industry/organization during the interview?

- Requirements for an entry level position including skills, etc.
- Trends of the industry and growth opportunities.
- What path did the interviewee take?
- What type of lifestyle can you expect?
- Standard compensation
- Challenges/Rewards
- Typical career steps

When is an informational interview appropriate?
This is a tool to explore your possibilities and increase your understanding of a career field. This is appropriate whether you are in the beginning stages trying to determine your major, a new graduate beginning the job search, or an alumni transitioning to a new career. It is a wonderful tool to learn more about a field.

How do I begin?
Join your alumni association or alumni LinkedIn. Look for UNLV graduates who are in the field you are considering. Ask friends and family members if they know of people in the field. Once you have names and contact information send them an email or call them to ask if they will be willing to participate in an informational interview.

Follow up after the interview

- Send a formal thank you letter to the person you interviewed.
- Share actions you took as a result of your discussion and any results.
- Stay in touch with the person you interviewed. Send an update or simply share an article that you think might be of interest to them.
**Requesting an Informational Interview**

**STEP 1:** Introduce yourself to the person who answers the phone. Ask for the name of the appropriate manager and ask to speak to him/her OR if you already know the name, ask to speak to the person directly.

**Example:**

Good morning! My name is Tim Smith. Would you please tell me the name of the Public Relations manager? (Heather Chang) - May I please speak to Ms. Chang? -OR-

Good morning! May I speak to Heather Chang please?

**STEP 2:** Introduce yourself to the professional once you are transferred and state the purpose of your call. Ensure that this is a good time to talk.

**Example:**

Hello Ms. Chang, my name is Danielle Sharp. I am a graduate of the University of Nevada Las Vegas with a degree in Finance; do you have a moment to talk?

[Insert Name of Company] is a company that I admire. I was especially impressed with the company’s philosophy regarding professional development.

I am interested in interviewing you so that I can gain more information about your company and position.

**Example of a phone script requesting an informational interview:**

"Good morning Mrs. Jones, my name is Steven Don and I am a Management student at the University of Nevada Las Vegas. I am calling on the recommendation of (referral’s name). I would like to ask if I could come in for a brief meeting. My purpose is to interview you in order to gain more information about your personal career strategy and the advice you would give someone who is starting out in the field. (Referral’s name) told me that I should speak to you, because you would have good information and advice."

"Good morning, Ms. Jones. My name is Allen Birkman and I am an Accounting Major at UNLV. I would like to ask if I could come in for a brief meeting. My purpose is to interview you. I am interested in hearing about your career strategy and advice you would give to people starting out in your field."  

*Remember that your goal is to get a personal meeting!*