



RUTGERS

School of Management
and Labor Relations

CAREER SERVICES

NETWORKING

INFORMATIONAL INTERVIEWS

An informational interview is a meeting with someone, preferably face-to-face, to ask for career advice and/or learn about his/her role, organization, and industry. The purpose is *not* about asking for a job or internship; but about *building* a relationship.

IDENTIFYING CONTACTS

- Ask your personal contacts if they know someone working in your chosen career field (i.e. former colleagues, friends, professors, family and their network, neighbors, and community affiliations)
- Utilize LinkedIn and Career Services resources (i.e. Student Alumni Career Connect “SACC” and/or Handshake) to find contact information – <https://rutgers.peoplegrove.com> <https://rutgers.joinhandshake.com>

INITIATING CONTACT

Professional contacts are busy people who have many commitments for their time. It may seem as though you are intruding on their schedule, but remember that people enjoy sharing personal stories and how they got to be where they are. You are creating an opportunity for them to pass along the benefits of their experience. By crafting your request as an informational interview you are more likely to receive a positive response. Remember the goal is not to get a job, rather to develop your professional network.

- Determine what you want to learn before you contact the person
- Send an e-mail introducing yourself and explaining your reason for reaching out (*See sample below*)
- Mention in your e-mail if you were referred by someone to contact them
- Once you receive a reply, follow up within 24 hours to arrange a telephone or in-person meeting

Dear Dr./Mr./Ms. Last Name,

I am a sophomore at Rutgers University majoring in [*identify your major*]. While searching on LinkedIn, I came across your profile and noticed you have a background in [*i.e. labor relations*].

(Or--if you were referred to this person, state: “*Recently, I met with [name] who suggested I contact you*”). I would like to learn more [*i.e. about how you started your career in human resources*]. Would you be willing to meet with me or talk over the phone for 20 minutes? I can be reached at [*phone*] or [*e-mail*]. Thank you in advance for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,

Your name

CONDUCTING THE INFORMATIONAL INTERVIEW

Where and when you meet with your contact should be at their convenience.

- Before the informational interview, prepare questions and write them down. Research the individual in advance
- Find out the location for the meeting and be sure you know the route and building before you go
- Dress professionally. Arrive 15 minutes early and do not go beyond allocated meeting time
- Shake hands, make eye contact, smile, and address the person in a respectful and formal manner
- Introduce yourself and restate your reason for meeting
- State your goals for the meeting (*i.e. I would like to tell you about my career goals and ask you a few questions about your career path and any advice you have for me*)
- Ask your questions and seek advice for getting into that industry or organization
- Inquire if the person you are speaking with has any questions about your background or skills
- Thank the person at the end of the meeting; and if applicable, ask about next steps, referrals, or future meetings

Sample questions to ask:

- How did you become interested in your field of work? What is your educational background?
- If you completed an internship in college, how do you believe this experience benefitted you?
- What has been your career path in this field? What do you like most/least about your work?
- What are some of the other leading organizations in this field?

- What type of experiences or skills would you recommend to someone starting out in this field?
- What is the outlook for this industry? What are future predictions for growth and change?
- Is there anyone else that you suggest I meet with to learn more about the careers we have discussed today?
- How can I be helpful to you? (see if you can give anything back to your new professional contact)

AFTER THE INFORMATIONAL INTERVIEW

- Send a thank you e-mail within 24-48 hours. Sample below:

Dear Dr./Mr./Ms. Last Name,

Thank you for taking time from your busy schedule to meet with me. Your comments about your career were insightful and have helped me clarify my career goals and next steps. *[NOTE: If the person gave you information that you need to follow up on, add a sentence about it—"I will follow up with the person you suggested I talk with".]* Thanks again!

Sincerely,

Your name

Your e-mail address and phone number

DEVELOP YOUR PERSONAL PITCH

Throughout your academic and professional career you will most likely attend at least one networking event or business function. Developing a personal pitch is helpful practice in developing your personal brand. When you attend a networking event, plan to meet as many people as possible. Introduce yourself with a firm handshake and smile while stating your name. If you collect someone's business card, send a follow up email within 24-48 hours to connect with them and mention you would like to stay in touch.

Use the ***N.E.W.S. technique*** to put together your 30-second personal pitch.

Name My name is Avery Busch.

Education I am a junior at Rutgers University completing a Bachelor of Arts in Human Resource Management.

Work I have participated in several human resource internships for different companies. Recently, I was at Live Well Pharmaceuticals where I worked on the Talent Acquisition team recruiting Clinical Research Scientists. I also contributed to a project at Planet Honda where I coordinated the design and implementation of a new hire orientation program. I am involved in several groups on campus, one being the Asian American Culture Club.

Skills I always volunteer to help in roles that involve social media since I have utilized various social media tools for recruitment efforts.

**If you're at an event, you can end with a question to engage in further conversation:*

Can you tell me more about the internship program at your organization?

SAMPLE QUESTIONS TO ASK:

- How did you get where you are today?
- What skills do you value in an intern?
- What are the greatest challenges facing your industry?
- What do you like most about working at your organization and in your field?
- What recommendations do you have for someone looking to get started in your field?
- Are there any books, online sites, or professional associations that you would recommend?