



# Networking

## What is an informational interview?

Informational interviewing is a method of career exploration and a way of discovering the 70-80% of jobs not publicly advertised. It is not the same as a job interview. Informational interviewing allows you to talk with people already in the industry you have targeted. By obtaining informational interviews, you have gained access to the “inside information” regarding career paths, alternate careers that will use your skills, and people to contact who may be looking for an employee like you. It is an effective technique because it allows you to:

- investigate a specific career field
- narrow or expand your options
- obtain advice on where skills might be applied
- broaden network contacts for future reference
- learn about important issues in a career field
- build confidence for actual job interviews
- expand your job market information
- discover jobs/career paths that you didn't know existed
- deepen your understanding of the world of work in a variety of settings
- learn the methods that others used to get to a particular career point
- clarify your weaknesses in education, skills and development, and therefore improve those areas
- develop your listening/social skills

## Remember to:

- Wear business casual or professional attire.
- Arrive 10-15 minutes early.
- Prepare questions in advance.
- Listen carefully and attentively to the contact person.

## Building a Contact List for Informational Interviews

Networking is creating a system of contacts both for information and support. It may include anyone from your career advisor to your neighbor. **A key to successful networking is learning how to move beyond initial rejection; not every person you contact will be willing or able to help you.** Networking is a refined skill learned through experience. Some good examples of people to network with are:

- Family and Friends
- Fisher and Ohio State
  - Fisher Alumni
  - OSU Alumni
  - Office of Career Management
  - Student Organizations
  - Centers of Excellence
  - Professors
  - Staff
  - Classmates
- Past/Current Employers
  - Coworkers
  - Bosses
  - Clients and Vendors
- Extracurricular Groups
  - Social organizations
  - Industry associations
  - Interest groups

## Tips for Professional Networking

- In your initial e-mail or outreach to a contact, please note how you obtained the contact's information. In addition, provide background information on yourself and share your career goals and experiences.

- Ask for advice, not a job or internship position.
- Respect their time.
- Once your contact has responded to your initial outreach, make every effort to respond in a reasonable time.
- Conduct research on the company/industry/career and prepare questions to ask during the informational interview (see sample questions below).
- Follow-up promptly with a thank you e-mail or letter.
- Stay in touch and keep a contact informed of your progress.
- You may wish to continue your contact through e-mail, telephone, or personal/group meetings.
- Obtain a business card following networking.

## Organizing and Maintaining Your Contacts

Students often find it helpful to create a system for keeping track of people you meet, their contact information, and how often to reach out. For some, an Excel spreadsheet is the best way to maintain an organized method for tracking networking contacts. Try creating a spreadsheet with columns such as name, company, title, date and location where you connected, email address, phone number, and then a final column for notes or follow-up information.

There is also a free app called [UpHabit](#) that allows students to easily keep contacts listed in one system on their smart phone. It allows you to:

- Set reminders to reach out to someone periodically
- Make notes about conversations
- Link to your contacts' social media profiles
- Set descriptions for your contacts
- Make use of searchable notes to remember everything
- Tag contacts to group people together

## Cold Emailing

The term “cold emailing”, while similar to its cousin “cold calling”, refers to sending an introductory email to someone you’ve never met. Sending a cold email, or several, throughout your job search can be a productive way to enhance your networking and your possibility of getting a job offer. While this term can have a negative connotation, it is actually a very highly acceptable form of communication in today’s age of technology. Sending these emails can be a great way to network, meet new people, gain a connection within a particular company, and possibly get a referral to a job.

### Who should you send it to?

One of the best places to begin looking for possible recipients of this introductory email is on LinkedIn. You can use LinkedIn’s search feature to find individuals who work at a certain company, geographic region, or even people who are connected to your LinkedIn connections. It might be easiest to start with alumni of Ohio State or Fisher. You can go to the [Fisher College of Business School page](#) within LinkedIn and use the “Find Alumni” feature to filter and get even more specific with your search. Reaching out to an individual who has something in common with you is often likely to result in them responding to your email. Recent grads are especially easy to connect with since they are more likely to want to give back by helping out a fellow Fisher student, and they may not be as intimidating to talk to. Students report that Fisher alumni are often flattered when contacted and eager to help in any way they can.

### How do you find a professional’s email?

Once you find an individual you would like to contact on LinkedIn, sometimes their email address may not be visible. You have two options:

- 1) Send a personalized request to connect on LinkedIn – with this option you are limited to 300 characters and it is sent directly via LinkedIn. The chances of the individual responding might be lower with this option since they may miss the initial message and request to connect.
- 2) Do some research to find their email address – Once you are connected with someone on LinkedIn, go to their LinkedIn profile page and click on “Contact info.” Sometimes you will find a personal or professional email address listed. If no email is listed on LinkedIn, you can use a free website called [RocketReach](#) to find email, phone, and social media links for professionals. As long as you know the person’s first and last name, plus their company name, you can usually find a match. Sending an email directly to the professional’s work inbox is much more likely to get a response!

### What should I say in the email?

Here are some tips for what to say in your cold email:

- 1) Introduce yourself and explain how you found them. Were you searching on LinkedIn? Did a friend suggest you reach out? Were you looking for a contact at XYZ Company? Take notice of any particular areas you both have in common to try to break the ice. This makes the cold email feel “warmer.”
- 2) Share a recent accomplishment. Did you graduate recently? Just finish an internship? Complete an online certification? Doing this helps establish your credibility.
- 3) Ask a question. Make sure you include a question so that the professional has a reason to respond. For instance, a good place to start would be to ask to set up a 30-minute informational interview over the phone. Or you could invite them to get coffee or lunch if the person is in the nearby area.
- 4) End with enthusiasm, gratitude, and identify your next steps. Let the person know that you are flexible and you are willing to adjust your schedule to accommodate them.

#### Some final tips:

- What’s the number one rule when sending a cold email? *Don’t ask for a job.*
- Keep it short – no one wants to read a 1,000-word email!
- Don’t worry if the person doesn’t respond. Move on, and continue sending these emails until you get a response! Persistence = success.
- Don’t use a template. Personalize your email and tailor it to the recipient.
- Set a reasonable goal. If you are in the middle of searching for an internship or full-time job, set a goal of reaching out to 1-3 professionals per day.

#### Other Resources:

[How to Cold Email Your Way into Your Dream Job](#) (The Morning Brew)

[A Guide to Cold Emailing](#) (Harvard Business Review)

#### **Sample cold email:**

Hi Joseph,

I hope this email finds you well! My name is Veronica and I am currently a Fisher student studying Marketing at Ohio State. I was searching for alumni on LinkedIn and I noticed that you are currently working at Wendy’s here in Columbus as an Associate Brand Manager. I also noticed that you were a member of Phi Chi Theta, the professional business fraternity. I was recently elected as the Internal Vice President for PCT and I have really enjoyed it so far!

Anyway, I would love to have the opportunity to talk to you about your role at Wendy’s and what the company is like. Would you be available for a short phone conversation sometime in the next two weeks? I am available Mondays and Wednesdays between 2-5 pm, but if those times don’t work for you I can definitely be flexible.

Thank you so much for your time in reading this; I really appreciate it! I look forward to hearing from you.

Sincerely,  
Veronica

#### **Sample LinkedIn request for an informational interview (300 character limit)**

*Best Practice – Always add a personalized note to your connection request. Use the samples below for inspiration, but be sure not to just copy/paste!*

Dear Ms. Alumni,

I am a sophomore marketing major in the Fisher College of Business at OSU. I saw that you work in marketing at XYZ Co. and wanted to see if I could ask you some questions about your experience in this field? I look forward to hearing from you. Thanks for your time.

Brutus Buckeye

#### **Sample thank-you following an informational interview**

Dear Mr. Alumni,

Thank you again for meeting with me yesterday to discuss your career path and for me to learn more about your company. I truly value the advice of professionals like you who know brand management so well.

I especially appreciate your offer to introduce me to other professionals in your network, which I know will be extremely helpful to me. I have contacted Ms. Patel as you suggested and have arranged a time to meet with her.

I can't thank you enough for your willingness to help me learn more about marketing. I will be sure to keep you informed of my progress. And please do not hesitate to contact me if you think of any additional suggestions for expanding my network and establishing my career in marketing.

Best regards,  
Jane Job-Seeker

## Sample Informational Interview Questions

Choose **a few questions** and be sure to tailor them based on any research you've conducted on the company or the contact.

### About the Individual

- What would you say is the best path to this career?
- What attracted you to this industry, your company, and your job?
- What do you enjoy most about this industry, the company, and your job?
- What aspects of your career have you found most and least rewarding and why? Any regrets?
- What are your educational and career backgrounds? What would you do differently if you were starting over?
- What do you see as possible next steps for you? What career expectations do you have in the short & long term?
- What are you most excited or concerned about for this industry/company/career path in the future?
- If you were in the job market tomorrow, what would you do?

### About the Job

- What are your primary responsibilities? How do you spend your time?
- How do you value/measure your results and effectiveness?
- What do you do in a typical day or week? How much time are you in meetings, on the phone, on the road, and working in teams versus working independently?

### About Skills

- What skills are most critical to your success?
- What weaknesses in a person's skill set would make him or her ineffective in this business?
- What are the most valuable skills in your job? Which experiences enabled you to develop these skills?
- How do you keep skills current? What do you read? What professional associations do you belong to? What seminars or continuing education do you consider useful?

### About the Company

- What would you do differently if you ran this company?
- What are the common misconceptions about working in this company?
- What do you see as the biggest competitive challenge for your company?
- What are some of the defining characteristics of the individuals who have been hired by your company in the past for this position?

### About the Industry

- What have been your biggest surprises in this field?
- What are the common misconceptions about working in this field?
- What motivates you to continue in this business? What do you like most?
- What are the vulnerabilities of this business? What worries you?
- What biases or barriers to entry does this business have in terms of hiring practices?
- What do you expect of people starting out in this field? What educational and personal qualities in candidates attract you? How do you determine a candidate's compatibility for the field, including education, personality, and cultural considerations?
- Can you recommend others I can talk to about this field?
- What are some of the ways I can become familiar with the industry jargon?

### About Me

- What kind of job responsibilities could I expect given my background and experience level?
- What strengths and weaknesses do you see in my current background?
- Is there anything else you think would be helpful as I consider this field?
- Looking at my résumé, what advice would you have for me on next steps if I were interested in this industry/company/career?