



Informational Interviews

When researching a career or preparing for a job search, an informational interview allows a student to gain information from an authority with experience in the field of study. An informational interview allows you to gain insight into the field, clarify career goals, learn more about skills and qualifications needed, and practice interviewing. Ask for advice; DO NOT ask for a job.

When requesting an informational interview it is important to indicate the reason for the interview and the topics that you hope to discuss. If you are able to obtain an informational interview, you should remain professional at all times prior to, during and after the interview. Whether or not you are familiar with the person you are speaking to, you will want to use appropriate dress, appropriate language and conversation, and treat the professional with respect at all times. Remember to follow-up by writing a thank-you letter to show your appreciation to each person you have met. Both hand-written letters and emails are appropriate.

Requesting an Informational Interview through a Network or Saint Vincent College Alumni

1099 Seventh Avenue
Latrobe, PA 15650

December 10, 2007

Mr. Dylan L. Steiner
Director, Graphic Design
J & M Interactive
203 Maywood Drive
Greensburg, PA 15601

Dear Mr. Steiner:

Dennis Gilbert, Associate Director of the Career Center at Saint Vincent College suggested contacting you in regard to my interest in the graphic design field. He mentioned your recent graduation from Saint Vincent College and your collegiality in assisting current students with internship and full-time graphic design positions. He indicated that you would be an excellent source of information for career advice, as I intend to begin searching for a position within the next few months.

I am interested in a graphic design position with a firm specializing in higher education, non-profit and travel and tourism. As a current graphic design major at Saint Vincent College, I have had many relevant courses in the field.

I have recently learned that J & M Interactive is one of the leading experts in this growing field. I was hoping since you were in the area, we could discuss any opportunities with J & M for the summer or you could assist me in learning more about the graphic design industry. I may be contacted at (724) 555-6660 or at TimothyJohnson@SVC.net. I am looking forward to hearing from you soon.

Sincerely yours,

Timothy Johnson

Requesting an Informational Interview by Company Interest

136 West Davis Street
Washington D.C. 20030

October 2, 2007

Ms. Becky A. Laine
Vice President of Sales, Barkley Enterprises
555 W. Sheraton Drive
Washington, D.C. 20011

Dear Ms. Laine:

Barkley Enterprises is recognized for its proficiency in developing a knowledgeable, highly motivated, and enthusiastic sales force, marketing information processing equipment, with sales representatives acquiring a focused expertise. With this marked reputation, I am seeking your advice on how to prepare for a career within the field of sales.

My background encompasses a combination of sales and clerical work, primarily acquired while working throughout my college career. However, within the coming months, I hope to enhance my sales experience through interning with a firm such as Barkley Enterprises. My familiarity with word processing equipment, my previous sales experience, and my education in the field of communication have well prepared me for the information-processing field. I want to begin my career in sales and eventually move into a management level position.

As I begin my search, I am attempting to gather information and advice before applying for internships. I would like to meet with you to discuss my potential plans and perhaps gain suggestions on how I can appropriately market my skills. I may be contacted at 555-555-1234 or at jsutters@yahoo.com. I appreciate your consideration and am excited by the possibility of meeting you in person.

Sincerely yours,

James R. Sutters

Most Common Informational Interview Questions

1. How important is my primary major when being considered for a job in the _____ industry?
2. What are some non-major courses that you would suggest that would be appropriate for this position?
3. How important is GPA when being considered for a job at your company?
4. What are the most important characteristics you look for in hiring a candidate?
5. How can I show confidence and enthusiasm to recruiters during phone interviews?
6. How do employers screen students based upon only their resume?
7. What is the worst mistake that students make during interviews?
8. What do the recruiters look for when evaluating a candidate based on a case interview?
9. Do you have any tips for behavioral interviews?
10. What can I be doing if I have no professional experience? And no experience related to my field?
11. What are some tips for networking if a company is not hiring at the time?
12. How do I present a major that is not commonly known to potential employers?
13. What do you look for in a person before forwarding their resume to a specific department?
14. What is the best way to get to know recruiters and therefore set myself apart from other candidates?
15. What is a typical day like in your field?