Tips for the Informational Interview

- Be flexible. Work around your contact’s busy schedule when arranging a date and time to meet.
- Research the occupation/organization ahead of time, so you can develop thoughtful questions.
- Dress professionally. Formal clothes aren’t necessary (like suit, tie, dress), but avoid jeans, shorts, tennis shoes, etc.
- Arrive 5 to 10 minutes early.
- Bring a list of questions you want to ask and something with which to take notes.
- Ask for names of additional people you can contact and permission to use contact’s name as a referral.
- Before you leave, be sure to ask for the person’s business card, so that you have accurate name, title, and address information.

Maintaining a Professional Relationship

Send a thank-you note after meeting a new contact. A handwritten thank-you card or formal email is appropriate. Your message should include something specific you learned during the meeting, rather than a generic note. Ideally this message should be sent within 24 hours of your meeting.

Connect on LinkedIn. You can do this immediately after a meeting with a personalized invitation request. Once you are connected, you will be updated if the person gets promoted or changes organizations, which can prompt your follow-up with that person.

Follow up with your contact. It may not be possible to re-engage with all contacts regularly, but it is important to keep in touch genuinely by reaching out to them on a regular basis, every 3-6 months.

You can follow up with a contact if you:

- Followed the person’s advice.
- Are sending an article of interest.
- Updated your résumé, experience, or personal situation.
- Read or heard something about the person or the person’s company or industry.
- Simply want to touch base and meet again.
- Are offering something, such as volunteering on a project, access to your university databases, student perspective, etc.

Networks are your contacts’ contacts. You can use the site to find people in your network and extend your network. LinkedIn is the world’s largest professional network with more than 250,000 U of M alumni with whom you can connect and more than 425 million members in 200 countries and territories around the globe.

Additionally, you can find people through:

- GoldPASS Professional Networking Database
- Conferences / Workshops
- Company websites
- Student clubs
- Professional associations
- Industry directories
- Service organizations
- College career offices
- Alumni groups
- Social media sites (Facebook/LinkedIn)

Don’t Be Intimidated by Networking

Networking becomes relatively easy after a little effort and time. If you’re shy, or if you’re uncomfortable contacting people you don’t know, that’s understandable. But keep in mind the worst response you’re likely to get is someone saying they’re too busy to talk (or no response). Most of the time, people will be happy to share information about their work, company, or profession.

Networking Resources

- Join the UMC Student/Alumni LinkedIn group and other UMC student organizations
- Attend career events (refer to www.cnk.umn.edu/units/career-development for upcoming events.)
- Consider attending meetings of professional associations in areas that interest you
- Utilize the professional networking tab on GoldPASS

Contacting People

In addition to networking with people you know, you can network with complete strangers. It’s very common in the world of working professionals, and there are many ways to find people to contact. Start by thinking about who is currently in your network who could help find networking meetings/informational interviews.

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Benefits of Networking

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>As a Job Seeker</th>
<th>As a Professional Being Contacted</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• Find out about jobs that aren’t posted or advertised</td>
<td>• Connect with someone interested in their field</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Get insider information about your field</td>
<td>• Get to know a potential job candidate more personally</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Get insight from a working professional to determine career fit</td>
<td>• Possibly find a new employee without having to advertise or go through the hiring process</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Make contacts who could lead to even more valuable contacts</td>
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Informational Interviews

An informational interview is a brief, face-to-face meeting with a person in a position or field you want to explore or pursue. An informational interview allows you to:

• Explore a specific industry, field, organization and/or position and assess personal fit
• Network and gather more information about that field/organization.
• Observe and feel out different work environments.
• Connect with professionals who may have tips about future job or internship opportunities
• Develop the social skills for professional interactions

Requesting an Informational Interview

After you’ve found someone with whom you want to talk, contact that person to request an interview. You can call or send an email. Usually you’ll ask to meet for 20 to 30 minutes. Include:

• Your first and last name
• How you got the person’s name
• A brief summary about yourself (2 or 3 sentences is plenty)
• The fact that you’re contacting the person for an informational interview
• Your phone number and email address (if you leave a message, speak slowly)

Remember that you shouldn’t use an informational interview as a way to apply for a specific job or internship opening. You can ask about overall opportunities in that organization or profession, but don’t ask for a job. This approach may cause the other person to ignore your request for information.

If you aren’t able to have a face-to-face interview, you can also do an informational interview by phone or by email, but this isn’t ideal. You’ll miss out on seeing the organization first-hand and networking in person.