

Informational Meetings in the Job Search Audio Script

Slide 1 Introduction

Informational Meetings in the Job Search

In this module, we will learn how and why to set up informational meetings in the job search process.

By the end of this module, you will be able to set up informational meetings and leverage them in your job search.

The goals of this learning module are:

- Identify target companies and people to meet for informational meetings.
- Facilitate an effective informational meeting.

Networking has been cited as the number one unwritten rule of success in business. Who you know really impacts what you know. Sallie Krawcheck, CEO and Co-Founder Ellevest

You will get the most out of this module if you already have these entry skills:

- Basic networking skills
- Identification of personal skills and strengths
- Three STAR stories
- LinkedIn profile
- *Preferred* Job Search Business Card & Updated Resume

If you do not yet have these skills, please go to the Passport to Employment website resources section and work through the videos and tutorials there before completing this module.

Slide 2

What is an informational meeting

Informational Meetings, sometimes called "Informational Interviews," involve talking to people who currently work in your target field, company, or job role to gain a better understanding of an occupation and to build a network of contacts in that field, company, or role.

Benefits of using informational meetings.

- You are making a first-hand impression on someone who can directly or indirectly benefit you over the long haul.
- You are establishing a personal relationship with an agent of potential employers.
- You are gaining insights that will greatly benefit you at a job interview.
- You are able to examine in advance whether you have located an employer whose corporate culture suits your nature and needs (working environment, career path potential)
- The informational meeting serves as a valuable job-hunting tool to find out what companies are hiring, what jobs are available, what skills those jobs require, whom to ask for job interviews,

plus who you are able to get face-to-face. Use of this approach might be the best way to find a position you really like because the dynamics are entirely different from those of a job interview

Slide 2 Video

I'd say it's worth the effort because when I applied for the job, it was just an on/off light switch, I got the job, or I didn't. More often than not, I didn't. That's a very discouraging process. Whereas the informational interview, I would definitely encourage doing it. Because it's a guaranteed win, you can't walk away from the experience feeling like, "That was just a waste of time." If I apply somewhere, and I write a cover letter, and I hone my skills on a resume, and I get my references, and I submit it, and they say, "thanks, but no thanks," then it kind of feels like a waste. But if I take the time to meet a new person and hear their story and get to know them, and I make a connection no matter what, even if they don't have a job opening, that's not the point. I walk away, winning from that experience. The job, it might come, it might not, but the informational interview part of networking I find it really meaningful because it's not high stakes. It's not, oh, you don't have anything, then I guess I'll be on my way like if you don't have an opening, I'll just move on and keep looking. It really is actually trying to meet people who give their time and effort to a stranger, someone they don't even know. The people I met with, they were willing to meet with me because they're that excited about what they do. And they want to share that with other people.

There are, I'd say there are three big benefits that come from all those interactions combined. Not only did informational interviews help me in my job search, it also helped me find the next job, and once I had the next job, it helped me really be successful within, inside my next profession, inside my next job. The first was that just getting out there in the midst of my job search really helped me to maintain a positive outlook on what I was doing. I had kinda hit some snags along the way. I was far enough in my job search where I had some not great news along the way, some jobs that didn't pan out, whatnot. So, the informational interview was just a really cool way to develop that passion again, keep that fire stoked, keep me excited about what I was trying to jump into, and uh, you know, meeting those people. It really helped me to reframe my mind and my focus on to something positive. In the midst of what can be a very turbulent experience, the job search.

The second thing, the second big benefit that happened was a completely unexpected benefit. Besides just gaining some connections, one of the people I reached out to after we had had an informational interview and I asked her some questions about her experience and asked her about her story and listened a lot. Then she actually opened up and said, "Hey, I've got a job opening. Just, by chance, that I'm looking to get filled." She had asked for a little bit of information about me, and so she thought I might be a good fit. That's actually the job I currently have right now. It actually ended up panning out into a job. So that was really unexpected. I would have been completely happy with just meeting people in the profession I wanted to enter. But this is the idea of networking. You don't have to have every networking lead pan out. You just need one to pan out, and then you got the next job. And for me, the piece of networking that helped out the most was the one-on-one informational interviews that led to that next job.

And then the third piece about informational interviews that I found extremely helpful is that when I did enter this new profession. I'm taking some classes now to get certified, and I went into my class, and the guest speaker, the first guest speaker of this like 12-week-long course, was the third person that I had gone on an informational interview with. And, so, I was like, man, what a small world!

You know, I already knew this guy. I just entered this new profession, and I already know the guest speaker one on one. We had had lunch together. I actually realized a lot more about my own interests and what I wanted from my next job in this process. So, I wasn't just learning about them. It helped me to realize that I had maybe overlooked part of that profession that I probably should have given more time. And the only way I could have learned more about it is by hearing about the profession from people who are doing it.

Slide 3 strategies for getting informational meetings

There are a few different strategies for getting informational meetings.

- You could tell someone you are interested in their career path and want to learn more about it. You are interested in what they do and where they work and would like to learn more about both.
- You could ask where your skills fit in an industry. (If you don't have a specific job title or company in mind, start here).
- You could work on a project and ask for a meeting to help with research on the project. (Just make sure you produce a project, it's not a setup for getting a job).

How to start networking:

- Ask people you already know to meet. (If you don't know where to start, start here).
- Pick a job title that you are shooting for. Search LinkedIn for people with that job title and ask them to meet.
- Find target companies and find people through LinkedIn or the people you already know, who work at that company to meet.

Reasons to conduct informational meetings:

- To clarify your career goals
- To expand your professional network; build visibility
- To build confidence for a job interview; invaluable interview experience; reduces anxiety
- To access the most current career information
- To identify your professional strengths and weaknesses.

The basic rules:

- Keep the meeting to 20-30 minutes, you can even set a timer.
- Make it clear you are not asking for a job.
- At the end of every meeting, ask how you can help the person you are meeting and ask them, "Who do you know that I should be talking to?" Try to get three contacts.

Slide 4

Identify your target occupation(s), companies, and functions

Preparation: Determine your immediate and long-term job goals; general career objectives to show you're focused. Also, this helps the potential interviewer think as to where or how you might benefit the company. Use research to find companies that may be a good "fit" for your skills and abilities.

Networking 101 Activity

Take your time here and write down your responses to each prompt on your paper.

1. Pick three companies where you would want to work. Ask your current network, and search online for contacts in each of those companies. Write those three companies on your paper.
2. Think of your immediate network, friends, family, mailman, connections from social and religious organizations, your banker, and university connections. Write five contacts from your immediate network on your paper.
3. Pick a job title that you are shooting for. Search LinkedIn for people with that job title and ask them to meet. Write one or two target job titles on your paper.
4. List contacts: Talk to friends, relatives, and professional and personal acquaintances. Acquire names, set your sights high; work to get to a potential decision-maker.
5. Contact someone who works for your target company: the higher-level party, the better, and arrange a brief "fact-finding" meeting.

Slide 5

"I'm looking to make a career move, and Sam suggested that you would be a good person to speak with for advice and guidance. I would appreciate the opportunity to have a short meeting with you soon. I would like to get your perspective on opportunities in the field."

There are several ways to meet people and introduce yourself. You can meet people that are friends of friends and communicate with them by phone or electronically. You can introduce yourself to people who work at your target company via LinkedIn.

If you are introducing yourself electronically, send an initial e-mail note or LinkedIn message and include the contact that you have (your friend or another person who works at a target company) who pointed you to the target person.

If you do not include your point of contact, reference the common source of contact (LinkedIn group, professional group, individual, positive conversation with the mutual contact) in the message.

Ask for a 20-minute informational meeting to brainstorm or use them as a sounding board about their company, career/job/role, etc.

Make it clear you are not asking them for a job or interview. A practice that has worked well is to include something like this: "I'm not asking for a job; I'm seeking information and guidance. I will respect your time via a timer on my cell phone, and I will come to you at your office, or if you prefer, we can meet at your favorite coffee place or for a virtual coffee."

Remember, you are not asking for help or for a job, but for information and guidance. If the person is unable to meet with you, thank them for their consideration and ask for the name of someone else in the company who might be agreeable and/or more appropriate to meet with.

Write your introduction on your paper.

Slide 6

There are a few ways to prepare for an informational meeting.

The first thing to do is research the company: learn about products, services, competitors, reputation/status, and future growth potential.

Next, compose a list of questions designed to find out about career opportunities and the company in general. (See the document of potential questions below). A few topics you could talk about are:

- Pluses and minuses of the career or job.
- Qualifications needed to succeed.
- Current and future employment outlook.
- What problems exist and need to be solved?
- What is the corporate culture?
- Who would be the best person to contact regarding specific job potential?
- What do you want to know about this individual? What do you want to ask them about their own story, how they got into what they do, and what they might do differently?

Slide 6 Video

How do you react when you hear the question, “so, tell me about yourself.” Do you freeze up? Are you tempted to overshare about your hopes and dreams? Is your first thought, “where do I start?” When put on the spot, a lot of us struggle to communicate who we are and why we are someone worth knowing. But thankfully, this problem is easily solved with a winning elevator pitch. So, what is an elevator pitch? And how can you develop one? Let’s take a look.

An elevator pitch is a short synopsis that briefly and memorably, Introduces you as a professional. It touches on three major points. 1)who you are 2) what you do, and 3) what you want. Overall, it’s a quick, snappy way of advertising yourself and capturing a person’s attention. An elevator pitch should be short and delivered within the time it takes to ride an elevator up and down, roughly 30-60 seconds. And while elevator is in its name, you can deliver this pitch in all types of situations and locations, including career expos, corporate conferences, and job interviews. So, how do you create one of your own?

The best elevator pitches follow a structure. First, introduce yourself, smile, shake the other person’s hand, and say Hello. Then shake the other person’s hand and offer a quick expression of gratitude. For example, “Hi, I’m Amelia. It’s great to meet you. Next, share your background. Explain what you do and what experiences you have. When following this step, start by writing down everything that you do, then weed through the list and remove anything that isn’t absolutely critical. Finally, continue rearranging and editing phrases until you are down to two or three sentences.

Once you have shared your background, the next step is to look forward. The best elevator pitches have a purpose and outcome, which brings us to our third step. The third step is to explain what

you want in one or two sentences. For example, do you want to apply your skills at a different company? Do you want to find a mentor in your field? Or do you want to sign a new client? As you answer that question, keep in mind that you might need to create a few different templates depending on those different wants. Next, encourage your audience to respond by giving them a call to action. Clearly explain what you want the other person to do. That might mean giving them a chance to ask questions. Requesting that they introduce you to someone else or scheduling a time to meet later. And finally, say thank you. If this person agrees to your request, follow that thank you by asking for their contact information and promising to stay in touch. And, if they don't agree, be polite and simply say, "I understand. Thank you for your time."

After you have written your speech, you'll then want to share it with the world. But before jumping into that live performance, there are a few extra things to keep in mind. Specifically, here are five pitch-perfect tips for your next elevator speech. First, don't speak too fast. Keep the pace steady, so your listeners can understand and absorb everything. Second, skip the jargon, avoid using acronyms or technical terms. You don't want to confuse your audience. Third express confidence by speaking clearly, standing tall, looking straight ahead, and making eye contact. Fourth, express positivity by using friendly facial expressions, smiling, and modulating your voice at different times to keep listeners engaged. And finally, keep practicing. The more you practice, the more natural you'll sound and the less likely you'll be to forget anything.

Start following those tips and start drafting, reviewing, and practicing your elevator pitch today. You never know who you might run into and where, so don't delay. Prepare a winning elevator pitch, and you'll set yourself up for success the next time you get asked that all too famous "tell me about yourself" question.

Slide 6 continued

What is a 30-second Infomercial (Elevator Pitch)?

An elevator pitch (or elevator speech) is a short synopsis that briefly and memorably introduces you as a professional. It answers the infamous "So, tell me about yourself" question by touching on three points:

1. Who you are
2. What you do
3. What you want

A 30-second infomercial is meant to be short—delivered within the time it takes to ride an elevator up and down. It's the highlights, not the cover letter.

Structuring Your 30-second Infomercial

You never know who you might run into and where. Make a powerful first impression by creating a 30-second infomercial ahead of time—that way, it's ready to share when you need it.

So, how do you create a concise, compelling, and accurate pitch? Engage your audience—and cover all the bases—by using a clear and consistent structure.

You don't need to share everything. It's tempting to share your life story, but an elevator pitch should be brief. Time yourself, continue making revisions and confirm that your speech is no more than 60 seconds long. Remember, it's better to leave people wanting more than it is to overwhelm them with details. If they're curious, they'll ask questions.

5 Pitch-Perfect Tips

After you write your speech, it's time to start sharing it with the world. Make sure it's a home run by adopting the following pitch-perfect tips:

- 1) Don't speak too fast. While your speech should be short, don't rush through it. Speak too quickly, and your listener will struggle to understand or absorb anything. You want your words to be memorable, so keep the pace steady. If that's taking too long, you likely crammed in too much information. So, do another round of editing.
- 2) Skip the jargon. While professional jargon can sometimes speak to your skill level, it also limits you. Using acronyms, industry-specific phrases, and technical terms isn't only confusing for many people, it also alienates them. So, skim your speech and double-check that you're using language that's easy to understand.
- 3) Express confidence. Convince your listener to believe in what you're saying by expressing confidence. First, consider your voice. Are your words clear and well-enunciated? What about your body language? Are you standing (or sitting) tall, looking straight ahead, and making eye contact?
- 4) Express positivity. Positivity is contagious—and it leaves a lasting impression. So, deliver your speech with enthusiasm. Use friendly facial expressions, smile, and try modulating your voice at different times to keep your listener engaged.
- 5) Keep practicing. You won't have a cheat sheet on the spot, so keep practicing. The more you practice, the less likely you are to forget something—and the more natural you'll sound. Recite your pitch out loud, in front of a mirror, over a recording, and with friends and family listening in.

Slide 7

Facilitating the meeting

The flow of an Informational Meeting

- Thank them for their time.
- Use your 30-Second Infomercial to share something about yourself.
- Set your phone timer or place your watch on the table or desk.
- Have your Marketing Profile (see PDF below) with you, just in case – but do not “lead” with it.

Virtual Informational Meeting Tips

1. Remove distractions from your desk.
2. Remove any distractions from behind you that the camera can see.
3. Make sure your background is simple and not noisy.
4. Pull all your notes out in front of you on your table or desk.
5. Make sure the equipment works.

6. Make sure you test Skype/Zoom/Teams ahead of time.
7. Be in a good Wi-Fi area.
8. Make sure power is available – no battery problems.
9. Make sure a phone is handy in case the sound dies. Know what number to call.
10. Have a clean tablet available in case the sound dies and you need to write a message.
11. Make sure the camera is just about eye height.
12. Make sure the lighting is good

Treat connections like friendships. Informational meetings aren't interviews. Your goal isn't to sell yourself—it's to create personal connections. So, ask yourself, "If this person was a friend, What would I say?" Remember, a great professional relationship is built on honesty and trust—just like friendship.

Tip: Don't Forget to Follow Up

If you want your connections to stick, follow up—and quickly. Send them an email within 24 hours.

When drafting those messages, refer to your notes so that you can reference a conversation point. Remind them of anything they said they would send you - another person's contact information, a job post, etc. Send them any information that you promised them, such as a contact or your marketing sheet or resume. Thank them again for meeting with you.

Keep your contacts updated on your progress.

Slide 8

Final tips for success

- Do your homework!
- Dress appropriately.
- Be prepared to take notes.
- Be a good and attentive listener.
- Always try to obtain referrals. ("Who do you know that I should talk to?")
- Always send a thank you note.
- Record, analyze, and evaluate the information received.
- Send the person an update as to your progress.

Networking is simply the cultivating of mutually beneficial, give-and-take, win-win relationships. It works best, however, when emphasizing the 'give' part. Bob Burg, Writer and Owner of Burg Communications, Inc.

Slide 9

Networking is not about just connecting people. It's about connecting people with people, people with ideas, and people with opportunities. Michele Jennae, Executive Career Coach and Writer

Conclusion

I can:

- Identify people in my network.
- Identify target companies and people to meet for informational meetings.
- Set up informational meetings and leverage them in my job search.
- Facilitate an effective informational meeting.

Expand the rows below to review the key takeaways from this course:

Identify People in your Network

Build worthwhile connections by being socially active and strategic about professional contacts. Also, demonstrate your value by offering help, staying up to date on industry news, and conveying an interest in what others say.

To meet new people, tap into your existing contacts for introductions, connect with others online, leverage your alma mater, join professional groups, and get involved in your community.

Use your 30-second Infomercial

Give a Call to Action

As you make new connections, prepare a quick and snappy summary of who you are. Keep your winning 30-second infomercial short by following a five-step process:

Introduce yourself.

Share your background.

Explain what you want.

Give a call to action.

Conclude with a genuine, "Thank you!"

Prepare for the Meeting

Research the company. Learn about products, services, competitors, reputation/status, and future growth potential.

Compose a list of questions designed to find out about career opportunities and the company in general.

Have Engaging Conversations

As you facilitate informational meetings, introduce yourself, ask open-ended questions, and share your thoughts. Remember also to end conversations gracefully, take notes on your contacts, and follow up.

Say Thank You and Ask for Contacts

Follow up quickly with a genuine thank you note, and don't forget to ask for additional contacts.

Follow the above takeaways, and you'll set the foundation for nurturing a rich professional network that you can use to grow your career. Thank you for completing this course!

Slide 10

Credits

Molly Schultz - Instructional designer, video producer/editor

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Five Step Networking Conversation from Articulate Rise 360 Content Library

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Hinshaw, D., Falconer, T., & Johnson, M. (2018). Survive and thrive in your job search: The team networking group process to your next job. Abbot Press.

Various resources from Mike Johnson, Coach for Tomorrow

Passport to employment Website