



## *Networking and Informational Interviewing*

Informational interviews are an excellent way to research potential career fields, network with individuals in your field, gain insight into the day-to-day functions of a job and learn more about the skills one needs to succeed in a particular career path. Informational interviews are also helpful in identifying your skills and interests and becoming more comfortable in an interview setting. Ask employees and administrators where you've interned, volunteered, or worked, about job openings in their organizations. The best way to get hired is still by knowing someone who works at a company who can mention your name!

### **Locating People to Interview**

- Family members and friends
- Professional organizations or associations
- College connections (Alumni Association, Career Center, faculty, parents of your friends or roommate)
- Online professional networking sites like LinkedIn
- Local companies, organizations or the Chamber of Commerce
- Job fairs
- Cold calls

### **Now What?**

Ask your primary contacts if they can refer you to secondary contacts (people they know) with hiring power, valuable career information, and/or knowledge of job vacancies in your desired field. Here are some potential questions to ask:

- Do you know anyone who does the type of work that I am looking for (or work that is similar in nature to the type of work that I am looking for)?
- Do you know anyone who works in the industry (or industries) that I wish to explore?
- Do you know anyone who works in this type of work setting or with this specific employer?

### **Then ask....**

Would your contact(s) be willing to meet with me informally to answer a few questions?

Conduct informational networking interviews with professionals in fields of interest as a way to learn more about their job, educational background, career path to current position, industry pros and cons, and to obtain referrals that broaden your networking base.

### **Preparing For the Interview**

- Bring a copy of your resume to the interview or mail it in advance as a FYI
- Dress professionally, just as you would if you were interviewing for a job with this organization
- Research the organization or the field (libraries, on-line resources, directories, annual reports, company Website)
- Develop a list of potential questions (see sample questions on the other side)

The following introduction can be used in telephoning the contact person for an interview. If you meet with some resistance, stress that you won't take up much of his/her time and that you are willing to meet at his/her convenience.

Who you are: *"Hello," Mr. Smith, "My name is Rocky Raven...."*

How did you get here: *"...and I am calling at the suggestion of Fred Jones...."*

Why are you contacting him/her: *"...the reason I am calling is that I am currently researching opportunities in the field of \_\_\_\_\_. I want you to know that Mr. Jones did not imply that you have any openings or that you would know of any. He did say that you would be a good person to speak with in order to gain a better perspective on my options within the marketplace."*

## **During The Interview**

- Arrive on time. Call if you are going to be late or need to cancel or reschedule.
- Be enthusiastic and professional at all times.
- Offer a firm hand shake, make good eye contact, etc.
- Don't turn an informational interview into a job interview.
- Tell the contact about yourself: Briefly summarize your background and your skills
- Be prepared to ask your prepared questions, but also be flexible and let the person being interviewed take the lead if appropriate
- Take notes to show that you are very interested.
- Ask for advice or suggestions about entering or working in the field
- If you wish, ask for feedback or suggestions on your resume
- Tell the contact that you enjoyed meeting with him/her and that you'll be sure to tell the referral about your meeting. Also, ask if the contact would recommend other professionals you might speak with.

## **Sample Questions**

### *About the Industry*

- What is a typical day like?
- What are the current trends in this field?
- How is the industry changing?
- Where do you see growth happening?
- What are the current trends in this field?
- How is the current economy impacting this industry?
- What do you see as the nature of the job market in this field?
- How does one learn about job opportunities for this field or organization?
- What type of advice would you offer to someone entering this field?
- What types of college courses or activities would help prepare one for this job or field?

### *About the Company*

- What kind of customers/clients does the company serve?
- Who are the primary competitors to this company?
- How would you describe the organizational culture?
- What type of skills do you look for in job candidates?
- What are typical salaries in the career?
- What types of education, training or certifications are required for this type of position?
- What are the best places to go to gain the appropriate certifications or degrees?

- What do you like most about working for this organization?
- How does the organization utilize technology?
- What opportunities are there for advancement?

#### *About the job*

- What is a typical day like?
- What are your duties and responsibilities?
- What are the advancement or growth opportunities?
- What is the profile of a high achiever in this job?
- Where would you see someone with my kind of background fitting into this type of environment?
- Are there busier or slower times of the month, year, or season?
- What type of hours are typical in the field? Is overtime common? Is there flexible scheduling?
- How much travel is required for this job??
- What kinds of deadlines do you typically deal with? What kinds of stresses are common?

### **Following the Interview**

Send a thank you note. Email is okay, but a handwritten note can really stand out.

#### *Sample Thank You Letter*

March 24, 2018

Rocky T. Raven  
40 University Drive  
Rindge, NH 03461  
rocky@franklinpierce.edu

Ms. Jane Doe  
Information Processing Manager  
XYZ Corporation  
Manchester, NH 03040

Dear Ms. Doe,

I am writing to let you know how much I enjoyed meeting with you on Thursday and learning more about the field of Information Processing Management. Through our discussion, I now have a much clearer understanding of the options open to me within my area of concentration at Franklin Pierce University. Thank you for taking the time to meet with me. I realize that your time is valuable, and I appreciate your willingness to share your knowledge and experience.

Thank you,

Rocky T. Raven