



NETWORKING refers to the process of identifying and contacting individuals who may be able to provide you with information, advice, or job leads and/or the names of other individuals who may be able to provide you with such information. **INFORMATIONAL INTERVIEWING is a type of networking.** Networking and informational interviewing are proactive strategies for developing personal and professional relationships/connections to gather information and gain exposure. If done properly, they can lead to job opportunities and long-term relationships.

Getting Started...

How do you find potential contacts?

- * Alumni, current or past faculty, current or past employers, classmates, friends, family
- * Individuals who gave presentations during class or at other events
- * People you have met at professional meetings, conferences, in professional associations
- * People who are experts in your field(s) of interest
- * People who are employed in organizations that match your professional interests
- * People you have met at career fairs, information sessions and people who have posted positions on Career Connect
- * People you may know through your outside interests/hobbies

Pointers about approaching contacts

- * Write an e-mail to request a 15 – 30 min meeting, either over the phone or in person. Use professional language in your e-mail and if you

do not know the person, begin the e-mail with "Dear Mr./Ms. ____"

- * When contacting someone you do not know, begin by stating how you obtained his/her name or by identifying the individual who referred you.
- * Explain why you are contacting the individual and be specific about the type of information you are seeking (e.g., conducting career research to help you make better decisions) make it clear that you are seeking information and advice (and not a job).
- * Briefly summarize your professional training, skills and goals.
- * If you make the contact via the phone, be prepared with some questions just in case the person says, "I have a few minutes now and can answer your questions."

Preparation/Questions: Prior to speaking or meeting, research the person/organization and develop a list of questions. Below are some sample questions but remember even though you want to obtain information, you also want to establish rapport, make a personal connection and have the conversation flow naturally. Choose the 5-7 questions that are most important to you.

- ◆ How did you get into this field? What is your background (education, training, experience)?
- ◆ What are your responsibilities? How does your position fit into the organization?
- ◆ What are the major skills/abilities you use?
- ◆ What are the rewards that you get from your job? What gives you the most satisfaction?
- ◆ What are some of the challenges/frustrations of the work?
- ◆ What is the work culture like?
- ◆ What are the demands of the job – does it require evening work? What is the work/life balance?
- ◆ What types of skills are necessary to be successful in this field?
- ◆ Are there opportunities for professional development?
- ◆ How well suited is my background for this field?
- ◆ What trends do you foresee in this field over the next three – five years?
- ◆ What are typical entry-level positions and salaries?

At the meeting...

"If you want to go fast, go alone. If you want to go far, go with others."

-African Proverb

Greet them with a firm handshake and thank them for their time upfront. Do not exceed your requested time, but be prepared to stay longer in case they indicate a willingness to talk longer. Dress as if it were an actual job interview. First impressions are always important. Get to your appointment a few minutes early (but no more than five or ten minutes) and be polite and pleasant to everyone you meet, regardless of their position. Take the initiative in conducting the interview; for informational meetings you are the one who asks the questions. Ask open-ended questions which promote a discussion and cannot be answered with one word responses. Once the question is asked, listen respectfully without interruption. Once inside the organization, look around. What kind of working environment is it -- dress style, communication patterns, sense of humor, etc.? Is this environment a good fit for you?

Frequently Asked Questions...

Q: I feel awkward asking people to meet with me. How assertive should I be? **A:** If you feel uncomfortable calling, start with email contact (and maintain the initiative if they do not write you back.) Request a short meeting and go to them so you are not inconveniencing them. Remember that they were likely in this position once and they may enjoy a conversation about their work and the opportunity to help out someone who is entering the field.

Q: How frequently should I keep in touch with contacts in my network?

A: There is no one right answer to this question. You may connect with some people in more ways than one and mutually work to develop a deeper relationship. Others, you may meet once, thank them for their time, and circle back within a year's time to give them an update on where you landed. People appreciate being contacted with a friendly note, and you needn't have an ask attached to it. If you learned something about their personal or professional lives, you might ask about that or say "I hope your recent travels went well."

Q: Should I request an informational interview after I have applied for a position? **A:** It is important to be upfront and not use an informational interview as a way to circumvent the hiring process. If you have a contact within the company who is not responsible for hiring for the position in which you are interested, you can request to meet with them to inquire more generally about the work and culture of the organization and about their career path and current work. You should disclose upfront in your request that you have applied for a position there and that you are not seeking to meet specifically about that posting.

Q: What should I ask for at the end of the informational interview? **A:** You don't have to request anything, but if they have offered suggestions of careers or companies you might consider, you might ask if they know anyone who would be willing to meet with you to offer additional advice and information. This way you further your research and expand your list of contacts.



Remember: Create a quick snapshot of your background with which to introduce yourself. Research the organization and if possible, the person with whom you will be meeting. Know exactly what information you want to learn or how you think the person with whom you are meeting can be helpful and prepare a list of questions. Don't ask for routine information that is readily available on the employer website. Informational interviews and networking meetings will give you lots of valuable information, including the type of experience or training that you have or need to acquire for specific positions and organizations as well as current information about the culture and realities of the organization and the field. **Be yourself! Send a prompt thank you e-mail, and stay in touch! You are building the personal and professional community that will support you along your career!**

SAMPLE REACHING OUT EMAIL:

*** Subject Line: Harvard Chan student request for informational interview ***

Dear Dr. Olsen,

I came across your contact information while searching through the alumni directory (or the Harvard Chan LinkedIn Group) **OR** When I was discussing my interests with Professor X, she suggested that I contact you .

I am currently finishing my MPH in Epidemiology at the Harvard T.H. Chan School of Public Health and I have a strong interest in U.S. immigrants' health concerns. I understand that you are involved in with the Latino/a Immigrant Health Study and I was hoping you could give me an overview of your work and any related projects in the Boston area.

Would you have 30 minutes to meet with me sometime for coffee at Starbucks? I would be happy to come your way.

I have also attached my CV as background. Thank you and I look forward to hearing from you at your earliest convenience.

Sincerely,

Janelle Smith

MPH Candidate 2017

Harvard T.H. Chan School of Public Health

aaa000@mail.harvard.edu | 413-555-1212

SAMPLE THANK YOU EMAIL:

*** Subject line: Thank you for meeting with me yesterday ***

Dear Dr. Olsen,

Thank you for meeting with me today. It was wonderful to speak with you and to learn more about your work at the Latino/a Immigrant Health Center. I was particularly fascinated to hear about your project addressing the needs of U.S. Latino/a Immigrants living below the poverty line.

I am grateful for the contacts you suggested to me, and I am excited to report that Dr. Susan Smith has already agreed to meet with me to discuss a potential internship position.

Thank you again for giving your time and advice so generously. I will keep in touch and update you on my progress in the future.

Sincerely,

Janelle Smith

MPH Candidate 2017

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