

# Job Search, Informational Interviews & Networking

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# JOB SEARCH

## INTRODUCTION

Are you searching for a job and aren't sure where to start? It can seem overwhelming with all of the new resources and tools available such as LinkedIn and the multitude of job search engines. Here are some tips and resources to help you successfully job hunt, including some tips for getting started, how to organize your job search, and do's and don'ts. You will also learn about networking and other helpful job search resources.

## JOB SEARCH STRATEGIES

### *USE JOB SEARCH SITES AND AGENTS AS PART OF YOUR SEARCH*

You can receive list of jobs via e-mail that may be a good match for you through many of the job search sites. All the major job sites have search agents and some web sites specialize in sending announcements. Of course, this is only one of many tools you should be using – don't limit your job searching to only the top sites like Monster, CareerBuilder and HotJobs. For efficiency you can take advantage of Indeed.com as it covers all of the major job boards, newspaper classified sites, niche industry sites and corporate job sites. It has more than 1,500 in all. Also consider smaller niche sites that focus on a particular geographic location or distinct career fields or to find other less publicized job listings.

**OUCareerLink.com** is Oakland University Career Services' comprehensive website that has a wealth of online resources available to point you in the right direction. The website allows you to post your resume for open positions. You can search the database to apply for full and part-time professional positions, internships, co-ops and other career-related opportunities. **OUCareerLink.com** is updated daily, accessible 24/7 and has free online registration open to OU students and alumni.

### *USE PROFESSIONAL NETWORKING TOOLS SUCH AS LINKEDIN, TWITTER AND FACEBOOK*

Though some job seekers are not as familiar as others with newer social media and job search tools, they should be utilized as they are a very common way that employers find and check out potential candidates today. Networking is key to finding a job and these tools provide innovative opportunities to network with other professionals and information on networking events. In addition, employers check these sites to evaluate a candidate's professionalism, credentials and achievements. Employers also will often do an internet search of candidates and you may be at a disadvantage if aren't connected to these social media networks.

### *PARTICIPATE IN NETWORKING WORKSHOPS/EVENTS*

For an effective job search, you should be spending more time off-line developing your social and business network to uncover job leads than posting your resume on on-line job sites. Connecting with others should be a significant part of your job search. You can polish your skills by participating in networking workshops and events offered through the Career Services office and out in the

community. If it has been a while since your last interviewed, it would be a good idea to see what the new trends and recommendations are for interviewing and networking with potential employers.

See the appendix for details on elevator speeches and researching companies.

You can build your networking skills by joining a professional organization related to your field or major. Often, they hold networking events, which may involve employer participation, in addition to regular meetings. You can also look at organizations and companies in the community who may be holding networking events, such as Michigan Works! and local Chambers of Commerce.

## JOB SEARCH GUIDELINES

- **Do** use all avenues/methods of job-hunting available. And **do** have a job search strategy
- **Do** take advantage of all web based job hunting methods, including general job-hunting sites, industry-specific job sites, geo-graphic-specific job sites, company or employer sites, and networking sites.
- **Don't** rely on any one method of job-hunting, especially job-hunting on the Internet (which should be at most 25% of your efforts)
- **Don't** expect to get a new job overnight; job-hunting takes time and patience. But **do** take some time to reflect on your strategies if you have been job-hunting for several months and have not had any success.
- **Don't** quit your current job until you have a new job. And **do** give proper notice when you quit your current job.
- **Do** know how to dress professionally for job-hunting.
- **Do** take advantage of your friends, family, and colleagues to network. And **don't** simply rely on passive job-hunting methods.
- **Do** follow up all job leads and do be persistent; there is truth to the "squeaky wheel" cliché.
- **Do** make sure a potential employer can reach you. Provide your cell phone and email and **do** make sure that your voicemail (or user name for e-mail) is professional.
- **Do** prepare and practice for your interviews. And **do** be sure and ask questions at the interview.
- **Do** conduct research on all companies that interest you.
- **Do** send thank you letters to all people who interview you including informational interviews.

*Quintessentialcareers.com*

# INFORMATIONAL INTERVIEWS

## INTRODUCTION

An informational interview is a brief meeting between a person who wants to investigate a career and a person working in that career. The purpose is not to get a job, but to find out about jobs you might like to see if they fit your interests and personality.

Informational interviews may help you:

- Learn more about the realities of working in particular occupation
- Decide among different occupations or choose an occupational specialty
- Focus on career goals
- Discover careers you never knew existed
- Uncover your professional strengths and weaknesses
- Find different ways to prepare for a particular career

See the appendix for details on elevator speeches and researching companies.

## HELPFUL GUIDELINES

- Don't ask for a job... Ask for information. Your goal is to build a relationship and establish rapport so that if a potential opportunity becomes available in the future, your contact will want to refer you.
- Be respectful of the other person's time. Have an agenda and keep the meeting on track.
- Ask questions and listen to what the other person has to say. Do not do all the talking.
- Ask for suggestions on how to expand your network. Ask your contacts if they can recommend a professional organization or the names of some other people you should be talking to.
- Create ways to keep the relationship going. Try to find at least two to three opportunities yearly to reconnect with members of your network.
- Find ways to reciprocate. See if you can help them in some way.
- Always thank your contacts in person and follow up with a letter. If your handwriting is legible, the personalized touch is appreciated.
- Write out your list of questions to ask (see list of possible informational interview/networking questions on the next page)
- Create a resume – have your resume reviewed before going to the informational interview
- Be punctual and give yourself time in case you run into traffic or get lost.
- Dress as if you were going to an employment interview – you only get one chance to make a first impression.

## **SAMPLE INFORMATIONAL INTERVIEW QUESTIONS**

- What kind of work is done in this job on a daily basis?
- What education or training is necessary to get this kind of job?
- What experience or skill is required?
- What are the positive aspects of this job?
- What are the challenges of this job?
- Are there other people/professional organizations I could talk to for further information?
- What personal qualities or abilities are important to being successful in this job?
- How did you get your job?
- What opportunities for advancement are there in the field?
- How do you see jobs in this field changing in the future?
- What advice would you give a person entering this field?
- What types of training do companies offer persons entering this field?
- Which professional journals and organizations would help me learn more about this field?
- If you could do it all over again would you choose the same path for yourself? Why? What would you change?
- Who do you know that I should talk to next? When I call him/her, may I use your name?

*Occupational Outlook Quarterly 2002*

# NETWORKING

## INTRODUCTION

Networking means developing a broad list of contacts -- people you've met through various social and business functions -- and using them to your advantage when you look for a job. People in your network may be able to give you job leads, offer you advice and information about a particular company or industry, and introduce you to other so that you can expand your network.

Networking doesn't mean asking everyone you run into for a job or even if he or she knows where the job openings are. It means establishing relationships so that you can enlist support and comfortably ask for ideas and advice. Successful networking doesn't mean always asking for favors; it means participating in a give-and-take. Networking is at its most effective when both the networker and the contact benefit from the relationship.

## HELPFUL GUIDELINES

- **Do** maintain a LinkedIn presence. It is the largest professional networking site and can help you with your job search.
- **Do** think creatively about where to find network contacts. You can find people to add to your network almost anywhere.
- **Don't** go anywhere without copies of your resume and business cards or networking cards. You can keep your resume in your car, briefcase, or online, but be sure you can access it easily if you meet someone who could pass your resume along to a hiring manager.
- **Don't** be afraid to ask for help. Most people are flattered to be asked for assistance and advice with your job search. It makes them feel important.
- **Do** join a professional organization related to your field. Professional organizations are a top venue for networking
- **Do** volunteer. Volunteer work was cited in the survey as the No. 2 way to make network contacts.
- **Do** find a mentor. A mentor -- that one person who can guide you, help you, take you under his or her wing and nurture your career quest -- can be the most valuable kind of network contact.
- **Do** come up with a system for organizing your network contacts, whether a spreadsheet on your computer, a file box of index cards, a three-ring binder, or whatever works for you.
- **Don't** forget to thank everyone in your network who has been helpful to you, preferably with a nice thank-you note. It's just common courtesy to show your appreciation for peoples' assistance and your contacts will remember your good manners.
- **Do** keep networking even after you've found a job. You never know when you might need your network contacts again.
- **Do** realize why networking is so important. Only 5 to 25 percent of jobs are advertised, so you can find out about all the unadvertised openings only through talking to as many people as possible and telling them you are looking for a job.
- **Do** consider conducting informational interviews, the ultimate networking technique.

## **EXAMPLES OF NETWORK CONTACTS**

**For college students and new grads, the best networking contacts are:**

- Classmates
- Alumni
- Your parents and relatives
- Parents of classmates
- Professors
- Fraternity brothers, sorority sisters, and Greek organization alumni
- College administrators and faculty
- Coaches
- Guest speakers in your classes
- People you have conducted informational interviews with
- Members of professional organizations
- Your past or present co-workers
- Friends
- Members of your religious community
- Peer volunteers
- Your mentor
- Business associates, such as customers, clients, vendors, and suppliers



# APPENDIX

## RESEARCHING COMPANIES

### *WHY RESEARCH A COMPANY*

- Identify employers in your targeted career field
- Identify career opportunities within a company or organization
- Find pertinent company information to include in your cover letter that demonstrates your interest and why you are uniquely suited for the job or organization
- To prepare for a job or informational interview questions
- To learn more about the person you might be interviewing with or working for

### *WHAT INFORMATION SHOULD YOU RESEARCH*

- Is the company publicly or privately owned?
- Is there a parent company, divisions and/or subsidiaries?
- How large is the company? How many people does it employ?
- What are the history, philosophy, mission, goals and background of the company?
- What products or services does this company provide?
- Where is the company located? Is it local or does it have regional, national or international affiliations?
- Who are the major competitors?
- What is the organizational structure and culture?
- What does the company say about itself? Consult company literature, brochures and advertisements.
- What types of changes, trends, societal and economic factors are occurring or impacting the industry?

### *WHERE TO RESEARCH COMPANY INFORMATION*

- Company's website and LinkedIn profile: About Us section, the press section and other areas of interest, e.g. company's annual report
- Social media including: Facebook and YouTube fan pages, the latest Twitter tweets, Twello to find employees of the company and what they are writing about, LinkedIn to look up profiles of people you might be interviewing with or for info on hiring manager or others in your department of interest
- Search engines--type in company's name, can include "good" or "bad"
- Internet research sites including: Business.com, Hoovers, Thomas Net, Vault, WetFeet
- Directories including: Dunn & Bradstreet, Standard & Poor Register of Corporations, Thomas Register of American Manufactures, Moody's Manual, Directory of Corporate Affiliations, local and national newspapers
- Trade and professional associations that produce membership directories, journals and industry briefs.
- Company employees via your personal and professional network, including friends, neighbors, relatives, alumni and former classmates
- Chamber of Commerce

## *ELEVATOR SPEECHES (AKA: 60 SECOND SELL)*

### *DEVELOPING AN ELEVATOR SPEECH*

An “elevator speech” is a short description of what you do, or the point you want to make, presented in the time it takes an elevator to go from the top floor to the first floor or vice versa. You can use it at an event, a conference, a convention, or some other type of meeting with networking opportunities. It can be a response to “what do you do” or “tell me about yourself” at the start of a job interview. It can also be incorporated into your LinkedIn profile summary.

Actually, it is imperative to work on this one minute presentation until it is perfectly crafted and you have it memorized. Make it such a part of you that if someone caught you off guard and distracted, and asked you what you do, you would smoothly and without hesitation tell them your “elevator speech.” This speech will serve as your introduction to others, so it has to be good! Let it become an organic part of you. Many experts suggest practicing in front of mirrors, role-playing with friends, and practicing in the car on the way to interviews or networking events.

Take advantage of a wide variety of gatherings and networking events to gain practice with your speech. And, don’t worry, if it isn’t smooth, easy, or natural in the beginning. If you stick with it, you will find that it gets better and better.

Consider these questions in crafting your description:

- How familiar is the employer or your audience with you or your subject matter?
- What are their biases/interests?
- How can you connect your background to what they care about?

**Remember:** The best descriptions leave the listener wanting more. If you succeed with your 60-second presentation, you’ll likely have three or four more minutes to elaborate on your work.

### *ELEVATOR SPEECH: DOS & DON'TS*

- **Do** make your Elevator Speech sound effortless, conversational, and natural.
- **Do** make it memorable and sincere. Open a window to your personality.
- **Do** write and rewrite your speech, sharpening its focus and eliminating unnecessary words and awkward constructions.
- **Do** consider including a compelling "hook," an intriguing aspect that will engage the listener, prompt him or her to ask questions, and keep the conversation going. .
- **Do** be warm, friendly, confident, and enthusiastic. A smile is often the best way to show friendliness and enthusiasm, while a strong, firm voice the best way to express confidence.
- **Do** take it slowly. **Don't** rush through the speech, and do pause briefly between sentences. Breathe.

- When developing an Elevator Speech for a specific employer you've targeted, **do** research the organization and incorporate that knowledge into your speech.
- If you're cold-calling a hiring manager and get his or her voicemail **don't** be afraid to leave your Elevator Speech as a voice message. You may be even more successful getting action from the speech than if you had talked to the manager personally.
- **Do** incorporate examples and stories to help support your points. Provide examples of successful outcomes of deploying your skills. Stories make your speech memorable. .
- **Do** focus on how you can benefit employers and help them solve their problems. Remember as you deliver your Elevator Speech that the listener may be mentally asking, "What's in it for me (or my company)?"
- **Don't** forget to update your speech as your situation changes.
- **Don't** try to tell them EVERYTHING in one breath. Tell them something that is so powerfully grabbing that they just have to ask you for more, and even then when you respond keep it short, keep them asking for more.

### **SAMPLE ELEVATOR SPEECHES**

Below are sample Elevator Speeches. Use these as guides in developing your own. **Do not copy these verbatim.** It is essential that you create your own and incorporate your own uniqueness and style of expression.

#### **Seeking On Campus Job Example**

*"I am a freshman attending Oakland University and plan on declaring a major in Health Sciences. I am undecided about my ultimate career choice at this time, but believe I will pursue a medical or PT degree after completing my undergraduate studies. I volunteered at Henry Ford Hospital my last two years of high school and loved interacting with the patients I was assigned to as a Transporter and Aid. The environment was challenging but very rewarding and provided me with a great perspective on career options in the medical field. I was an honors student at Farmington Hills High School and particularly enjoyed my science and lab classes. I was on the swim team for all four years and will be trying out for OU's swim team next semester. I am interested in a student position at the Rec Center so I can contribute my enthusiasm for helping people, athletics and promoting healthy lifestyle initiatives which aligns well with my academic and career goals. "*

### **Seeking Internship Example**

*“I am a senior, majoring in Human Resource Development at Oakland University and will be graduating in December. Currently I am looking for a fall, full-time HR generalist internship where I can contribute my strong interpersonal, communication and organizational skills. I am a high achiever—having maintained a 3.9 GPA while working 30 hours a week and taking a full time course load. I have also been highly involved in the honor society for HRD students, starting out as the Secretary in my sophomore year, Treasurer in my junior year and currently serve as President.*

*For the past 4 years I have worked at The Gap, starting out as a Sale Associate and after receiving great customer satisfaction evaluations and exceeding sales goals I was promoted to Assistant Manager two years ago. I currently hire and train all new sales associates and am responsible for assigning and overseeing the weekly work activities of 10 part-time employees. I am confident that my HR-related work experience and the knowledge I have gained through my courses and projects will make me an excellent addition to your HR team.”*

### **Seeking Full-Time Employment Example**

*“I am a recent graduate of Oakland University’s Master of Arts in Counseling program. I completed 40 hours of clinical practicum experience at OU’s SEHS Counseling Center and a 600 hour internship at the Linwood Counseling Center in Southfield. In both environments I provided individual counseling sessions for children, adolescents and adults and had the opportunity to do some additional therapeutic work with couples experiencing marital difficulties. I am very familiar with the DSM having used it extensively during my internship and in my employment as a Case Manager with a social services agency for 10 years. I have been recognized by my colleagues and supervisors as a strong advocate for the clients I serve and have received multiple awards for my community service leadership activities. I am a strengths-based counselor and believe in utilizing a range of therapeutic techniques based on the individual needs of my clients and also recognize the importance placed on evidence-based treatment plans as mandated by many third party providers. I am seeking a full-time counseling position servicing a diverse population and am available to work some evenings and weekends as necessary to meet the needs of the clients served.”*