

— informational — INTERVIEWING

Choosing a career is difficult without adequate knowledge. The Shocker Career Accelerator has assessments, appointments, programs and events to help you learn about yourself and the world of work. Once you begin to identify careers, industries or companies that seem like a potential fit, an informational interview can be another great step toward gaining more knowledge and making a career decision. To make the most of this opportunity, consider these key points.



BE CLEAR ABOUT YOUR GOAL.

Which career, industry or company do you want to know more about? Do initial research on the web. What can you learn on your own, and what additional questions do you have? These additional questions can form the basis for the interview, and the information you learn on your own will help make a good impression by showing you are prepared.

FIND OTHERS TO ANSWER QUESTIONS.

Go through your list of potential contacts. This can include professors, classmates, co-workers, friends, family, friends of family, family of friends or people you encounter during personal appointments or other outings. By doing research online, you can also find potential interviewees. Another resource is the LinkedIn search feature or Alumni Tool (LinkedIn.com/Alumni). You can search by keyword, job title, degree or company to find potential contacts. If you are unable to find someone to talk to via these methods, contact the Shocker Career Accelerator for assistance.



REACH OUT POLITELY AND PROFESSIONALLY.

People are often happy to talk to others about the work they do, but be mindful that professionals are busy. By phone or email, politely ask for a 20-minute meeting. Identify your goal and how you found the person's name. It might be necessary to conduct the interview via phone. If the person is unable to talk with you, ask for any ideas of others you could talk to. See the back of this handout for an example of what you might say in an initial email or phone conversation.

PREPARE. LISTEN. SEND A THANK-YOU NOTE.

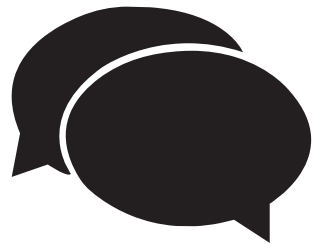
Now that you have secured a brief meeting, make the most of the opportunity by being prepared with questions that will help you learn if the career, industry or company is a good fit for you. See the other side of this handout for some sample questions. Dress appropriately – business casual is a good option. Plan to arrive 10 minutes early. While there, pay attention to what the interviewee is saying, as this can help guide further questions and help you gain the knowledge you need. Take brief notes and ask permission if you want to record the conversation. If you hear only negative or only positive information, you may want to conduct another interview with another person. Don't forget to promptly send a thank-you note or email afterward! An example is on the other side.



quick EXAMPLES

INITIAL PHONE OR EMAIL CONVERSATION:

“Hello Mr. Smith. My name is Elizabeth Wilson. I’m currently a student at Wichita State University pursuing a degree in _____. I’m interested in learning more about _____ (insert career area or company name). Would you be willing to speak with me for 15 to 20 minutes about this when you are available? Thank you for your time.” You can also include how you heard about your contact, for example, “Stephanie Hunter suggested I contact you.”



QUESTIONS TO ASK DURING THE INTERVIEW:

The sample questions below can give you ideas of what to ask your interviewee. For more ideas, go to <http://bit.ly/1m1pqwn>. Remember that your interview time is limited, so choose questions that will help you reach your interview goal.

- Tell me a little about your background. How did you get started in this field?
- Why did you decide to choose this career/industry/company?
- What is your favorite aspect of your work?
- What is your least favorite aspect of this job?
- In general, what are the rewards and frustrations of this field?
- What sorts of changes are occurring in your occupation?
- How is the outlook for employment in this field?
- What degrees, skills and experiences are important for someone entering this career?
- What courses and past experiences proved the most valuable for you in this job?
- How is my experience so far for entering this field? What else should I do?
- What are the typical entry-level jobs?
- What can you tell me about this company’s atmosphere and culture?
- How has your career affected your lifestyle?
- What would be the next step in your career?
- How are salaries in this line of work?
- What other fields or companies do you think I should research?
- Do you have any suggestions of other people I should talk to?
- What suggestions do you have for someone interested in this career/industry/company?

THANK-YOU NOTE AFTER THE INTERVIEW:

“Hello Mr. Smith. I appreciate you taking time out of your busy schedule to meet with me yesterday. Our interview was useful and informative and answered many of the questions I had about a career in/at _____ (insert career area or company name). Your suggestions were very helpful, and I have made revisions to my resume based on your thoughts. I have also contacted _____ (insert name of reference) about meeting, since you advised she might have other helpful experience to add to my knowledge. Thank you again for your time and assistance. I hope to see you again soon. Sincerely, Elizabeth Wilson.”



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WICHITA STATE UNIVERSITY SHOCKER CAREER ACCELERATOR
(316) 978-3688 | SCA@WICHITA.EDU | WICHITA.EDU/CAREER
JOHN BARDO CENTER. ROOM 162