

Networking Questions

Networking and informational interviews can provide valuable information for your job or internship search and also for clarify your career interests.

Reaching out to a Contact

When reaching out to a contact, such as an alumnus, send a brief email.

Here's an example of an email you could send:

*Dear Ms. Hanson,
I am a current Suffolk University BSBA in Finance student who will be graduating in May. Professor Ross recommended contacting you.*

I am considering a few possible career directions and wanted to see if I can speak with you for an informational interview to learn more about the work you do as a Financial Analyst at ABC Company. Please let me know if it would be possible to meet for a half hour at your convenience. Thank you for considering my request.

*Sincerely,
Michele Birkman*

It's helpful to say why you are interested in speaking with the person, so they know you will not waste their time. Indicating a timeframe is advised. If someone, such as a professor, recommended speaking with them, you can mention that too.

Be sure not to say:

“I wanted to see if you could help me get a job/internship at your company.” – If they do not know you, they need to get to know you first before offering help or sharing contacts. *Remember that you are asking for advice and information, not a job.*

Preparing

Make the most of your contacts by planning ahead. Think about each contact's areas of expertise and how they can be helpful to you. Come prepared with your one-minute introduction and effective questions. Also look up your contact on LinkedIn.com and study the company's web site.

Your 1-minute introductions

Begin your conversation with a brief statement about your background and what you are looking for. For example: “I've been working as a human resources generalist for a software company for the past three years, and had some recruiting and client relations experience before that. I'm now thinking about where I want to go next and am looking for opportunities for advancement outside my company. I know that because of your position, you have a good sense of what is happening in the industry. I would like to review some of my ideas with you.

Networking Questions

Use some of the following questions to help you get the answers you need for your job search.

Tell me about yourself: these questions help you learn about your contact's career path, current work, and skills requirements.

- How did you get into this field? What special skills did you have coming into this job?
- What tasks do you like most/least in your job?
- Who do you interact with on a regular basis?
- What special skills did you learn on the job?
- On what criteria are you evaluated?
- What will you need to learn to stay or advance in this job/industry?
- How would you describe the culture of your employer?
- Where do you see yourself in 3, 5, and 10 years? What related industries would you consider working in?
- What is the compensation for someone in various levels in this industry?

The Industry/Market: these questions help you learn more about the profession, industry trends, and what employers are looking for in candidates.

- What are trends affecting this industry? What employment trends do you see?
- Who are the market leaders? Who are the growing companies?
- How would my background be perceived?
- Are people in this industry receptive to people coming from other industries?
- Are there freelance opportunities that would enable me to check out the field?
- What are the best sources of information about this industry?
- What professional associations would you recommend?
- Who are other people that you would suggest speaking with?
- Can you share with me the resources that you use to source candidates when you have a job opening at your company?
- Are there any particular job search strategies that are more successful in this industry?

Personal feedback: Use these questions to get feedback about your background and get ideas of directions to consider in your job search.

- Would you be willing to give me some feedback about the content and format of my resume?
- Based on my background, what kinds of jobs should I consider? What are some alternatives?
- What skills are employers seeking?
- What questions should I be asking that I am not?

Send a Thank You Note or Email

It's critical that you send a thank you card or email to thank the contact for taking the time to speak with you and share valuable information. Make sure to include your contact information so they can get in touch with you if they choose to follow up at any point with additional information.