

## Informational Interview Guide

An informational interview is one of the most valuable tools you can use to develop your career plans. It is a very enjoyable activity. You simply set up meetings with professionals and talk about their career. It is one of the most effective types of networking used as part of a career search.

**What is an Informational Interview?** An informational interview is a meeting with a person who can help you understand a career, company or industry. It is one of the best ways to discover if a career is right for you.

**What are the benefits of an Informational Interview?** The main benefit of an informational interview is that it gives you a first-hand personal account of what it is like to work in a specific career or organization. You will discover what it is really like to work in that industry and whether that career will suit you. This kind of research will allow you to find out if a particular career matches your own interests, skills and goals. You will be able to ask specific questions that are not answered elsewhere and which you would not be able to ask in a job interview. An informational interview also gives you a valuable contact to add to your network. **Note:** An informational interview is never used to ask for a job.

**Who do I interview?** You should interview professionals in jobs that interest you. Ask family and friends if they can recommend someone for you to interview. Also, join the Georgia Tech Alumni Group on LinkedIn. The alumni on LinkedIn have volunteered to be a resource to current Georgia Tech students. You may also visit the Georgia Tech Alumni Association and look-up professionals in the alumni database. It is also a superb idea to join a professional association and attend their meetings to meet professionals. Once you meet with a professional, thank them for their time and ask if they know other professionals that you could interview.

**How do I invite someone to an Informational Interview?** When you contact someone by phone or email, introduce yourself, tell them you are a Georgia Tech Management student, and tell them you are interested in learning about their career or organization. Ask if they can spend 30 minutes discussing their career with you. It is always polite to ask them to join you for breakfast, lunch or a coffee. **Never mention you are looking for a job or need a job.**

**How should I conduct the interview?** The difference in a job interview and an informational interview is that this time you are in charge and get to ask the questions. However, you should treat this like a formal business meeting and conduct yourself professionally. This means you must be on time and dress business casual or business formal, whichever is appropriate.

**How do I prepare for the interview?** It is important to prepare for the meeting by bringing questions with you and by researching the organization or career in advance. Be ready to provide a brief statement (Personal Positioning Statement) about yourself and what you wish to achieve in the meeting. Be prepared to explain your interest in the career/company/industry. Take your portfolio with pen and paper and take notes during the interview.

**What questions should I ask?** Before the meeting, take time to create questions that are thoughtful and important to you; such as:

- Tell me about your career.
- What trends are going on in this field?
- What advice do you have for a young person interested in this field?
- How did you get started in the industry?
- What do you like most about your job?
- What do you like the least about your job?
- What was your major and how did it help you in the field?
- Is this the career you always wanted?
- What were your original career goals?
- Can you look at my resume and suggest improvements?
- Is there any other advice you would give to a student seeking a career like yours?
- Are there any other people you would recommend I talk to?

**How should I follow up after the interview?**

- Give them your business card at the end of the meeting and ask for their card
- Send a thank you note before the end of the day.
- Email the new contacts this person provided. Repeat above steps for each contact.
- Keep records on individuals contacted for future reference and follow up.
- Once you get your job, inform and thank everyone that helped you.
- Maintain your network by keeping them updated on your career and life.

Informational Interviews are fun and you will learn a lot during the process. You will endear yourself to people because you are interested in them and their careers, and it will lead to a job if you stick to it and follow-up on every lead you receive.