



Thunderbird Informational Interview Guide

Career Management Center

Thunderbird School of Global Management

Arizona State University

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Overview

This guide is intended for current students at Thunderbird School of Global Management to support job research through informational interviews. These meetings can be a great source of information that cannot be found online, as well as provide connections to continue career development. Each section builds on the information, ultimately guiding through searching, identifying, contacting, and interviewing another professional.

What is an informational interview?

An informational interview¹, sometimes called a networking meeting or informational conversation, is a brief meeting to obtain information to achieve identified goals. Executive Career Job Search Coach and the author of *20-Minute Networking Meeting*, Nathan Perez, says there are professional and personal reasons to network. Professional reasons include job search, business development, sales, marketing; whereas personal reasons include making friends, learning, and having fun. This guide is focused on professional networking meetings with the objectives to learn trends, strategize career, and gain an advocate (Table 1).

Objectives of Professional Networking Meetings	
Learn Trends	Information about a organization, industry, or function; career development strategies
Strategize Career	Career development insight, expand knowledge sources with people and resources
Gain an Advocate	Someone who is willing to help identify opportunities or additional connections

Table 1. Objectives of Professional Networking Meetings

The purpose of this type of meeting is to enable career research, such as getting advice, insights, and contacts. These **meetings are not the time or place to ask for a job**. Networking is an ongoing process, starting *before* a job is being considered. According to Beyond-B School, there are 5 things to accomplish in these meetings, to learn about:

1. industry trends,
2. the person's career path and a typical day in their role,
3. navigating the hiring process and landing a job,
4. other resources and contacts,
5. secure a new advocate.

The person requesting the meeting sends the agenda, leads the discussion, and asks the questions. While a job should not be an expected, T-birds strive to make a good enough impression that the professional wants to hire them or influence someone else who can. Anything is possible when entering the conversation with **genuine interest**, are **curious** about the person and the organization, come **prepared** with a plan, and **communicate** effectively to impress the contact.

Why are informational interviews valuable?

In Perez's book, the reason why this is so important comes down to: People hire people. Companies want trust and efficiency, which emphasizes the importance of cultural fit. It is well known that good culture and hiring people who fit that culture improves overall business productivity. When there is a healthy work culture, then it is more enjoyable and rewarding to "go to work". This draws additional talent to the organization, increasing productivity and efficiency in workflows and hiring. Many hiring managers and recruiters use their own network to find a match for hiring needs, meaning that **networking plays a fundamental role in searching for qualified candidates**.

¹ The term 'informational interview' will be used throughout the document for consistency.

Everyone should be networking throughout their career. Organizations seek a workforce with diverse experience in different organizations and industries, therefore networking is a continuous factor of career development.

Networking is a skill and can be learned, but it takes practice and patience with the process. While these meetings can hold a lot of value, there are several ways to diminish that value: asking for favors, not respecting others' time, name dropping or selling, not taking initiative, fear of seniority. The biggest challenges tend to be not having the time (people are busy) and that networking can carry a negative connotation. Professionals feel that they simply don't have extra time to spare. Often that is due to networking meetings that are not focused, become social, do not have an agenda, or take more time than promised.

Inform the contact about career research results, requesting to add value from their insight, advice, or opinion. It may make a big difference in getting a spot on their calendar. This strategy can be an effective approach when the word 'networking' may be stalling progress. All that said, **the biggest deciding factor when it comes to a request for a networking meeting is time**. These conversations are productive when in-person, but similarly on video calls. Some professionals may not have the capacity to do either, so in this case a phone call can work.

Who to talk to?

Start with your own network! While at university, there is a trove of connections to discover. Having a wide contact base is fundamental to achieving career development goals; potential is all around- expand networking beyond profession and adapt objectives to each unique connection.

- Fellow members of academic clubs, internship peers, friends, neighbors, grads from year prior
- Online influencers, conference presenters, current or past co-workers, peers, alumni groups, professional networking groups, those met at conferences or training

With any type of networking, it's unknown how each person can provide support and there are various types of support. There are 3 types of connections that provide different types of support: mentors, referrals, and managers. Mentors are professionals who can provide industry knowledge and advice. They are great people to review application materials, like resumes and cover letters, but reach out to mentors while still exploring career paths.

Referrals are another type of connection that can facilitate introductions to enhance the job search. However, any requests should match the intensity of the relationship. There must be strong rapport for the contact to confidently advocate a candidate at any point in an application process. These professionals may be in a number of roles, such as individual contributors, current/former interns, etc. However, Managers are a type of connection that have hiring power for roles. They can provide guidance on professional development and are great sources for feedback. When networking, it's important to clarify the objective but know that the undertaking is long-term and starts with the little things.

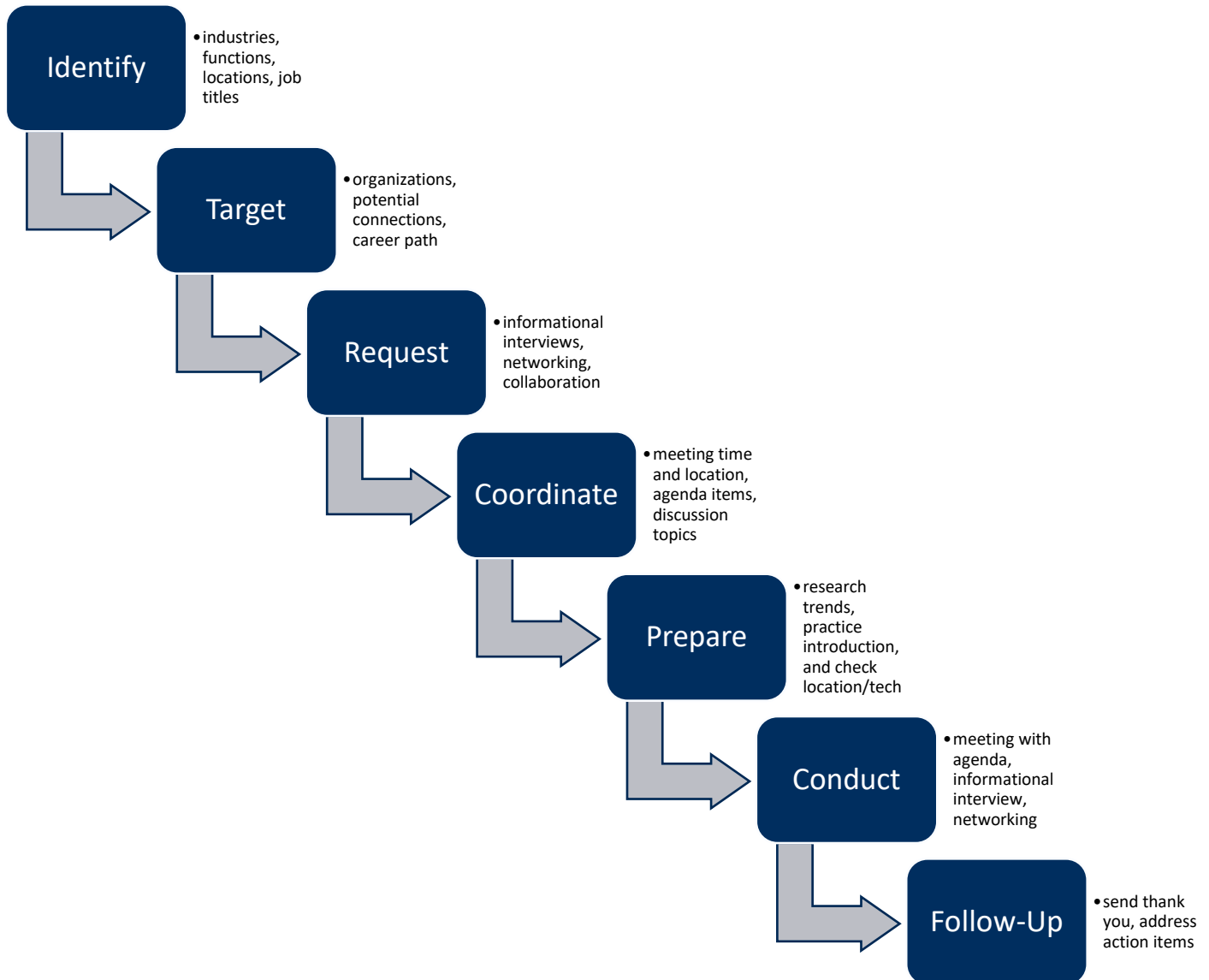
As the person that requested the meeting- your actions are critical to the success of the meeting (i.e. setting the agenda, asking questions). It's important to be prepared when entering these conversations, which will be detailed throughout the rest of the guide.

How does it work?

Informational interviews require effort, as does networking. This guide will provide additional details and information about the process outlined below.

1. Identify industries and functions of interests, then research job titles for future roles.
2. Target companies and potential connections using LinkedIn and other resources with [L.A.M.P.](#)

3. Make a request to meet with identified professionals. Depending on the industry, the common channels may vary - in-person, email, LinkedIn, or other.
4. Coordinate to schedule the meeting.
5. Research the professional, prepare questions, and practice powerful introduction.
6. Conduct an informational interview with the professional.
7. Follow up with the professional and any of their recommendations within 24 hours.



Getting Started

Everyone has to get started somewhere. To begin, identify and list organizations to find connections. This is the first step to research and prepare for an informational interview. It can be a lot at once, so first focus on only 3-5 people a day. Be sure to find “common ground”, or mutual understanding that provides foundation to a relation, during research. This will be useful for requests, conducting informational interviews, and sending follow-up messages. Start with 3-5 today, 5 more tomorrow, 5 more on the next day, and so on. Comfort will increase with frequency and effort, until it becomes regular practice to send up to 30 invitations a day.

Identifying Organizations and Connections (L.A.M.P.)

Steve Dalton, author of *The 2-Hour Job Search*, uses L.A.M.P. method to focus the job search by collecting certain critical and preliminary data. A worksheet copy of this exercise is provided in [Index A](#), with an international version in [Index B](#).

L is for List. Develop a list of potential target companies for each category below. Spend 10 minutes per section to find 10 prospective employers for each- after 40 minutes there will be a list of 40 potential employers.

L	• List	• Dream Employers- ideal employers identified when entering business school
A	• Alumni	• Alumni Employers- find by typing keywords into primary alumni database
M	• Motivation	• Posting Employers- found using keywords to search this job-posting website ○ Note: Don't click on postings, just see who they are hiring.
P	• Posting	• Trending Employers- found when using industry and “trend” in search engine, noting companies cited for doing interesting things

A is for Alumni/Advocate Next to the column of employers listed, mark a Y (for Yes, when there is a strong alumni contact or personal connection, or advocate, working at that organization) or an N (for No, when there is not a strong connection currently employed there) based on search through Tbird Connect (www.tbirdconnect.com) and the LinkedIn Alumni Search Tool (<https://www.linkedin.com/school/thunderbird/people/>). This should take about 10 minutes.

M is for Motivation. Indicate personal level of determination to obtain an informational interview with **each employer.** **Record** a number from 5 down to 1, with 5 being a dream employer and 1 indicating an unknown organization (Table 2). Go with the gut feeling, this step should only be about 5 minutes.

5	4	3	2	1
dream employer	2nd tier employer	3rd tier employer	employer - don't care for	employer - don't know enough about

Table 2. L.A.M.P. Employer Rating Scale

P is for Posting. Go back to common job site (Indeed, LinkedIn, Google) and mark a Y if the target organization has postings and N if it doesn't. Again, don't open the postings; mark whether the targeted employer is advertising jobs. This should be completed in 15 minutes. Mark employers between 1-3 (1 indicating few postings, 2 for moderate amount, and 3 for many postings) as a proxy measure of whether a organization is hiring or not. Remove employers that do not have postings, as this activity targets those that are actively hiring.

For the nature of this guide, there is a worksheet attached ([Index A](#)) to complete. However, it's recommended to record this list in a spreadsheet to sort the results. Review the information by sorting first by Motivation (high to low), second by Postings (high to low), and third by Alumni (Yes to No).

Note for International Job Search: For international candidates looking for US jobs or US candidates looking for roles abroad, add a column indicating whether the organization accepts visas or has sponsored in the past ([Index B](#) for international version of worksheet). Refer to the list of employers in Interstride (<https://student.interstride.com/dashboard>), or by using sites like H1B Grader (<https://h1bgrader.com/>).

LinkedIn as a Research Tool

Use the link to access the 7-minute tutorial on using LinkedIn to quickly find variations of job/internship titles, companies you've never heard of, and professionals to contact.

Recording: <https://vimeo.com/961704161?share=copy>

Powerful Introduction

Crafting a powerful introduction, also known as an elevator pitch, is an essential tool for networking. It emphasizes the start of a conversation—and hopefully a relationship—rather than an isolated moment. Make a memorable introduction with a short synopsis that answers the infamous “So, tell me about yourself” question. Practice and revise until it concisely and clearly addresses: who you are, career interests/activities, and what you want.

With only seconds to capture the audience's attention, bringing a human element to networking stands out because it's focused on relationship building. Utilizing a conversational approach makes it easier to connect with others, especially when there is a genuine interest in others. However, it is better to leave people wanting more, than to overwhelm them with details. If they're curious, they'll ask questions. Follow the steps below for a concise, compelling, and honest powerful introduction.

1. Introduce Yourself

Before diving into talking, take a moment to let the other person know who you are. Smile, shake the person's hand (if in person), and greet them. Then, share your name and a quick expression of gratitude.

Example: “Hello, my name is [NAME]. It's a pleasure to meet you!”

2. Share Your Background

Highlight career interests and relevant experiences that showcase skills and accomplishments. To prepare: write down all key points about your background, filter out non-essential details, and refine by editing until it sounds right. What's left into 2-3 sentences.

Example: “I recently graduated with a Master of Global Management from Thunderbird, where I specialized in finance. It was when I led a team project to develop a financial model for a startup that I became interested in financial literacy at technology startups.”

3. Explain the Purpose

State the objective for the conversation, which will vary depending on goals and career stage. Limit this to 1-2 sentences and highlight value by referencing specific skills or knowledge.

Example: “I am passionate about leveraging my financial analysis skills to support sustainable business practices and am currently looking for opportunities in corporate finance.”

Listed below are examples of how to articulate the desire for the conversation.

- Discuss what skills may translate to a new but related industry
- Brainstorm about career options in [INDUSTRY]
- Discover the organization's culture (and potential fit)
- Gather information about the growth or hiring trends of other companies in industry
- Obtain names of other industry related companies
- Identify key individuals to meet (such as decision-makers in target companies)

4. Give a Call to Action

A call-to-action statement (CTA) encourages the audience to respond and act. This is the last precaution for making sure that the pitch doesn't end in silence. Clearly lay out what the connection and expectation is of the other person.

Example: "I would love to learn more about your work in sustainable finance and explore potential career paths at [ORGANIZATION]. Do you have time now to talk or could we schedule a later time to discuss further?"

5. Say Thank You

Regardless of whether they agree to the request, thank them for their time. If they agree then it's appropriate to ask for their contact information and promise to stay in touch. If they don't agree then be polite in the response but don't give up- ask if they are comfortable with future follow-up.

Example, if they agree: "Thank you! What's the best way for us to stay in touch?"

Example, if they don't agree: "I understand and appreciate your time. May I follow up with you in the future?"

Value Proposition as a Purpose

When requesting an informational interview, presenting a value proposition can be an effective way to establish common ground and set the stage for a meaningful conversation. A value proposition focuses on the problem to be solved for a potential employer, not on what you need or want. This is appropriate for entrepreneurs, technical experts, and others; who are interested in collaborating with an organization.

Very much like a Powerful Introduction, it may be used in an informational interview, at a networking event, formal proposal, or impromptu conversation. The content should also be adapted to the audience and stay succinct, if they want to know more then they will ask questions. The steps below replicate the prior section but in the paraphrased context of a value proposition.

1. **Introduce Yourself:** Greet the other person by smiling and clearly saying your name with an expression of gratitude.
2. **Share Your Background:** Highlight career interests and relevant experiences to stand out, focusing on skills and experiences uniquely position you to add value.
3. **Explain What You Want:** Shifting to value-add makes it easier to discuss what may translate to being a solution (instead of a problem). By framing the request around a value proposition, it shows a focused approach on proactive contributions, setting a positive tone for the encounter.
4. **Give a Call to Action:** As an extension of the value proposition, a call-to-action clearly lays out what is being asked of the professional.

5. **Say Thank You:** Always thank them for their time, regardless of results, and follow up with them accordingly.

In summation, keep the powerful introduction brief and genuine by tailoring it based on the context, then practice until it feels natural. A memorable and effective introduction ([Index C](#) for examples) can open the door to valuable professional relationships.

Requesting an Informational Interview

Reaching out to a stranger for the first time can be daunting, and possibly intimidating. Review the steps below and reference the sample messages in the index. It gets easier to send invitations on LinkedIn over time and meet more professionals. Contributing to the Fourth Industrial Revolution, this is a professional skillset that will evolve throughout and between careers.

Approach professionals with curiosity and seek a way to help them. Always be conscientious of the relationship between genders as a student and professional, whether in-person or online. Thunderbird instills a global mindset- T-birds are expected to be aware of the cultural issues and differences between regions when inviting others to connect. Integrity is a related Tbird value that is key to achieving the vision to advance inclusive and sustainable prosperity worldwide.

This section will detail how to find, connect, and engage contacts. It includes best practices for sending requests on LinkedIn and directs to the Index for templates. To craft a winning request, Viveka von Rosen (author, entrepreneur, LinkedIn influencer) advises that messages have four elements:

- Use distinct and compelling Subject line to entice or convince the reader to open the message.
- State connection to the person by including the name of a mutual contact (possibly in the Subject).
- Explain desire to meet by sharing the purpose is for wanting to meet, being clear and truthful.
- Suggest meeting dates (and times) to make it easy for the person to find time on their calendar.

It's important to put the needs and interests of the professional first in this process. Be sure to identify common ground or the value added from the meeting for them. Consider how the professional will benefit from the informational interview and communicate why you are the person to facilitate that.

How to Find, Connect and Engage Alumni Contacts

Viveka von Rosen, internationally known as the “LinkedIn Networking Expert”, says to follow these 5 simple steps to find alumni contacts:

1. Use the Alumni Search tool on LinkedIn for the School: www.linkedin.com/school/thunderbird/people/
 - Find Thunderbird School of Global Management on LinkedIn and click on the Alumni tab
2. Go to the Thunderbird's website and find the Alumni page.
 - Navigate to www.t-birdconnect.com and sign up or log on. This is platform has 'T-bird Only' content like alumni contacts, job posts, networking events (all over the world), and much more!
 - To access other information, visit the Alumni page <https://thunderbird.asu.edu/alumni>
3. Search the Alumni by filtering through the different fields to find relevant contacts, select the profile of professional(s) to connect.
 - Consider entering dates when attended or the date range alumni has graduated
 - Click into the alumni search bar to search by title, keyword, organization, or areas of expertise
 - Refine results by sorting fields such as locations and companies of interest, as well as what they do and associated skills
4. Reach out either through an invitation to connect, a message, or an email (if available).
 - Review their summary, job experience, and recent activity; check for common contacts, groups, and interests
 - Sample messages for reference: [Index D](#) for LinkedIn, [Index E](#) for Emails
5. Engage with the right people by requesting a short informational interview (not a job interview) face-to-face, online, or by phone, to learn about their work, organization, and other connections.
 - Contact the **Alumni Engagement Office** for support (tbirdalumni@thunderbird.asuep.org, 602-496-7125) on working with alumni. Reach out to the **Career Management Center** for help on navigating these meetings and information

Tips for Requesting Informational Interviews

- Ask People You Know for an Introduction
- Request Information and Insight, Not a Job
- Explain the Purpose of the Meeting
- Prepare for Likely Objections
- Be Crystal Clear and Truthful
- Request Face-to-Face if Logistically Possible
- Tell Them Who You Are, Share Value Proposition
- Craft a Winning Request*

Table 3. Tips for Requesting Informational Interviews

How to Find, Connect and Engage Professionals at Organizations of Interest

As mentioned previously regarding alumni contacts, the 5 simple steps to identifying contacts can also be done within a organization.

1. Using LinkedIn, navigate to the organization profile using the search bar. When looking at Companies on LinkedIn, filter through companies by location, industry, and organization size, to identify relevant organizations.
 - Refer to [Identifying Organizations and Connections](#) on how to create a list of companies
2. Look to see if there are any connections that work there already. If there is a 1st (or possibly 2nd) connection, send them a message and ask for a short informational interview to learn about the organization's culture from an insider. They may be willing to make an introduction.
 - Refer to [Index D](#) for samples of messages and [Index E](#) for Emails
3. Click on People tab on the organization profile page to see all the employees at that organization on LinkedIn. Similar with Alumni, filter through the different fields to find relevant contacts and select the profile of professional(s) to connect.
 - Click into the employee search bar to search by title, keyword, organization, or areas of expertise
 - Refine results by sorting fields such where they live or what they studied, as well as what they do and associated skills
4. Customize the note when sending the request to connect or email.
 - Review their summary, job experience, and recent activity; check for common contacts, groups, and interests
 - Sample messages for reference: [Index D](#) for LinkedIn, [Index E](#) for Emails
5. Engage with the right people by requesting a short informational interview (not a job interview) face-to-face, online, or by phone, to learn about their work, organization, and other connections.
 - Contact the **Alumni Engagement Office** for support (tbirdalumni@thunderbird.asuep.org, 602-496-7125) on working with alumni. Reach out to the **Career Management Center** for help on navigating these meetings and information.

LinkedIn Best Practices for Requests

LinkedIn is an online resource and professional career profile. Quickly find variations of job/internship titles, research companies from all over the world, and identify professionals to contact. With great value comes great responsibility, apply these best practices to enhance the impact of an informational interview request.

- Have a **completed LinkedIn profile** when contacting professionals, so they can make a more informed decision and conversation. Engage with content online to establish professional online presence and update the profile regularly.
- When clicking the 'Connect' button, it should **always include a message with the invitation** ([Index D](#)). LinkedIn shows people the user may know and it's easy to click 'Connect' without a thought. Always click on the person's name to view their profile, otherwise users may not be prompted or get access to adding a message. When prompted, select 'Add a note' to the invitation.
 - When on the mobile app, click on three dots to the right of their name and select 'Personalize invitation' to add a message
- Basic account holders are limited to 200 characters to personalize their invitations and 2-3 personalized messages a month, depending on membership type. This is subject to change by LinkedIn as the platform continues to develop.
- If the option to connect with a professional is not yet available, or the monthly limit of requests has been reached, then **look at the groups** they are part of. This will bring those connections closer, as well as provide access to other relevant resources.
- In the app, click on profile picture and select Groups; while online, the Groups will be listed on the left side of the homepage.
 - If already in a shared Group, navigate to the directory and select their name to send a personalized message through the Group
 - If there are no Groups in common, then identify an appropriate group and request to join. Once admitted, then send a personalized message through the Group.

As a part of the Fourth Industrial Revolution, T-birds advance inclusive and sustainable prosperity worldwide and must remain conscientious when interacting online. Thunderbird values a global mindset and integrity—consider the relationship between genders as a student and professional, as well as be aware of the cultural issues and differences between regions.

Warning

When it comes to sending invitations on LinkedIn, don't send hundreds of invitations a day.

1. If sending more than about 50 invitations a day, LinkedIn may think it is an issue (glitch, bot, phishing, etc.) and could restrict the account. Accounts are limited to 250 connections a week.
2. When sending an invitation to connect on LinkedIn and someone says they don't know the requester, enough of those will lead LinkedIn to restrict the account. Always personalize the connection request invitations.

Confirming Informational Interview

When coordinating a time and place to meet with the professional, be specific about dates and times (and location, if in-person) but flexible. Students should defer to the professional's busy schedule and make it work unless it imposes undue hardship.

Confirming the designated time with the informational interviewer is just as important as scheduling the conversation. Be sure to proofread the message and edit it accordingly before sending. This can be sent as a calendar invite and/or an email (examples in [Index G](#)), and include the time in the appropriate time zone, location (link provided, as needed) and a clear subject title.

- For online informational interview, students have an ASU provided Zoom account and can set up online meetings using the tool.
 - Note: Students can access their Zoom account through my.asu.edu then select the appropriate bubble (or click 'View More') to log in
- For in-person, provide the address in the location and instructions in the notes

If they do not respond to the email or accept the calendar invite, then it is appropriate to follow up after 2 business days to confirm they received it.

Preparing for an Informational Interview

Once the invitation has been accepted and the informational interview is on the calendar, it's time to prepare for the meeting. The person requesting the meeting is expected to set the agenda and manage the discussion. When done well, this conversation could be the beginning of a long-term professional relationship. Make a good impression by preparing for an informational interview with these tips and resources.

8 Steps to Prepare for an Informational Interview

As a student, doing research is a common task. With this, start with Google then move to professional and social media. Note information about the person and their organization, whether they have been in the news, their professional background, membership or interest in professional groups or topics, and other personal touches.



Graphic 1. 8 Steps to Prepare for an Informational Interview

Researching and planning in advance will increase confidence during preparation. Start the conversation with something light or from research, but plan how to start the conversation in advance. If there is a common interest, don't force it but find an opportunity to organically work the topic into the conversation.

Review what was specified to accomplish in the meeting request. Conducting research will shape questions to receive information that is not easily found. Understand what information they may have and how it will help by adapting questions appropriately for the person being interviewed. Set an agenda because 20-30 minutes goes by quickly, consider the general outline below (Table 4).

Agenda Item	Time Allotted
Greetings, small talk	3-5 minutes
Powerful introduction and purpose of the meeting	3-5 minutes
Ask questions	15-20 minutes
Thank you, ask for other contacts, offer help	3-5 minutes

Table 4. General Agenda Outline

When setting the agenda, identify the questions that this individual can readily answer and provide information sought. Listen carefully for opportunities to clarify or dive deeper into a topic of interest. However, it is important to **not** ask for a job in these meetings so that the conversation remains informative and engaging. Developing questions to acquire the information sought is challenging but does improve with frequency and effort (i.e. practice). After addressing the eight steps to prepare for an informational interview, the context for a powerful introduction and line of questioning becomes clearer.

No matter what, after every informational interview, it is imperative that gratitude is expressed and any actions taken within 24-48 hours. It will be top-of-mind, so reflect and include why the meeting was helpful and address next steps or advice provided. Anyone can send a “thank you for your time”, but not everyone makes the time to do so within 24-48 hours and invests the effort to reflect on what was discussed. This will be addressed in a later section with more detail, [Following Up with a Thank you](#).

Additional items that may be appropriate to prepare before an informational interview include:

- Completed and updated resume (in Thunderbird-style format), reflective of LinkedIn profile
- LinkedIn profile with a customized url, professional picture (smile preferred in U.S.), accurate information (education, professional experience, projects, volunteer, etc.), and a descriptive headline or summary
- Small, light snack to eat 30-60 minutes before meeting and hydration to sip during meeting
- Knowing the location and route to get there for timely arrival; ensure that technology is charged and ready for online meetings, with a backup device
- Picking out appropriate attire- wear business professional or ‘smart’ business casual (refer to *Thunderbird’s business attire guidelines*). It is better to be overdressed than underdressed
- Practiced value proposition and/or powerful introduction that is concise, summarizes background/context, and includes the most relevant information
- Drafting the follow up message for the meeting (without their email address, make sure to ask for it!) and have it available to enter notes

Do not prepare:

- A pitch for what you need or want – focus on the person being interviewed or a problem that you can solve for a potential employer.
- To ask for a job – this is not the point of an informational interview.
- Nothing – present an agenda, make a plan, and know what questions to ask, to make the most of the time.
- The same questions for every informational interview – time is limited, ask GOOD questions that are specific, open-ended, and relevant to the individual.
- For no action after the meeting – the bare minimum is to send a thank you to the professional but there will likely be other actions identified or topics to pursue.

Preparing for Objections

When coordinating and confirming the informational interview, there may be a few challenges. However, once the meeting is confirmed and happening, there may still be unspoken pressure to provide. Despite efforts to focus on information, the flow of conversation can change course. Below are tips to keep the limited time as effective as possible.

Develop and practice a powerful introduction/value proposition that is relevant to them, explaining specifically what is being asked of the professional. With more practice frequency and variability over time, confidence will increase to a point of casual but professional presence for the actual meeting. Many professionals may not know how to help or find a reason to not meet (and that’s okay!). They are communicating that they are not comfortable to schedule a meeting at this time- it’s not always a no. Preparing responses for common

objections will also empower the conversation to continue, but keeping needs and interests of the professionals first.

Potential Objections	Sample Response
I don't know of any jobs	I understand, but I am actually looking to speak with a professional to learn more about [Organization /Industry/Function/Position]. There isn't an expectation for a specific opportunity as a result of our conversation. With this in mind, who do you recommend I speak to?
I don't do the hiring	
I'm too busy	

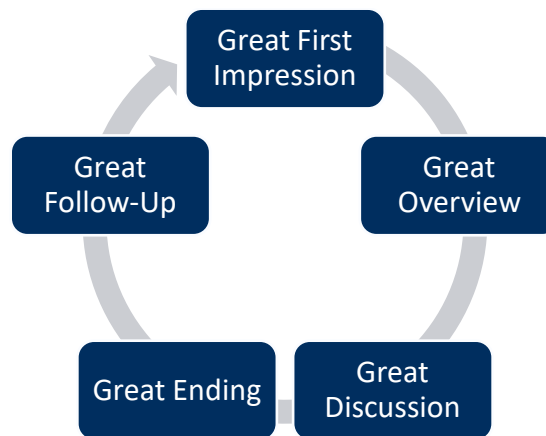
Table 5. Potential Objections and Sample Response for an Informational Interview

Conducting an Informational Interview

The time has arrived to conduct an informational interview! This section will review how to make a good first impression (preparation is key), share a powerful introduction, manage balance between timing and questions, wrapping up the meeting, and the importance of following up with the professional.

Great 5-Step Structure

There is a five-step process that sets up the environment for a proper job search/networking meeting, or informational interview. As outlined by Nathan Perez, Executive Career Job Search Coach and the author of *20 Minute Networking Meeting*, this addresses first impression, starting the meeting, leading the discussing, finishing the conversation, and following up. Time management is a universal value for professionals, therefore it is imperative to prepare for who is being interviewed and plan the questions accordingly.



The Great First Impression

There is a saying that “there is never a second chance for a first impression”. Especially as the person that requested the meeting, it is expected that person start the meeting and lead it. Since there has already been communication, putting a face or voice to the name is THE first impression.

- Arrival: be on time- not too early, but definitely not late
- Greeting: express gratitude and thank them for their time
- Rapport: highlight mutual connections (or common ground) to increase trust
- Agenda: set the agenda and verbalize meetings expectations with the contact

This preparation indicates professionalism, especially when actions are considerate of the contact’s time. It is appropriate to take initiative and guide the conversation. This is refined with practice, clarifying the appropriate approach(es) to job search and building relationships. Before moving on, be sure to confirm their preferred name and pronunciation.

The Great Overview

Start the conversation by referring to the agenda and confirming the timeline for the meeting. Address the purpose of the informational interview and topics that will be discussed.

Then move into a 60-second powerful introduction to give context to the discussion. This will expand on the shortened pitch that was provided during communications before the meeting and reiterate the value proposition. This may include:

- Degree and motivation to pursue global management
- Highlights of educational experiences

- Awards or achievements
- Professional experiences and associated or developing skills

The Great Discussion

After the overview, it's time to ask questions. While the intention is to gather information, a good line of questioning allows for possibilities such as additional networking opportunities, business contacts, an advocate, or a consulting gig. Perez provides the below structure to lead an efficient discussion with 3-5 questions. Additional details and examples for questions can be found under [Index I](#) and [Index J](#).

Question	Content	Example
1	Thought provoking questions that will provide insight that is not readily available such as a career transition, organizational change, an industry trend, or value of degree	After finishing your degree, what was the biggest job search challenge?
2		How do you see [X] impacting the industry in 5 years?
3		How has your degree been valuable to you doing [X]?
4	Inquiring of a contact to continue networking	Do you know someone in [X] that I could talk to?
5	Ask how to support them	How can I help you?

Table 6. Informational Interview Question Structure for 20-Minute Meeting

The final question (How can I help you?) instills a sense of professional relationship, communicating the understanding of networking as a mutual process of give-and-take. By asking how to help them, it initiates trust and opens the possibility to stay in touch with the contact.

Networking is a lifelong activity that requires consistency and effort. Questions asked will evolve over time and careers; examples and ideas for questions are included in [Index I](#) and [Index J](#).

The Great Ending

When there are about 5 minutes left, begin wrapping up the conversation. Direct the conversation to review actions agreed on with contact and thank them again for their time, expertise, suggestion(s), wisdom, insight, perspective, and/or willingness to help. When saying goodbye, finish with a solid handshake or good wishes and try using their name.

The Great Follow-Up

The final step of the process is to follow up with the contact within 24 hours, especially if they have referred someone or something. The [next section](#) will go into more detail about the follow up afterward. Since networking is an ongoing process, expect to reach out to contacts quarterly unless there is another update like change of contact information, receiving a certification, or about to graduate.

When to Contact	What to Do
Immediately (24-48 hours)	Follow up with contact and other actions
Ongoing (ad hoc, quarterly)	Keep network alive with follow-up and maintenance

Table 7. When and What to Follow Up

Following Up with a Thank You

Anyone can send a “thank you for your time”, but not everyone makes the time to do so within 24-48 hours and invests the effort to reflect on what was discussed. After every informational interview, it is obligatory to express gratitude and follow up any actions within 24-48 hours. At the conclusion of the informational interview, reflect on the discussion and note why the meeting was helpful, what steps to address next, or advice provided. Use the provided Informational Interview Worksheet ([Index F](#)) to organize these thoughts to help draft the thank you message. Depending on how the meeting went, it may not be necessary to continue communication after the thank you message (reach out to the Career Management Center for guidance). However, it is best practice to continue communicating on a regular basis with professionals to maintain a good rapport.

Drafting Thank You Message

A thank you message will be **concise** and can usually be conveyed in three paragraphs. The first paragraph says thank you, the second paragraph explains why the meeting was beneficial and addresses any follow-up actions to take, and the final paragraph says thank you again. Refer to Table 8 for a structure to guide drafting this message. At this point, it may be appropriate to ask if it is ok to keep in touch or ask follow-up questions (examples of messages can be found in Index H). Consider the points below when drafting the message:

- Templates are great to start but thank you message must be unique to the informational interview
- Keep the tone formal, remember this relationship could result in a job offer one day
- Take the extra time to make sure the message is free of grammar or typographical errors
- If referred by someone else for the contact, be sure to follow up to thank them for the introduction including a summary of take-away from the meeting

Ongoing Following Up

Networking is an ongoing process in career development. It is expected that if a professional wants to maintain a relationship, then they will reach out to do so. In order to keep the network “alive”, plan to reach out to contacts quarterly with small updates. Unless there is big change, like change of contact information, receiving a certification, or about to graduate, these messages should be consistent, interesting to the contact, and brief. Refer to Table 8 for a structure to guide writing follow up and thank you messages.

Section	Content
Subject Line	Thank you for your time
Greeting	Dear [Preferred Name],
1st Paragraph	Thank the person for their time, sharing their expertise, insight, knowledge or information. Reference the type of information shared (organization information, career information, job search guidance, information about job skills or experience needed, or some other topic).
2nd Paragraph	Explain what was gained from the informational meeting and how it will help impact the job search or career. Include what actions have been taken as a result of actionable advice or recommendations from them.
3rd Paragraph	Thank the person again for their time and express the desire to keep the lines of communication open in the future.
Signature	Sincerely, Name Phone number LinkedIn URL

Table 8. Thank You Message Structure

Index A: L.A.M.P. Worksheet

	Organization Name	Advocate (Y/N)	Motivation (1-5)	Postings (1-3)
Dream Employers				
	Organization Name	Advocate (Y/N)	Motivation (1-5)	Postings (1-3)
Alumni /Advocate				
	Organization Name	Advocate (Y/N)	Motivation (1-5)	Postings (1-3)
Posting Search				
	Organization Name	Advocate (Y/N)	Motivation (1-5)	Postings (1-3)
Trending Orgs				

Adapted from Steve Dalton's L.A.M.P. model in *The 2-Hour Job Search*

Index B: L.A.M.P. Worksheet (International)

	Organization Name	Advocate (Y/N)	Motivation (1-5)	Postings (1-3)	Sponsor (Y/N)
Dream Employers					
Alumni /Advocate					
Posting Search					
Trending Orgs					

Adapted from Steve Dalton's L.A.M.P. model in *The 2-Hour Job Search*

Index C: Sample Powerful Introductions

Example (in writing)

Hello [NAME],

My name is [YOUR NAME]. It's a pleasure to meet you! I recently completed a degree in global management at Thunderbird, where I focused on finance in sustainability and led a successful team project to develop an investment strategy for a non-profit organization. I am keen on using my financial expertise to support sustainable businesses and am currently seeking opportunities in corporate finance.

It would be great to hear more about your work in this field to understand if it aligns with my skills and career interests. I'm available every Thursday and Friday from 8 am – 3 pm (AZ), do you have 20 minutes in the next 2 weeks for us to talk?

Thank you so much for your time!

Example (in-person)

Hi, my name is [YOUR NAME] - it's a pleasure to meet you!

I am studying global management at Thunderbird, right now. My work is focused on finance in sustainability and I had the opportunity to lead a team project in successfully developing an investment strategy for a non-profit organization.

I am excited to meet you, as my desire is to apply my financial expertise to support sustainable businesses. Your work in this area has been impressive and it'd be great to discuss how I may contribute to the field.

Your time is valuable so I appreciate any moments you have to talk more- is now a good time or can we schedule a time later this week or next?

Index D: Sample Meeting Requests (LinkedIn)

When reaching out to professionals, the message should use information collected during research and will vary based on current level of connection. Refer to the sample meeting requests for LinkedIn and draft an adapted version. Initial messages cannot include an email address but can be sent once connected. Basic accounts will only have 200 characters for initial messages. **Invitations and notes that are customized when reaching out to connect have significantly higher response and acceptance rates.**

Generic Variations

- Hi [NAME], I am studying at Thunderbird and building my LinkedIn network. Your profile came up in my search for [SPECIFY INDUSTRY OR FUNCTION] leaders. We're not yet connected so I am sending a request in the hopes you will accept.
- Hi [NAME], I was reviewing your profile and, as a recent graduate from/student at Thunderbird, would love to add you to my network. Thank you, [YOUR NAME]
- Hi [NAME], as a recent graduate from/student at Thunderbird, I was hoping you will connect with me. Appreciate the consideration, [YOUR NAME]

First-level Contact (1st connection)

- Hey- it's been ages! You came up on my LinkedIn, what have you been up to over the past XX years?
- Hi [NAME], I was just thinking about you and saw you're now doing [ROLE]. Would love to hear about what you're doing nowadays, do you have 20 minutes to chat this week?

Note: It may be appropriate to include an email address or other relevant links in the message. Try to arrange a phone call with them and be sure to communicate what you expect from the connection (i.e. share your qualifications).

Not yet connected but know them (2nd connection)

When sending connection, always select to add a personalized note to the invitation to connect.

- Generic: It's been a long time. Your profile came across my feed and I noticed [XYZ]. Do you want to connect? Thanks!
- Informal: Hi [NAME], I can't believe we're not connected on LinkedIn yet. We should rectify that and catch up. Talk soon!

Note: As appropriate, include your phone number.

Someone that went to same school but not connected (2nd connection)

- Formal: I see you were at Thunderbird at the same time as me, but I don't think we ever met. Your profile came across my feed and hope to connect here. Thank you, [YOUR NAME]
- Informal: Hi [NAME], It's been a while. I don't know if you remember, but we were in [COHORT] together. You came up on my feed/search, would you be open to catching up? Thanks!
- Acquaintance: Hi [NAME], I am studying at/just graduated from Thunderbird and starting to build my LinkedIn network. Your profile came up in my search but we're not connected yet. Sending an invitation-let's catch up soon.
- Simplified: I see we're both alumni of Thunderbird circa 1998 to 2008 working in [COMMON GROUND]. Would you like to connect? Thank you, [YOUR NAME]

Someone that went to another school but not connected (2nd, 3rd connection)

- Hi [NAME], I was checking out the [SCHOOL] alumni and noticed you were there from 1999 to 2002. Would you like to connect? Thanks!

Note: This message does not indicate whether you are an alumni but focuses on noticing them and emphasizing interest in connecting.

Someone who works at an organization of interest and you know them (1st , 2nd connection)

- Hi [NAME], It's been a while! How are you? I was researching companies and saw your name under [ORGANIZATION]. Interested to hear about your experience, do you have time to catch up next week? Talk soon!
- Hey [NAME], Long time, no talk. Last time we spoke you were [XYZ] and I see you're now at [ORGANIZATION /ROLE]. Do you have 15 minutes this week for me to talk about your experience?
- Hi [NAME], Noticed you're working at [ORGANIZATION], congrats! I'm meeting professionals in [INDUSTRY] to talk about [XYZ]. Would you be okay connecting me with someone for a quick informational interview?

Someone who works at a organization of interest but not connected (2nd, 3rd connection)

- Hi [NAME], Noticed you work at [ORGANIZATION] and I'm interested meeting professionals in [INDUSTRY] to talk about [XYZ]. Would you be available to connect with me for a 30 minute informational interview?
- Hi [NAME], Saw you work at [ORGANIZATION] and I'm interested in meeting professionals to talk about [XYZ]. Do you have availability for a 30-minute informational interview next week? Thank you!

Alumni at organization of interest but not connected (2nd connection, 3rd connection)

- Formal: Hi [NAME], As a recent graduate from/student at Thunderbird, I am building my LinkedIn network with professionals I admire at [ORGANIZATION NAME]. Would you be willing to connect? Appreciate your consideration, [YOUR NAME]
- Informal: Hi [NAME], I'm a recent graduate from/student at Thunderbird and your ORGANIZATION is on my short list. Would you be willing to connect to learn more about working there? Thank you, [YOUR NAME]
- Simplified: Hi [NAME], I see you're the [TITLE] at [ORGANIZATION NAME]. As a recent graduate from/student at Thunderbird, I hope you'd be willing to connect with me. Thank you, [YOUR NAME]

Index E: Sample Meeting Requests (Email)

These sample messages are intended for reference, they have dynamic fields to easily update the appropriate information. Be sure to sign it with gratitude, your name, and another method to connect (i.e. phone number). Invitations and notes should be customized when reaching out to connect.

Sample 1

Subject: Jim Smith recommended I reach out to you

Dear [NAME OF PERSON],

Hope this finds you well. I received your name through [NAME OF SOURCE] as someone who would be knowledgeable of industry trends and life at [ORGANIZATION NAME]. I am interested in meeting with you to learn about the culture at [NAME OF ORGANIZATION] and what trends you are seeing in your area of expertise [OR SPECIFIC AREA IF KNOWN].

As a [STUDENT AT/RECENT GRADUATE FROM] [NAME OF SCHOOL], am interested in [CONCENTRATION, TYPE OF ROLE, AND/OR FUNCTION].

My success [INSERT VALUE PROPOSITION].

Your schedule is probably very busy, however, I was hoping we could 20-30 minutes sometime within the next couple of weeks [OR INSERT A COUPLE OF DATES]. I'm flexible and able to meet at a time and location convenient for you.

I will follow up with you to see what might be convenient. Thank you for your time and consideration.

Regards,

Name

Email/Phone Number/LinkedIn URL

Sample 2

Subject: Referred by Nancy Jones for an Informational Interview

Dear Mr. Smith,

Nancy Jones from [ORGANIZATION NAME] suggested I contact you to discuss your work [OR SPECIFIC AREA IF KNOWN].

As an editor/writer for Alexandria's city magazine, my talent and experience has grown as a public relations writer. Due to a small staff, I've worn several hats including developing the editorial format and individual story concepts, writing numerous articles, editing copy, laying out the magazine, and supervising production.

I am eager to learn about your successful career path at [ORGANIZATION NAME OR SPECIFIC AREA IF KNOWN]. I will [CALL/EMAIL/FOLLOW UP WITH] you the week of [SPECIY DATE] to see if we can find a mutual date and time to get together.

I appreciate your guidance and time.

Cordially,

Name

Email/Phone Number/LinkedIn URL

Index F. Informational Interview Worksheet

Informational Interview Worksheet	
Pre-Meeting	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Name: ▪ Title: ▪ Organization (How Long?): ▪ Education (Schools, Certifications): ▪ Major accomplishment(s): ▪ Associations, clubs, activities: ▪ Who referred you: ▪ Basis for referral: 	
Meeting	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Objective or Value Proposition: 	
<u>Questions to Ask</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Q1. ▪ Q2. ▪ Q3. ▪ Q4. ▪ Q5. How can I help you? ▪ <u>Next Steps</u> 	<u>Response Notes</u>
Post-Meeting	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Discussion Summary (1 sentence): ▪ What are 2 learning outcomes from this informational Interview? ▪ Outcome 1: ▪ Outcome 2: ▪ How do these learnings contribute to your career development? ▪ What follow-up items need to be completed? 	

Index G: Sample Confirmation Message

Virtual Informational Interview Confirmation Template

Hi [NAME OF INTERVIEWER],

Thank you for your willingness to do an informational interview with me! We are scheduled to meet virtually on [MONTH XX, 20XX] at [TIME]. I've included the link for the zoom call below and will follow-up 2 days before to provide you with an updated resume and relevant materials.

Zoom link: [INSERT ASU ZOOM LINK]

Looking forward to speaking with you!

Thank you,

Name

In-Person Informational Interview Confirmation Template

Hi [NAME OF INTERVIEWER],

Thank you for your willingness to do an informational interview with me! We are scheduled to meet on [MONTH XX, 20XX] at [TIME]. Our agreed location is [NAME OF LOCATION] I've included the link for the zoom call below and will follow-up 2 days before to provide you with an updated resume and relevant materials.

[LOCATION ADDRESS/INSTRUCTIONS]

Looking forward to speaking with you!

Thank you,

Name

Calendar Invite for Informational Interview

Title: Informational Interview by [YOUR NAME]

Date/Time: [DATE/TIME]

Location: [LOCATION ADDRESS]

Notes:

Thanks for meeting with me for an informational interview. We are scheduled to meet on [MONTH XX, 20XX] at [TIME].

[Optional: ADDITIONAL INFORMATION – directions, specific instructions, necessary updates]

Looking forward to speaking with you!

Thank you,

Name

Email/Phone Number/LinkedIn URL

Index H: Sample Thank You Messages

Sample 1

Dear [NAME OF PERSON],

Thank you for taking the time to meet with me to discuss your career at [ORGANIZATION NAME]. I enjoyed meeting you and learning about how you navigated into your field after business school.

Based on your recommendation, I have [PROVIDE STATUS OF ACTION]. I'm looking forward to [XYZ].

Again, thank you so much for your time! I look forward to keeping in touch.

Sincerely,

Name

Email/Phone Number/LinkedIn URL

Sample 2

Dear [NAME OF PERSON],

Thank you for meeting with me to discuss your experience in [INDUSTRY]. I appreciate your time and the insight and information you shared with me.

I was especially interested in learning about [REFLECTION FROM CONVERSATION] and the way it affects [INDUSTRY] employees. I am even more motivated for a career in this area of work, and I feel that the information you shared has helped fill some gaps in my knowledge of [ROLE/INDUSTRY].

Again, thank you for your time and I look forward to keeping in touch. If there is anything I can do to help you, please don't hesitate to reach out!

Thank you,

Name

Email/Phone Number/LinkedIn URL

Sample 3

Dear [NAME OF PERSON],

Thank you for speaking with me today. Your insight into [CAREER, INDUSTRY, ORGANIZATION, CULTURE, OR OTHER TOPIC OF DISCUSSION] was truly helpful. The information you shared has confirmed my decision to gain additional work experience in [ROLE/INDUSTRY] before aiming for a more senior role.

I am looking forward to [XYZ] from [RESOURCE] and I'm certain the information will help me become more familiar with the industry. I have also [PROVIDE STATUS OF ACTION].

I will follow up in the near future to let you know about my progress. Thank you again for your assistance.

All the best,

Name

Email

Phone Number

LinkedIn Profile URL

Index I. Examples of Questions to Ask (Category)

Job	•What do you do?
Hiring	•How did you get there?
Organization	•What do you like about your company?
Projects	•What projects are you working on?
Support	•How can I help you?

Role/Function

- What do you do?
- What's a regular day/week like in this role?
- What's the best part of your job?
- What has been the biggest challenge in your role to date?
- What other positions do you suggest that match my skills and background?

Hiring

- How did you get to your current position?
- What skills are employers looking for in this [FUNCTION/INDUSTRY]?
- What [INDUSTRY] websites, podcasts, books, influencers, etc. have caught your attention lately?
- What experts in [INDUSTRY/ROLE/ ORGANIZATION] do you follow?
- What do you see as the future trends in this industry?
- What industry associations or professional organizations should I consider?
- What career strategies (skills, certifications/courses, membership, etc.) are necessary to be successful?

Organization

- What other companies might be interested in someone with my [BACKGROUND/SKILLS/EDUCATION]?
- What do you like about working at [ORGANIZATION]?
- What is one thing you would change about [ORGANIZATION]?
- What is the organization's culture like?
- What's the best way to get noticed at [ORGANIZATION]?

Projects

- What projects are you working on?
- What is the most challenging project you've had?
- What was the best project you've had so far?
- What project(s) are you looking forward to?

Contacts

- Who do you know that works in [INDUSTRY/ ORGANIZATION]?
- Would you look at my target list and tell me if you have any contacts in these companies?
- Who else do you know in [XYZ] that might be willing to speak with me?

Index J. Examples Questions to Ask (Objective)

Consider Asking	To Learn About
What attracted you to the career?	How does this career match your expectations?
What previous experiences helped you most in this role?	What experiences can you acquire or do you have that are similar?
What do you need to know or what you should prepare to be successful in the role when you first started? What's one thing you wish you knew about this role/organization before you started?	What do you need to know or what to prepare for to be successful in the role.
What have you found to be most rewarding about this work?	What are the intrinsic or extrinsic motivators in this type of work?
What's most important to prepare for a role like yours?	What skills, knowledge or competencies do you need to develop?
If you could go back and do anything differently in this career path, what would you do?	Is there another way to enter into this career?
Tell me about your organization.	What are their goals, concerns, values, needs?
What is happening in the industry?	What do they think is important for you to know?
What exactly do you offer your clients/customers?	What is the technical language used in their role?
What is the history of this industry locally and how was this business started?	How does their organization fit into the larger industry picture?
What are the most significant factors affecting your organization today?	What are the outside circumstances affecting their organization?
How have changes in technology most affected your business? How has your business/industry been affected by the past economic climate?	How are these factors affecting their present hiring needs?
How has your organization grown or changed in the last couple of years?	How has the direction of the organization affected its hiring needs?
What future direction do you see the organization taking?	Have these changes increased or decreased the need for staff?
What is the greatest demand for your services or product? Which department feels it the most?	Where are the greatest possibilities for employment in this business? How would employment in these areas add to the growth of the organization?
How do you differ from your competition?	What services/products are they most proud of? How do they perceive themselves in the marketplace?
Describe your star employee. What are the qualities of people who perform best in this business?	What does this organization need from its employees and how can I address those needs before they show up as job postings?
How do you think most of the employees would describe this workplace?	What kind of environment has this organization created for its employees?
How would you describe your organization's culture?	What is their perception of the kind of workplace it represents?
What type of personalities fit in best at your organization?	What is the organization's culture/values?
What trends do you see in the future that will affect your organization and industry? What do you think the organization will look like 5 years from now?	How will the organization's planned growth affect its hiring needs?
Who else would you recommend that I speak with about this career/ organization?	Acquiring referrals is an important part of networking plus this question helps you determine how well the person trusts you.

Adapted from *Beyond B-School: Eight Steps to Prepare for Your Informational Meeting*

Resources

Target Company List: http://thunderbird.beyondb-school.com/video.aspx?id=Topic_Company_Research_Text1&referer=1

Company Research: http://thunderbird.beyondb-school.com/video.aspx?id=Topic_Company_Research_Text1&referer=1

Purpose of Informational Meeting : [http://thunderbird.beyondb-school.com/pdfs/The_Purpose_of_The_Informational_Meeting_v2%20\(1\).pdf](http://thunderbird.beyondb-school.com/pdfs/The_Purpose_of_The_Informational_Meeting_v2%20(1).pdf)

Overview for Networking Meeting : http://thunderbird.beyondb-school.com/video.aspx?id=Topic_Networking_Text13

5 Step Structure for Networking Meetings: http://thunderbird.beyondb-school.com/video.aspx?id=Topic_Networking_Text14

How to Find, Connect and Engage Alumni Contacts : http://thunderbird.beyondb-school.com/video.aspx?id=Topic_LinkedIn_Text17

Tips for Requesting Informational Meeting : [http://thunderbird.beyondb-school.com/pdfs/8_Tips_to_Request_an_Informational_Meeting%20\(1\).pdf](http://thunderbird.beyondb-school.com/pdfs/8_Tips_to_Request_an_Informational_Meeting%20(1).pdf)

How to Invite Contacts to Connect on LinkedIn (with templates) : http://thunderbird.beyondb-school.com/video.aspx?id=Topic_LinkedIn_Text18

8 Steps to Prepare for Your Informational Meeting : http://thunderbird.beyondb-school.com/pdfs/8_Steps_to_Prepare_For_Your_Informational_Meeting_v3.pdf

Strategies for LinkedIn Connections: <https://www.linkedin.com/pulse/linkedins-invitation-revolution-strategies-genuine-budget-kaemmerer-ed91c/>

Connecting with Old Contacts: <https://www.linkedin.com/pulse/getting-back-touch-old-contacts-ron-gibson/>