

Potential Informational Interview Questions

Informational interviews often become more of a conversation, but it's a great idea to be prepared with several questions to ask your interviewee. Write them down if it helps.

- Use this list to generate ideas to help ensure that you ask questions relevant to *you*.
- Do your research so that you ask questions where you cannot get the answers online.

About an industry you are exploring:

- Which of the various jobs available in my field are growing fastest?
- How is the economy affecting this industry?
- How does regulation or compliance affect this industry?
- What are the typical entry-level job titles and functions?

About an overall career field that you are exploring:

- How much demand is there for people in this career?
- What are the growth areas of this field?
- What types of training do companies offer those who enter this field?
- In what ways is your occupation changing?
- How quickly is the field growing?
- What parts of the country offer the best opportunities in this field?
- What are the opportunities in this career like in [geographical area you are most interested in]?
- What kinds of mental dividends (such as job satisfaction) does this career yield?
- What do you find unique about your career field?
- What negative aspects do people find working in this career?
- When people leave this career, what are the usual reasons?
- What skills or characteristics do you feel contribute most to success in this field?
- What entry-level jobs offer the best opportunities for the greatest amount of learning?
- What trends would be most likely to affect someone just entering this career now?
- What kinds of people experience the greatest success in this field?
- What is the most important thing that someone entering this career should know?

About a company you are targeting:

- How is the company positioned in its industry? Is that changing?
- Who are the company's main customers?
- Why do customers choose this company?
- What is the company's [distribution/marketing/acquisition/etc.] strategy?
- What obstacles do you see getting in the way of the company's profitability or growth?
- In what areas do you see the company expanding? (Probe new markets/new products)

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- How optimistic are you about the company's future and your future with the company?
- What do you like most about this company?
- How does the company communicate internally? Slack/email/newsletters/etc.
- What other technologies are integral to the company's operation?
- How are work teams or groups organized?
- Has the company made any recent changes to improve its business practices and profitability?
- What systems are in place to enable employees to give management feedback?
- Based on what you know about me, where do you think I might be a good fit in this organization?
- If they respond positively:* Do you know someone on that team I might speak to?

About your interviewee' s job:

- Can you share a bit about your professional background?
- Did anything surprise you about working in your role or in this industry?
- What is your exact title? Does it accurately capture what you do?
- What does a normal day look like for you?
- What was your title when you first started here?
- Can you tell me more about the duties/functions/ responsibilities of your job?
- What percentage of your time is spent doing each function?
- What is a typical day like?
- What skills do you rely on the most in your work?
- What part of your work is most rewarding?
- What do find most challenging about your job or the company?
- What kinds of decisions do you make?
- What is the job title of your department head or supervisor for this job?
- What is the name of your group or division?
- Who else works in your group or division? What are their titles?
- Where do you and your supervisor fit into the organizational structure?
- What are some of the toughest situations you've faced in this job?
- Which other departments or levels of the hierarchy do you regularly interact with?
- To what extent do you interact with customers/clients?
- What kinds of problems do you deal with?
- Is your work primarily individual or predominately in groups or teams?
- Is multi-tasking a skill that is required for this job?
- What projects have you worked on that have been particularly interesting?
- Are there any certifications that are helpful for someone in your job?

Potential Informational Interview Questions

About job satisfaction

- What part of this job do you find most satisfying? Most challenging?
- What do you like and not like about working in this job?
- To what extent is the job as you expected it would be?
- Do you have to deal with a significant amount of conflict in this job?
- What systems are in place for dealing with conflict?
- What constraints, such as time and funding, make your job more difficult?
- What are the major frustrations of this job?
- If you could change anything about your job, what would it be?
- Is there a great deal of turnover in this job?
- What interests you least about the job or creates the most stress?
- How many people do you supervise?
- If you ever left your job, what would most likely drive you away?
- How much flexibility do you have in determining how you perform your job?
- How much job security do you have in this position?

About work/life balance

- Have you found it difficult to maintain a healthy work/life balance in this industry?
- How does this job present a challenge in terms of juggling work and family life?
- What kind of hours do you normally work?
- Do you have to put in much overtime or work on weekends?
- Are the time demands of your job specific to this company, or would anyone in this career be expected to put in the same hours?
- Do you ever take work home with you?
- Are you expected to check and answer emails in the evenings and on weekends?
- Are there crunch times during the year where you need to put in more hours?
- What obligations does your employer place on you outside of the ordinary work week?
- What social obligations go along with a job in your occupation?
- Are there organizations you are expected to join?
- Are there other things you are expected to do outside work hours?
- How has your job affected your lifestyle?

Potential Informational Interview Questions

About salary and other compensation

- What is the typical entry-level salary in this field?
- What is the salary range for higher levels in this occupation?
- The salaries in this field seem to be about [state a range]. Is that about right?
- What kind of training program does the company offer?
- Does the company encourage and/or pay for employees to pursue graduate degrees?
- Is there a tuition reimbursement program?
- Does the company offer an employee discount on the products it sells?
- What other benefits are available?
- Is there flexibility in work hours, vacation schedule, place of residence, etc.?
- What does the company do to contribute to its employees' professional development?
- How does the company evaluate your job performance?
- How does the company recognize outstanding accomplishments of its employees?
- Is there a bonus program?

About skills and education required

- What skills or talents are most essential to be effective in your job?
- How did you learn these skills?
- What are the educational requirements for this job?
- Is graduate school recommended? What type?
- What other types of credentials or licenses are required?
- What optional certifications or continuing education are most valuable?
- What do you feel is the best educational preparation for this career?
- How did you prepare for this work?
- What should I do to prepare myself for emerging trends and changes in this field?
- If you were entering this career today, would you change your preparation in any way?
- What are the skills that are most important for a position in this field?
- What courses should I be taking?
- How well did your college experience prepare you for this job?
- How do you think [name of your college]'s reputation is viewed when it comes to hiring?
- What courses have proved to be the most valuable to you in your work?
- What courses do you wish you had taken that would have prepared you?
- If you were in college student, what would you do differently to prepare you for this job?
- How important are grades/GPA for obtaining a job in this field?

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About your interviewee' s career path:

- In what way did this type of work interest you and how did you get started?
- What was your major in college?
- How did you get your job?
- Did you enter this position through a formal training program?
- What jobs and experiences have led you to your present position?
- What kinds of things did you do before you entered this occupation?
- Which aspects of your background have been most helpful?
- What other jobs can you get with the same background?
- What were the keys to your career advancement?
- If your job progresses as you like, what would be the next step in your career?
- If you could do things all over again, would you choose the same path for yourself?
Why? What would you change?

About company culture:

- What can you tell me about the organization's culture?
- Are people in your department allowed to function autonomously, or do they get a lot of supervision and direction?
- How would you describe the morale of people who work here?
- What is the attitude to working remotely? How has that changed recently?
- How much emphasis does the company place on employee development?
- Do you participate in many social activities with your coworkers?
- What personality traits are really valued here?
- How [female/LGBTQ/veteran/etc.]-friendly is the organization?
- What's the best thing about working at the company?
- What does the company do to foster innovation and creativity?
- What's the dress code here?

About staffing and recruiting (talent acquisition)

- What are the most urgent hiring needs at this company?
- What is the best way to learn about job vacancies?
- What is the typical job interview process here? How many interviews do candidates generally go through before being offered a position?
- What areas of the company would be most interested in hiring people with my background?

Potential Informational Interview Questions

About how to make a career change or pivot

- My current career is _____. How easy or difficult do you think it might be to make a transition from that career to your career?
- The skills I use the most in my current career are _____. To what extent and in what ways do you think those skills are transferable to your career?
- What aspects of my background do you feel would be the most helpful in making the transition to your career field?
- What aspects of my background do you feel would be the biggest obstacles to someone making the transition to your career field?
- What skills needed in your career field do you think someone in my current career might be lacking and might need to develop?
- What would be the best kind of training to get to make the transition from my current career to your career?
- What's the best way for me to get more experience in your field without taking major steps backward from the level to which I've progressed in my current career?
- How do you think someone in my current career would be viewed by those with hiring power in your career? Would you personally hire someone coming from my current career field?
- The things I like the best about my current career are: _____. Will I find some of those same things if I switch to your career?
- The things I dislike the most about my current career are: _____. Will I encounter any of those same challenges in your career?
- Do you know of other people that have made the transition to your field from my current career or a career like my current career? How did the transition work out?
- I've heard that people in your field have skills such as _____ which I have not had the opportunity to develop yet. How important are those skills?
- What sacrifices do you think I might have to make to switch into your career field?
- Knowing what you know about your career field, and knowing what I would have to do to get into this field, do you think you would make the change if you were me? If not, can you suggest any other fields that might be more appropriate for me?
- Can you suggest some ways to obtain the experience necessary to enter this field?
- What is the best way to obtain a position that will get me started in this occupation?

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About opportunities for advancement within this company and/or field

- What is a typical career path in this field or organization?
- What is the highest-level job one can hold in this career?
- What are the advancement opportunities?
- What is the average length of time for an employee to stay in the job you hold?
- How rapidly do people move to the next level in this career?
- What incentives or disincentives are there for staying in the same job?
- Would someone in this field need to relocate to advance in his/her career?
- If I performed well at this company, where could I expect to be in five years?

About additional resources and connections

- Outside of your company, I'm also looking at companies X, Y and Z. Do you know anyone there who might be a good contact? May I mention your name when I reach out to them?
- (More generally) Who else do you recommend I meet with?
- What advice do you have that we haven't discussed yet?
- How can I assess whether I have the skills needed for a position like yours?
- What kinds of experience, paid or unpaid, would you encourage for anybody pursuing a career in this field?
- What other fields or companies would you suggest I research further?
- Do you know of other people whom I might talk to who have similar jobs?
- Which professional journals should I be reading to learn about this career?
- Are there any other websites that you suggest I read?
- Which professional organizations associated with this career should I join?
- What other kinds of organizations should I be investigating?
- Do you have any special words of warning or encouragement because of your experience?
- What special advice do you have for a student seeking to qualify for this position?
- How would you assess the experience I've had so far in terms of entering this field?
- What qualifications would you be looking for if you were hiring for a position like yours?
- What qualifications would you be looking for if you were hiring for a position subordinate to yours?
- Would you mind if we stayed in touch if I need additional advice in the future?
- How can I be of help to you? [usually, you can't but it's nice to ask]

Sources: LiveCareer, Career Sherpa, Kadima Careers