

Guide to Informational Interviewing

An informational interview is a specific networking tactic to help you gain insight and career planning advice from a practicing attorney, preferably a UDSL alum. It is meant to be an informal discussion whereby you may gather helpful information on areas of law, types of practice, employer culture, legal trends, career options, and other topics. Keep in mind, however, that an informational interview is not a job interview.

To start, you will want to locate a practitioner who is currently doing the type of work you want to do and reach out via phone or email to schedule a mutually convenient time to meet, such as over coffee, lunch, etc. Next, you will want to come up with a list of questions to ask during your meeting about the practitioner's career path and how it led to his/her current position.

Make Contacts

Research alumni in the geographical area where you want to be and practicing the type of law you want to practice. Remember when you ask someone to share their time and expertise, you must respect their willingness to help by thanking them. However, it is perfectly fine to ask if the alum knows of anyone who is hiring. Early in your meeting, emphasize that you do not expect to learn of a job opening, but are simply seeking information and advice on how to use your abilities and experience most efficiently.

Prepare your thoughts regarding what types of information you would like them to share with you. Be ready to discuss your goals, accomplishments, and abilities. Be concise and factual. The more concrete you are, the better able your contact will be to share appropriate information. Prepare questions and observations about the career field that your contact can discuss. He or she is the expert and will enjoy sharing his/her insights and expertise. Work at making this an enjoyable experience for both of you so that you will be remembered favorably.

Ask for Other Resources

At the conclusion of your meeting, thank the person you are talking to and ask if he or she can suggest two or three other people who might be willing to share their insights in a similar manner. Ask your contact if you can use his or her name when contacting these people. This tends to open more doors. Send a thank-you note immediately after the interview.

Sample Questions for Informational Interviews

- What is your work and educational background?
- What experience did you have to get your job?
- What are your primary responsibilities and duties?
- What might a typical work day look like?
- How much training/supervision did you receive early in your career? What sort of training/supervision helped you the most? What sort was least helpful and why?

- What do you most enjoy about your job? What do you enjoy the least?
- What trends or changes have you experienced and what do you foresee in your area?
- What books/blogs/journals do you recommend I read on a regular basis if I am interested in your area of practice?
- What professional associations should I join?
- What advice do you have for me regarding my current job search?
- Who else do you recommend I reach out to? May I mention that you referred them to me

Below are several links to help you prepare for an informational interview:

<https://www.americanbar.org/groups/litigation/committees/minority-trial-lawyer/practice/2019/a-guide-on-informational-interviews/>

<https://www.vault.com/blogs/vaults-law-blog-legal-careers-and-industry-news/ten-steps-to-effective-informational-interviewing>

<https://www.lawcrossing.com/article/900050407/Top-5-Steps-Law-Students-and-Attorneys-Ace-an-Informational-Interview/>

<https://www.careercontessa.com/advice/questions-to-ask-informational-interview/>

<https://www.indeed.com/career-advice/interviewing/informational-interview-email>

<https://biginterview.com/informational-interview-advice/>

<https://www.glassdoor.com/blog/informational-interview-guide/>