



CandidCareer.com

INDUSTRY
PROFESSIONALS

sharing their unique

Advice & Experiences

Giving Students a *glimpse of* what *the future* might hold!



**How to conduct an
Informational Interview**

Neilye Garrity
814.574.2882
neilye@candidcareer.com



Presenter Background

Neilye Garrity, Co-founder of CandidCareer.com

- Pennsylvania State University
 - 2004 Bachelor of Science in Information Sciences and Technology
 - Lettered 4 years in field hockey and served as team captain
- Work Experience
 - Information Technology Consultant for IBM (2004 -2010)
 - Focused on software development, training and project management
- Interesting Facts
 - Completed 2010 Ironman competition in Coeur D'Alene, Idaho
 - High School Field Hockey Coach
 - Two sons (3 months old and 2.5 years old)

Candid Career - Business Overview

Candid Career is the premier provider of *informational video interviews* featuring industry professionals from various industries giving candid career advice, including job descriptions, career preparation tips and personal testimonials.



Video – Candid Career Overview

What is an Informational Interview?

- An Informational Interview or Informational Conversation is a meeting in which a career explorer or potential job seeker gets advice on a career, industry, and/or company culture.
- The interviewee (industry professional) learns about the career explorer or job seeker and can make notes on their potential as a future hire at their company
- This is **NOT** a job interview. It is not about hiring and not about a specific job. The interviewee asks general questions about careers at the company and in the industry.

Purpose of an Informational Interview

- Learn about a potential career path
- Learn about the expectations and preferences of employers in a particular industry or company
- Identify gaps in your education, background, experience, or training
- Fine-tune your college major and career plans

▶ Why is it Important?

- Career Exploration & Networking Tool
- You learn something
- You get help
- You find a mentor



Video - Why Career Exploration?



Video – Why Network?

▶ How to find people?

- Use your Network!
 - LinkedIn
 - Family and Friends
- Your college may provide tools to help students connect with alumni through a mentorship program or other networking tool
 - Career Services Office
 - Alumni Association



Scheduling an Appointment

- When making appointments, tell your contacts how you got their names and why you hope they will talk to you.
- Ask for a time that works for the other person NOT you. They are doing you a favor.
 - Treat them with respect and work around their schedule to the best of your ability.
 - A 20-minute phone call or a 30-minute meeting is a reasonable request.
- Decide Location
 - Phone, email or in person.
 - Face-to-face interviews are by far the most valuable and effective but not always possible.

▶ Preparing for the Interview (1/2)

- Do your homework. Try to find out a bit about the person you are meeting.
 - LinkedIn Profile, Facebook, Twitter, etc
 - Similar Connections/Friends?
 - Occupational Outlook Handbook
 - <http://www.bls.gov/ooh/>
 - ONET
 - <http://www.onetonline.org/>
- Research what is going on in his or her company or industry.
 - Set up a Google News Alert
- Don't expect the other person to set the agenda of the meeting. You set the agenda!



Preparing for the Interview (2/2)

- **Do** decide if and how you will record information
- **Do** plan to dress for success
- **Do** send a résumé in advance
- **Do** practice with a friend or family member if you're not an experienced interviewer or your nervous
- **Do** call or email to confirm your appointment
- **Do** prepare a list of questions
- **Don't go into the interview thinking this is a job interview. You are NOT there to ask for a job!**



During the Interview

- **Do** arrive on time.
- **Do** absorb your surroundings; listen carefully.
 - **Don't** argue with the answers you hear.
- **Do** project enthusiasm and show your personality.
 - **Do** give a brief introduction about yourself (career, hobbies/interests, etc.)
- **Do** end the interview when you promised to.
- **Do** ask if you can stay in contact. Trade business cards.
- **Do** ask for referrals.
- **Do** thank the interviewee (and **do** so again later in writing).





Example Questions (1 / 2)



- **Questions for anyone**
 - Can you tell me how you got this position?
 - What do you like MOST about what you do? What are some of the CHALLENGES?
 - What are your educational and career backgrounds? What would you do differently if you were starting over?
- **Questions for learning about a Career**
 - What is a typical day like for you?
 - Why do you think you have been successful in this field?
 - What advice do you have for someone considering this field as a career direction?
- **Questions for learning about an Industry**
 - What are the types of jobs that exist where you work and in the industry in general?
 - What does a typical career path look like for someone in your industry?
 - Are there any trade and professional associations I should consider? LinkedIn groups?
 - How do you see your industry changing in the next 10 years?



Example Questions (2/2)



- **Questions for job seekers:**
 - How did you break into this field? What is your story?
 - What are the biggest challenges facing your company and your industry today?
 - What types of skills / knowledge are going to be needed to address these?
 - What weaknesses in a person's skill set would make him or her ineffective in this business?
 - What are the most valuable skills in your job? Which experiences enabled you to develop these skills?
 - How do you keep skills current? What do you read? What professional associations do you belong to? What seminars or continuing education do you consider useful?
 - If you were in the job market tomorrow, what would you do?
- **Questions About You**
 - What kind of job responsibilities could I expect with my degree level in your Industry?
 - What strengths and weaknesses do you see in my current background?
 - Is there anything else you think would be helpful as I consider this field?
 - Looking at my résumé, what advice would you have for me on next steps if I were interested in this industry/company/career?
- **More Sample Questions**
 - http://www.quintcareers.com/information_interview.html

Informational Interview - Example



Video – Environmental Scientist Job Description

▶ After the Meeting

- Write a thank you note
- Connect via LinkedIn
- Follow –up
 - Keep the person posted on your progress
 - As soon as you decide on your next steps or take a new job let your network know.



Creative Ways to Stay in Touch

- During the interview find out something you have in common.
 - Hobby, Favorite Sports Team, etc
- If they referred you to someone else. Keep them posted on your meeting with that person and thank them for connecting you.
- Google News Alert on their industry/company

Informational Interview - Video Recap



Video – Informational Interview Recap