

Informational Interviewing 101
For
Goizueta Business School BBAs

INTRODUCTION

- One of the best ways to get noticed by a firm you are interested in, is to get yourself in front of the employer- this is called networking. One way to begin to network, is to conduct “informational interviews” with people working in the industry you want to enter
 - Most positions are not advertised, creating a hidden job market
 - Networking is critical! Here’s a “how-to” guide to start this process:
1. The purpose of an informational interview is strictly to network and **not** to inquire directly about a job/internship. Having said this- I might add that of course, your hidden agenda is to make a connection that will land you a job/internship. Avoid asking a contact for an informational interview, it sounds too much like an “interview” instead, ask for a brief “informational meeting” so that you can ask questions.
 2. You should approach the informational interview process much like you do applying for an advertised position. The first step is to write a cover letter (this can be done via email). **See attached example.**
 3. Follow-up by calling the contact person when you said you would call from the letter. Introduce yourself and let them know you are in the process of researching the industry and you have a particular interest in their company because...(give a good, well-informed reason- (ie) they have an outstanding product or service you have used or have respect for, etc.) Stress that you know they are busy and will limit the meeting to 15 minutes.
 4. If they accept, set a date and time. If they can’t meet with you, ask for suggestions of other people you might contact within their own company, or within the industry. Thank them for their time.
 5. Make sure to dress professionally for the interview and conduct yourself as if it is a real interview. The difference is that you are the facilitator for this meeting- you called the meeting, so you will need to run it. Be prepared with at least 10 very good questions to ask. **See attached example.**
 6. Follow-up by writing and sending your thank you letter on the same day that you met. The thank you can be similar to a traditional thank you letter, stressing that you will follow the suggestions they offered and would like to keep in contact.

Sample Letter of Introduction (may be used via email):

Mr. Big Wig
Senior Vice President
Company Name
Drawer PP
Atlanta, GA 30322

Dear Mr. or Ms.:

Hello and I hope this letter finds you well.

I received your name from the Goizueta Business School Alumni database. I will be graduating with a Bachelor of Business Administration degree in **{CONCENTRATION}** in May of 2011. I take my professional career very seriously, and am in the process of researching and determining if the **{BLANK}** industry is right for me.

To this end, would you be open to meeting with me for a brief informational discussion? And I do mean brief: no more than 15 minutes, if your schedule permits. I always think it's helpful to put a face together with a name and would love the opportunity to introduce myself in person.

Thank you for your time and I hope we have the opportunity to meet soon.

Best Regards,

Joe Student
1234 Peachtree Road
Atlanta, GA 30033
phone

Questions to ask during an Informational Interview:

- What advice or suggestions do you have for me to increase my chances of entering this industry?
- Does this company usually hire from within, or extend full-time offers to summer interns?
- What are hiring professionals at this company looking for in a strong applicant?
- What are the key hiring times for this company?
- Do you recommend any professional organizations I should join for further networking opportunities?
- What got you started in this industry?
- Are you happy in your choice?
- {Ask at least one company- specific question based on your research}
- I would like to keep in touch periodically, for your suggestions, would this be alright? (Obtain business card)
- LAST QUESTION, ALWAYS: Can you suggest anyone else who might have a few minutes to meet with me at this company or other companies in the industry?