

# Wellington Careers and Employment

## Career Essentials—Informational interviews

Find out what an informational interview is and how you can make the most of these conversations to increase your professional network and make new connections that may lead to future work experiences.



### What is an informational interview?

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An informational interview is a conversation with professional contacts to learn more about an industry, company, or role you are interested in, particularly if it's a field that is new to you. It can help you decide if an organisation or career path is a good fit for you and identify potential career opportunities.

### How do informational interviews work?

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For an informational interview to be valuable, it needs to be with someone who works in a role, company, or industry that is aligned to your career goals or interests—so think about who to reach out to. Make use of your existing network first: you may have a friend, family member, lecturer, or other acquaintance in a relevant role or company that you could speak to. Or ask your network if they can connect you to someone. It may be beneficial to reach out or email relevant companies and ask whether they can put you in contact with the right person. LinkedIn and Twitter are also great for making direct contact with specific people.

Whether emailing, messaging via social media, or calling:

- introduce yourself and your situation,
- keep your request short and to the point,
- say what you are looking for, and
- state how they can help.

If they're not interested, don't pursue it. If they're OK to help you, ask whether a face-to-face (preferred), phone, video call, or email conversation is best and arrange a suitable time. Remember that they are doing you a favour, so be accommodating.

### Preparation

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- Update your LinkedIn profile first—interviewees may want to know more about you before meeting in person.
- Research the individual and company before the interview so that you have some knowledge.
- Prepare the questions you want to ask and practise asking them.
- Plan a short, 30-second introduction, giving details of yourself and why you want to speak with them.



- Be clear about how long the meeting will take (20–30 minutes is best) and don't overrun.
- The day before the meeting, check in with them to make sure they can still make it.
- Dress appropriately, just as you would for a standard job interview.

## During and after the interview

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- Show an interest in the person you are talking to, for example by asking where they've worked before and how they got there.
- Be enthusiastic and friendly but keep it professional.
- Be ready to answer any questions about your goals and motivations.
- Ask for other contacts in the field, information, advice, or suggestions.
- After the meeting send a thank you and follow-up email. If you got on well, ask if you can stay in touch, or ask to connect with them on LinkedIn.

## Potential questions to ask

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The emphasis of an informational interview will be on you asking most of the questions. It's helpful to think about the topics you want to discuss and plan the questions accordingly. Make sure your questions reflect what you are genuinely curious about in this career. Don't ask about things you could have easily found out online, as it can make you look unprepared or uninterested. While the point of this interview is to ask for information and advice rather than a job, you could still enquire about whether they take on new graduates and ask for advice around that.

- What does a typical day or week look like for you?
- What do you like most about what you do, and what do you like least?
- Can you tell me how you got to this position?
- How do people get started in this field? What's the best way to get work experience?
- What are the types of jobs that exist where you work and in the industry in general?
- What skills and attributes are essential for success in your field?
- What are the common career pathways for people in this field?
- How would you describe the culture of your organisation?
- My strengths lie in (fill in the blank). Which area of work do you feel would be most suited to me?
- What is the usual recruitment process? What are you looking for in interviews?
- What are the key words to include in my CV/résumé or cover letter when job hunting in the field?
- How do you see the industry changing over the next few years?
- How do you keep up with developments in your field?
- What are some of the best moments and biggest challenges you've experienced here?
- Are there any professional associations you think I should connect with?
- Can you recommend anyone else I could speak with, particularly in the realm of (specialisation)?

