NETWORKING THAT WORKS Informational Interviews and Overcoming Objections

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INFORMATIONAL INTERVIEWS

Benefits Of An Informational Interview:

- Allows you to ask questions about a career field, company, or industry.
- Provides valuable insight into successful strategies for breaking into a particular field or company.
- Great way to establish contacts (this is call "networking") with individuals who may be able to share job leads and other information with you later.

Preparing for an informational interview:

- Prepare a 2-5 minute "commercial" about you: give the individual an overview of your experiences, skills, interests, and future goals.
- Practice your commercial!
- Develop a list of 25-30 prioritized questions (be sure to include some questions about your contact's personal career path)
- (Keep in mind, the better your questions, the more likely you will be remembered.)
- Dress professionally and arrive early for your appointment.
- Ask questions, then wait for a response. Don't interrupt.
- Take notes and show interest. If it appears you are "losing" the individual during this process, don't continue to waste his/her time. Cut down on the total questions you had planned to ask; figure out which questions are most important and spend the time on those.
- Thank the individual for his/her time.
- Follow up after the interview. Send a formal (written) thank you.

Sample questions to ask:

- How did you get your start in this industry?
- What was your major, and how did it help prepare you for this field?
- Is this the career you always wanted? What were your original career goals?
- I recently read an article about your company that stated [current news about the company]. What does this mean for you and your department?
- If someone with my resume were to apply for an entry-level position in this field, what changes would you recommend to increase the chances of securing an interview?
- What kind of preparation is typical to get started in this career field? Is that really required, or is that just the typical approach?
- When you entered this field, what was different from what you expected? What was the biggest surprise you encountered when you began your career in this industry/with this company?
- Are there any "myths" or fallacies about this profession that you can share with me?
- Who ensures continued advancement within this company? Field?
- What is the typical path out of this position or field? What does this career prepare you to do next? What's next for you?
- What advice do you have for someone like me?

- Is there a specific minor that I should consider picking up that will enhance my degree and make me more marketable in this profession?
- If possible, I would be interested in talking to some other individuals who are currently working in this profession. Would you be able to provide me with any professional contacts who may be willing to participate in an informational interview with me?

OVERCOMING OBJECTIONS

"We're Not Hiring."

- That's okay. I'm not applying for a position with your organization. I am interested in your advice.
- That's okay. I'm not in any hurry. I just wanted you to know what I have to offer in case something becomes available later.
- That's okay. I just wanted to know if you would take a look at my resume and provide me with any advice, ideas, leads or referrals that come to mind.
- That's okay. Perhaps you can think of someone else who might be interested right now in what I have to offer.

"I'm too busy."

- This will only take a moment.
- Yeah. I heard your company was pretty successful right now. (then stop, no matter how long the silence.)
- I'd be happy to meet you early, late, during lunch, or even after work. What's best for you?
- What's a better time for me to reach you?

"Send me your resume."

- Well let me tell you what's on it. I'm the one who...
- What's your fax number/email address? I'll fax/email it and call you right back.
- I'll bring it to our meeting. What's a good time for you?

"I'm not the person you should be talking to."

- But I'm not applying for a position. I received your name from ______. She indicated that you were very knowledgeable about this field. I just want to know if you have a few moments to share with me any advice, ideas, leads, or referrals.
- Actually, I'm going to be applying through official channels as well, but I was wondering if you would be able to give me a little inside information.
- Who should I be talking to? I appreciate your referral.

Prepared by the Career Development Center, Shippensburg University (Updated 8/2011)