WHAT IS IT?

Good career decisions result from having good information. Valuable career information may also be gathered by talking with working professionals representing occupational fields in which you have an interest. Conducting informational interviews is about gathering information about a particular industry or occupation, it is not asking for a job. The following suggestions will enable you to successfully identify, contact, and interview these individuals.

1. WHERE & HOW TO BEGIN

• Arrange a mutually convenient time for an information interview by calling or e-mailing the individual.
• Contact division heads within companies and/or a person employed in a specific occupation in which you are interested. Connect with friends, family members, teachers, alumni, and counselors who may be able to suggest contacts.
• Ask for an interview by saying something like: “Hello, my name is (blank), I am very interested in learning more about (blank), and I would like to talk with you about what you do and the field in general.”
• Talk to as many people as you can to gather helpful information.
• Utilize the Otis Job Board, available through the Center for Creative Professions Webpage (www.otis.edu/careers).
• Research the company organization for which the person you are going to interview works.

2. SUGGESTED QUESTIONS

• How did you get into this field?
• What do you like most/least about your job?
• What is a typical day like?
• What are your job responsibilities?
• What kind of individual (in terms of talent/personality) would be best suited for this kind of job?
• What are the prospects for someone entering your field today?
• What advice would you give regarding how to best prepare for entering this field?
• Is travel required?
• Are there any other sources of information you might suggest?
• Where might I go to find an employer who could use my skills?
• What function or service does your office provide?
• What are the recurring problems for people in this field or your office?
• What salary range could I expect to make in this field?
• Are there any other jobs that are similar to yours but with different job titles?
• Who do you know that I might benefit from speaking with?
• Where else might I go to find someone doing something similar to what you do?
3. ADDITIONAL SUGGESTIONS

• Organize your questions and prepare to take notes.
• Your positive, enthusiastic attitude will create a good impression. People are more apt to help others after they get to know them on more personal basis – this is a great way to get referrals and begin the networking process.
• Be conscious of time constraints.

4. FOLLOW-UP

• Write a thank-you note, which may be handwritten or typed. You may wish to enclose a resume, matching the information gathered from the interview with your experiences and background.
• Make sure your contact information includes your name, address and local phone number.
• Stay in touch with your contacts and update them periodically on your status and inquire if they have heard of any new opportunities.

5. EVALUATE

Whether the interview was successful or not, assess how it went. Look for what went well (strengths) versus what needs improvement (weaknesses) for your next interview. Feel free to discuss the interview with a career counselor. Since your main reason was information gathering, ask yourself a few questions such as:

• Does the person I just talked with use the skills I want to use?
• Would I be qualified for his/her job?
• Do I understand what the job entails?
• Would I enjoy working in this capacity?
• Did I get additional ideas for alternatives?
• Do I have an idea about what my salary might be?
• What impression (positive or negative) do I now have about this area of work?
• Would I enjoy working for this company?
• What are the goals (needs, concerns, problems, issues) of this area of work/company?
• How can I help meet those needs, accomplish those goals?
• Which of my personal assets could I offer?
Jane Doe  
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May 15, 2012

Mr. James Smith  
Director of Design  
ABC Corporation  
1245 Apple Road  
Santa Monica, CA 90105

Dear Mr. Smith:

In conducting career exploration research, your name came to my attention as someone who could provide me with valuable advice and information, especially because of your experience in the field of graphic design.

I am currently attending school full time at Otis College of Art and Design and am giving serious consideration to a future career in graphic design. I am not seeking an employment interview; rather I would like to speak with you about graphic design as a possible career in order to obtain your valuable advice and perspectives about the field. Realizing the demands on your time, I will telephone you next week to see if we can arrange a brief meeting at your convenience.

I appreciate your consideration as I explore a variety of career opportunities.

Sincerely,

Jane Doe

Jane Doe
Jane Doe  
1234 Any Street Los Angeles, CA 90045  
310-999-9999  
janedoe@student.otis.edu  
www.janedoedesigns.com  

November 28, 2012  

Ms. Amanda Stone  
Unit Head, Product Design  
TGIF Designs  
753 Happy Street  
Los Angeles, CA 90021  

Dear Ms. Shacoy:  

I am currently a junior Product Design student at Otis College of Art and Design. After discussing my career interests with my career counselor in the Office of Career Services, they recommended that I contact you. I am particularly interested in the manufacturing of fine furniture in the International marketplace. I would very much appreciate the opportunity to talk with you about your experience in product design, and in particular with the international market.  

As you indicated your willingness to speak with Otis students through the Alumni Career Advisory Program, I would like to speak with you to learn more about the actual work that you perform. Your advice on the skills and coursework necessary to contribute effectively as an entry-level designer and suggestions on appropriate internships to pursue would also be very helpful. To provide you with some sense of my background, I am enclosing a resume.  

Thank you for your consideration. I look forward to speaking with you within the next week to set up an appointment.  

Sincerely,  

Jane Doe