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**Curiosity Conversation Guide**

**Benefits of Informational Interviewing**

* Get firsthand, relevant information about the realities of working within a particular field, industry or position. This kind of information is not always available online.
* Find out about career paths you did not know existed.
* Get tips and insider knowledge about how to prepare for and land your first career position.
* Learn what it’s like to work at a specific organization.
* Initiate a professional relationship and expand your network of contacts in a specific career field; meet people who may forward job leads to you in the future.
* Advance your work through brainstorming and learning with someone with a shared interest.

**Six Steps of Informational Interviewing**

**(1) Research Career Fields & Define Your Goals**

* Do some initial research on the career field or employer using internet and print resources.

**(2) Identify people to interview**

* Pursue your own contacts. People you already know, even if they aren't in fields of interest to you, can lead you to people who are. This includes family, friends, teaching assistants, professors and former employers.
* Identify Hopkins alumni to contact; they often take a special interest in "giving back" to students.
* Utilize Handshake and other Career Center Resources

**(3) Prepare for the interview**

* Develop a brief introduction of yourself and your hopes for the meeting.
* Plan open-ended questions to ask.

**(4) Initiate contact**

* Contact the person via email
* Mention how you got his or her name.
* Emphasize that you are looking to learn about their career path and the specific industry, not a job.
* Ask for a convenient time to have a 20-30 minute appointment.

Requesting an Informational Interview: Sample Email  
"Hello. My name is Ashley Schantz and I'm a junior majoring in Marketing at Johns Hopkins University. Is this a good time for you to talk briefly? I heard you speak at an event sponsored by the Undergraduate Marketing Association last semester. Although I am not currently looking for a job, I have become very interested in public relations and would like to learn more about the field. Would it be possible to schedule 20 to 30 minutes with you at your convenience to ask a few questions and get your advice on how best to prepare to enter the field?"

**(5) Conduct the informational interview**

* Dress neatly and appropriately, as you would for a job interview.
* Arrive on time or a few minutes early.
* Bring your list of questions and take notes if you like.
* Restate that your objective is to get information and advice, not a job.
* Give a brief overview of yourself and your education and/or work background.
* Be prepared to direct the interview, but also let the conversation flow naturally, and encourage the interviewee to do most of the talking.
* Respect the person's time. Limit the meeting to the agreed-upon timeframe.
* Ask the person if you may contact them again in the future with other questions.
* Ask for names of other people to meet so as to gain different perspectives.

*Note*: You can bring a resume, but don’t take it out right away or your interviewee may think you are actually fishing for a job. At some point you may wish to ask for input about it, but first establish a nice rapport with the person.

**(6) Follow-up**

* Keep records. Write down what you learned, what more you'd like to know, and what your next steps should be.
* Send a thank-you note within 1-2 days to express your appreciation for the time and information given. Based on whether the informational interview was relatively informal or more businesslike, this may be a brief handwritten note or an email.
* Keep in touch with the person, especially if you had a particularly nice interaction; let them know that you followed up on their advice and the outcome. This person could become an important part of your network.

**Helpful Questions**

Below is a list of some generally helpful questions to initiate the conversation. To make the most of your curiosity conversation, don’t be afraid to really nerd out and get into specific subject matter. People enjoy talking about topics that matter to them with others equally engaged in the subject. They may also be more inclined to offer further support. Don’t be afraid to let your personality shine through.

**TASKS AND RESPONSIBILITIES**

* Please tell me about your work.
* Describe a typical work day.
* What aspect of your job do you ﬁnd most challenging/rewarding?
* Do you more often work individually or as part of a team?
* Can you describe the typical work/life balance in this ﬁeld?

**PREPARATION FOR CAREER PATH**

* What do you think is the best academic preparation for this profession?
* How did you become interested in this ﬁeld?
* What are the qualiﬁcations you look for in a new hire?
* What else should I know to make an informed decision about choosing a career in this ﬁeld?
* Is there anything you wished you knew before entering this ﬁeld?
* Do you have any recommendations for other people I should speak with in the ﬁeld to learn more? May I use your name when reaching out to him or her?

**INDUSTRY KNOWLEDGE**

* What industry publications would you recommend I read to help keep me informed of developments in this ﬁeld?
* Is the advice you have passed on to me regarding this sector typical of the industry, or is it speciﬁc to your organization?
* Are there any professional associations that you are part of or suggest I join?
* Where do you see this industry going in the next 5-10 years?

**CULTURE & PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT**

* What are the unspoken expectations of this profession?
* What does work/life balance look like within this field as a whole?
* How does the culture within this profession differ from others?
* What skills can I gain through this work that can be applied to future career options?

**EQUITY & INCLUSION**

* How does your organization define diversity? What lenses of diversity has your organization made a direct commitment toward?
* Does your organization have a chief diversity officer (CDO) or a designated leader to drive DEI and engage internal and external stakeholders?
* What social causes does your organization support?
* Does your organization actively support diverse suppliers, contractors, and small businesses?
* Has your organization made any formal commitments in support of racial equity?
* How does your organization center diversity, equity, inclusion, and belonging?
* Does your organization offer any formal employee training around biases, anti-racism, or general DEI?
* How has your organization prioritized executive accountability toward DEI advancement?
* Does your organization have any affinity groups or committees to support diverse populations? If so, how do these groups contribute to the culture of the organization?
* Does your organization complete annual compensation equity analysis?
* What resources has your organization provided to its employees in support of COVID-19 and racial injustices?