Search Strategies

What You Need to Know
Now you need to find out where the jobs are and make yourself known. Since two out of three positions are not advertised, finding out where all the jobs are requires some investigation.

Informational Interviewing
Informational interviewing helps you gather first-hand information and reach tentative decisions about how you may fit into available positions. Think of informational interviewing essentially as a reality check that builds on work done during self-assessment. Informational interviewing is:

♦ A way of generating new, previously unconsidered options.
♦ A short [20-30 minute] meeting, ideally at the work location of your contact.
♦ An opportunity to experience the work environment in the field you're considering.

During informational interviewing it's okay to openly acknowledge gaps in your knowledge about the field you are investigating. This openness is generally not advisable for people actively involved in their job search campaign. Though you'll want to present yourself as courteous, professional and mature, putting “I'm-looking-for-a-job” pressure on yourself won't be helpful and may confuse your informational interview contact.

“Always bear in mind that your own resolution to succeed is more important than any other one thing.” ~ Abraham Lincoln
How to Set Up Interviews

Depending upon where you are in the process, you may want to speak with:

◆ People who majored in an academic field that you are considering.
◆ People who can tell you more about a field in which you are interested.
◆ People who can tell you more about an organization where you would like to work.

These do not have to be “high level” people. Simply put, anyone who is doing or has done something that you’re interested in learning more about is a potential source for an informational interview. Begin by thinking about people that you already know: family members, instructors, friends, co-workers, classmates. Though they may not be employed in or have a background in the area that you’re considering, they may know people who do.

When the potential interviewee is someone you do not know, a personal referral [e.g., “My academic advisor suggested that you would be a good source of information about the range of possibilities in the public service area.”] is ideal. When you cannot get a personal referral, you can call an organization and ask to speak with a person in the area you’re interested in. This type of “cold call” can be a bit intimidating, and sometimes several calls and dead-ends may precede reaching the person you’re seeking.

However, with a bit of tenacity you may be surprised at how helpful people can be, and how much people enjoy talking about what they do for a living.

Be prepared when you phone a person for an informational interview. If you feel a bit anxious, writing a loose “script” might be a good idea. Things you’ll want to cover include:

◆ Your name
◆ Why you’re calling:
“...I got your name from the Career Services Office at Ivy Tech Community College, and I see that you’ve had several jobs in marketing. Since that’s what I’m thinking of specializing in, I’m hoping you might be able to tell me more about the field.”
◆ Request an in-person meeting:
“...I wondered if you might have 30 minutes or so available some time next week when I could visit with you at your office.”

If the person cannot see you at the time you suggest, you can request a later date or ask if there’s another person you should contact.

Confirm the date and time before ending the conversation. Make sure you have the correct address and directions if needed. Also, if the meeting is scheduled more than a week away from your initial conversation, it’s advisable to call a day or two before the meeting to remind and re-confirm. Finally, arrive on time!

“All successful people have a goal. No one can get anywhere unless he knows where he wants to go and what he wants to be or do.”
~ Norman Vincent Peale
Conducting the Interview

This is not a job interview. Nevertheless, you’ll want to make a positive first impression, and some of the basics of job interviewing apply for informational interviews as well.

Remember:

The purpose of the informational interview is to explore the link between “Who am I?” and “What’s out there?” With that in mind, the overriding questions—the essence of what you’re trying to get at through your informational interviews—are:

- What’s this really like?
- Would I like this?
- Is this a good fit for me?

There is no 100% “right answer.” But by being curious, asking good questions, really hearing the answers, and considering how they fit [or don’t fit] you, you’ll be in the best position for making good decisions about what your next step will be and what options you’ll want to explore further.

Though the function of the informational interview is to find out more, having some knowledge in advance will assist you in asking more meaningful questions. Read and gather, via printed materials or the Internet [refer back to the information you gathered in Chapter 2], some preliminary information if you’re researching an occupation or organization.

Dress appropriately for the place you’re visiting. “Business casual” may be sufficient for most informational interviews. If in doubt, the general rule is that it’s better to be dressed too formally than too casually.

Sample Informational Interview Questions

Simple, open-ended conversation starters such as “Please tell me about what you do,” or “How did you come to be in this job?” will often get the ball rolling in such a way that many of the questions below will be answered as a matter of course. Have specific questions prepared, however, to assure you get everything you want covered, but be selective so that you respect the time being granted to you by the interviewee.

- What is a typical workday like for you?
- What is your position title?
- What are your responsibilities?
- What experiences, skills and education are necessary for a person who wants to do this job?
- Do you feel your academic background was a good preparation for the work you’re doing?
- What do you like most about your position? Least?
- What are the pressures, problems and challenges for a person entering this career?
- The skills I’m most interested in developing are __________ and __________. Is this a good field/company to be in for someone with interests in those areas?
- Are there some types of people more likely to find success than others?
- What are typical entry-level salaries?
- How did you enter this field?
- Is your career path typical?
- How competitive is this field?
- How does this company/organization compare to other places where you’ve worked?
- Who else hires people in this field?
- What are the emerging trends or challenges you’re facing?
- What professional associations do people in this field belong to?
- Are there certain professional publications or Web sites you’d recommend?
- Are there other occupations/organizations that you might suggest I look into?
The following questions are an essential part of informational interviewing.

- Can you think of anything else I really should know about this field/company?
- Could you suggest one or two other people I might want to contact for information?
- Would you mind if I called you again if I think of any other questions?
- May I have your business card?

Follow-up

You have just had a meeting that can be invaluable, both for what you’ve learned and for perhaps establishing a new relationship. Immediately make notes for yourself on the content of the interview for future reference.

As soon as possible, send a note or e-mail stating your appreciation for the time and information shared. Mention specific points or suggestions that were particularly helpful, how you acted upon ideas they offered, and state your next-step plans for follow through.

Every informational interview contact has the potential to become a future networking contact. By expressing your appreciation and establishing your professionalism, you’re laying the groundwork for the possibility of ongoing advice and assistance in your career development.

“People don’t have to like or support you, so you always have to say thank you.”
~ Ruben Studdard
Networking

After you have identified and can articulate the direction in which you are headed, networking is one of your most effective tools as you explore career options; and a support system once you’ve embarked on your career.

Numerous entire books have been written on the topic of effective networking. For our purposes, we’ll discuss some of the most basic rules about how networking can work as you begin to move into your job search.

Networking as a job-search tool begins when you:
- Have a fairly precise sense of where you're headed.
- Can articulate why you're headed there.
- Have enough confidence in your direction that you're willing to ask for assistance in finding the work you want to do.

Why Networking?

Though networking feels riskier to many people than traditional methods of seeking work [e.g., newspaper ads, Web postings, job boards], it is, in fact, the most effective job search strategy.

The advantages of networking include:
- Less competition. When there is a job waiting, why not be in a candidate pool of one, rather than dozens or more?
- You may find new or unadvertised positions, or get the early word on advertised positions before they go out to the general public.
- Many employers rely on direct contact as a more reliable and less expensive method than advertising or recruiting.
- By bringing yourself to the employer's attention, you may help them think about needs they had not gotten active about filling yet.

In other words, you essentially create opportunities, instead of waiting for them to happen.
Key Steps in Networking

1. Identify your network.
   This is similar to the work you did when you compiled the list of people who might make good informational interview contacts. In addition, if you’ve done some informational interviewing, you now have additional people with whom you already have a relationship, and who may be in a position to help you.

2. Make contact.
   Let the people in your network know that you’re looking for work, and the specific type you are seeking. Then ask if they know of any place that is hiring or might be hiring, or if they can suggest a specific person to whom you should direct your inquiries.

3. Follow-up on leads.
   Call people as suggested, mentioning the personal referral. Sometimes it turns out that they are not, in fact, the people you want to interview, but these people will often be willing to assist you: “Actually, I think you really want to talk with Tina in marketing. Let me put you through to her ...”

4. Keep your network active.
   Call or e-mail key network contacts with your progress. Thank them and let them know how your search is going. They’ll appreciate the updates. Also, by developing the relationship in this way, your allies are more likely to remember you as they become aware of future leads and openings.

Maximize Networking Events

Conferences, trade shows, career fairs, meetings, and small-group gatherings are excellent venues for being visible, getting connected, and becoming known to the people who have the power to hire. There are eight “Cs” for making the most of networking events. Networking Worksheet 3-1 on the next page, will help you accomplish the first two.

1. Catalog your strengths, accomplishments and objectives.
   You’ve completed worksheets in Chapter 1 that help you know who you are and what you want, and looked at how to promote yourself in Chapter 2. Networking provides an opportunity for you to put that information to work. What opportunities are you targeting? What skills do you want to use that would tap into your niche?

2. Create your marketing theme.
   Using three key strengths from Networking Worksheet 3-1, compose a short “verbal business card.”

Example:
As a sales rep for hotel properties, I specialize in the three R’s: Research, Relationships and Revenue Growth. My research skills helped unearth a list of 40 qualified prospects. My relationship skills opened the doors to meet decision-makers and match the benefits of our property with their needs. The result was that revenue grew more than 30 percent over the past 12 months, at a time when most property revenues were stagnant or declining.
Networking Worksheet 3-1

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<th>Targeted opportunity</th>
<th>What skills would tap into this area?</th>
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<th>My key strengths:</th>
<th>Value this brings to an employer:</th>
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<th>Verbal business card:</th>
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“Act as if it were impossible to fail.”
~ Dorothea Brande
3. Chart your course. Literally. If you’re attending a Career Fair or large convention or trade show, do some logistical planning to cover all the ground efficiently. Review the list of attendees to identify those with whom you want to meet and when you might call on them. Ask colleagues their recommendations. If time permits, do a quick Google.com search on your target contacts so you’ll have some personalized dialogue once you’ve completed the perfunctory pleasantries. In some cases, it may be appropriate to e-mail or phone your contacts in advance of the event. Mention that you’ll be attending and, at the suggestion of so-and-so [e.g., a known and trusted colleague of the contact], are looking forward to saying a brief hello.

4. Connect with people. Measure your networking success by the number of meaningful conversations you’ve had, not by the number of business cards collected. The fastest way to have a meaningful conversation is to put aside your personal agenda for finding a job and focus on the other person. How? Smile, look people in the eye, and care about them by asking questions, such as:
   - What’s the most interesting exhibit [or, seminar, idea, project] you’ve seen here?
   - Who would you like to meet here? [You may know someone who could help make the connection.]
   - What do you hope to accomplish at this event?

5. Clarify needs. Clarify your contact’s needs so you can understand how you can be of value. Arm yourself with intelligent questions:
   - What interesting projects are you working on now and where might you need help?
   - What changes or challenges do you see in the next 6-12 months at your company, and what will those changes bring?
   - What resources or ideas are you looking for at this meeting/event?

Notice that you’re not asking whether there are any job openings available!

6. Collaborate on needs. Position yourself as the answer to those needs. For instance:
   - In my most recent position, we had a similar problem. What have you tried so far? We found that XYZ system worked well in our situation. Are you aware of such-and-such a resource?

“There is no such thing as a self-made man. You will reach your goals only with the help of others.” ~ George Shinn
7. **Continue the connection.**

Look for appropriate opportunities to ask for a business card or gain permission to make contact again soon. For instance, if your contact is checking her watch or looking distracted, you might try:

- *I don’t want to take up too much of your time just now. Perhaps we can continue our conversation after the conference/meeting. When would it be convenient to touch base with you again?*

- *I recently read a fascinating article about that subject. I’d be happy to e-mail you the link if you’ve got a business card handy.*

- *I know someone who may be a good connection for you. I can e-mail you their contact info.*

- *Who else should we include in our next conversation?*

- *Who else would you recommend I speak with about that?*

As a creative way of following up with contacts, one bright job-seeker carried a camera with her, took photos of her target company’s exhibit booth [with their permission], and offered to e-mail a digital photo later.

8. **Carve out some time on your calendar for follow-up with personalized e-mails or phone calls.**

Commit to keeping these new relationships alive in the months ahead. When the right opportunity opens up at your dream company, you’ll find yourself on the short list, head and shoulders above the mystery candidates.

“Call it a clan, call it a network, call it a tribe, call it a family. Whatever you call it, whoever you are, you need one.”

~ Jane Howard
Summary
Now you know how to use the information you organized in earlier chapters for informational interviewing and networking. You’ll be able to find out where the opportunities are, how you fit into what’s available, and use networking as an effective job-search tool.

Want to Know More?

Books
The Complete Job Search Guide for Latinos
Murray A. Mann, Mary Bombella, Rose Mary Bombella-Tobias
If you’re planning to launch or advance your career, this guide for Latinos presents a comprehensive career road map designed to resonate with Latino and Hispanic job seekers at experience levels ranging from college students through mid-level managers. If you’re a Latino job seeker, you’ll find user-friendly advice and information you can use right away:
◆ Practical job search and network strategies with a Latino focus
◆ Award-winning sample resumes and career marketing letters that generate interviews
◆ Techniques for making a winning impression at job interviews
◆ Tips on focusing and maximizing your education to jump-start your career
◆ A Latino Career Management Tool Kit to improve your chances of getting hired
◆ Advice on avoiding bias and discrimination pitfalls
◆ Plus a comprehensive assessment survey to help you improve your career management skills

Knock ‘Em Dead 2007: The Ultimate Job-Seeker’s Guide
Martin Yate
The NY Times Business best seller integrates practical job search and interview tactics with lifetime career management strategy. The first part of the book addresses how to implement the best job search techniques into a practical plan of attack. The second part of the book gives you over two hundred great answers to tough interview questions, shows you how to negotiate an offer and turn one job offer into many. There is not a more comprehensive, practical job search book in print; techniques on every page you can put to work today.

Online Resume and Job Search
Karl Barksdale, Michael Rutter
Teaches time-proven strategies for successful job finding using the Internet. These include everything from assessing one’s abilities in a personal inventory to evaluating job descriptions to creating professional resumes to preparing for a job interview.
Over-40 Job Search Guide: 10 Strategies for Making Your Age an Advantage in Your Career
Gail Geary
The “go to” book for the over-40 career search. The content is clear, contemporary, substantive, pithy, and pragmatic. A treasure chest that is packed with tips, samples of resumes, interview responses, and real-world examples.

Seeking Employment in Criminal Justice and Related Fields
J. Scott Harr, Karen M. Hess
As competition for positions in all areas of criminal justice and law enforcement increases, it’s vital that you have a carefully planned job search strategy that matches your goals for a career in the field. Harr and Hess help you develop that strategy, providing specific information on many criminal justice professions, helpful tips on resumes and cover letters, and practical advice on interview techniques.

Successful Job Search Strategies for the Disabled: Understanding the ADA
Jeffrey G. Allen, Ed., Lindsey Allen
A prominent employment attorney provides all the necessary information pertinent to physically and mentally challenged job seekers. Contains excellent coverage on such topics as ADA regulations, overcoming perceptions, hiring, promoting, civil process, reasonable accommodations, job leads, interviewing, resumes and cover letters. Features 50 real-life scenarios.

Very Quick Job Search
Michael Farr
Rejecting many of the traditional job search strategies used in the past, this book helps job seekers define their next job, consider alternative search techniques that may save time, negotiate a higher salary, learn how to network, improve interview skills, and apply computer technologies to expand the search. Worksheets, checklists, and sample resumes are provided.
Online Job Search Resources
The Internet is filled with postings on company sites and general job posting boards. You can also use the Job/Internship Listings in the Career Services office or JobZone to find employers who are seeking Ivy Tech Community College students and alumni to fill positions. The links provided will help you learn the basics of networking and get you started.

Informational Interviewing
This is a document you prepare before important meetings to help you remember key facts, such as your major accomplishments, and serious questions or concerns.
http://careerlab.com/interviewing.htm

How to Effectively Use a Job Fair

Networking and Your Job Search
http://www.rileyguide.com/network.html

The Art of Career and Job-Search Networking
http://www.quintcareers.com/networking.html
http://www.job-hunt.org/job-search-networking/job-search-networking.shtml

The Wall Street Journal Executive Career Site
Contains a variety of articles on job hunting and networking.
http://www.careerjournal.com/jobhunting/networking/