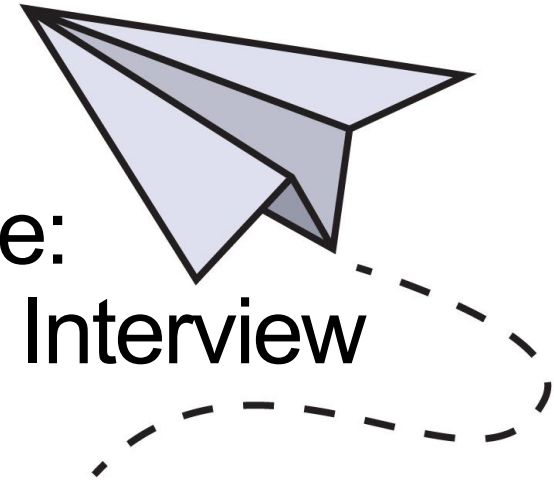


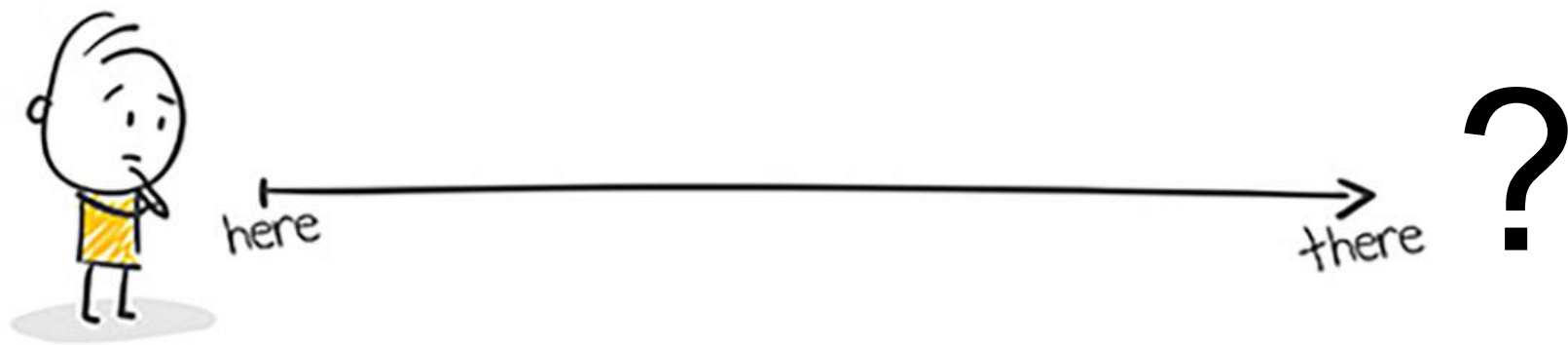
Networking from Here to There: Preparing for an Informational Interview

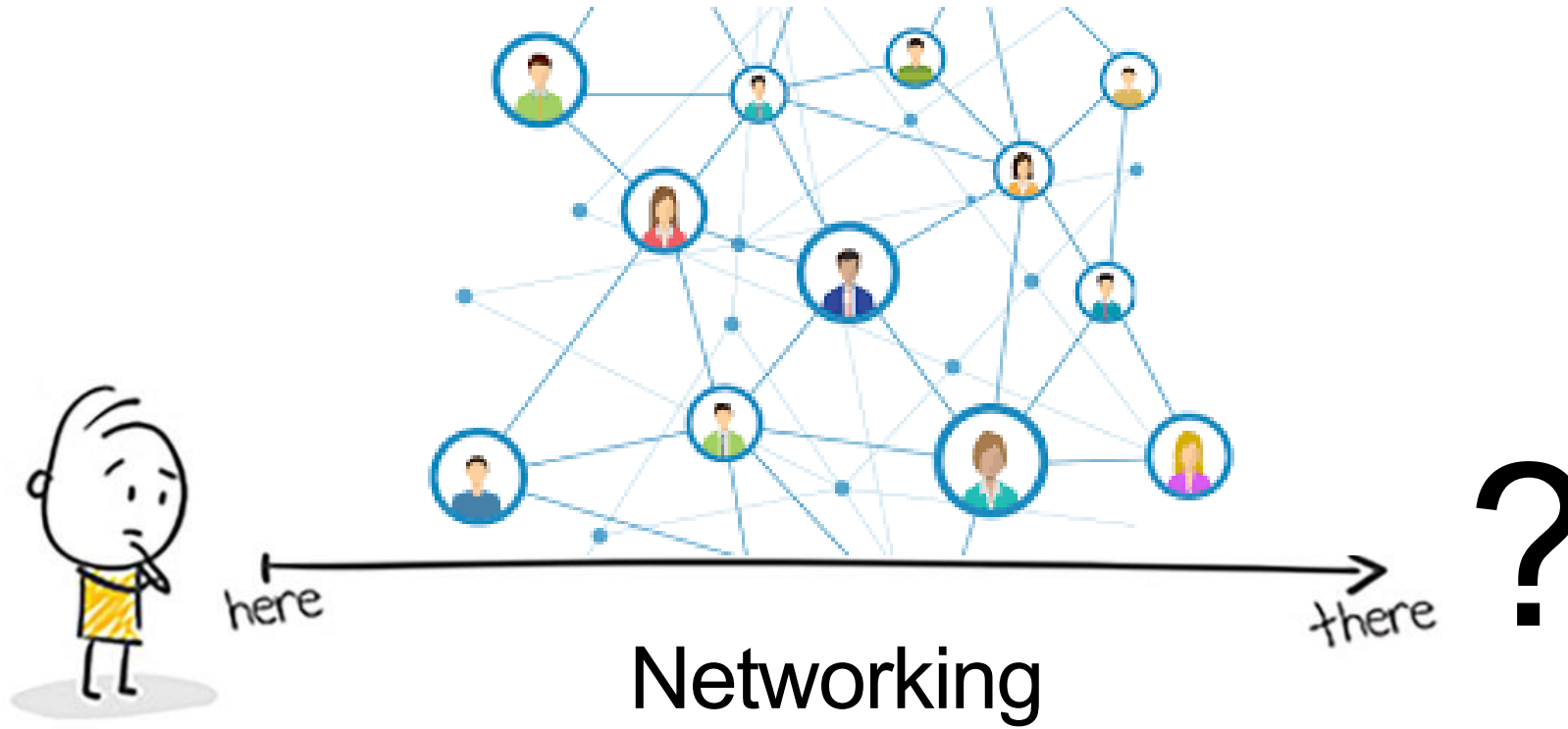


Ashley Brady, PhD

BRET Office of Career Development ASPIRE Program

ASPIRE Job Search Series | May 16, 2024





Informational interviewing is your most powerful networking tool!



Has anyone ever participated
in an informational interview?

- Interviewer or interviewee?

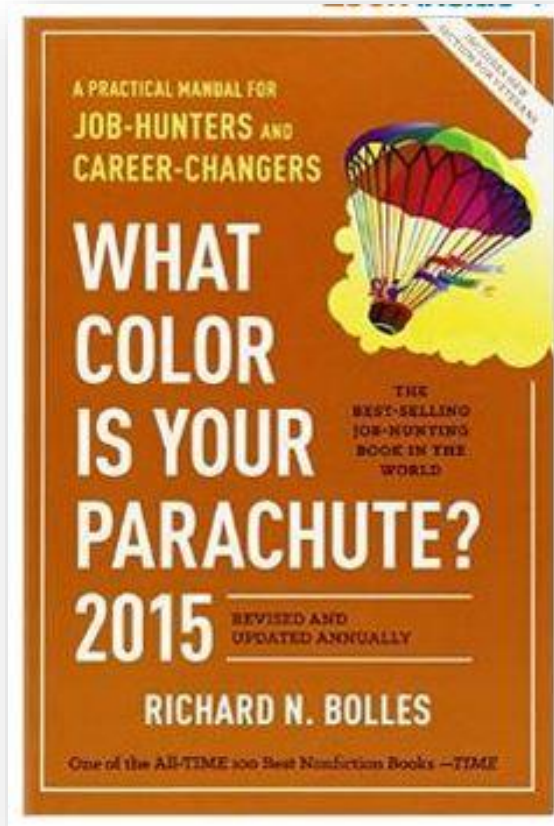
It's not what you may be thinking...



....It's just talking and listening



What is an “Informational Interview”?



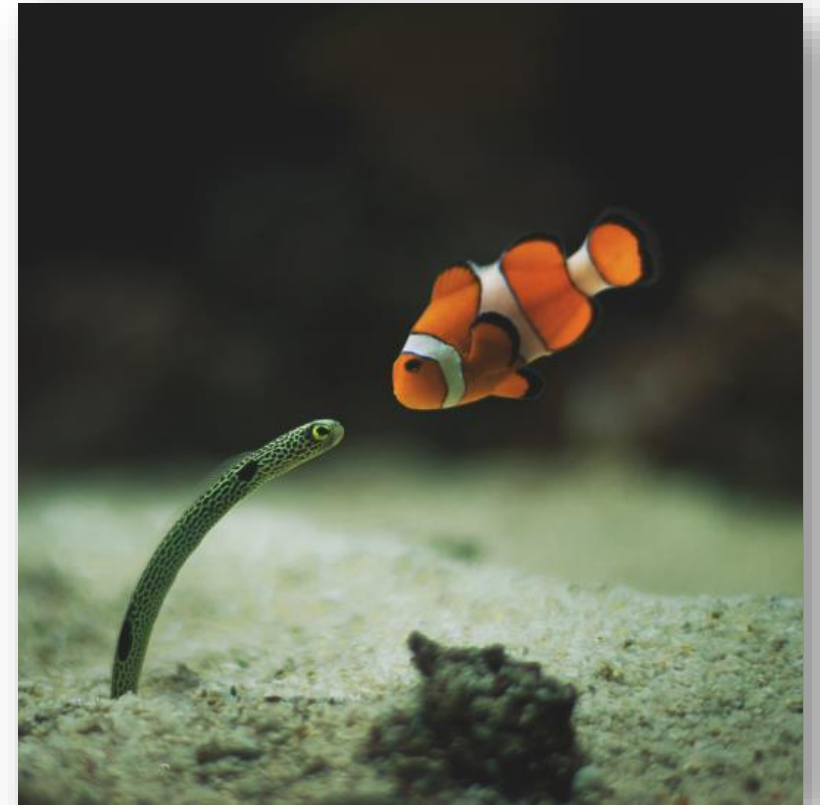
- Term coined by Richard Bolles, in his book, *What Color is Your Parachute?*
- Informal, but professional, meeting with someone in a career area of interest to you
- Opportunity to screen a job and a company before you take a position— “trying on jobs”

Intention is not to get job offers or to respond to an open position

1 in 12 informational interviews results in a job offer (vs 1 in 200+ resumes)

What can you gain?

- Meet someone new
- Learn about their current position, company and career path
- Grow your network– often they will suggest others you should talk to
- Discover resources available to you to gain important skills/experiences
- Build confidence -> low-stress environment to practice talking to people
- Increase knowledge about a career or company
→ more impressive job candidate
- Gain insight into the “*Hidden Job Market*”



The Hidden Job Market



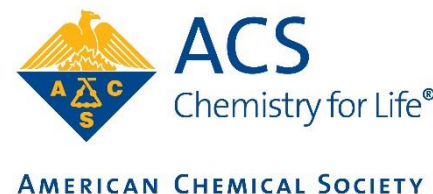
60-80% of job opportunities are found through networking

How do you find people to interview?

- Revisit your personal network
- Ask your PI if they know of anyone you should approach
- Review meeting agendas before you go to professional meetings
- Look for alumni contacts
- Scour industry websites and LinkedIn for people doing things that interest you



VANDERBILT
UNIVERSITY



Come to the Career Symposium!



How do you ask for a meeting?



Example email request:

Re: Meeting request with Vanderbilt postdoctoral fellow

← descriptive subject line

Dear Dr. Who,

I'm a postdoctoral fellow in Cancer Biology at Vanderbilt University. I am in the process of exploring my next career steps and am particularly interested in applying my background in cell proliferation and tumor initiation to develop precision chemotherapy for cancer patients. My advisor, Dr. What, suggested that you would have a very good perspective on the current field.

I would appreciate the opportunity to meet with you briefly to learn more about your career path and current role at DiaTech Oncology. I'm especially interested in any advice you may have for someone who is interested in transitioning from academia to industry.

Would you have time to meet for a coffee at some point in the next month?

My best,
Ashley

615.123.1234
bradyae@gmail.com

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who you are



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why you are
contacting them



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← your connection

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*Could also be that you saw an article they wrote, read an article about them, or found them on LinkedIn etc...

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what you
are asking for

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offer a time frame

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your contact info



Email conversation: confirm details in a single place

Re: Meeting request with Vanderbilt postdoctoral fellow

Dear Dr. Who,

Thank you so much for agreeing to meet with me at 11:00 am on Tuesday, March 14th at Starbucks on 21st Ave. I will follow this email with a calendar invitation.

I'm attaching a copy of my resume to give you a little more information about my background.

Looking forward to seeing you.

Best,
Ashley

615.123.1234
bradyae@gmail.com

**Attach as a pdf*



Prepping for an informational interview

- Research the person and their company/department/industry: Google away! websites, annual reports, press releases, news articles, LinkedIn
- Prepare an “elevator” pitch to tell them who you are and what you are trying to learn. (“Tell me about yourself” - 30-60 sec)
- Bring a copy of your resume, even if you sent it ahead of time



What do I ask them?

Plan 10-12 focused questions

- Career Path
- Daily Activities
- What are the most important skills?
- Work-culture
- What kind of education/training/experience needed?
- How can I learn more?



At the interview

- Thank them for their time
- Emphasize that you are there only to learn and gather advice
- Share something about yourself, but don't dominate the conversation
- Be enthusiastic and show interest
- Be direct and concise
- Have good eye contact and posture
- Take notes



A stack of spiral-bound notepaper is shown against a light gray background. The top sheet is white with a blue spiral binding on the left. It features the text "Success is in the follow up!" in a blue, italicized serif font. Below the text is a single blue horizontal line. A silver ballpoint pen lies diagonally across the bottom left of the notepad. Two blue paper clips are attached to the right edge of the notepad. The URL "instoreMasters.com" is printed in a small, gray font in the bottom right corner of the notepad.

*Success is in the
follow up!*

instoreMasters.com

Short-term follow-up

(24hrs-3/4 days)

- Send a thank you email within 24 hours of your meeting.
- Follow up with a hand-written note.
- Connect via LinkedIn if you haven't already.
- Include something you learned from them or enjoyed hearing about.
- Include any specific follow-up items (e.g. things you offered to send them or vice versa → contacts, websites, or other resources)



Example Thank you email:

Re: Meeting request with Vanderbilt postdoctoral fellow

Dear Dr. Who,

It was great to have the opportunity to meet you yesterday. Thank you so much for taking the time to share your experience with me. It is very encouraging to hear about the exciting opportunities you foresee in the area of precision cancer therapeutics and I hope to be able to contribute to this area as my career develops.

Thank you also for suggesting I reach out to our local biotechnology industry organization, Life Science TN. I will let you know how that goes. Please continue to keep me in mind if you learn of any other opportunities or resources that might be helpful.

I would also like to connect via LinkedIn so that we can stay in touch.

My best,

Ashley

615.123.1234
bradyae@gmail.com

Longer term follow-up

(6mo-1 yr +)



Remember: This person has invested time in you— they like to know if their investment paid off.



Periodically check in:

- Let them know if their suggestions have been helpful
- If you have any successes— new job, internship etc...
- If you come across something that would be of interest to them: a news article, a book, a speaker coming to VU
- Congratulate them on a recognition, promotion etc... (*Linkedin)
- Look for opportunities to reconnect- attendance at a conference
- Make introductions to others

Resource from: Live Career

[RESUMES](#)[COVER LETTERS](#)[INTERVIEWS](#)[JOBS](#)[QUESTIONS](#)[ARTICLES](#)

[Home](#) > [Career](#) > [Career Advice](#) > [Interview Tips](#) > **The Ultimate Guide to an Informational Interview**

The Ultimate Guide to an Informational Interview

by LiveCareer Staff Writer



While you may think that the best way to conduct your job search is to respond to a job ad by submitting your resume and a [cover letter](#), the reality is that many of the best work opportunities are never advertised. In fact, some experts estimate that nearly 80 percent of the job market is made up of these 'hidden' jobs.

Informational Interviewing Tutorial:

<https://www.livecareer.com/quintessential/informational-interviewing>

200 Questions to ask:

<https://www.livecareer.com/quintessential/informational-interview-questions>

THANK YOU!

ashley.brady@vanderbilt.edu