

## Business Career Services

# Career Conversations

### What is a Career Conversation?

A career conversation, also known as an informational interview, is a meeting to gain insights about a person's real-life experiences in a specific career field, industry, or organization.

These informal conversations tend to last 20-30 minutes, though if you've made a strong connection, they can last up to an hour.



While a career conversation is **NOT** a job interview, it has potential to lead to job prospects in the future.

### Benefits of a Career Conversation

- Learn "insider" information.
- Build relationships.
- Practice communication skills.

### How to Set Up a Career Conversation

- **Identify the Interviewee:** Gain recommendations and referrals from people in your network (family, friends, professors, advisors, etc.). Utilize LinkedIn to identify ISU alumni and/or contacts in organizations of interest.
- **Contact:** Indicate why you are connecting, request a meeting (in-person, virtual, or phone), and how much time you are seeking (20-30 minutes).
- **Schedule:** Be prepared to adjust your schedule. Ask when is it convenient for the contact to meet.

### Preparing for the Career Conversation

- **Research:** Before the meeting, research the career field, industry and/or organization.
- **Preparation:** Prepare questions and bring your resume in case you are asked for it.
- **Professionalism:** Bring a padfolio with a notepad and pen, wear business attire. Arrive 10-15 minutes early.

### Question Examples

- What background is necessary or helpful for this position?
- What are the best ways to enter this field?
- What are the most effective ways to learn about specific job openings?
- What are the five most important competencies or traits for a person going into this field?
- What are your job responsibilities? What do you do in a typical day or week?
- What are the common career paths for people within this field?
- What aspect of your job brings you the most excitement or fulfillment?
- What is your biggest challenge in this role?

### After the Career Conversation

- Send a thank-you note within one to two days to express your appreciation for the time and information given.
- If you had a particularly impactful interaction, let them know that you followed up on their advice and the outcome.

### Tips for the Career Conversation

- Be flexible. Work around your contact's busy schedule when arranging a date and time to get together.
- Arrive early, demonstrating respect for the interviewee's schedule.
- Be prepared to direct the interview, but also let the conversation flow naturally.
- Ask for the names of additional people you can contact, and ask if you can use your interviewee's name as a point of referral.
- Respect the person's time. Limit the meeting to the agreed-upon timeframe.