



CAREER CONVERSATIONS

Career Center

California State University, Los Angeles

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You can gain a better understanding of an occupation or an industry by talking to people who are currently working “in the field.” You can conduct these conversations over the phone, although in-person contact is preferable. These meetings can be relatively brief – thirty minutes or less – and when you are done, thank the professional for adding to your knowledge base about his/her career. This person is now a part of your professional network! The following are some suggested questions.

The Nature of the Job

1. What are your major duties and responsibilities?
2. Describe a typical workday.
3. What aspects of your job do you find most interesting? Which are the least enjoyable?
4. What kind of person (in terms of talent and personality) would be best suited for this type of job?
5. Who do you have the most contact with – clients, peers, subordinates, superiors?
6. How does your job fit into the organization’s structure?
7. What changes do you see occurring in this field? Has technology affected this industry or this job?

Career Path

8. What were the positions you held that led up to this one?
9. Describe entry-level positions in this industry.
10. What types of experiences would help someone advance in this field?
11. How long does it usually take to move from one step to the next in this career path?
12. In this field, are there any specific prerequisites for advancement, such as examinations, higher degrees, advanced certifications, etc.?
13. Are there other positions in this field to which one could be transferred? What are they?

Preparation

14. What are the academic and experiential requirements for entry-level jobs in this field?
15. Are there any specific courses I might take that would be of help to me in this field?
16. Which extracurricular activities (paid work, volunteering, interning, campus) could enhance my chances of being hired in this field?
17. Which professional organizations would enhance my readiness for the field?
18. What special advice would you give to a person considering this field?
19. What types of training do employers give when entering this field?

Hiring

20. What is the current demand for people in this field?
21. What types of companies, organizations, or agencies might employ people in this field?
22. What advice could you give about how I could qualify for an entry-level position in this field?