

## NETWORKING AND INFORMATION INTERVIEWING

The differences between employment interviews and information interviews are:

### EMPLOYMENT INTERVIEWS

Employer arranges interview  
Employer sets agenda  
Employer attempts to find out what it wants to know although its interviewers may not be trained to succeed  
Your agenda is to find out everything you want to know about the employer and the opportunity without seeming rude

### INFORMATION INTERVIEWS

You initiate  
You choose the employer  
You ask the questions  
You draw conclusions  
You set up the appointment  
You decide what you need to know  
You conduct the interview.  
Employer may limit you as to time  
**You may not ask for a job**

### Why do an information interview?

1. Become a more credible candidate because you have market/professional information;
2. Find out about career paths that you had heard of but know little about;
3. Determine whether your personality/work style/life style is suited to a particular kind of practice;
4. Gather first hand information in a safe environment; and
5. Learn to ask impertinent questions of strangers.

### Where do you begin? *Research Research Research*

First, answer "What are the possibilities?"

1. CSO's *Extensive but not exhaustive list of practice areas* (CareerFiles at <http://www.law.umn.edu/uploads/images/318/LIST.pdf>)
2. Deborah Arron's *What Can You Do With A Law Degree*
3. NALP's *Guide to Law Specialties*
4. Your own assessment of your interests (What brought you to law school? What do you read in the newspaper? For what causes do you volunteer? Etc.)

Second, answer "Who does the work?"

1. Consult the CSO for connections to U of MN alumni and other practitioners
2. Contact your undergrad alumni office for alumni contacts who are lawyers (also available through the Lexis gateway to [www.martindale.com](http://www.martindale.com))
2. Research lawyers and practice areas through [www.martindale.com](http://www.martindale.com)
3. Research lawyers in specific practice areas in specialized directories: *Directory of Corporate Counsel, Directory of County Attorneys, Legal Aid & Public Defender Handbook, National District Attorneys Directory, Federal Staff Directory, Congressional Staff Directory, etc.*

Third, answer "What's current in the field?"

1. Read newspapers and the literature of what interests you to find out who is writing, speaking and thinking out loud in the field.
2. Talk to professors who teach in the area. Ask whose work they respect.
3. Read current law journals and call the authors of articles that interest you.
4. Contact professional journalists who cover the industries that interest you.

Fourth, call or write the people who do the work. Keep a record of the contacts you make.

### Now that you have someone's name and contact information, what do you say?

**Telephone:** Create a one-minute introduction and tell who you are and why you would like 20 minutes of that person's time.

**Letter or e-mail:** Write a short message telling who you are and why you would like 20 minutes of that person's time. Attach your resume as a pdf document to the e-mail.

## **What do you say in the information interview?**

You get to ask the questions you can't ask in an employment interview and they include:

How did you become interested in this work?

Is there growth here?

What is the most challenging to you?

What is most frustrating to you?

What are the pitfalls of this career path?

What personal characteristics and skills are essential to success?

What should I read everyday to prepare to do this work?

How will my experiences (on journals or clinics, or in particular classes) help me in this kind of employment setting?

What classes should I take?

How did you get your job?

What are the problems in working for this type of employer?

What is a typical day or week?

What motivates you to stay in spite of the difficulties?

What kind of earning potential is there in this type of employment?

How often do you work late?

Is this a lonely job?

If you could do it again, what would you do differently?

What is the real product of the legal profession?

What is your response to my resume?

and

Who else should I talk to?

Whose work do you respect?

May I use your name?

**Don't forget to say "Thank you."**

## **After the interview**

1. Write a thank you note.
2. Later, write again to make clear that you have followed up on a recommendation that your interviewer made. Did you read an article she suggested? Did you meet with a lawyer that he recommended. Report and thank the person again.