As you continue your education at Davenport, it is important to think about that end goal of successful employment. Stop by any business that you think you might enjoy working at, or you think might be able to use a person with your skills. You don’t have to know that they’re “hiring, conducting interviews, or looking for employees” – it doesn’t matter. Your goal is to collect information to help you with the employment and networking process.

The best time of day to do this would be mid-morning; mid afternoon is probably the 2nd best time. Don’t go at the very beginning or end of the day, or around lunchtime. It can often be an inconvenient time for the person you’ll be interviewing.

Remember – this is an extremely low-pressure process. No pressure on you, as you’re not asking for a job and no pressure on the “interviewee” for the same reason – you’re not asking for a job. There is no downside to this. No one has to worry about rejection.

When you show up at the business you’re interested in, have a book or a clipboard with the Informational Interview blank form, so you can write down answers. Ask to speak with the Owner, Manager, or “the one who does the hiring”. The person you ask may automatically assume you have a complaint… (They might not even hear the “one who does the hiring” part of your opening.)

Tell them you’re doing some “Career Exploration” – (This is very important) and that “you’re not looking for a job at this time” (Also very important!) Say you are just looking for some information on the type of work that they do, and that you only need five minutes of their time. You would like some guidance from an “Expert in the Field”. I know at this time you may be looking, but this sets you apart from others who are looking. Remember this is a way to get some networking contacts, along with researching your potential career field.

At this point they may say that they’re the manager, or they may take you to the manager/owner, etc. It doesn’t matter where you do this. It can be in the owner's office, or at the front door of the office/building.

Once you are with the owner/manager/hiring person, ask them the first question on the form, and continue through them as follows –

1. **What do you look for in a worker in this field?**
   *Paraphrase this answer and right it down*

2. **What 5 skills are most important for success in this field?**
   *Write down their answer. (Don’t be surprised if they can’t give you five...whatever they give is ok!)*

3. **What 5 personality traits are most important?**
   *Again, don’t be surprised if they can’t complete a list of five, or they give you more skills.... It’s all ok! Write it down.*

4. **What is the biggest problem you have with workers in this field?**
   *Write down their answer*

5. **What is the toughest interview question you ask, and how would you like it answered?**
   *This is like in school when the teacher says you’re going to have a test, and you ask what the answers are..... And they actually TELL you! They’ll very often give you the question and answer...*
The next question shifts gears a bit – and it is designed to do just that! For question # 6, in advance, have a couple of Job-related skills and transferable skills already written down in the blanks. Then, you ask them

6. **How would a person like me fit into this field? I …**
   
   Then quickly and briefly give them your short list of Job-related and Transferable skills. So it would sound like this: *How would a person like me fit into this field: I have great time management skills, strong attention to detail, and I have three years experience working in a customer relations position.*

Then…. Be quiet and let them answer your question. This is the **most critical part of the interview.** This actually “forces” them to visualize you, and consider you in one of their positions, and it also “forces” them to say something nice about you. (Remember, you’re going there to interview them as an “expert” in their field, and they’ll feel good about that – they’ll want to say something nice about you… This does NOT happen when you go to a prospective employer and ask “Are you hiring?”, or “Can I fill out an application?” If you do that, you just sound like everybody else who stops by their office, and they’ll not have any reason to think you are different.

Finally, ask them if they...

7. **Can you refer me to three other people who know as much about your field as you do?**
   
   *This question is designed in gathering referrals to others that you can visit to conduct an Informational Interview. Write down their names and where they work.*

After you have thanked them for their time, it is time to get out of there. This process can be done very quickly, however numerous times you will find the interview to last much longer. That is ok! As it will be the interviewee’s prerogative to lengthen the interview. That is a good thing!!!

If you do get offered a job – play it cool!!! Remember you stated at the beginning of this process that you were currently not looking for work. If you do get offered a job or an interview that is great – set up another time to discuss those details further. Continue to do your research and prepare for the interview on another day.

Lastly, don’t forget to send them a Thank You note – Preference would be mailed and hand written. Along with the written Thank You, include a copy of your resume so they have all your proper contact information. Keep detailed records of your visit to reference later for composing the Thank You.

You will soon see that most all employers tend to look for the same things; you’ll see a LOT of similarity in the answers to the questions regardless as to what type of business they’re in. That helps you develop the “language” to use when talking with prospective employers. And if you DO go back for an “official interview” with anyone that you’ve met with, you’ll already know all their hot button concerns.

Give it a shot, be positive, and open to trying something new!!! Remember there is no PRESSURE!!!
Please let me know what questions you have, I’m here to help!!!!

Good Luck

Sarah McAlpine – Career Services Coordinator Saginaw / Alma Campus
Informational Interview Worksheet

Business ___________________________ Person ______________________________

1. What do you look for in a worker in this field?

2. What 5 Skills are most important for success in this field?
   1. ___________________________________
   2. ___________________________________
   3. ___________________________________
   4. ___________________________________
   5. ___________________________________

3. What 5 Personality Traits are most important?
   1. ___________________________________
   2. ___________________________________
   3. ___________________________________
   4. ___________________________________
   5. ___________________________________

4. What is the biggest problem you have with workers in this field?

5. What is the toughest interview question you ask, and how would you like it answered?

6. How might a person like me fit into this field? (At this point, the employer may ask you to tell a little about yourself, or use the formatted question in the guide to incorporate your skills. Use this space to jot some skills down for reference.)

7. Could you refer me to 3 other people (Not in their organization) who have as much knowledge about this career field as you?
   1. ___________________________________
   2. ___________________________________
   3. ___________________________________