

INVESTIGATE CAREER CHOICES

SPECIAL REPORT



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REPORT THREE:
OPEN YOUR MIND TO THE WORLD OF
CAREER POSSIBILITIES.
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THE GINAC GROUP, INC.

BY LINDA M. GINAC

www.ginacgroup.com

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INVESTIGATE CAREER CHOICES

Open Your Mind to the World of Possibilities

- Explore and gain a greater understanding of potential careers and positions that match your strengths, interests, and work/life goals.
- Research and identify the pros and cons associated with different career options or choices.
- Narrow your options and create a roadmap that identifies outstanding questions and information about your chosen career path(s) and plans to address your goals.

OVERVIEW

The first step is to generate a list of occupations of interest and explore them in more detail. The goal is to narrow your choices to one or two definitive career paths. It will take due diligence to explore every facet about the career choices, in as much detail as possible, to gain enough knowledge to make informed decisions.

Typically, there is a temptation to hurry this process, omit key steps, or gloss over information to find an answer quickly. The temptation to rush through the process should be resisted. It is important to dedicate time to fully explore careers based on your interests and latent passions.

It is natural to feel anxious, have questions about your career, or feel uncertain about the direction you want to go. You began this process with a mission and a dream, and now you will begin to move from strategic exploration to tactical, hands-on discovery to jumpstart your new career. In this section, we explore three different career paths that clients have used during the **Research process**. There is no right path. You will need to determine which path works best for you given your time constraints, finances, and motivation.

INVESTIGATE OPTIONS

You should first begin by investigating all of your options. This **will help you** focus in on the types of careers and positions that make the best use of your **Career Assets**. It will enable you to broaden your awareness of influences that will shape and/or affect your career decisions as well as expand your thinking about the possibilities available to you. Often there are many more opportunities available than you first imagine. You may learn of careers that you never knew existed or discover new ways to apply your existing skills and talents. Thinking about all the career possibilities available to you can be an exciting and daunting prospect at the same time. You might ask yourself:

- How do I figure out which career(s) is the right fit for me?
- How can I avoid making the wrong career decision?
- Do I want to change to a new career or is it just that I am in the wrong environment?
- Where do I begin my career exploration?

One of the key anchors you can fall back upon throughout the career transition process, to help you answer such questions, is your Career Assets. **Career Assets** are the distinct competencies you bring to any organization, including your **strengths, abilities, interests, and values**. They provide valuable direction for your career decision-making process, in that they help you:

- Identify and make a decision about what types of careers, companies, and positions you will enjoy, and that fit best with your personal skill set.
- Discover new careers and fields of interest that you had not considered before.
- Determine the unique assets you bring to the table and make you most marketable to employers.
- Identify areas you need to develop in order to make a change to something new.
- Determine careers and professions that you would *not* enjoy, and should avoid.

Other factors to consider include the **Career Influences** that have shaped your career thus far. How did you select your current occupation? If you are a teacher, perhaps your mother or father was a teacher as well. Perhaps you are a financial analyst because you did not know that there was anything else you could do with your finance degree. Remember to think about the following important areas as you make decisions about your career:

- Your assumptions and beliefs about your strengths and skills.
- Your ideas about what types of jobs are “acceptable” – for example, to fit in with friends/colleagues or meet family members’ expectations.
- Your ideas about the availability of jobs, and the requirements to enter different positions.
- Your beliefs about different careers and the level of salary you can earn.
- Your vision for the future and the type of lifestyle you want to enjoy.

Many times, people make career decisions without being aware of the many influences that impact their decision-making. Or they base decisions on perceptions, beliefs, and expectations about themselves or different careers, which are not always fact-based, and may or may not be accurate. As you begin your exploration, be aware of those influencers that led you down your current path and choose not to limit yourself. Recognize that little voice that says, “You are not creative enough to do that,” or “You will never make money doing that.” Now try to shut that voice out!

OTHER FACTORS TO CONSIDER

There is much to consider when exploring careers and occupations. It is not just about the pay and how much fun the job is – there are many other factors of importance! You might be surprised to hear how often computer engineering students, who loved their chosen field in college, end up disliking their post-graduate jobs because they did not realize that they would be sitting in a cube by themselves, programming all day.

Being as informed as possible about all the facets of different careers and professions is key. There are many factors to consider – here are just a few:

- **Career Risk:** Knowing what type of career strategy (i.e. Job Change, Diversification) will help you achieve your goal and understanding the level of risk associated with each option.
- **Personal suitability for the work/career:** Are you capable of doing this job? Why? What skills or competencies would you have to develop or acquire to have a good chance of getting into this job or career?
- **The work:** What types of tasks are performed in the position? What products or services are provided? Do they sound interesting to you?
- **Working conditions and environment:** What is the location of work, safety requirements, uniform and dress, indoor or outdoor work, trade unionism, and level of interaction with others vs. working independently?
- **The effect of technology:** How does technology improve working conditions, productivity, or eliminate certain work/positions?
- **Wages and salaries:** Learn the range of wages or salaries and any special conditions for overtime work.
- **Opportunities for advancement:** What is the upward career path and timeline for this job?
- **Required skills for specific tasks within the work/career:** These might include computer programming or working with your hands.
- **Transferable competencies you possess that apply to the work:** Leadership, communication, problem solving.
- **Education or training qualifications required for the work/career:** College degree, vocational training, computer-based training.

- **Advantages and disadvantages of the work/career:** Pay, hours, level of independence.

The end goal is to evaluate many different career choices and make a final selection on a specific career to pursue. This decision-making process will give you a sense of fear about the future and also a sense of hope about what lies ahead. This is natural, because you are coming to terms with a choice. With this choice, you will open new doors and close old doors. During this process you should expect lots of change, be ready to accomplish tasks and be prepared to face drawbacks or obstacles that may arise.

On the next page you will find a worksheet called, “Discovering Career Options.” This worksheet is a place to capture your thoughts on everything you have learned about yourself and your future career direction. It is a place to log the careers or industries that interest you, make notes about what types of information you need to uncover about each choice, and capture your fears and ideas about the transition process. It is very good to capture your thoughts and ideas on paper for reflection through the transition process.



YOUR HOMEWORK:

DISCOVERING CAREER OPTIONS

Please take 20 to 30 minutes to think about and answer the following questions regarding your Career Options.

1. What types of careers and professions interest you the most based on the results of your **Career Exploration**? What is it about them that you find most appealing? It is okay to list anything that comes to mind – even careers/jobs that are completely unrelated to your current profession or careers you dreamed about, but never thought you could do.

2. What types of careers and professions do you think would make best use of your assets? In what kinds of roles or jobs could they be best used? It is okay if you do not have an answer to this question at this point in time.

3. What key things would you like to learn about the career choices listed above?

4. How would you most like to approach the research process?

DESK RESEARCH

To conduct secondary research to learn about the skills, expertise, and credentials required for specific careers.

OVERVIEW

The **Desk Research** process will teach you how to:

- Gather information about occupations, industry trends, business processes, and economic influencers.
- Determine job responsibilities and match them against your skills and abilities.
- Analyze job requirements in the context of the business environment.

From this process, you will gain:

- In-depth knowledge about the variety of opportunities available to you.
- More confidence about how you can leverage your skills and interests in various settings.
- Knowledge about the specific job requirements in each occupation and how you measure up against those requirements.
- Insight to help you determine the pros and cons of choosing various paths.

GATHERING INFORMATION

Now that you have developed a list of career options, it is time to engage in **Desk Research** to learn more about each of those options. **Desk research** is the name given to finding published information which can include occupational descriptions, job responsibilities, skills overviews, and comments about educational requirements. It includes magazines, journals, books, CD-ROMS, e-learning, and more. A wealth of information exists and this knowledge is available to you in bookstores, colleges, libraries, and on websites. With the widespread adoption of the Internet, use of published information to learn more about careers and industries is becoming increasingly common as a means of gathering information.

The most common questions that people ask:

- “Where do I start?”
- “What do I look for?”
- “How will I know when I find it?”

These are common questions asked prior to **Career Discovery**. This section will assist you in planning the steps in your research process and help minimize research anxiety.

Desk Research can be challenging and time consuming. Many people are intimidated by research and the research process. Sometimes, you might spend hours looking for specific information. At other times, you might find exactly what you want within five minutes. The time you spend on research is dependent on what types of information you are seeking, how much information you feel you need to make decisions, and available resources. It is best if you set aside dedicated time to do the research required to help you make informed decisions.

During **Desk Research**, you will evaluate a broad list of occupations based on your **Discovering Career Options** worksheet. Through research, you will narrow your career options to one or two choices, if you have not done so already. Let us take a look at the research process so that you can get a feel for the type and quality of effort that will be required of you.

NARROWING OPTIONS

After some initial thinking about each occupation and some basic **Desk Research**, you will narrow the options based on personal criteria mentioned earlier (i.e. salary, work environment). For example, you might develop an initial occupational list that includes the following occupational choices:

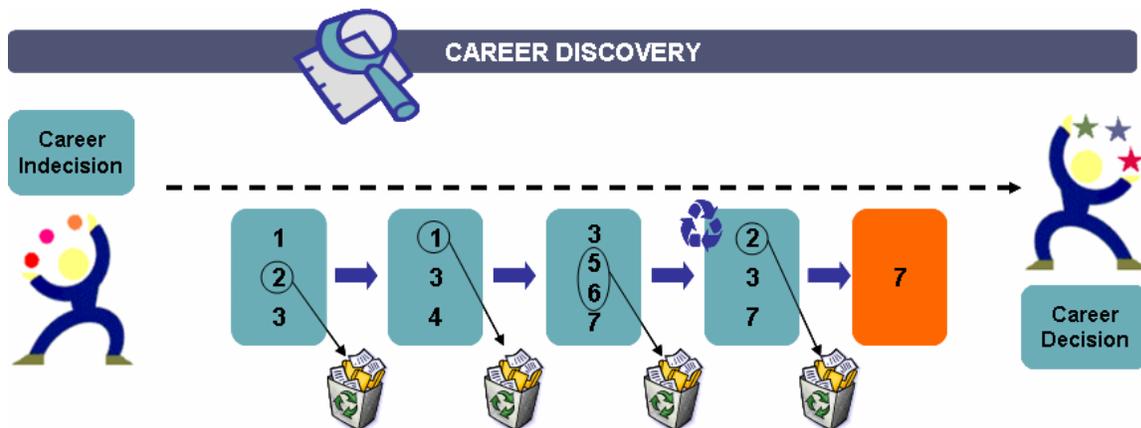
1	Advertising Manager
2	Association Executive
3	Education Administrator
4	Lobbyist
5	Public Relations Manager
6	Real Estate Appraisers
7	Real Estate Brokers
8	Sales Manager
9	School Counselors
10	Training and Development Manager

As depicted in the illustration below, you may be interested in becoming an (1) Advertising Manager, (2) Association Executive and (3) Education Administrator. You will spend time researching each of these occupations in-depth to learn about the work tasks, responsibilities, required skills, and more.

After some period of time, typically weeks, you will refine your occupations list based on new information. As you can see, you might keep (1) Advertising Manager and (3) Administrator, **remove** (2) Association Executive and then decide that you are interested in (4) Lobbyist.

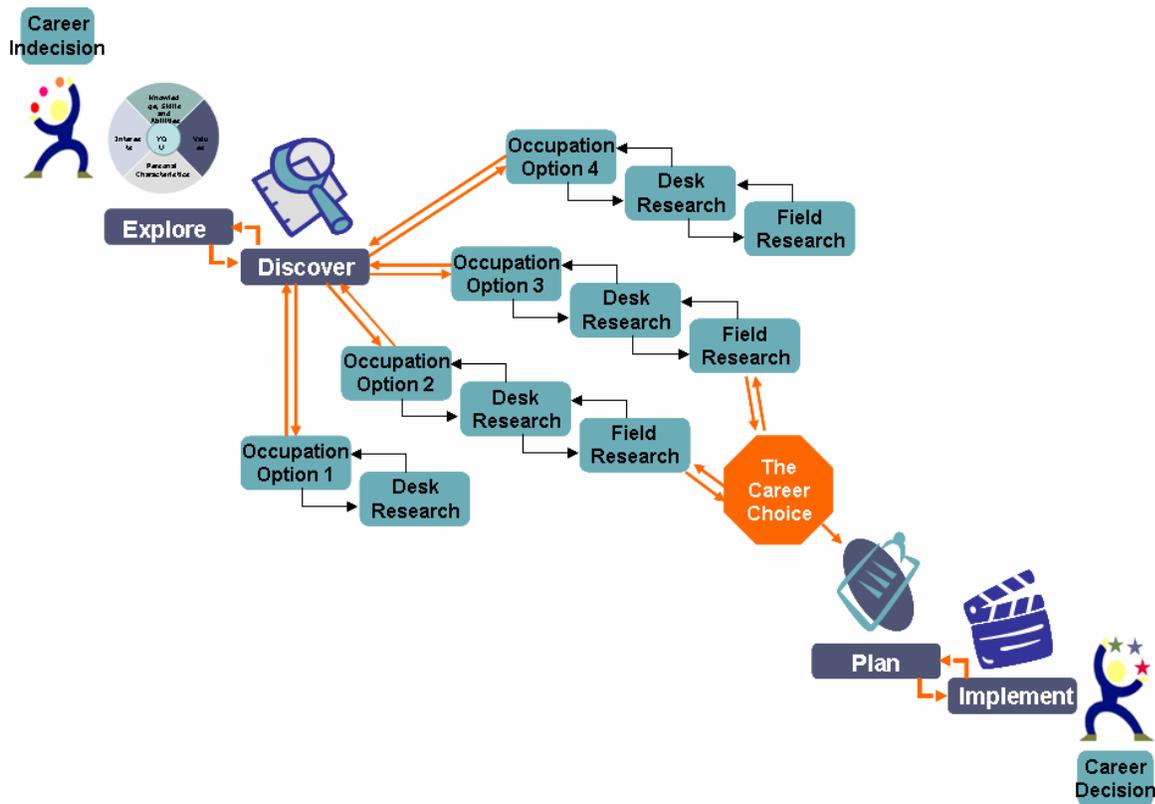
During your **Desk Research**, you will fine tune the occupations list many times over by adding and deleting occupations. The final list might finish up with (2) Association Executive, (3) Education Administrator and (7) Real Estate Broker. This is a natural evolution of the **Discover** process. The goal is to ultimately narrow the list to two options so that deeper research can be performed, and you can move on to **Career Planning**.

Once you have enough information via **Desk Research**, the next step involves **Field Research** in which you speak to friends and colleagues about each of these occupations to learn more about the day in the life of someone in this job. We will talk more about this in the following section.



RESEARCH PROCESS

Many clients come to the realization that aspects of **Discovery** are challenging and absorbing as depicted in the illustration below. This will require a great deal of autonomy and independence if you are to find the right information. It can be a draining experience to narrow options to one or two solid career choices. The ambiguity of not knowing exactly what you will be doing next in your career can torpedo productivity and force the **Discover** process to a halt. Indecision may strike several times during the process, due to information overload.



As you can see in the picture above, you must do extensive research to end up with **one** definitive career choice. This process places stress on you because the process is truly designed so that you will choose one career path. If you are like many clients, you do not have the luxury of time to work in each new occupation to test your likeability factor. You must rely on judgment and instinct and invest time in sufficient research to lead you toward career satisfaction.

GATHER THE RIGHT INFORMATION

The basics of good desk research involve:

- Knowing where to look and what to look for.
- Understanding the quality of the source material.
- Ensuring that you get the right information.

STEP ONE: KNOWING WHERE TO LOOK AND WHAT TO LOOK FOR

At the core of **Desk Research** is developing a list of resources. The list below includes resources that we find most useful in locating occupational information. You should first identify which resources will be relevant to your needs.

Occupational Descriptions

- **O*net Online:** A national database that provides comprehensive occupational overviews on more than 200,000 jobs in the United States. Visit <http://online.onetcenter.org/>

Labor Market Information

- The Bureau of Labor Statistics: Review labor market information to obtain projections on job and occupational trends at <http://www.bls.gov/bls/occupation.htm>.

Salary Information

- **Salary.com:** Explore salary ranges to ensure that a shift in occupation would meet your financial requirements at <http://www.salary.com>.

Professional Associations and Organizations

- Visit the professional association or organization relevant to your career choices to gain a broader perspective on the type of projects, people, issues and trends within the disciplines of interest to you. Many of these sites offer resources such as magazines and job descriptions that will give you a clearer idea on the variety of positions and niche markets that you could serve with your **Career Assets**.

STEP TWO: BE CREATIVE IN GENERATING INFORMATION

Sifting through and collecting research information can be quite lengthy and tedious. For some people, using the Internet and reading books are the most effective methods of research. For others, a more creative approach is required. It is important for you to judge which information gathering methods are best for you. Some of the more popular methods that can be used to collect, organize, and present research findings are listed below:

- **Collage:** The process of creating a collage can be an incredible tool to help you tap into your intuition and creativity to design your career or visions of you in your career.
- **Dream Journal:** Use a journal to write about your childhood dreams and fantasies as they relate to your career, and the types of work that you envision doing.
- **Brainstorming:** Brainstorming is an excellent way of developing many creative solutions to a career problem. It works by focusing on a problem, idea or career occupation and then coming up with solutions. Ideas should deliberately be as broad as possible.

STEP THREE: ENSURING YOU GET THE RIGHT INFORMATION

The golden rule for a successful outcome is to *know what you are looking for and the question you are trying to answer*. There is lots of information out there that will be interesting. Unless the information is important in answering your question, it should be avoided, as it will sidetrack you and slow you down.

The more conventional types of information that you will want to obtain includes occupational skills, companies in the market, salary range, educational requirements, credentials, and work environment factors. The less conventional types of information that you will need to assess include whether you like the industry, culture, driving distance to work, and other aspects that impact your quality of life.

Your research evaluation should include those bits of information that are meaningful to you. On the following page, you will find a worksheet called, “Career Choices Research,” to help you gather pertinent information on each career option. You can also create your own research tracking sheet. If you choose to use the worksheet on the next page, you should make copies of it prior to filling it in for the first time. This will enable you to have one sheet for each area that you want to research.



YOUR HOMEWORK:

CAREER CHOICES RESEARCH WORKSHEET

Please complete the **Career Choices Research Worksheet** below based on what you learned during your **Desk Research**. Be sure to include all of your career choices. Please refrain from using a filter on your choices at this time. For example, if you have a passion for photography, please include it. Using a filter, you might not include it because you think you can not make a living doing it full-time. We want to be able to understand all choices during this process. Be sure to include the following information:

- **Career:** Name of the occupational title.
- **Career Matrix:** Indicate whether this occupation would be a **Job Change**, **Career Change**, **Industry Change** or **Diversification**.
- **Suitability:** Indicate your level interest in the occupation.
- **Salary Range:** Provide the details of the salary ranges in this field.
- **Trends:** List the top three or four trends impacting the occupation, such as job growth or decline.
- **Career Assets:** List the top five or six **Career Assets** that are required of the occupation and that you possess and want to use in a future career or industry.
- **Education/Credentials:** Include any pertinent information on education, training, or credentials required to be effective in the job. You should also include how long it will take to earn/achieve them.
- **Long-term Consequences:** List the types of consequences you foresee for each choice.
- **Short-term Consequences:** List the types of consequences you foresee for each choice.
- **Probability of Success:** Make a note about the probability of being successful in each role.
- **Other:** Capture any other information that will help you make good decisions.



MY CAREER CHOICES WORKSHEET

Please complete this worksheet for each career or industry of interest to you.

Career Option:			
Career Matrix:	Job ____ Change	Career ____ Development	Industry ____ Change
Career Suitability:	Endorse ____ It	Support ____ It	Mixed ____ Feelings
Trends:			Salary Range:
Career Assets:	1. 2. 3.	4. 5. 6.	
Education:			
Consequences:	Long-Term	Short-Term	
Probability of Success:			
Other:			

CAREER OPTIONS AND VALUES

Now that you have completed the research worksheets, you may have narrowed your list to two or three close options. To help refine the list even more, we recommend that you now match your career choices to your values. Even if you have narrowed your list to only one choice you might want to do the following exercise to gain some perspective on how your values and career choices align.

This exercise is based on two dimensions: **Career** and **Value**. On the **career dimension**, list your top career choices. On the **value dimension**, list your top 10 values. Next, use the following system to rank your matches.

1 = Definite Match

2 = Strong Match

3 = Somewhat of a Match

4 = Weak Match

5 = Not a Match

Add up the numbers in each column to help gain some perspective about the careers that align with your value system. The higher the score, the better the career choice will be for you both short-term and long-term. The highest-choice option has the most probability of meeting your expectations.

This perspective will provide you with a more personal view of decision making. The numbers that you assign may or may not vary drastically. Typically, we find that this exercise works best with people sitting on the fence about two or three close options. You will need to determine if the values listed have equal or varying weights. For example, do you value money/financial situation more than family? This will impact your final outcome. An example is provided for you on the following page, followed by a blank template for you to complete.

Career and Values Matching

Example

Careers Values	Counselor	Real Estate Agent	Financial Advisor
Financial	2	1	1
Independence	1	1	1
Flexibility	1	3	3
Responsibility	1	2	2
Relationships	2	2	2
Friendships	1	2	2
Outdoors	3	2	2
Family	2	4	2
Personal Time	2	3	2
Challenging	2	1	2
Totals	17	21	19



YOUR HOMEWORK:

CAREER AND VALUE MATCHING WORKSHEET

Please take 15 to 20 minutes to complete the following worksheet to gain some perspective on how your career options align with your values.

Working Model

Careers			
Values			
Totals			

FIELD RESEARCH

Conduct primary research to learn about the norms, political landscape, and how people in specific careers get onto the path.

OVERVIEW

Conducting **Field Research** will teach you how to:

- Gather information about norms, political landscape, pros and cons, and the daily life of someone in that career.
- Determine true job responsibilities and see how they differ across different job descriptions, people, and industries.
- Analyze your **Career Assets** in the context of the people doing the work.

From this process, you will gain:

- In-depth personal knowledge about the variety of opportunities available to you.
- More confidence about how you can leverage your skills in various settings.
- Knowledge about the specific job requirements in each occupation, and how you measure up against those requirements.
- Insight to help you determine the pros and cons of choosing various paths.

FIELD RESEARCH

Now that you understand the roles and responsibilities of each of your career options, you will take the next step so that you can get a true feel for each occupation and the types of duties you would perform on a daily basis. You will move from gathering information to gathering intelligence with a human touch. It is a process we call **Field Research** or gathering primary information about occupations. **Desk research** was all about gathering information from published sources. With **Field Research**, you will be interacting directly with people who are employed in the careers you want to pursue.

GATHERING INTELLIGENCE

Primary research involves obtaining first-hand information directly about the careers you are pursuing. It is designed to answer specific questions of interest to you. Here are some of the questions that you could ask – and answer – during this process:

- What will be expected of me in this career?
- What are the key skills needed for this career?
- How do people in this career feel about their career choice?
- What type of challenges would I encounter if I enter this field?
- How did the person you are meeting with enter this career?

To collect primary information a person must carry out field research. The main methods of field research are:

- Informational Interviews
- Job Shadowing

The following sections describe the two methods above and provide guidance on how to appropriately execute each option. One option is not superior to the other. You can opt to use one or all of the methods. Map out a plan based on the following information.

INFORMATIONAL INTERVIEWS

Informational interviewing should be an integral part of your **Field Research**. One of the best sources for gathering information about what is happening in an occupation or an industry is to talk to people working in the field. This process is called *informational interviewing* or *research interviewing*. An informational interview is an interview that you initiate – you ask the questions. The purpose is to *obtain information*, not to *get a job*. This is an important fact to keep in mind. Many people misuse informational interviewing to land a job rather than to learn about various careers and industries. This can cause pain for everyone involved in the process. It could hurt your chances of obtaining future informational interviews, especially if a friend did you a favor and made an introduction. If you engage in this process as a means of discovery, view it as a good fortune that people are making time in their busy schedule to meet with you.

Reasons to Conduct Informational Interviews

- To understand job demands, frustrations, satisfactions and how a certain career has influenced people's lives.
- To gain solid information that will help you evaluate how your skills and interests dovetail with a particular career or business.
- To gain insight into the hidden job market –employment opportunities that are not advertised.
- To learn what the industry or employer values in its employees.
- To gain confidence when interviewing for a particular position. You are in control of the interview; you decide which questions to ask. Later, you will evaluate the acquired information for personal use.
- To increase your network by leaving a positive impression with someone who could provide encouragement, support, and future access to job leads.
- To find out whether jobs are available in the field or business you want to enter.
- To find suggestions about the career or the employer.

SIX STEPS TO CONDUCTING AN EFFECTIVE INFORMATIONAL INTERVIEW

Step One: Identify the Occupation or Industry to Learn About

Assess your own interests, abilities, values, skills, and evaluate labor conditions and trends to identify the best fields to research.

Step Two: Identify People to Interview

Start with lists of people you already know, including friends, relatives, fellow students, present or former co-workers, supervisors, and neighbors. Professional organizations, the yellow pages, organizational directories, and public speakers are also good resources. You may also call an organization and ask for the name of a person by job title.

The following questions may help you schedule your informational interview. Please feel free to modify the questions to better meet your communication style. It is important to keep asking people questions until you find a “warm” lead.

- Do you know anyone who works for COMPANY?
- Do you know anyone in a TARGET position at COMPANY?
- Do you think anyone you know will know someone at COMPANY?
- Do you know anyone who helps hire into COMPANY?
- Are you willing to help me connect with COMPANY or with your friend who can connect me to someone at COMPANY?

We recommend that you meet with a minimum of three people per occupational choice. It is important to meet with people at different companies to get the broadest exposure to your career choices and to minimize bias. We recommend that you structure each informational interview based on three perspectives:

1. New to career – Interview someone who just entered your field of interest. This will give you a fresh perspective of the career.
2. Experienced in career (likes it) – Interview someone who likes their job and has lots of experience in the chosen career. This will help you gain a balanced perspective, both positive and negative, about what you can really expect on the job and avenues for advancement.

3. Departing career – (dislikes it) – Interview someone who dislikes their job and had decided to leave it for various reasons. This will give you food for thought about the things that might annoy you in the job after you have been in it for a while.

Step Three: Arrange the Interview

Contact the person to set up an interview. Be sure to introduce yourself and explain why you are calling. Clearly state your goal and explain the process that you will be using during your investigation. Mention that you have a list of questions and would like to meet with them for less than thirty minutes. If they do not want to meet with you, ask for a referral. In preparing your communication, be sure to do the following:

- Write a brief introduction about yourself.
- Explain why you are writing to this individual.
- Explain your interests in the person's field, organization, or location.
- Highlight why you would like to converse. Be straightforward.
- Indicate when you will contact this person again. Be specific.

The following script can be used to break the ice when arranging your interview.

"Mr. Dunn, Linda Ginac at The Ginac Group referred me to you. Linda suggested that I speak with you about your career. My name is Andy and I am interested in the _____ field. I could use some advice from someone who is in this field. Do you have any time this week when I could meet with you? I know you are busy. I only need about 15 minutes of your time. I would really like to learn more about your company and the _____ field from someone with your credentials and experience."

You can contact the referral using a variety of ways by:

- e-mail
- telephone,
- a letter followed by a telephone call
- having someone who knows the person make the appointment for you

Step Four: Prepare for the Interview

Read all you can about the field and the specific company prior to the interview. Decide what information you would like to obtain about the occupation/industry. Prepare a list of questions that you would like to have answered.

Types of Informational Interview Questions

You will need to customize a list of your own questions for your informational interview. We recommend that you pick 10 – 12 questions from the following list:

What do you do as a _____?

- How do you spend a typical day/week?
- What kinds of problems do you deal with?
- What kinds of decisions do you make?
- What are your major responsibilities?
- What do you find most/least satisfying about your job?
- What part of this job do you find most/least challenging?
- What training or education is required for this type of work?

Tell me about this career field...

- What are the positive/negative aspects of working in this field?
- What are typical jobs for someone with my experience?
- Is there a definite career path in this field? Can you describe it?
- How did you enter the field and what has your career path been?
- What personal qualities or abilities are important to being successful in this job?
- How do you see jobs in this field changing in the future?
- Is there a demand for people in this occupation?

What is it like to work in this organization?

- How does your job fit into the organization/department?
- What are the toughest challenges you face in the organization?
- What is the "corporate culture" here? Is it very informal or formal? Do people work autonomously or under close supervision? Does everyone come early, stay late, or does it vary?

Can you give me advice on how to break into this field?

- Could someone with my background obtain a position in this field?
- What skills, education, and experience are required?
- What are the professional journals in this field which I should read? How can I find them?
- Which professional associations do you participate? Can non-members attend meetings?
- Would you take a quick look at my résumé and give me feedback?
- If I wanted to apply for a job, whom should I contact in this organization?
- What do you think of the experience I have had so far in terms of entering this field?
- What do you think of my résumé? Do you see any problem areas? How would you suggest I change it?

Step Five: Conduct the Interview

Dress appropriately, arrive on time, be polite, and be professional. Refer to your list of prepared questions; stay on track, but allow for spontaneous discussion. Ensure that you have a solid opening statement to describe yourself, your background, and your reason for conducting your career investigation. Before leaving, ask your contact to suggest names of others who might be helpful to you and ask permission to use your contact's name when contacting these new contacts.

Do not ask this person for a job! If they have opportunities that they believe are suitable for you, they may mention them to you. Before leaving, thank this person for his or her time. However, if they do invite you in for an interview, then go for it.

Step Six: Follow Up

Immediately following the interview record the information gathered. Be sure to send a note of thanks – preferably hand written – to your contact within one week of the interview.

JOB SHADOWING

Job Shadowing is a highly engaging career exploration tool for job seekers. It is a work-based learning experience in which you follow a host during a typical day (or period of time), observing and asking questions about a particular career. A job shadowing assignment can range from a half day, to a full day, to a week or a month, depending on your needs and the host's availability. By experiencing a career first-hand, you will learn a great deal more about that career than you can through **Informational Interviewing**.

Many of the same rules apply to job shadowing as apply to informational interviewing: preparing for the experience, scheduling it, getting the most out of it, and following up on it. At the end of the assignment, you should have gathered enough information about that job to make an informed career decision.

During your job shadowing experience, you will follow the professional you are shadowing through his or her work day. You will observe the rigors of the job, the company culture, and ask lots of questions. This is a time consuming project so if you are employed, you may need to schedule personal time off.

SIX STEPS TO CONDUCTING AN EFFECTIVE JOB SHADOWING EXPERIENCE

Step One: Identify the Occupation or Industry to Learn About

Since job shadowing can be a time consuming project, you will want to pick the one or two professions that most interest you.

Step Two: Identify People to Job Shadow

You will want to **job shadow** someone who is filling the position of interest. You should not shadow someone in a position that is below, above or somewhat like the position you will be doing. Start with lists of people you already know, including friends, relatives, fellow students, present or former co-workers, supervisors, alumni, and neighbors. You may also call an organization and ask for the name of a person by their job title.

Step Three: Arrange the Job Shadowing Experience

Contact the “host” to set up your job shadowing experience. Be sure to introduce yourself and explain why you are calling. Contact this person several weeks' in advance of the date when you would like to do the shadowing. You will need to determine if you will be onsite for a day, three days or an entire week. The timing will be dependant on your availability as well as the availability of your host. If they do not want to meet with you, ask for a referral by:

- e-mail,
- telephone,
- a letter followed by a telephone call, or
- having someone who knows the person make the appointment for you.

In preparing your communication, be sure to:

- Offer a brief introduction about yourself.
- Explain why you are contacting this individual.
- Explain your interests in the person's field, organization, or location.
- Highlight why you would like to converse. Be straightforward.
- Indicate when you will contact this person again.

Step Four: Engage in the Job Shadow Experience

Research the company where you plan to shadow carefully. While your best research will come from the actual shadowing, find out enough about the company so that you won't seem ignorant to the person you are shadowing.

Be helpful on the job by providing help and assistance when appropriate. If you are asked to attend business meetings, it is very important to refrain from speaking and participating in the discussion. You are not an employee; you are an observer.

If you need your cell phone, make sure that the ringer is on "vibrate" mode. It is rude to have telephone calls interrupt while onsite during this valuable experience. If you need to take one or two emergency phone calls, then excuse yourself from the work area to talk. Please limit the discussion to 3-5 minutes at the most.

Dress appropriately, arrive on time, be polite, and be professional. Refer to your list of prepared questions; stay on track, but allow for spontaneous discussion and interaction.

Remember to take notes during your experience, so that you can reference them later.

Step Five: Follow Up

Immediately following the job shadowing experience, record your thoughts and questions.

Be sure to send a thank you note to your contact within one week of the experience.

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1. Identify Career Issues and Goals

Explore Issues and Factors Influencing Your Career Decisions

Spend time investigating your current career situation, the challenges you are facing, and your overall goals. Begin to think about your career in a different way – in the broader context of your life as a whole. This report will help organize and clarify your thoughts and better define and communicate your career needs and goals.

2. Understand Career Issues and Possibilities

Learn How Your Talents Fit With Different Careers

Assessments often lead us to learn new things about ourselves and/or understand ourselves in a different way. This report will help you gain new insights on what you are good at, what you want or need to learn more about, what is most important to you in the workplace, and the types of careers that suit you best.

3. Investigate Career Choices

Open Your Mind to the World of Possibilities

Generating a list of occupations of interest and exploring them in more detail allows you to gain a greater understanding of potential careers and positions that match your strengths, interests, and work/life goals. The goal of this report is to identify pros and cons associated with different career options or choices.

4. Select the Perfect Career

Select the Perfect Career Based on Research and Insight

Weighing the many different factors, trade-offs, compromises, and work/life issues that could be impacted as a result of a career transition, your goal is to make a reality-based decision about your career future. By systematically weighing the many different factors, trade-offs, compromises and work/life issues this report will help you narrow your career options.

5. Develop a Career Roadmap

Gain the Competencies Required for Success

By creating a Career Roadmap you will have a strategic plan that lays out the specific steps needed to make a successful transition. This report will help you to determine the competencies needed to pursue your career choice while identifying your current level of ability and suggesting opportunities for development.

6. Expand Your Knowledge & Talents

Acquire New Skills to Become Proficient in Your Career

If you want to transition your career, you need to develop new competencies. The career action plan provides you with a means to manage all of the components of your career transition. This report introduces you to the acquisition of new skills in order to become proficient in your new career as well as tips and questions for checking in with yourself to ensure you are moving in the right direction.

7. Create a Job Search Plan

Define Your Approach to Obtain a New Career

*The central planning device for changing your career is a **Job Search Plan**. It defines and describes your target market, outlines your marketing strategy, and organizes the work to be done. In this report you will learn how to develop a **Job Search Plan** to manage the change process, who to target and how to get your foot in the door.*

8. Craft Your Transition Story

Know What You Want to Communicate and Pitch It Clearly

Create a personalized career transition story; one that showcases your unique talents, skills, and qualities. Your story will represent the totality of your career, and will highlight the top value propositions that you bring to an organization. In this report, you will learn how to craft a compelling story that helps you survive and thrive during the career transition process and merges your past experience with your future roadmap.

9. Develop Proven Communication Tools

Accelerate Career Change with Resumes, Letters and Other Tools

The most important assets for any career transition are the right tools. You need basic career tools to get promoted, change jobs, change careers, shift industries, or improve your performance. In this report, you will learn about the proven communication tools used to accelerate career change.

10. Prepare for Stellar Interviews

Articulate Your Unique Value During The Interview

Due to this increased competition, and to the physical and financial limits of the employer, interviews have become increasingly tougher. In this section, we discuss the different types of interviews, interview preparation, and mock interview testing. We will also introduce the "Interview Scorecard" used to assess your interview skills. This report briefly outlines strategies you can use to become a stellar interviewee. Learn how to talk the walk and walk the talk.

11. Build or Expand Your Network

Build and Activate a Network To Achieve Your Goals

Learn how to leverage your network of contacts to secure opportunities, make connections, and meet people who can help you achieve your goal(s). To have a successful career, you must understand how to use your network in a positive manner so that you build long-lasting relationships and continually develop your career. In this report, we will discuss the art of networking, generating opportunity and starting off on the right foot at work and at home.

12. Manage Your Career

Take Control of Your Career and Keep It On Track

One of the things that many people forget, once they have achieved their career goals, is that the journey is not at an end. Having a new career is not an end in itself. Having a career is the environment in which you can continue to grow, prosper, and advance. In this report, we will explore how you will set goals that are specific to your job, your profession, your industry, and your career.

The Ginac Group, Inc.

108 Wild Basin Road, Suite 230
Austin, Texas 78746

www.ginacgroup.com