

The Proactive Intern, Ann Arbor Spark, 10/26/2022
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What are the biggest differences between being a student and being a professional?

- Learn theory vs. practice the theory, well-rounded vs. proving yourself in specific industry
- Creative environment vs. real world scenarios, problems; process vs. results, learning information vs. using information
- Self-determination, write your own syllabus, decide your own learning objectives

Discerning your career interests

- Campus career planning offices, career fairs
- Network (ie, talk with people).
- Research companies and their leaders by:
 - Reading their websites
 - Following them on social media
 - Looking for alumni connections (use campus resources or LinkedIn)
 - Requesting informational interviews

Informational Interviews

Why? To learn about the industry or company, make a contact, demonstrate that you are proactive.

How?

1. Request an informational interview by sending an email in which you
 - Introduce yourself (1 sentence)
 - Explain your interest (1 sentence)
 - Request a short phone or zoom call (15 minutes)
2. Prepare for the interview by reading the website and social media, and making a list of questions that cannot be learned from the website such as:
 - Tell me about your journey to get to your position. What skills do you need to get to your position? How did you figure out this is what you wanted to do?
 - What does a typical day look like for you?
 - How do you connect with your coworkers? Is it hybrid, in-person, on-line?
 - What is the hierarchy of the company? How is it organized and who works here?
 - Is the company hiring now? What does the company's future look like? What is the vision for ten years from now?
 - What is the company's most important value?
 - What is the work culture like? How do you achieve that?
3. Conducting the interview:
 - Remember, most people enjoy talking about themselves and what they do.
 - Take notes.
4. Don't forget to send a quick email thanking the person for their time and highlighting something you learned or that interested you.

What does it mean to be proactive?

- Research ahead of time, contact alumni, ask for informational interviews.
- Take initiative to show you're interested in learning.
- Try to foresee obstacles ahead of time, take action before you need to react.