

### Why?

- ◆ Gain information on careers, industries, fields, training, etc.
- ◆ Expand your network – which is the undisputed #1 way of moving your career forward.
- ◆ Build your confidence
- ◆ Establish visibility with key people

### Getting Started

Start from your own contact base. Who do you know and interact with whom you could tap for names? Everyone knows someone who knows someone who can lead you to the right person.

Best to get an introduction; even better to have that person call or email giving the contact a heads up that you will be contacting them.

If you must call cold, have your elevator speech ready. Try emailing first with a brief intro and what you want (ex. "15 minutes of your time to discuss your perception of the xyz field today"). Follow up with a phone call to set up a face to face appointment. If you do lunch or coffee you should pick up the tab. If you can't get an in person time, then schedule a phone appointment.

### Questions to Ask

Be sure to do your homework first. Read up on the area they are in so you can ask intelligent, well thought out questions. Here are some you might consider:

1. How did you get started in this career? What was your career path like?
2. What background or skills do you recommend for success in this career direction?
3. What is your typical day like?
4. Is the work environment typically casual or formal? Fast paced or relaxed? What is the balance of team vs. independent work?
5. Have you worked in other environments? How would you say they differ?
6. What are the rewards of this work for you? What about the challenges?

7. What would you have done differently if you were entering this field today?
8. How do you see this field changing in the next 5 years?
9. Any professional organizations you recommend I visit or get involved in?  
(Hint: ask if you come as guest (you pay but they sponsor you to their next meeting). Websites to look at?

### **Follow Up Actions**

1. At the conclusion of the interview ask:
  - \* “Can I answer any questions about what I have told you?”
  - \* “I would like to talk with other individuals who are familiar with this area. Can you recommend 2-3 other individuals who are knowledgeable about current trends and opportunities in my target area? “ “Would you be willing to let them know that we spoke and that I will be contacting them?” Or, “May I use your name”
2. Be sure to write a thank you note (email or handwritten) and **INFORM THE PERSON ABOUT WHAT FOLLOW UP ACTIONS YOU TOOK BASED ON THEIR RECOMMENDATIONS.** They will be much more likely to continue to help you.
3. Be on the lookout for information and resources you can pass on to your contact.  
Stay in touch and you will be “top of mind”!