

Informational Interview Questions for the TIARA Framework

What do I want to know to help me to determine if this could be the right career for me?



Informational interviews are conversations between you and a professional who is working in a field/career of interest to you.

The TIARA Framework¹ is a technique by Steve Dalton that you can use for informational interviews. It is a way to get your foot in the door and build your professional network while learning about a profession from the people who work in it every day.

Consider your goals for the interview when selecting your questions. You'll likely have some of your own, too. Below are some sample questions you might ask. The first few categories are modeled after the TIARA Framework.

Trends

What are the various jobs in this field or organization?

What does your typical day look like?

- What kinds of problems do you deal with?
- What are your duties and responsibilities?
- What kinds of decisions do you make?
- What percentage of your time is spent doing what?

What sorts of changes are occurring in your occupation?

What skills or talents are most essential to be effective in this field?

What is the average length of time for an employee to stay in the job you hold?

What work-related values are strongest in this type of work (security, high income, variety, independence, etc.)?

How is the economy affecting this industry?

What are the salary ranges for various levels in this field? What is the job outlook?

From your perspective, what are the problems you see working in this field?

What are the major frustrations of this job?

Insights

Why did this type of work interest you, and how did you get started?

What are the most important personal satisfactions and dissatisfactions connected with your occupation?

- What part of this job do you personally find most satisfying? Most challenging?
- What do you like and not like about working in this industry?

Do you find your job exciting or boring? Why?

What were the keys to your career advancement? How did you get where you are and what are your long-range goals?

If your job progresses as you like, what would be the next step in your career?

If your work were suddenly eliminated, what kinds of work do you feel prepared to do?

How has your job affected your lifestyle?

What interests you least about the job or creates the most stress?

If you could do things all over again, would you choose the same path for yourself? Why? What would you change?

What abilities or personal qualities do you believe contribute most to success in this field/job?

What are the typical entry-level job titles and functions? What entry-level jobs are best for learning as much as possible?

Advice

How did you get your job? What jobs and experiences have led you to your present position?

How does a person progress in your field? What is a typical career path in this field or organization?

- What is the best way to enter this occupation?
- What are the advancement opportunities?
- What are the major qualifications for success in this occupation?

Do you have any advice for someone interested in this field/job?

Do you have any special words of warning or encouragement as a result of your experience?

Resources

Are there any written materials you suggest I read?

Which trade/professional journals and organizations would help me learn more about this field?

With the information you have about my education, skills, and experience, what other fields or jobs would you suggest I research further before I make a final decision?

Who is the department head or supervisor for this job?

- Where do you and your supervisor fit into the organizational structure?
- Who else do you know who is doing similar kinds of work or uses similar skills?
- What other kinds of organizations hire people to perform the functions you do here?
- Do you know of other people whom I might talk to who have similar jobs?

My strongest assets (skills, areas of knowledge, personality traits, values) are :_____.

Where would they fit in this field? Where would they be helpful in this organization?

If you feel comfortable and it seems appropriate: Would you mind taking a look at my resume?

Assignments

What things did you do before you entered this occupation?

- Which ones have been most helpful?
- What other jobs can you get with the same background?

What are the educational requirements for this job?

- What other types of credentials or licenses are required?
- What types of training do companies offer persons entering this field?

Does your work relate to any experiences or studies you had in college?

How well did your college experience prepare you for this job?

What courses have proved to be the most valuable to you in your work? What would you recommend for me?

What kinds of experience, paid or unpaid, would you encourage for anybody pursuing a career in this field?

General/Company Information

If you are interested in working for the same organization as your interviewee, ask about the company.

What do you like most about this company?

How would you describe the working atmosphere and the people with whom you work?

How does your company differ from its competitors?

What does the company do to contribute to its employees' professional development?

¹ Please find more information about Steve Dalton's technique, the TIARA Framework, in his book entitled "The 2-Hour Job Search." You can also find more information in these videos: <https://youtu.be/qKxjK2JtdGw> and <https://youtu.be/8FsUm5noXEM>.