

Information Meetings

Information meetings are meetings you arrange as part of your career strategy, designed to help you research possibilities, build your network, and develop leads that may lead to career opportunities.

When we are thrown into transition, we often feel disoriented and powerless. Taking a proactive approach, rather than just applying for jobs online and waiting for recruiters to call us back, helps rebuild our sense of agency. Moreover, many jobs are filled through informal channels; you will only learn of them if you have good networks.

Information meetings also help you to understand different sectors of the job market, and possibilities within those sectors, which in turn will help you to focus your efforts, and write a well-targeted CV.

The way to start getting Information Meetings is to think of all the people you know who might be useful contacts.

It can be helpful to think of three types of contact.

A contacts are people you already know. They can give you feedback on your CV, on how you put your aspirations and strengths across, and, most importantly, give you referrals to B contacts.

B contacts are bridging people. They are typically knowledgeable and well-connected within their sector. They can give you information on the sector: what is going on, who is important or interesting, how recruitment typically works in the sector, and what foreseeable needs there are; and also how (or if) your aspirations and strengths might match job roles. They can give you referrals to other B contacts and also, sometimes, to C Contacts.

C contacts are decision makers who can hire you for existing opportunities, or even create a new role for you. They can also refer you to other C contacts.

Your first goal in all meetings is to build a relationship with the contact. If they like you and are interested in what you have to offer by the end of the meeting, that is a good outcome.

The typical shape of an information meeting (with B or C contacts) is:

1 Build rapport

Thank the person for seeing you

Emphasise connection with whoever referred you

Decompression: make it clear that you are not expecting them to know of a job for you

2 Set the context

Purpose of the meeting: you want to pick their brains about the sector

Your situation: background and career aspirations
Options you are exploring (see the handout on Developing Options and Segmentation)

3 Open Questions

Move from the general to the specific Sector questions:
Problems, trends, critical issues Solutions tried, outstanding issues
Key organisations, individuals
Fit: types of role in sector that relate to your aspirations and skills
Feedback: on your CV and presentation

4 Closing the meeting

Who else should I be talking to about this? (May I use your name?)
May I come back to you if I have further questions?
Brief summary of conversation, including actions you will take as a result
Thanks!

This is a challenging aspect of any career transition strategy; but there are a two things to bear in mind:

One is that most people won't do this, so if you do, then you stand out as someone proactive, purposeful and courageous;

A second is that the people who agree to meet you on this basis tend to be nice people: that is heartening and makes it less scary. In fact, once you have plucked up your courage and arranged a meeting, you will almost certainly enjoy it and be energised by it.