



# Networking Questions Open Doors

True networking takes place after a so-called networking meeting when one business professional sits down with another to have a one-on-one conversation. If that conversation is focused and planned, it can yield big results – new career ideas, inside information about companies, new product knowledge, industry trends, job leads, and—most important—career advice.

Many people call this process the Information Interview, but some believe that process should only be done by college seniors about to graduate. The truth is: you can benefit from having a conversation about your career, with nearly ANY business associate. I call this meeting the Career Conversation™.

**The Career Conversation™** is designed to help you investigate job possibilities without actually *seeking* a job. This process is the KEY to making business connections, and accessing jobs before they become public knowledge. The interview is conducted with employees or workers who have a job similar to the one you seek. Or, it could be staged with any business professional you meet—either socially or at formal networking occasions. Often, you can learn about an industry or a company from nearly anyone working there; in addition to anyone who consults or sells to that company or market.

## Questions to Ask

Once you get started, you will have no trouble filling the hour with conversation. Here are a few questions to get you started. These are by no means all inclusive. The more strategic your questions, the better you position yourself for a professional position. If you have ideas and suggestions, by all means add them. But, keep the focus on the other person. Your goal is to make the other person feel important.

## Questions Regarding a Job Position

1. What is your full job title?
2. What are your responsibilities?
3. What do you like most about your work? Least?
4. What are the major frustrations of your work?
5. How is your time divided between administrative work, meetings and solitary work?
6. Could you describe a typical day for me?
7. Is there seasonal pressure in your work? What time of year is the busiest?
8. Who reports to you? To whom do you report?
9. How many roles like yours are in the company?
10. How did you happen to get your job?
11. What factor on your resume got you the interview?
12. What educational background do you have?

13. How flexible are your work hours?
14. How flexible is the company about onsite versus remote work?
15. How many hours a week do you actually work?

### **Questions Regarding a Company**

16. I noticed from your website that a merger took place in 20XX. How did that affect your product line, market position, etc.?
17. How would you describe the culture compared to \_\_\_\_\_? (Mention a company you both are familiar with.)
18. Do you know the market share for this company's product X? How has that changed over the years?
19. What new products are in development?
20. What new markets are of interest to the company?
21. Have there been recent changes in the executive suite?
22. What are the educational backgrounds of the company's top executives?
23. What markets/locations are doing well? Which ones are struggling?
24. Are functions such as HR, accounting and marketing centralized?
25. What is the organizational structure?
26. If I were to join the company in X department, who would be the executive overseeing that area?

### **Strategic Questions Regarding an Industry**

27. I notice the major players in this industry seem to be X, Y and Z. Am I on target? Who's leading the pack? Who has the hottest technology/product?
28. Are the markets for your product expanding? What sectors? What countries?
29. What do you see as major changes in the industry?
30. How would you characterize the strongest image or brand in this industry?
31. What are some of the innovations that customers are looking for?
32. What product features or services that used to be cutting edge are now considered standard?
33. What are some of the biggest challenges this industry faces?
34. Who owns the major companies? Are they US-based? European? Asian? How does that affect you?
35. What trade associations are strongest in this industry?
36. What standards, regulations and codes affect this industry? Is the development led by a particular country/state?
37. Which companies are doing something really interesting in terms of products and services?
38. Which companies are emerging as market disrupters?

### **Questions Regarding a Company Culture**

39. What do you like about working at the company?
40. The company claims to be mission-driven. As an employee, how often do you hear about mission and see it implemented?
41. I notice your company values are \_\_\_\_\_, \_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_. Which one(s) do you think are most in alignment with actual management decisions? Why?

42. Does your company support professional development? How?
43. If you were to give the company a score on strategic versus reactive decisions, what percent would each one be?
44. What experiences at work are fun? When can you truly be yourself?
45. How do you celebrate wins in this company?
46. How does the company deal with personal leave, sick leave, or parental leave?
47. What did you notice about the culture when you first came to work here? How is it different from other companies you've worked for?
48. Does the company emphasize Diversity, Equity and Inclusion? (DEI) How?
49. Do you feel advancement opportunities are real in the company?
50. Do you feel work/life balance is possible at this company?