

wlpg



STAGEfive

I need people who can help me

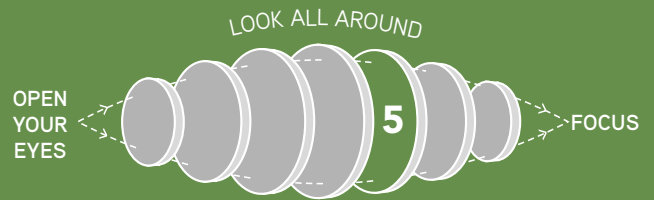
STEP 1 - THIS IS MY COMMUNITY

STEP 2 - TIME TO PROPOSE A TOAST!

STEP 3 - THE ART OF INFORMATION INTERVIEWS

STAGEfive

I need people who can help me



IF YOU'RE GOING ON HOLIDAY, YOU USUALLY RELY ON LOTS OF DIFFERENT PEOPLE TO ENSURE IT'S A SUCCESS. WHETHER IT'S THE FRIENDS OR FAMILY YOU GO WITH, THE TRAVEL AGENT, THE AIRCREW WHO GET YOU THERE OR THE TRAVEL REPS WHO LOOK AFTER YOU, THEY ALL HAVE A VITAL ROLE TO PLAY. WHO WILL PLAY A VITAL ROLE IN THE REST OF YOUR LIFE?

OVERVIEW

You now know how to develop the attitude, belief and commitment you need for the journey you're making. But this will be a journey through the real world. And how far you get will not always be up to you – other people have a big say in what happens to you. So you need to have people around you who can support you and have your best interests at heart.

This stage shows how to ensure this through the vital skill of relationship building. It also explains the art of information interviewing – one of the most valuable techniques for building your community and managing your life.



THE RIGHT PEOPLE AROUND YOU

It was when Helen hit problems that she realised the importance of having people who listened, helped her make decisions, had fun, loved and supported her through the ups and downs of life. They include work colleagues, people from college, volunteers from a local charity, family and friends from the gym. Helen realised she'd be lost without this support community.

*'Positive people make you positive.
You've only got one life so make sure
you share it with the right people'*

STEP 1 > LOOKS AT THE PEOPLE WHO MAKE UP YOUR EXISTING LIFE COMMUNITY AND THE POWER THEY HAVE TO HELP YOU MOVE TOWARDS THAT LIFE YOU'RE VISUALISING

STEP 2 > SHOWS HOW MANAGING YOUR RELATIONSHIPS CAN BE AS SIMPLE AS MAKING A 'TOAST' AND PROVIDES 10 PRACTICAL WAYS YOU CAN START TURNING THOSE PLANS INTO ACTION RIGHT NOW

STEP 4 > OUTLINES THE OPPORTUNITIES INFORMATION INTERVIEWS CAN CREATE AND OFFERS A PRACTICAL GUIDE FOR CONDUCTING YOUR OWN INFORMATION INTERVIEWS

HOW STAGE 5 WILL HELP YOU

Don't worry if you find some parts of this stage difficult. You'll still get real benefits and insights that help you to:

- Realise you're not alone in the process
- Identify key people to help you
- Develop the capability to seek effective support

STEP 1 – THIS IS MY COMMUNITY

Achieving your vision is almost impossible on your own – we all need help. Just think back to all the people who've already helped you through the ups and downs of your life to date – when you were born... during your schooldays... getting your first job... when you were ill... when you felt low... and so on!

We may not think about it much, but we all have a personal 'community' that supports us throughout our lives. And our relationships with those people dramatically affect the quality of our life. This involves giving as well as receiving – and can change over time. For example we begin our lives totally dependent on our parents but they may end their lives highly dependent on us.

Your community has probably evolved naturally. You may have barely realised it, let alone thought to be grateful for it. But it can hold the key to your future happiness.

Your life community

Let's look first at the different kinds of help people can provide in your life. You'll then be ready to propose a 'TOAST' – that's just an acronym for a simple action plan for managing your personal life community more proactively.

Like any community, voluntary, sports or social group, your life community is made up of three groups:

CORE MEMBERS – The people who give the most help and commitment, often going the extra mile.

SUPPORTERS – People who are very supportive but less able to help due to their own commitments or priorities.

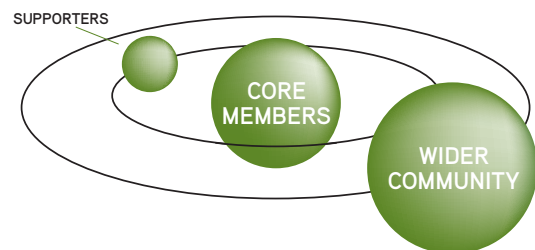
WIDER COMMUNITY – Existing members who are rarely seen or potential new members.

The key to success lies in:

- Creating a strong core by investing quality time with the right people
- Maximising your supporters by building strong relationships
- Continually networking in your wider community

The solution lies in the relationships and links between the three groups. For example too great an emphasis on a few core people will result in overload and frustration, while too great a number of distant members with no core commitment will result in nothing ever being achieved.

Think about your current 'community'. Roughly how many people are in each group?



'We have not come into the world to be a number, we have been created for a purpose, for great things, to love and be loved' – Mother Teresa

YOUR CORE MEMBERS

Imagine you are the chairperson of your own charitable trust – ‘Trust Me’. Its aim is to enhance the quality and impact of your life by helping you realise and sustain your vision. You start by creating an advisory group of core members, each providing different kinds of support for your various WLPG areas.

Here are twelve types of help you may need:

WORKING

CAREER PARTNERS – People you work with for a larger purpose, eg: An orchestral player needs his colleagues to perform a symphony

CAREER SPONSORS – People who employ and pay you to make your life (or earn a living)

CAREER COACHES – People who help develop your skills, confidence and employability

LEARNING

MENTORS – People who guide you and help you learn about yourself and your role on Earth

ROLE MODELS – People you learn from in terms of expertise, attitude or life management

CRITICAL FRIENDS – People providing honest, objective feedback on your strengths/needs

PLAYING

CONFIDENCE-BOOSTERS – People who make you feel good, see the bigger picture and put things in perspective

ENCOURAGERS – Positive people who give you energy and enthusiasm

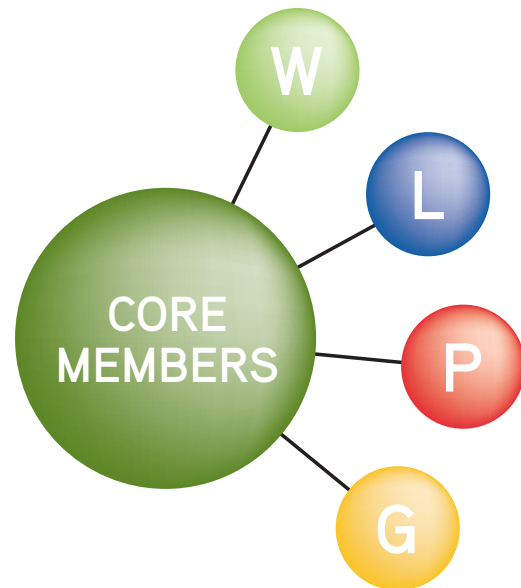
NETWORKERS – People with access to broader networks and contacts

GIVING

SOULMATES – People who provide unconditional love, friendship, warmth and compassion throughout your life

GOOD FRIENDS – The people always there for you – caring and non-judgmental

CHAMPIONS – People who recognise and promote your talents and achievements



Some members will stay with you right through your life, others may come and go. Some may play multiple roles in your life, others may appear for a particular reason. In our experience most people's core groups involve around four to eight people.

SUPPORTING MEMBERS

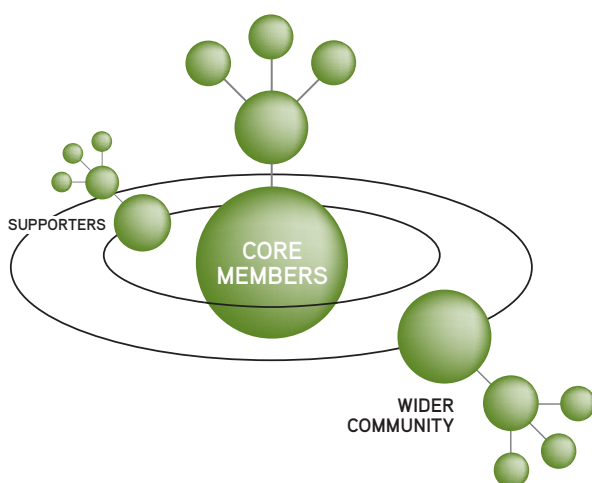
Surrounding this core group will be a larger number of supporting members perhaps 20-50 or more, each providing similar types of support but to varying levels and frequency. This group is potentially massive.

WIDER COMMUNITY

These are either casual contacts – or people you may meet in the future who could offer particular kinds of support you need.

e This is my existing community

1. Take a piece of paper and map out the names of your core group, supporting members and wider community. Try to be selective in choosing core members. You'll have all sorts of existing contacts through your WLPG and the boxes here may help to prompt names.
2. Broaden the list by adding all the people you have met or heard of through each contact, eg: friends of colleagues.
3. Review your community – where is it strong and where are the gaps?



WORKING

PRESENT COLLEAGUES – team, division, organisation
 PAST COLLEAGUES – including former boss(es)
 PEOPLE IN YOUR SECTOR – suppliers, customers, competitors

LEARNING

PRESENT AND PAST CLASSMATES – school or college friends, people you've met on courses
 PROFESSIONALS – teachers, trainers, lecturers
 MENTORS/ROLE MODELS – people who have inspired you

PLAYING

FRIENDS – the address book
 FRIENDS OF FRIENDS – asking people whether they know someone else
 SOCIAL CONTACTS – people you've met at parties or clubs and societies

'When facing the everyday sludge that life can throw us, we all need inspiration, motivation and a shoulder to lean on' – Dave Peizers

GIVING

FAMILY – the extended family
 NEIGHBOURS
 WIDER COMMUNITY – people you come into contact with each day



IT'S A TWO-WAY PROCESS

When Asya's husband was called up for naval duties overseas, her support community came into its own. Friends, colleagues, neighbours and family all helped with childminding, entertainment, socialising and day-to-day chores. This support reflected the help Asya had given them in the past. She recognises it's a two-way process – you often get back what you give, and with interest.



10-FOOT CHOPSTICKS

Imagine walking into two rooms full of the most exotic Chinese banquet. In both rooms the only rule is that you have to eat with 10-foot chopsticks. One room is quiet, full of miserable sad-looking faces. The other is full of fun, laughter and happiness. So what's the difference between the two rooms? In the first they are trying to feed themselves but in the second they are feeding each other.

Building your community is a two-way process – be a giver not a grabber.

e I can make more of my opportunities

So how good are you at building your community? And what difference could improving your skills make to your life? This simple questionnaire should help you find out. Every year we meet lots of new people that can help us, but how good are you at making the most of the opportunities?

1. Consider the following questions and mark yourself between 0 (not very good) to 10 (brilliant).
2. Now think about the impact you could make on your life if you improved your score.
3. Don't worry if you score low. Start by finding a friend to help you and perhaps meeting new people by enrolling on a course, volunteering locally or re-discovering an old hobby.

		LOW	MEDIUM	HIGH								
1	How proactive and motivated are you at contacting new people?	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
2	How confident are you of making a positive first impression?	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
3	How self-assured are you in large group situations?	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
4	How clear are you on what help you need from other people?	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
5	How skilful are you at asking questions and actively listening?	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
6	How persistent are you at following up new contacts?	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
7	How interesting are you when asked, "What do you do?"	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
8	How good are you at handling rejection?	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
9	How much help do you give other people?	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
10	How effective are you at keeping in touch and maintaining quality relationships?	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10

'Every stranger is a potential new friend'

STEP 2 – TIME TO PROPOSE A TOAST!

Now you understand more about your current life community and how it can help you. So you may wish to create a relationship plan. You'll be achieving a lot more by thinking about the kind of relationships that are right for you – rather than just drifting through life letting relationships come and go.

e I know how these people can help me

Before you start creating a plan to manage your relationships, it's important to determine the purpose of your support community. The clearer you are on the purpose, the quicker and easier you'll get there.

1. Take a piece of paper and list all the things you need help with in order to sustain your vision (Look back at Stages 3 and 4).
2. Place this list in priority order – what is most urgent and important.
3. Write down exactly what type of help you need under each.



Sue Earl (left) understood clearly what help she needed to find a job. She highlighted two types of support – guidance from somebody already doing the job she was interested in and help with her CV. Both her friends knew people who could help.



Finding help in each of the areas you've identified is simple. Think of it as proposing a **TOAST** - *Target, Outcome, Approach, Support* and *Timescale*. Imagine yourself toasting your success when your plan has helped you reach the life you want!



e This is my relationship plan

Now propose a TOAST to your future by planning how you can use – and develop – your support community to help make your vision a reality.



First ask yourself which people you are targeting and why. And whether these are existing contacts or new ones you need to find.

Make some new contacts

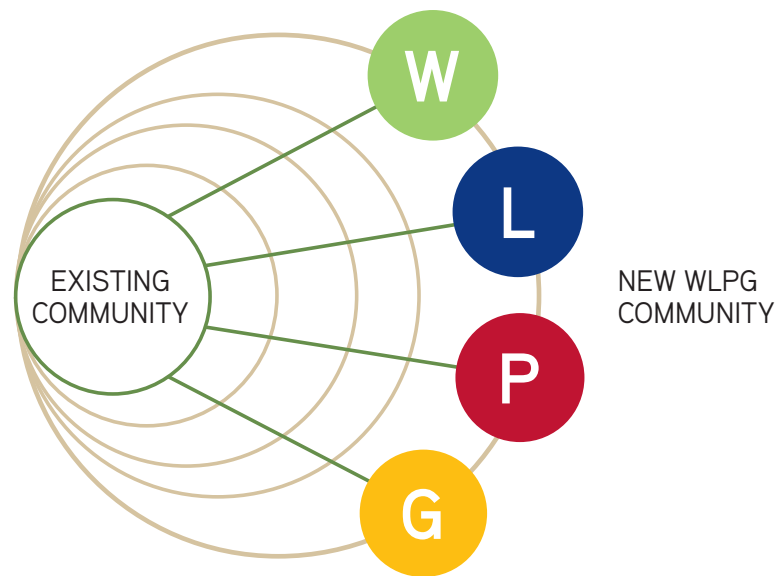
Are there any new people you need to add to your target list?

Some ways to generate this list are:

- Ask a friend or colleague if they can recommend someone
- Tap into existing networks, eg: professional bodies, internet chat-rooms, interest groups
- Scan papers, journals and magazines
- Surf the internet
- Review the list of people you identified in your life's essentials – Stage 2, pg 17

Move in the right circles

Many of us fail to find the right people because we keep moving in the same old familiar circles. The answer of course is to start moving into new circles.



This can be achieved by jumping into different, unrelated communities and linking people we meet back to our own support group. Some simple ways of doing this include:

- Joining a fitness club
- Giving time to a local voluntary organisation
- Going to night school
- Getting a job in a popular bar
- Joining a church group
- Taking up an interest involving other people

Remember, it takes time to build quality relationships so don't expect things to happen overnight! You'll be amazed by how many new people can support you, and in turn how many new people they know.



What are you hoping for? Be clear on what you want to gain from initiating or building the relationship. Having spoken, written to them or e-mailed, what do you want the ideal outcome to be?

Learn to ask for what you need most rather than simply going through the motions. Also think carefully about how you would like the relationship to continue.

Does this person represent an intended core member, supporter or simply a one-off request? What are you offering as well as asking for? People often share most when they receive something back.

Don't forget everybody out there, however important, is a human being with their own needs, concerns and frailties – how can you help them?



The clearer you can picture the outcome the better. In Sarah's case her outcome is shown. She wanted to climb to the top of the hill and had to persuade her brother and friends to join her. She 'sold the benefits' of the outcome – the fun of reaching the top, enjoying the view and getting an ice-cream on the way! They celebrated at the summit.



What approach will you take? We all build relationships in different ways. So plan your approach accordingly. Outgoing people generally find it easy – they just take the initiative, pick up the phone and think on their feet.

But perhaps you're more shy? That need not be a problem. You'll be surprised at the difference you can make – and as usual, it's a case of breaking down barriers.

Below are ten tips – why not pick out just one you could act on today?

1. Build on what you're good at and prefer. You may find e-mails ideal. This could mean developing a small number of intimate relationships built on trust.
2. Find an outgoing friend to help – there are no rules to say you have to go it alone.
3. Practise with friends – try out a few questions on someone you trust.
4. Model excellence – observe people you rate highly and try their approach.
5. Develop your confidence in a safe environment – try practising your technique with people you'll never see again, eg: shop assistants.
6. Go on a course that involves interacting with other people. Get out of your comfort zone.
7. Remember most quiet people are good listeners. Listening is one of the most powerful relationship management skills – so use it.
8. Focus your energy on building quality relationships, depth rather than breadth.
9. Expect rejection – believe it or not, it's part of the process and not personal. The most successful people often get the most rejections!
10. Review your successes – you've obviously built relationships in the past. This stuff is nothing new, so what can you learn from past successes?

Whichever approach you use, it's always worth thinking about potential questions – See tips on Information Interviews (see page 16) for help with this.

Consider also how you are going to make the most of the opportunity.

Try to create a win-win situation – what do you want from them and consider what you can give to them, eg: I want to increase my confidence when communicating with people – or I want to give them a clearer picture of me and what I have to offer.



Before Chris (left) could even contemplate extending his network and becoming manager of a hairdressing salon he needed the support of his partner Trevor. What Trevor crucially instilled in Chris was the belief that he could do it.



Firstly ask who and what can maximise your chances of success?

Probably the best form of support is an endorsement or referral from someone who knows your target audience personally and has its respect.

Secondly, it's always helpful having someone close, who is either a good relationship builder or is very encouraging, to act as a coach. This is essential if you don't know where to start or are too lazy to do anything!

Who comes to mind and when are you going to speak to them?

Thirdly it's always useful to have an 'excuse' for making contact, eg: "I'm doing some research on..."

Other support mechanisms include:

- Respected people in the field
- Thorough research beforehand
- Help from colleagues
- Selected books and courses
- Professional bodies, trade associations, interest groups
- Librarians and community organisations

Each may give invaluable advice and guidance on how to contact particular people. The more people that are looking on your behalf the better.

You also need to consider how you'll support yourself if you get rejected.



When Nic Wallis (left) moved into a new area, she found an extrovert friend Evelyn to help her develop new relationships. They shared by building on common friends then steadily got to know friends of friends. They are now at the hub of a whole new network.



Exactly when are you going to do things? Set a deadline and be as specific as possible, eg: time, day and date. Ensure you are clear of the steps required and have a means of recording progress. Make sure you'll know when you get to the date whether you've been successful or not. Think about potential Plan Bs and their time implications.



‘Remember, relationship building is a marathon not a sprint – but set yourself clear milestones along the way’

Creating your community is as easy as making a **TOAST** because the worst thing that can happen is people say no. So just have a go, and keep it going.

For a summary TOAST remember:

- Take time to build trust – there are no quick-fix solutions
- It is a two-way process. You'll be part of other people's networks and if you help people too, they'll be more likely to help you
- Always offer thanks and recognition – people always remember gratitude
- Dedicate time simply to keep in touch with people as their lives change (ring, write, e-mail, visit key contacts at regular intervals)
- Look back at your contact list – what further action is required?
- Be persistent
- Stay positive
- Accept rejection
- Learn from both your good and bad experiences
- Don't worry if you're not perfect
- Take small steps to improve and, most importantly, remember this is now an ongoing process – it may take time but it will be worth it

You may get ideas from the following four case studies.

WORKING



DON'T HIDE YOUR IDEAS

Ian McKenna uses the supermarket trolley approach to life – he goes along each aisle picking as many free training programmes and as much advice as he can. In work he is not the best completer/finisher but has developed his networking skills to build a complementary team around him. Ian believes it's vital to tell people your ideas even if they laugh at them. He put his theory into practice by influencing senior management at work to promote him into a more strategic funding role.



'Share your ideas with as many people as possible. Link with positive people who have complementary skills'

PLAYING



JUST HAVE A GO

Julieanne O'Hara moved from a finance department with 12 demotivated staff working in silence to a team of seven who treat work as fun. Supported by these new colleagues, she jumped at the opportunity to help at a children's play day. It opened her eyes to see kids with special needs having fun and she now realises the effect people can have on your life and the need to change if you're unhappy. She says you should always try meeting new people – you'll be amazed what's around the corner.



'You can choose who you play and work with if you're prepared to change'

LEARNING



DON'T BE AFRAID TO ASK

Roy Turnham has created an amazing community to support his visual impairment and learned to play the clarinet in a youth orchestra. Unable to read Braille music and play at the same time, he photocopies the script and asks his teacher to play the clarinet part. He then borrows a CD of the full orchestral piece and learns it by heart. He also plays drums in a band with friends. In addition to his music career Roy runs for his country with the help of three different guide runners.



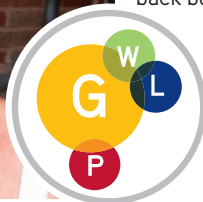
'Don't be afraid to ask for help.
The worst thing that can happen is
they say no'

GIVING



YOU MAY GET SO MUCH BACK

Debbie Roe loves using her organisational skills to help others and as a result has trebled the size of her own support community. Hosting foreign students visiting the city has enabled her to learn from different cultures. Helping at the Parkinson's Society has brought her in touch with lots of like-minded volunteers. And organising social activities for adults with learning disabilities has developed her patience, confidence, adaptability and communication skills. In all three cases Debbie did not expect anything back but she's gained something incredible – friends for life.



'I never thought how such simple
things could create a massive
support community'



Imagine all the TOASTs you'll need to achieve your vision. Start by creating a TOAST to those who can help you on your way. Remember, there is no such thing as a self-made person. We are all made up of thousands of others. Everyone who has ever done a kind deed for us, or spoken one word of encouragement to us, has helped shape our character and thoughts, as well as our successes.

Who could I meet today?

Every day is full of possibilities if you wake up with the right attitude.

If you can set out each morning with a fresh inquiring approach and keep your mind open to every possibility and situation, all kinds of opportunities can open up to build a strong support community.

I can use these tips to create my community

1. Every stranger is a potential new friend – treat every encounter as a special opportunity to meet new people whether at work, on a course, in the supermarket or around the local community.
2. You can reach anybody in the world through six contacts (or even fewer). Start with someone who is connected (however loosely) to your target person and ask them for a second contact – and so on. You may only take four steps – try it!
3. One good friend is priceless. So treasure those people who love you, listen to you and labour for you. It's quality not quantity of relationships that makes the difference. You may need to be selective with core members but also actively seek wider support.
4. Give as well as receive. We are given certain gifts that are to be used with other people. Make sure you use them to the full.
5. Celebrate and be thankful for the people around you. If you take things for granted and aren't grateful for what you've got, how can you expect anybody else to help?
6. Hang around positive people who give you energy. Spend too much time with Toxic Toads and you become one yourself. Avoid people at parties who never listen properly and are always looking for better more important conversation. They're only interested in themselves and will drain your energy.
7. Be prepared for rejection – always remember it's their loss not yours.
8. Be yourself – present the truth about yourself through your personality. Don't live your life through other people's expectations of you.
9. Remember everybody you meet has the same needs. We all require love, warmth and compassion. And we can all give it – it costs nothing.
10. Review your community at regular intervals as your needs will change over time.

'Lucky people build and maintain a strong 'network' of luck. They create, notice and act upon opportunities in their life' – Richard Wiseman



MAKE IT HAPPEN

Paul Corson took the plunge and left his marketing job to set up on his own.

The phone rarely rang and he soon realised he had to make things happen himself. He contacted an old colleague who offered freelance work, then found a social acquaintance to give him contacts in the business. Paul now has a small portfolio of clients and uses every opportunity at parties, courses or chance meetings to build new relationships.



STEP 3 – THE ART OF INFORMATION INTERVIEWS

One of the most valuable techniques for building your community and managing your life is information interviewing. Developed by leading world career management experts Dick Bolles and Daniel Porot, information interviews enable you to do two really valuable things:

- Build new relationships
- Gain unique information on vital work opportunities

They can be just as useful for developing the other three key areas of your life – learning, playing and giving. Information interviews give you the benefit of ‘live’, up-to-date knowledge from people in the know – rather than recycled, second-hand information.

So what are information interviews?

They are a simple method of exploring and researching potential fields of interest or job sectors. They are not job interviews but provide invaluable information to help with the process.

How successful are they?

They have been tried and tested throughout the world. Research by John Lees, author of the acclaimed book ‘How to Get a Job You’ll Love,’ highlights that 87% of people using this method gain an interview.

The approach

There are three easy steps:

1. Find someone who knows a lot about a particular area or sector you are interested in and ask them for a brief interview.
2. Ask them about the past, present and future shape of their sector, including how they got in, their current role and future challenges. End with the most important question of all – Can you recommend three other people (names and contact details) who can help me further?
3. Continue the process, recording and building on the data collected. The three new names can grow into nine new contacts and so on.

The benefits

The tremendous benefits of information interviews mean you can:

- Acquire valuable information nobody else has
- Spot new possibilities before they arise
- Indirectly promote your talents to potential employers
- Show how motivated you are
- Make far more informed decisions
- Begin to build a relationship (however simple) that could have a major effect on your life

Before you use this technique in a work situation, you may wish to practise in safe environments within your LPG.

For example you could:

- Interview a friend who has mastered a hobby you’re passionate about
- Contact an old colleague who went and studied something you’re really interested in or...
- Speak to a neighbour you know is actively involved in a local charity you’d like to volunteer for

Conducting an information interview

There are three parts in the process – making contact, conducting the information interview, and continuing the process.

Part 1 – Making contact

FIND THREE PEOPLE

Start by identifying the information you require. List the questions you need answering. How is the field changing? Where are the growth opportunities? How can I get into it? What should I expect? Then use your support community (page 1) and relationship plan (page 6) to identify three people who can help you. You may find them from many sources – your address book, people your friends recommend, from business cards you’ve collected through to the Yellow Pages.

Go for an early win by finding someone who you know is keen to help. As you get more confident, it’s worth aiming for the most senior person in an organisation or field. If they say no, they may still refer you to someone influential and experienced.

ARRANGE A MEETING

1. Introduce yourself (by phone, e-mail or face to face) and say why you’ve made contact.
2. Establish a link by mentioning the people you know in common or better still the person who recommended you to them.
3. Give some positive feedback, eg: “You’ve been recommended by Sarah who says you’re the ideal person to speak to as you’re an expert in...”. Remember we all like to feel important.
4. Say you are carrying out information interviews with some key people in the sector and would really appreciate their time.
5. Make it clear why you want the discussion and how it will help you.
6. Ask for 10-12 minutes (15-20 is too long).
7. Make sure you get to meet them in their organisation. If they offer to speak to you on the phone, say you prefer meeting in person.

This should only take a couple of minutes. Be yourself and don’t be too pushy – you don’t want to be seen as a salesperson.

Be ready to be knocked back and try a couple of alternatives, eg:

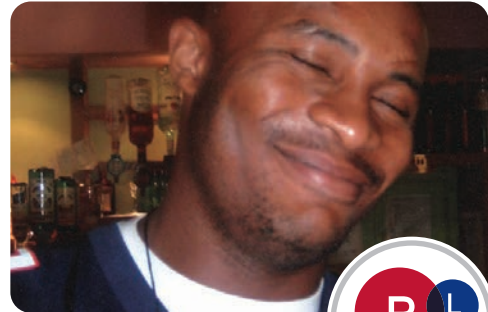
“I know you’re extremely busy, but....”

“I really would appreciate your time.”

“You may find it useful talking through your career.”

“Other people have found it very beneficial.”

If all else fails, ask: “Can you recommend anybody else I could speak to?” You may wish to practise this technique with friends or in a related playing area where the risk of getting it wrong may not be as high.



CHILL OUT AND BE YOURSELF

Ken Chendo used information interviewing to develop his passion in basketball. He arranged a meeting with a professional coach through friends’ contacts and met informally over a cup of coffee to find out how he could spend more time in the field. The coach directed him to a new team being set up which has created a whole new network of like-minded people.



I HEARD IT ON THE GRAPEVINE

Jane Henneghan used information interviewing to find out about volunteering opportunities. She approached a friend of a friend, asked what was most fun locally and found an ideal community group.

Part 2 – Conducting the interview

Once you've introduced yourself and explained why you're there, you'll find the following structure useful. Stick to it as closely as possible but feel free to put the questions into your own words.

QUESTIONS	PROMPTS
Thank you for seeing me	<i>Make a positive first impression, remember to smile and show how grateful you are for their precious time.</i>
How did you get into this field of work?	<i>Explore traditional entry routes, skills and experience required and alternative ways of getting in.</i>
What most excites you about the job?	<i>What are the best bits? Use this section to match the role with the six Ps you identified as your life's essentials. Does it: Use your prime skills? Build on your passions? Link to your purpose in life? Involve people who inspire you in a place that energises you and provides the right payoffs?</i>
What's not so good about the work?	<i>Once again, test against those six Ps.</i>
How do you see the sector changing over the next 2-3 years?	<i>What challenges and problems do you foresee? Here you are getting the person to look at future needs, whether problems or opportunities. Both will give you invaluable information on what skills and experience will be in demand.</i>
What kind of people will the sector need in the future?	<i>Many job descriptions look at the present position. This will allow you to spot in more detail the critical skills, expertise and experience required for success in the future. It will give you a clear idea of what you need in order to be employable in the sector.</i>
Can you suggest two or three other people who could help?	<i>You can tailor this question by identifying types of people, areas you need particular help with, or their location, eg: "Can you recommend any personnel managers who specialise in recruitment in Manchester?". Try to get contact details. If the person seems really keen, ask them to make contact in advance.</i>
Thanks very much for your time	<i>Follow up with a genuine hand-written thank-you card. (not another request). Avoid typed business letters or e-mails. Send memorable, quality cards with your name and address on the back as people rarely throw them away</i>



FIND A USEFUL LINK

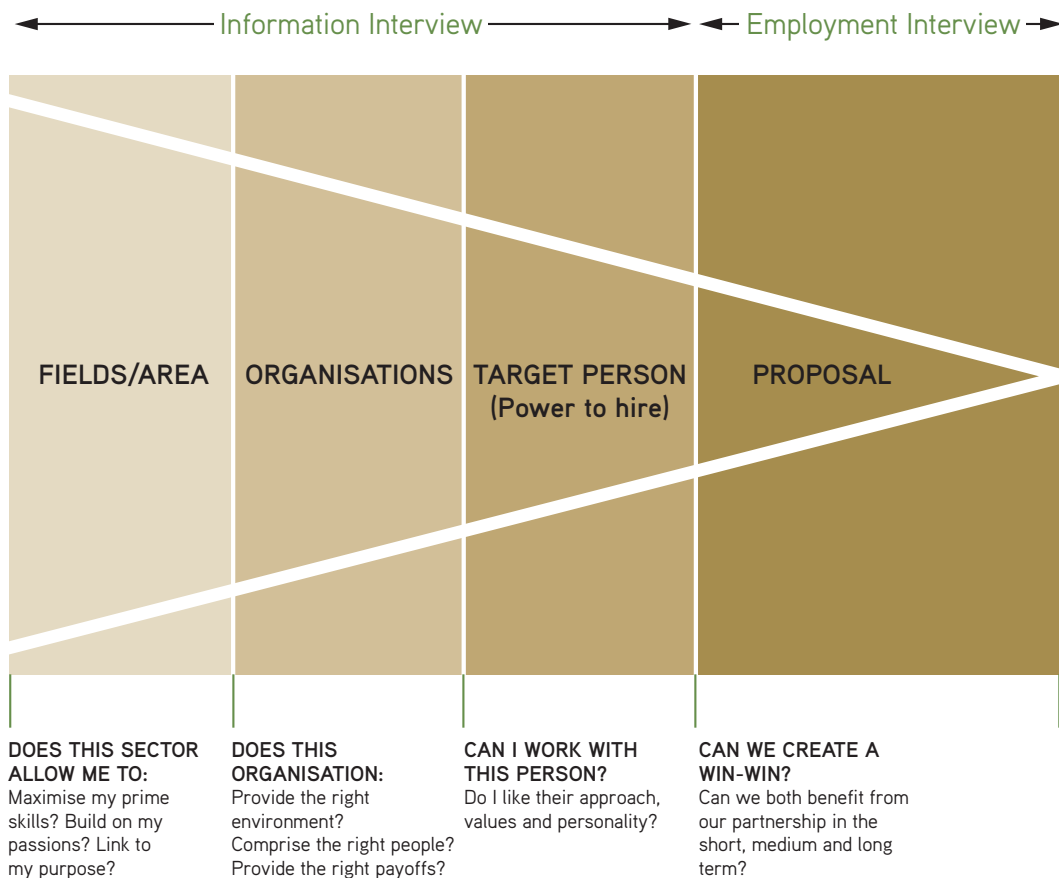
Nick Gordon wanted to go into PR work but had no idea how. His research showed a director of a local company had been to school with his brother. He used this link to ask for an information interview and spent some time with the staff. This enabled him to secure a job with another agency. Nick takes care to thank everybody who helps him and keeps in touch socially.

Part 3 – Continuing the process

Move on to the next three people in turn. Stay as general as possible to begin with, looking at broad sectors or areas until you have lots of information.

Then home in on specific organisations (speaking to anyone you can) until you have enough information. Then move on naturally to people who have the power to hire you.

As you move from one group to another, you will recognise the extent to which each meets your six Ps.



For example, “within the retail sector there may be thousands of organisations with which I could use my prime skills, with only a hundred or so linked to my passions and purpose.”

“Out of this 100 I’ve identified 12 in the North East who have the right environment.” Having interviewed these, funnel down the number of organisations you are considering – as the diagram above shows. I’ve highlighted three where exciting things are happening and I really get on with key staff. Two of these have already approached me, but I still need to target the third to keep my options open.

‘Informative interviews illuminate potential pathways ahead and help you target the right steps forward’

Golden rules

- Make sure information interviews don't become job interviews. Don't abuse the person's trust – simply take any details and explore the possibility at a later date
- Never try to sell yourself by giving your CV. This is an information-gathering process not a sales pitch
- Stick to the structure and the time limit. You may find this hard as people love talking about themselves when they get going
- Find a good way of recording the information and look for themes
- If everything goes wrong, don't forget your final question can always make it worthwhile. "Can you suggest anybody else?"
- Buy a bundle of thank-you cards. If things go really well, you may decide to send a second one

Thank-you cards

Hand written, avoid typed letters or e-mails.

Name and address on back.

Good quality cards.

Genuine and warm.

Simple message:

Thank you so much for...

I found... really useful and inspiring.

It has helped me to...

I have already contacted... to make a meeting.

Write the note the same day. Any later and you won't send it.

Avoid pushy comments like:

"If anybody/anything comes along let me know."

"My address is on the back."

Remember 'thanking' is a great skill in itself – so master it!



SPOT THE OPENINGS

Andy Cavell climbed out of his rut by seeking information interviews with colleagues in different departments. He found the local authority finance department was expanding its social service sector, pinpointed new openings before they went public and secured a far more fulfilling role.



GRAB THOSE CHANCES

Rob had a real passion for golf, and gave up his radiology job after carrying out a chance information interview with a top American professional. He now caddies for her around the world.



After spending over a year using her CV to chase advertised jobs, Liz realised over 75% of the posts weren't filled this way and decided to tap into the arts management grapevine through her part-time bar job.

She asked colleagues if they knew anybody in the arts, then approached locals she knew. A bar regular mentioned a friend who owned a gallery and Liz asked for an information interview at which she learned about a new Capital of Culture initiative.

By following up similar contacts, Liz found out about promotion work, started as a volunteer and has since been offered a full-time administration job in a local theatre.

Creating the employment interview

If you have effectively managed the process, you will have targeted someone with the power to hire you for a position that meets all your criteria and also highlighted their future needs.

Practical experience from John Webb, a leading careers expert in Germany, suggests that two thirds of employment interviews come from recommendations or referrals.

One third are self-initiated. If you take the proactive approach, here's a format that helps:

1. Introduce yourself – the fact that 10/12 informational interviews have led you here, ie: you've made a proactive and informed decision.
2. Suggest ideas – in terms of benefits to them.
eg: "I have an idea to...
Increase turnover/profit from existing clients by...
Increase turnover/profit from new clients by...
Reduce costs by...
Improve PR/image by...
Enhance efficiency by..."
3. Give a positive request for action – "I can start on..."
4. Close by reinforcing your motivation – "I'd really like to do this."

It is a known fact that asking for the job increases your chances of success. It shows your enthusiasm and may be as simple as saying, "I'd love this opportunity." You'll also find the information you gather places you in a unique position to answer the three most frequently asked questions:

1. Why do you want this job? Talk through the informational interviewing process you've undergone.
2. What can you contribute to meet our needs? Provide evidence of how you can address these.
3. Where do you want to be in five years time? (Golden ticket exercise, Stage 2 pg 26).

HAVING CREATED THE RIGHT SUPPORT AROUND YOU AND BEGUN TO EXPLORE ALTERNATIVES, YOU ARE NOW IN AN IDEAL POSITION TO TAKE YOUR NEXT STEP TOWARDS YOUR VISION IN STAGE 6.

IT'S MY LIFE!

Collect and consider everything you've gained from this stage in a file or notebook. Use your Life planner to:

1. Check you have done all the exercises.
2. Record the lessons you have learned and what you found surprising or puzzling.
3. Note down any ideas that could form part of your plans for the future.

wlpg

THE WINDMILLS APPROACH TO
WORKING, LEARNING, PLAYING & GIVING

‘When the wind blows, some people build walls – others build windmills’

Windmills is about dealing positively with the winds of change in your life.

The Windmills approach to working, learning, playing and giving will open your eyes to possibilities you never dreamed existed. You'll discover it's far easier than you imagined to achieve the life you really want and deserve. You'll find out how to make some plans for the future that will begin to make that ideal life a reality.

THE WINDMILLS PARTNERSHIP

Windmills is a partnership between The University of Liverpool's GIEU (Graduate Into Employment Unit) and Dr Peter Hawkins. It has evolved from extensive delivery programmes funded by National LSC, NWDA, Greater Merseyside LSC, IAG Partnership, ESF, DfES and GONW.

DR PETER HAWKINS



Dr Peter Hawkins is a Fellow of The University of Liverpool and a world expert on career and life management.

As a visiting lecturer at Harvard University and advisor to UK Government, he writes, speaks and consults on an international basis.

Peter is the author of seven books, including the acclaimed 'Art of Building Windmills' and enjoys working with a range of partners including VSO, KPMG, Unicef, European Commission, BBC, DfES and the Association of Graduate Recruiters.

Passionate about working with people with special needs, Peter leads a charity for adults with learning difficulties and is an advocate for individuals with disabilities.

THE WINDMILLS TEAM

The Windmills team is part of GIEU, based at The University of Liverpool. Team members, in particular Helen Wakefield and Sharon Nicholson, have significantly contributed to the concepts, development and writing of this resource.

Windmills was developed through the team's experience and its success has included; increasing the employability of 20,000 under-employed and unemployed individuals; enhancing the competitiveness of 2,000 businesses; creating 1,250 entirely new jobs, and adding over £30 million value to the economy.

Windmills includes a portfolio of job, career, work and life resources together with tailored training programmes. The process has been successfully used with a range of clients, including women's groups and graduates, as well as for staff development, public, voluntary and commercial organisations and career and life practitioners.



For more information visit our website www.windmillsprogramme.com or contact:

The Windmills Team, GIEU. T: +44 (0)151 709 1760 // F: +44 (0)151 709 0576 // E: mail@gieu.co.uk // www.gieu.co.uk