



# The Art (& Science) of Informational Interviewing

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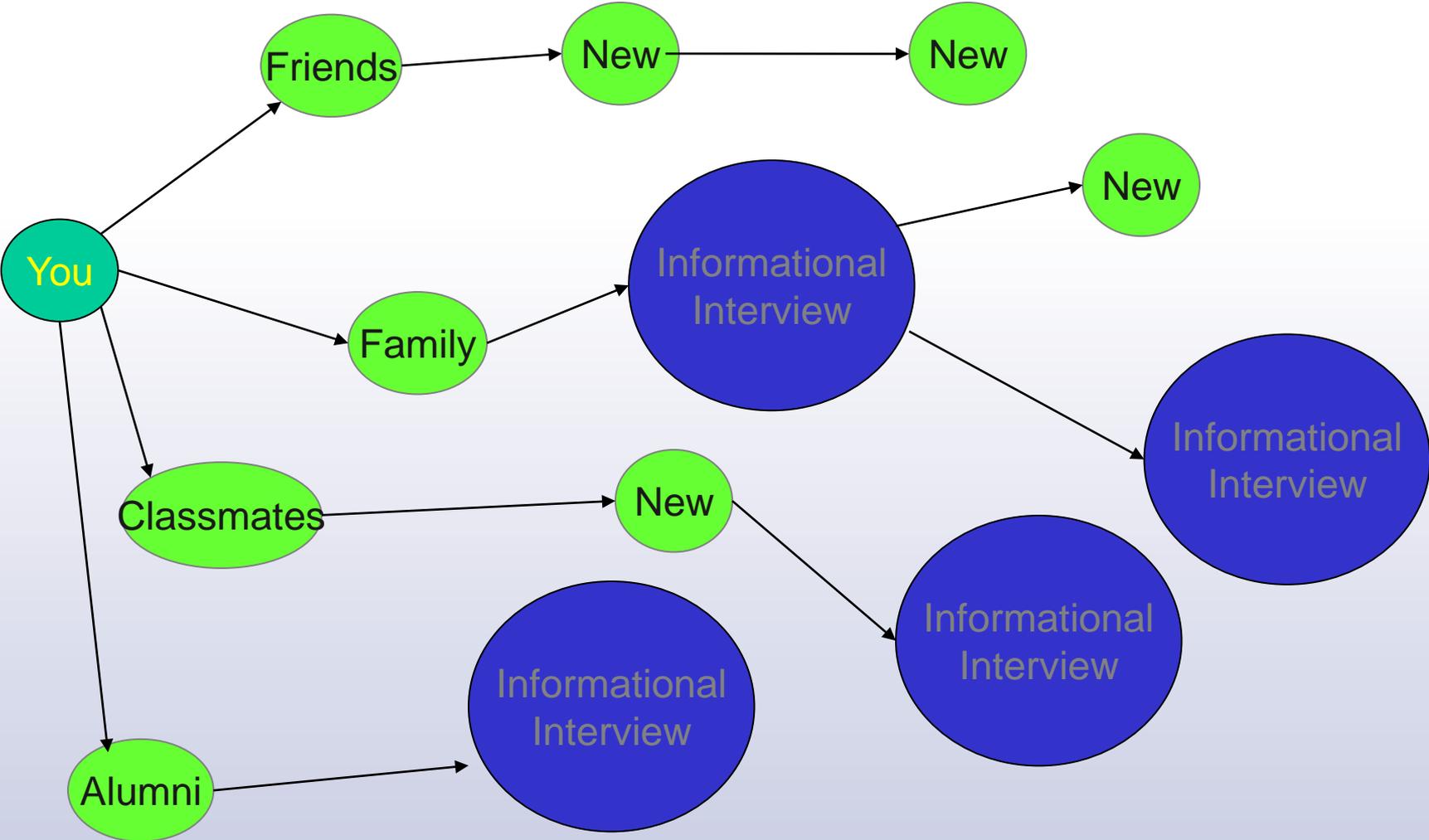
# Put yourself in the employers' shoes



- They want to hire someone who is known and recommended (i.e. trustworthy and competent)

*“If I can hire somebody without posting the job, I’m going to do that 100% of the time.” – Berkeley alum/recruiter*

# Networking & Informational Interviewing



# Barriers to successful networking

- I'm really shy/introverted/cautious/timid
- I can't remember names to save my life
- I'm just a student – why would anyone want to talk to me?
- Networking is almost a dirty word in my culture
- I have no idea how one conducts an Informational Interview – I mean, who pays for coffee, how long should it take, how do I approach people who aren't my friends, what questions do I ask, what do I wear, arghhhhhh!!!!!!

# Who is in your network?



# Create a tracking worksheet

- Company name
- Contact name
- Title or role or connection
- Source
- Email/phone/address
- Contact format (email, in person, other)
- Date contacted
- Date last heard from
- Nature of conversation
- Appearance/personal info
- Next action item

# Network Tracker Example

Last Name	First Name	Title	Company	Industry	MBA Program	
Feldman	Lisa	Director of Recruiting	Haas School of Business	Education Recruiting	Haas	
UG Program	Cell Phone	Work Phone	Other Phone	Referred by		Notes
Brown	123-123-1234	321-321-3211		Debra Underwood (my work colleague)		Spoke on 8/30 regarding connections in sports mgmt. Owe her a follow up call on 9/4

# Your Current Network



- Your friends and family
- Your Berkeley MBA classmates!
- Former professional contacts

# Your Potential Network

- Cal alumni
- Social Media (LinkedIn, Facebook)
- Your undergraduate alumni directory
- On-campus events
- Online Berkeley affinity groups and email lists
- Bay Area conferences & professional associations
- Contacts from social, sporting or volunteer activities
- Conferences
- News articles
- Items in the street (no, really....)
- Simply talk to people!

# Effective & Efficient Networking

- Know your product
- Have a positioning statement
- Use your existing 'warm' ties
- Six Degrees of Separation
- Pursue opportunities that match your interests
- It's a two way street
- Follow through, follow through, follow through!

# Positioning Statement Example

“I was previously a management consultant at Bain where I helped several clients design strategies to enter international markets. I particularly enjoyed helping clients enter the Chinese market. At Haas I am now exploring applying my skills to an in-house strategy role at a leading technology or biotech company with operations in China.”

# Exercise

Your Network is Sitting Right Next to You

# What a Good Network Contains

## ■ Mentor

- Advisor, usually more senior, in or outside of workplace

## ■ Sponsor

- Advocates on your behalf, even when you are not there

## ■ Cheerleader

- Your biggest fan, provides encouragement

## ■ Coach

- Pushes you to do things you think you can't do

## ■ Peers/Friends

- Can share ideas and vent frustrations

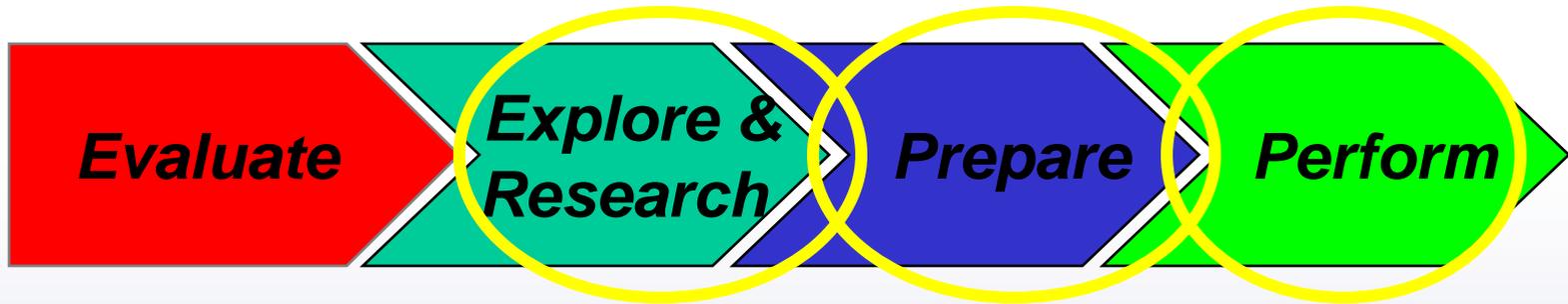
# An Informational Interview is...



*...a conversation.*

1. Ask for career and industry advice.
2. Develop a relationship, rapport and connection.

# The Informational Interview



- Five Major Goals
  - Learn and explore
  - Circulate name
  - Impress
  - Build contacts
  - Plant a seed

# The initial contact

- Do your research
- Know what you want
- Elements of the request:
  - Introduce yourself
  - Explain your connection first
  - What you are exploring
  - Maintain control of the follow-up

# Sample E-Mail #1

SUBJECT: Berkeley student seeking your advice

Dear Ms. Chu:

I'm a **Berkeley MBA student** in the Class of 2013, and I found your **contact information in the Haas Alumni database** . **Are you open** to setting up a 20 minute call so I can learn more about your experience with Applied Materials? I'm **interested in becoming as knowledgeable** as I can about marketing careers at technology companies in Silicon Valley, and your insights would be very helpful.

I realize that this may be a busy time of year for you, so if we are unable to connect by email I'll try to reach you next week to see whether that is more convenient.

I look forward to speaking with you in the next few weeks, as your calendar permits.

Thank you,

# Sample E-Mail #2

Subject Line: UC Berkeley MBA - Informational Interview

Mr. Blanchard,

Hello, my name is Brian Jones and I am a first year MBA student at the Haas School of Business at the University of California at Berkeley. After seeing Craig Palmer speak at the “Building a Digital Entertainment Company in Silicon Valley” event at the VLAB in Palo Alto, I became very interested in Gracenote’s role in the digital media industry. Specifically, I am exploring a career in digital media software marketing. While researching the company, I came across your name in the Haas Alumni connection.

I was wondering if you might have some time to meet with me in the next couple of weeks to talk about what you do, and what challenges you face in marketing a digital media software suite. I would be available to meet in Emeryville at your convenience for coffee or a short chat. Please give me a call at (510) 555-5555 and let me know if you would be available.

Thank you, and Go Bears!  
Brian Jones

Brian Jones  
MBA Candidate, 2009  
University of California at Berkeley  
brian.jones@mba.berkeley.edu

# Sample E-Mail #3

Subject Line: UC Berkeley MBA - Informational Interview

Dear Jim,

I am currently a first-year MBA at Haas and was referred to you by Jim Johns, a former colleague of mine at XYZ. I've been exploring career options in high tech product marketing and would greatly appreciate the opportunity to set up a meeting with you in the next few weeks to discuss the following:

- Your typical work day
- Your own career path
- How you may have seen others with a background similar to mine make the transition into high tech product marketing

Any advice or recommendations you may have for me should I decide to pursue work in high tech product marketing. Ideally, I'd like to meet with you in person if it's convenient for you. I generally have schedule flexibility to drive down to the Valley anytime on Tuesday's and Thursday's.

I'm sure that you have a lot on your plate and would appreciate any time you can give me. Please let me know what works best with your schedule – I'd like to buy you lunch or a post-work drink if that works for you.

If you would like to learn more about my background, please check out my LinkedIn profile at <http://www.linkedin.com/JaneDoe>.

Feel free to call me on my cell phone at the number below. Thanks in advance for your time and I look forward to hearing from you soon!

Regards,

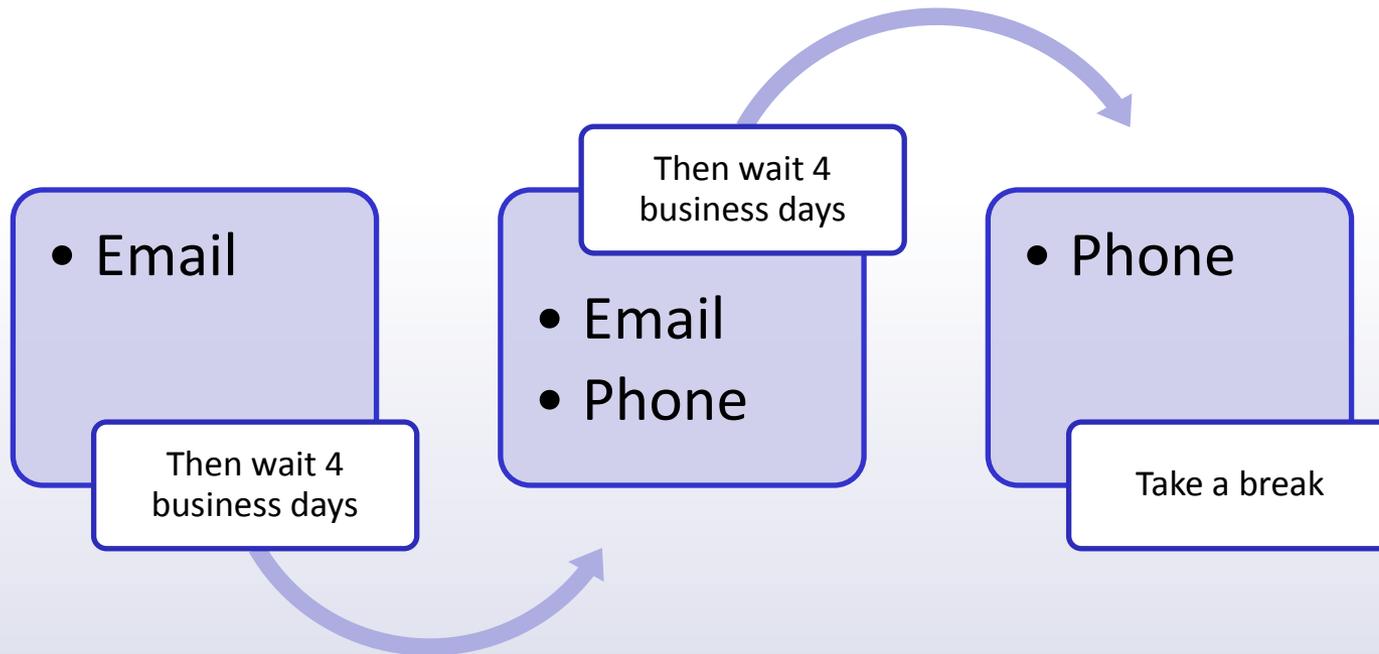
Jane Doe

Cell: 415-555-5555

# Sample: Phone script

“Hi \_\_\_\_\_, my name is \_\_\_\_\_, and I am a first year MBA student at the Haas School of Business at the University of California at Berkeley. \_\_\_\_\_ suggested I call you because I’m exploring a career in software support marketing, and he/she thought you might be able to give me some guidance. I’m wondering if you have some time to meet with me in the next week to talk about what you do. Please give me a call at \_\_\_\_\_ and let me know when would be good for you. Thanks.

# Professionalism in contacting



# Prepare for the informational interview

- Script:
  - Introduction to the meeting
  - Questions to ask
  - Your positioning statement, stories
- Be able to answer “why are you interested?”
- Do the research
  - Google, LinkedIn
  - Library databases (Factiva, OneSource, WSJ, Venture Xpert)
- Have resume
- Practice with a friend

# Informational interview questions

- Decisions, motivations, inflection points
- Ethnographic (behavioral) questions
- Information you can't get through other research
- Questions that create opportunities for conversation about yourself
- Avoid closed ended (yes/no) questions.

# TIARA\*

- Trends
  - What trends are most impacting your field right now?
- Insights
  - What surprises you most about your job?
- Advice
  - What can I do right now to best prepare for a job in this field?
- Resources
  - What resources should I look into next?
- Assignments
  - What projects are most common/important in your work?

\* From ["The 2-Hour Job Search"](#) by Steve Dalton

# The Tables Turn – When an Info Interview becomes a Job Interview

Be ready with your answers to “The Big Three:”

1. Tell me about yourself (aka walk me through your resume).
2. Why do you want to work for our organization?
3. Why do you want to work in this industry and/or function?

# Techniques for being impressive

- Confidence
- Good questions and responses
  - Genuine curiosity
  - Make them talk about themselves
- Good administrative skills – plan and follow up
- Send a thank you note – add value
- Follow up when you land a job (big bcc email)

# Giving back: What can you provide?

- An enjoyable experience
- A sense they helped you be successful (follow up)
- Being listened to
- Your network
- Industry knowledge

# Q & A

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