

Informational Meetings: LOSE the Guilt!

Recent college graduates feel uncomfortable and even guilty about the process of reaching out to people to network and set up informational meetings. You feel as if you're imposing on people by reaching out. You feel almost rude, as if you are wasting their time and "using" them. And you feel you don't have anything to offer them in return. Remember:

People Love Helping Younger People.

It makes them feel good to give someone a "hand up" as they were once given. Someday when you are no longer a young person ☺, you will realize just how true this is. For now you just have to take my word for it. Across the board, people love being invited to help a younger person get rolling on their path through life. It actually makes them FEEL GOOD to do so.

People Love Helping Recent College Graduates.

This is especially true, of course, when that person and you went to the very SAME college. When you contact an alum of your college, you literally have a Golden Key in hand that will open any door effortlessly. The subject of your email can be "SPU grad requesting short informational meeting" and 99 times out of 100 that person will be so happy to be able to respond positively to that invitation.

People Love Helping People Who Know What (more or less) They Want.

It's annoying to be asked for help by someone who doesn't really know what they want. When you know what you want to do (e.g., copywriting and content development, financial analysis and research, customer service in the travel industry, entry-level position in the sustainable building materials industry, event planning in the fundraising/development field, etc.) and you are clear that you have a few questions and only need 20 minutes of their time, people feel confident that you will manage the interaction, keep it short, and have questions for them. So it's easy for them to say "yes, happy to meet with you for 20 minutes." And when you throw in an ethical bribe (you're bringing them a latte – all they have to do is tell you what kind they want), they are happy to meet with you.

You Actually ARE Giving Them Something in Return.

Let's say you meet with an alum of SPU who works in a company in your area of interest. You have a great talk with her and she has no positions open at the moment (or even in the near future), but a guy who lives in her apartment building works in another, smaller firm in the same industry and she knows he is trying to hire good people. When she introduces you to him, she is doing HIM a favor too. Most professionals know that their professional network is strengthened anytime they help someone – not just when they seek help.

This Is How People Do It.

When you do this for the very first time (usually after college graduation), it feels uncomfortable for almost everyone. But people do this at multiple points throughout their lives, and each time you do it, it feels a little more comfortable. Create a mini Ideas Group – maybe 3-5 other recent grads who are all looking for jobs. Get together once a week or every two weeks for lunch (or wine!) at a standing time to share stories about the networking and informational meeting process. That will help normalize it for all of you, you'll absorb good tips and approaches from hearing others' stories, and together you'll generate great ideas and inspire one another.

*Remember that you get AIR from informational meetings: Advice, Information, and Referrals.
AIR leads to a JOB.*