

## WHAT IS A CAREER CONVERSATION?

A Career Conversation is a meeting with a professional to learn about their career path, industry, organization, and advice for someone exploring similar opportunities.

The goal is **not to ask for a job**. The goal is to learn, build a professional relationship, and expand your network. Many internships and job opportunities eventually come through relationships that begin with a simple career conversation.

A typical Career Conversation lasts **20–30 minutes** and can be conducted in person, over the phone, or virtually.

## STEP 1: PREPARE (15–30 Minutes)

### Research the Organization

Before your conversation, spend a few minutes learning about the organization.

Review:

- Company website
- Recent news articles
- Products or services
- Mission and values
- Industry trends

Look for recent announcements, major projects, growth initiatives, or challenges facing the organization.

### Research the Professional

Learn about the person you will be speaking with.

Review:

- LinkedIn profile
- Company biography
- Professional accomplishments
- Career path
- Shared connections or experiences

Being informed demonstrates professionalism and helps create stronger conversations.

### Use AI to Prepare

ChatGPT can help you prepare thoughtful questions. Try prompts such as:

- "I'm meeting with a UX Designer at Adobe. What are 10 thoughtful career conversation questions I could ask?"
- "What trends should I know about before speaking with someone in the public relations industry?"
- "Help me prepare questions for a BYU alum who works in sports media."
- "Based on this LinkedIn profile, what questions could I ask about their career journey?"

AI can help generate ideas, but your goal should be to ask questions that genuinely reflect your interests and curiosity.

## STEP 2: HAVE THE CONVERSATION (20–30 Minutes)

### Start with Small Talk

Your first goal is to build rapport. Consider asking:

- "Would you tell me a little about your background and how you came to work here?"
- "What originally attracted you to this field?"
- "What are you working on right now that you're excited about?"

Take genuine interest in the person. Follow their energy and interests. If they discuss hobbies, family, or interests outside work, engage naturally. If they stay focused on work topics, follow their lead.

### Transition to Your Questions

After a few minutes, ask your prepared questions:

- "Thank you again for taking the time to meet with me. I prepared a few questions and would love to hear your thoughts."

### The TIARA Method

The TIARA Method helps transform a conversation from information gathering into relationship building.

**T – Trends:** Learn what is happening in the industry.

- What trends are having the biggest impact on your field right now?
- What skills are becoming increasingly valuable?
- What changes do you see coming in the next few years?

**I – Insights:** Learn from their experience.

- What surprised you most about your career?
- What do people misunderstand about your profession?
- What has been the most rewarding part of your work?

**A – Advice:** Seek guidance.

- What would you recommend someone in my position focus on?
- What experiences helped prepare you for your current role?
- If you were a student again, what would you do differently?

**R – Resources:** Identify next steps.

- What books, websites, podcasts, or organizations would you recommend?
- What resources helped you learn about this industry?
- Who are the thought leaders in this field?

**A – Assignments:** Create opportunities for future interaction.

- What projects or experiences helped you stand out early in your career?
- What would you recommend I do in the next few months to learn more about this field?
- Is there something I could work on that would help me better understand this profession?

**STEP 3: AT THE END OF THE CONVERSATION****Ask for Additional Connections**

Ask: "Is there anyone else you would recommend I speak with?"

This often leads to additional introductions and opportunities.

**Ask Permission to Stay Connected**

Keep the relationship open for future conversations by saying:

"I've really appreciated your insights. Would it be alright if I stayed in touch and updated you on my progress?"

**STEP 4: FOLLOW UP****Send a Thank-You Message Within 24 Hours**

Express sincere appreciation for their time and advice. A strong thank-you note should include:

- Appreciation for their time
- A specific insight you found valuable
- A brief statement about how you plan to apply their advice

**Example**

Dear Mr./Ms. \_\_\_\_\_,

Thank you for taking the time to speak with me today. I especially appreciated your insights regarding \_\_\_\_\_. Our conversation helped me better understand \_\_\_\_\_ and gave me several ideas for next steps.

Thank you again for your willingness to share your experience and advice. I look forward to staying in touch and keeping you updated on my progress.

Sincerely,  
Your Name

**Maintain the Relationship**

Networking is not a one-time event. If someone provides advice, resources, or referrals:

- Follow through on their recommendations.
- Update them on your progress.
- Thank them when their advice helps you.
- Continue building the relationship over time.

**Remember**

The best Career Conversations are not about getting a job. They are about:

- ✓ Learning
- ✓ Building relationships
- ✓ Exploring career paths
- ✓ Expanding your network
- ✓ Discovering opportunities

Approach each conversation with curiosity, professionalism, and gratitude. Strong professional relationships often begin with a simple question and a willingness to learn.