

If you receive negative pushback from people who are not willing to meet, follow this advice on how to handle the 4 most common reasons..

[Excerpt from *The Play of Your Life* by Colleen Sabatino, pages 185-186.]

1. When people say, *"I do not have time,"* they are feeling stressed by so many other priorities and do not see your request for information as a priority. Make yourself very accommodating to their schedule, suggesting several meeting dates that are a week, two weeks and even three weeks out. Suggest meeting at their office or before work for coffee at a convenient location on their way to work. Clarify that you will respect their time and only need 15-20 minutes.
2. When they say, *"I do not think I can help you,"* they are concerned that you are requesting help in finding a job, which they are uncomfortable doing. Let them know that you called them simply because they are in the industry that you are currently exploring and want to obtain their opinion of the marketplace from an insider perspective. Use a qualifying statement to clarify your intent.

You might say, *"Perhaps you cannot help me. I am interested in talking to someone with experience in (profession/industry). My research produced your name as someone who fits that criteria. Are you not in this (profession/industry)?"* If they say they are but they are still not sure how they can help you, follow-up by stating that you are researching the industry and have developed a list of 10 questions that you would like to discuss with them. Note that you will only require 15 minutes of their time and will meet at their convenience.

3. When people say, *"You must be looking for HR; I do not hire people,"* they think you are calling them for a job. Redirect and say you apologize for misleading them. You are not looking to meet with them about a job; you are calling them to request help with your research.
4. When people say that organization policy does not allow them to discuss the current organization situation with people outside the organization, apologize for the misunderstanding. State that you certainly respect their privacy and you are not seeking any proprietary information. Rather, you are looking to discuss the general profile of the industry and the professional advice they could share based on their experience.

Most people are willing to offer their advice, opinions and feedback, but if they feel you are asking for a job, they are likely to use these excuses to avoid feeling pressured to do something they may not feel compelled to do or able to do.

TELEPHONE SCRIPT SAMPLES:

Use these pieces as a model; adapt them and make changes that work for you.

Hello, my name is _____. I was given your name (or found your name) by _____.

I am interested in learning more about the field of _____ (or your position as _____).

Is this a good time for me to try to set up a meeting with you or someone on your staff? (If not), when would be a good time for me to try to call you back?

I would like to meet with you for about a half-hour at your convenience. Would you be available to speak to me (during the week of _____)? I can call you at this same number unless there is another number you prefer for me to call.

**

Hello, my name is _____. I'm conducting career research in your field. I would like to meet and talk with you for about 30 minutes so that I can find out more about your field of expertise.

**

Because of the outstanding reputation of your company, and its leading position in corporate security, your advice would be most valuable to me at this time. I can meet you at your office first thing Wednesday morning. It would be my pleasure to bring the Starbucks coffee as you start your day, and I will be sure to take no more than 30 minutes of your time.

**

I have no expectations that you have a position at XYZ Corp. for me. Your comments and advice about the future prospects in the industry as a whole are what I would like to discuss. Would you be willing to meet with me, and when would be the best time for me to visit you at your office?

**

Your reputation as a civic leader, often quoted in local publications, has prompted me to seek out information about your background and career history. May I take you to lunch at (location) on (day) to learn more about your experience?

**

As one of the top executives in the field of _____, your expertise in what it takes to succeed in your industry must be sought often. Would you meet with me to give me the benefit of your guidance?

**

You're in a line of work that I'm interested in, and I was hoping that you could help me gain insights into the profession. I'm sure that my questions could be answered in a 20-30-minute informational meeting. I would like to arrange a phone appointment next week, and I can call you at this number. What works best with your schedule?

**

NETWORKING QUESTIONS

What associations have you been involved with over the years? Do you know who the current association director is or how to find that information? What did you get out of the membership?

What recruiters have you used in the past?

Who would you say has been a mentor to you in the profession/industry?

Who would you say are the real mavericks within the field?

What previous companies have you been involved with? How do they compare to where you are now?

Is XYZ organization involved with any specific cause in the community?

Where can I get a list of the board of directors?

Who are the major players within the organization/industry/profession?

What are the organization's major initiatives?

What are the organization's strengths?

What industries are similar?

Who are the organization's competitors?

What vendors does the organization utilize for complementary services/products?

What is the organization's culture?

What advice would you give someone exploring opportunities within this profession/industry?

Who do you most respect within this organization/profession/industry?

What trade journals/periodicals/subscriptions are relevant within this profession/industry?

What do you wish you had known about the organization/profession/industry before getting into it?

What part(s) of my resume need(s) changed in order to better reflect how my skills apply to this organization/profession/industry?

What are your major responsibilities?

What is the most/least rewarding aspect of your job?

What is a "typical" day like?

What is the most common career path? How did you get started in this field?

What obligations does your work put on you outside of the actual job?

What are some lifestyle considerations for this career field?

What kind of individual (skills/personality) would be best suited for these positions?

What are the most important factors used when hiring?

What is the best educational preparation for a career in this field?

How high is turnover? How does one move within the organization?

How do people find out about open positions in this field?

What is the future outlook for this career?

What are areas for potential growth/decline?

How do you see jobs changing in the future?

Who else do you recommend I talk with, and may I have permission to use your name?

Can you recommend other types of organizations I might investigate or contact?

E. FOLLOW UP

Suggest a follow-up conversation by phone, face-to-face, or by e-mail.
 Close by thanking the contact for his or her time

Immediately after the meeting, find a quiet place to sit and write down all of the answers to the questions that you asked. Jot down information about any follow-up activities that were discussed or names of other professionals to contact. Write ideas and any other questions this meeting raised.

Within 24 hours, send a handwritten thank-you note to the professional. Preserve the staying-power of your network! Don't limit your thank-you letters to those contacts with whom you met face-to-face. Instead, acknowledge the assistance of everyone who was instrumental in your network. Your consideration will reinforce the positive impressions made during your contact and present you as organized and attentive to detail.

Let them know when you follow through with anything you discussed or when you meet with any of the people they recommended. Keep them in the loop! This is a nice way to stay connected, especially because you are informing them and not necessarily asking for anything.

Keep a spread sheet of your contacts and leads.

| Contact Name | Meeting Date | Follow up Date/Method | Follow up Date/Method | Referrals/To-Do |
|--------------|--------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------|
| Joe Prince | 4/24 | 5/5 emailed | | Connie Blast |
| Connie Blast | | | | |
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