

The Informational Interview Playbook: Creating a Path to Achieve Your Career Goals

Henry Organ

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A structured workbook, The Informational Interview Playbook lays out all the steps to securing and acing informational interviews.

Sports agency founder Henry Organ's frank business book delivers advice for landing, and succeeding at, informational interviews.

The key to success, according to this blueprint, is to “play the game” rather than complain about how unfair the job market is. Here, to play the game is to meet the right mentors in the right way. The book lists different types of mentors, including the champ, the peer (co-pilot), the rock, and the young buck (a great source of current insights). After each general description comes a list of a mentor's specific attributes.

Indeed, the book lists many possible ways to think about what to do and say in an interview—and what information to save for later. It suggests keeping track of the people who interviewed you on a spreadsheet, even saying what columns to include, as with space for emails, notes on personal performance, and a checkbox for sending a thank-you. Lists of people who said no or never responded are also encouraged.

But much of the book's first chapter reads more like an introduction than a true start; it covers the book's overriding theme (“Advice without practicality is fluff”) and Organ's personal family background, with notes on how his grandfather and father became successful in their respective economies. Further, the book itself suggests a dearth of formal research; it moves between broad generalizations and anecdotal encounters, resulting in a conversational piece that varies in practicality—and that is sometimes out of touch with contemporary concerns, as with a story of a twenty-seven-year-old who was offered an unpaid internship that he rejected because “I have bills to pay”—an explanation that the book rejects, indicting the candidate as not “hungry enough.” Further, the book's use of vulgar language impedes its delivery, as with “You're sexy as f—” in the “positive mindset” section. Indeed, there's an entire section dedicated to “f— you energy” and workplace competitiveness.

More useful are the book's direct tools, including its guide on role-playing for an informational interview, the “pro tips” highlighted in grey on the sides of pages, and examples of follow-up messages. And there are valuable email templates for reaching out to potential business connections and mentors that strike an appealing, casual tone. The last “Apply It” section, which includes several pages' worth of space to write down big takeaways, is also helpful.

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STEPHANIE MARRIE (September 28, 2023)

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