How to prepare for an Informational Interview

Preparing for an Informational Interview seems challenging but it is simple at it's core. The objective of the informational interview is to gain knowledge about the company, person, or career pathway. Based off this objective, you need to develop questions that are specifically tailored to that individual. Keep in mind that these questions should be professional. Below are a few general questions which can be used to guide the conversation forward. However, researched and developed questions are preferred.

Examples:

1)What does a typical day at work look like?
2) What are some undergraduate courses that helped you when you joined the workforce?
3) What steps would you recommend I take in order to prepare for workforce?
4) What makes the company you work at unique to you?
5) What do you wish you had known when you were starting out in this role?

These questions were great but we need to be specific in-order to capture the most information. Developing these question can be hard, however, follow the sample profile with attached questions below to give you a better idea of developing tailored questions. Try to avoid google-able questions!

Profile: Mrs. Brown graduated from McMaster University with a Bachelors Degree in Mechanical Engineering. She obtained her P.ENG in the coming years and has worked at leading automotive companies such as Ford and GM. With over 20 years of field experience she continues to gain more knowledge as a production manager at Tesla.

Potential Questions:
1) Mrs. Brown having worked in the leading companies such as Ford and GM what is the biggest difference you saw in the company culture, environment, and the logistics of the companies?
2) What was the reason behind leaving Ford and joining Toyota at the time?
3) Being a co-op student who wants to work at Tesla, what experiences do you think will be an asset to my resume?
4) With over 20 years of experience in the automotive field, what was the most valuable skill you learned?
5) In your opinion, which company has trained and equipped you with the best skill set?

Remember, these questions are just starters, after they answer a question let your curiosity take over and ask them follow up questions in order to clear the water. During the interview, don't be afraid to draw parallels with some of the projects you are working and their experiences. After the interview, make sure to get their contact information and stay in touch. Important note, dress to impress for the interview, the first impression is last impression.

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