Forty Questions to Ask in Networking Interviews
by Martha Stoodley

> Ms. Stoodley is a management consultant based in San Jose, CA and author of *Informational Interviewing: What It Is and How to Use It in Your Career* (Garrett Park Press, 1989).

Most job hunters, realizing that networking is critical to their search, work hard to arrange face-to-face meetings with contacts. But setting up appointments with all the friends, professional acquaintances and corporate bigwigs you can is just the first step. More important is knowing what to say once you arrive. Since wasting contacts' time is a no-no, you should prepare an agenda before each meeting. Decide what you'd like to find out from your contact, then prepare questions to elicit that information. To simplify the query writing process, review the following list of questions. Pick those that are most appropriate, then tailor them to fit your personal situation and speaking style. Formulate some of your own as well, but *don't try to squeeze in too many questions*.

What Work Is Like
1. Could you describe a typical workday for me?
2. What skills are required in your position on a day-to-day basis?
3. What parts of your job do you find most challenging?
4. Despite these challenges, what motivates your to remain? What do you find most enjoyable?
5. Are there any dangers I should be aware of?
6. How often do you work past 6 p.m. and on weekends?
7. Which seasons of the year are the toughest in your job?
8. I'd like to walk through and see with my own. Can that be arranged?

State of the Industry
9. Is this field growing enough that there's room for someone like me?
10. Are there too many or too few people entering this profession?
11. What developments on the horizon could affect future opportunities?
12. This industry has changed dramatically in the past five years. What have you seen from inside your company?
13. How frequently do layoffs occur? How does it affect the morale of employees?
14. Why do people leave this field or company?
15. Who are the most important people in the industry today?
16. Which companies have the best track record for pomoting women and minorities?
17. Are there opportunities for self employment in your field? Where?

Money and Advancement
18. What would be my earnings potential if I entered this field?
19. To get promotions, is job hopping necessary?
20. How did you get your job?
21. If you could start all over again, would you change your career path in any way? Why?
22. How long does it take for managers to rise to the top?
23. What is the background of most senior-level executives?

Skills and Experience
24. What educational preparation would you recommend for someone who wants to advance in his field?
25. What qualifications do you seek in a new hire?
26. How do most people enter this profession?
27. Which of my skills are strong compared to other job hunters in this field?
28. What do you think of the experience I've had so far? For what types of positions would it qualify me?

29. What do you think of my resume? How do you suggest I change it?
30. Can you recommend any courses I should take before proceeding with my job search?
31. What companies might be interested in hiring someone with my background?

Fitting In
32. Considering my background, how well do you think I would fit into this company and/or profession?
33. How does your company compare with others?
34. Would the work involve any lifestyle changes, such as frequent travel or late-night business entertaining?
35. What personal attributes are essential for success in this field?
36. Taking into account my skills, education, and experience, what other career paths would you suggest I explore before making a final decision?

More Information
37. Where can I get up-to-date information on salaries, employers, and industry issues?
38. What professional journals and organizations should I be aware of?
39. Is there anything else you think I need to know?
40. Who else would you recommend I speak with? When I call, may I use your name?