PRACTICAL RESOURCE / JOBCOACH

Start Useful Career Conversations

Reconnect with people, ask focused questions, and learn about work without turning every conversation into a request for a job.

What you will prepare: A clear learning question, a short outreach message, three conversation questions, and a next step based on what you learn.

If time is limited: Start with steps 1 and 3. Choose one question and write one personal message to someone whose experience is relevant. You do not need a large contact list.

[ ] 1. Decide what you need to learn

Choose one uncertainty about the work: what a typical week involves, which skills are used most, or how someone moved into the role. Write a question a person could answer from their experience. Keep a request for information separate from a request for a referral.

Ready to move on: You have one specific learning question and know how the answer could change your next step.

How to Find Jobs That Match Your Skills When You Don’t Know the Title: https://jobcoach.cc/journal/find-jobs-that-match-skills/

My notes:

[ ] 2. Choose one relevant person

Consider a former coworker, classmate, teacher, volunteer collaborator, or someone who has openly invited professional questions. Look for relevant experience rather than seniority alone. You do not need a close relationship to ask respectfully, but do not imply a connection you do not have. Use a professional contact channel they have made available.

Ready to move on: You can explain why this person might have a useful perspective and how you actually know them, if at all.

What to Say When Reconnecting With a Former Coworker: https://jobcoach.cc/journal/reconnect-former-coworker/

My notes:

[ ] 3. Write a small, answerable request

State the genuine connection or reason for reaching out, explain the direction you are exploring, and ask one clear question. Offer a brief reply by message as an alternative to a call. Make it easy to decline. Adapt a template below to sound like you, then review and send it yourself through your chosen channel.

Ready to move on: Your message contains an accurate introduction, one focused request, and no pressure to respond.

What to Say When Reconnecting With a Former Coworker:
https://jobcoach.cc/journal/reconnect-former-coworker/

How to Ask for a Referral Without Making It Awkward:
https://jobcoach.cc/journal/ask-for-referral/

My notes:

[ ] 4. Prepare questions and listen for specifics

If a conversation is agreed, confirm the time and respect the duration. Prepare three questions: what occupies most of their time, what makes the work difficult, and what a newcomer should understand before applying. Ask what has changed in their own experience rather than treating one answer as a rule for the entire industry. Do not ask for confidential employer information.

Ready to move on: You have three questions and a place to record what you heard, what is still uncertain, and what to verify elsewhere.

Questions That Help You Understand a Manager’s Expectations:
https://jobcoach.cc/journal/manager-expectations-questions/

How to Test a Career Change Before Paying for Training:
https://jobcoach.cc/journal/test-career-change-before-training/

My notes:

[ ] 5. Thank them and choose one next step

Send a brief thank-you that names something useful you learned. Decide whether to investigate a role, refresh one skill, or speak with someone with a different perspective. If an

initial message receives no response, an optional brief follow-up is enough; leave space for no reply. Ask permission before naming someone as a referral or forwarding their details.

Ready to move on: You have recorded one takeaway and chosen a next action without assuming a referral or endorsement.

How to Ask for a Referral Without Making It Awkward:
https://jobcoach.cc/journal/ask-for-referral/

How to Organize Job Applications Without Spending All Day Tracking Them:
https://jobcoach.cc/journal/organize-job-applications/

My notes:

Reconnect with someone you know

Hi [name], I enjoyed working with you on [real shared project or setting]. I’m exploring [type of work] and trying to understand [specific question]. Your experience with [relevant work] came to mind. Would you be open to a brief reply here or a 15-minute conversation sometime? No pressure if the timing is not right.

Ask someone you have not met

Hi [name], I came across your [specific public talk, article, or professional post] about [topic]. I’m exploring [type of work] and wondered [one focused question]. If you have time for a short reply, I would appreciate your perspective. I understand if you are not available.

Follow up after a helpful conversation

Thank you for talking with me about [topic]. Your explanation of [specific takeaway] helped me understand [what became clearer]. My next step is to [action you actually intend to take]. I appreciate your time and perspective.

AI practice prompt

Help me prepare for a career conversation about [type of work]. My real connection to the person is [connection, or say we have not met]. I want to learn [question]. Draft a brief outreach message and three focused conversation questions. Keep the request easy to decline. Do not invent shared experiences, flatter the recipient with unsupported claims, request confidential information, or imply they have offered a referral. Ask me for missing context before drafting.

Next step: Review one message for accuracy and send it yourself if you are comfortable. After a reply or conversation, record what you learned and decide on one useful next action.

https://jobcoach.cc/journal/reconnect-former-coworker/

JobCoach • https://jobcoach.cc/action-plans/career-conversations/