

# How to Have a Successful Informational Interview and Job Shadowing Experience

*Both informational interviews and job shadowing are opportunities for you to explore and develop a fuller understanding of the field that interests you. A job shadow will last longer than a typical interview – anywhere from half a day to a couple of days – and often includes meetings with key staff at the organization. Both will help to establish and confirm a career choice by gaining insight of the details of what the career entails, and will help build a network in the field or industry of interest.*

## 1. Plan an informational interview and/or job shadow

- Start with your personal network (e.g., friends, family, current and past employers, alumni) and make contacts to see if anyone knows of someone in the career industry or field of which you are interested.
- Contact individuals with whom you have made a connection with at career fairs or other events where you have had a chance to interact with those who work in the industry you are researching.
- *You can always call an organization directly, even without prior personal connections or contacts. Seek for information regarding individuals who may be interested in helping you to gain a deeper understanding about their jobs. Although intimidating, students have reported success using this approach.*

## 2. Prepare for an informational interview and/or job shadow

- Schedule the informational interview and/or job shadow.
- Research the organization using their website and social media (e.g., LinkedIn, Facebook, Twitter), as well as databases ([www.rdl.lib.uconn.edu/subjects/2070](http://www.rdl.lib.uconn.edu/subjects/2070)) found on the Center for Career Development' website and in the Homer Babbidge Library.
- Prepare appropriate attire for the day of the informational interview and/or job shadow – dress as you would for a formal interview.
- Confirm the location and meeting time the day before the interview and/or job search; have prepared the instructions to the location and arrive five to ten minutes early.

## 3. Ask questions during the informational interview and/or job search

- Decide the direction with which you want the conversation to go; think about your goal for having the meeting and prepare questions that reflect that purpose.
- Consider the following when brainstorming questions: the field in general, the organization specifically, the individual's job, the individual's career path, advice for a student and/or an emerging professional.
- Informational interviews and job shadows are great ways to make connections and learn about opportunities, but you should never ask the interviewee for a job. Ask for a business card before the interview ends.

*Preparing for the informational interview and/or job search requires brainstorming questions, considering the goals and outcomes expected of such opportunities, and presenting yourself professionally and intelligently throughout the whole interview as well as afterwards.*

## Provided below are a list of **sample questions** to ask during the informational interview and/or job shadow.

- Why did you decide to work in this industry?
- Why did you decide to take a job with this company? What do you like about working here?
- What is the culture like in this company? What similarities/differences does this culture bear to any of your previous positions?
- What do you do in your job?
- What do you like most about your position? What do you like least?
- Do you have busy and slow times of the year?
- Does your job offer you some variety, or do you do the same type of work each day?
- Can you quantify the time you spend completing different tasks each day?
- What are the challenges in this occupation/career? How have you dealt with them?
- Is this a rapid- or slow-growth career? What do you see in store for your career in the future?
- What changes have you see occur in this field, and what changes are occurring now?
- Is there a certain type of person who works in this career field, and can you describe that personality type (e.g., very aggressive, workaholic, laid back)?
- How is the economy affecting this industry?
- What professional associations have you joined?
- What kind of lifestyle can one expect in this line of work? What are the demands on your time?
- What types of jobs, activities, or classes would you recommend I join or take if I were interested in pursuing an entry-level position in this field when I graduate?
- What other jobs/careers would you recommend I look into that are related to this job?
- What do you know now that you wish you had known when you were starting out?
- Is there anyone else you can recommend I speak to to learn more about this career field?

## To-do After the **Completed** Interview and/or Shadow

- Collect business cards of the individuals you meet and connect with during the informational interview and/or job shadow.
- Send a follow-up note (or email) thanking everyone you met for taking the time to meet with you within 24 to 48 hours; include specific aspects of the interaction that were beneficial to you.
- Reflect upon whether you felt more excited about the career of interest or if this experience led you to feel a disinterest in the field – these reflections will help determine if you should pursue additional experiences in the field of interest or move on to explore other careers.