Job Shadowing and Informational Interviewing

AUBURN UNIVERSITY CAREER CENTER
YOUR CAREER. OUR MISSION.
303 MARTIN HALL | 334.844.4744 | AUBURN.EDU/CAREER

JOB SHADOWING
Job Shadowing is an opportunity to “shadow” or follow an employer, gaining information about careers in which you are interested, allowing you to make informed decisions about career choices. You follow a sponsor (employer participants) at their office to gather information about their job, career field and the kind of preparation you need to enter their profession.

Job Shadowing helps you...
- Gain insight into careers of interest and make informed decisions about career choices
- Not to seek employment
- To perhaps include on resume to show serious interest in career field

WHAT MIGHT I DO WHILE JOB SHADOWING?
- Observe work being performed
- Attend staff or committee meetings or presentations
- Tour the organization
- Attend a training program for new employees
- Assist with completion of a sample work assignment
- Visit a client or a site

POINTS TO COVER WHEN ARRANGING A JOB SHADOW
- Discuss the purpose for shadowing
- Briefly share your academic background, major and minor
- Arrange mutually agreeable date and time
- Give the Sponsor your phone number and email (he/she may need to contact you)
- Obtain directions to the organization
- Ask for parking instructions
- Ask whether you should bring a lunch (if you like and if Shadowing during lunchtime)
- Ask about appropriate attire

INFORMATIONAL INTERVIEWING
Informational interviewing is a popular and effective method of collecting information on a career field from professionals currently in that area. It should assist you in making your career choice by gaining a more realistic insight into your career area of interest and to network with professionals. It is not, however, a job-seeking method.

Informational interviewing helps you...
- Sharpen your perception of the career you are researching, thus helping you make more educated career decisions
- Develop contacts
- Measure your compatibility with the people, environment and general lifestyles surrounding a certain career

WHAT MIGHT I DO WHILE INFORMATIONAL INTERVIEWING?
- Meet for 20-30 minutes over in the office of the professional, over coffee, or over lunch
- Tour the organization
- Ask lots of questions and listen to advice
- Ask to maintain contact and expand network by asking if there is anyone else with whom the professional would recommend you speak

POINTS TO COVER WHEN ARRANGING AN INFORMATIONAL INTERVIEW
- Ask if the professional would be willing to meet with you to discuss their profession
- Briefly share your academic background, major and minor
- Arrange mutually agreeable date/time and location
- Give your phone number and email
- Obtain directions to the organization
- Ask for parking instructions
- Ask about appropriate attire
STEPS TO CONDUCTING A SUCCESSFUL INFORMATIONAL INTERVIEW OR JOB SHADOW

Preparation:
- Be informed about your career of interest utilizing Career Center resources in the office and at auburn.edu/career
- Develop a list of questions
- Start with people you are familiar with and practice
- Contact individual well in advance to schedule an appointment
- Be prepared to respond to questions from contact

During:
- Dress appropriately and arrive 5-10 minutes early
- Refer to your list of questions if you need to, it shows you are prepared
- Make positive first impressions through appearance, social skills and punctuality
- Observe work environment, people, dress, etc.
- Thank everyone for their time and assistance
- Ask for business cards and two or three other contacts

Follow-up:
- Summarize information you gathered
- Send a written thank you note within 24 hours
- Keep contact informed if they expressed interest
- Contact new leads

CONTACTING THE PROFESSIONAL

Phone:
When you call your contact, introduce yourself and explain the purpose of your call:
“Hello, thank you for taking my call. My name is Jane Doe, and I am a student at Auburn University. I am interested in exploring the field of public relations, ____ gave me your contact information and thought you might be willing to help. I was hoping you might be willing to [meet with me to discuss your position and give me some advice about entering this field] OR [allow me to conduct a job shadow]. If you are busy right now, is there a more convenient time for me to call?”

Email:
If emailing, be sure to include a subject line and use proper grammar and spelling. You might also include something stating, “If you are not currently able to meet with me, is there someone you know who might?” Always have someone else read over the email before you send it to avoid potential problems.

INFORMATIONAL INTERVIEW QUESTIONS
- How did you get started in this industry?
- What is your educational background and what previous work experience have you had?
- What short- and long-term trends affect your industry?
- What are the positive and negative aspects of your position and this industry as a whole?
- What are the major rewards of your job?
- What are the major frustrations you encounter on your job? How do you deal with them?
- What fringe benefits are offered on your job?
- Based on my research, I see that the average salary range is $___ to $____. Would you say that is accurate?
- Who are the recognized leaders in this industry?
- What professional associations represent this industry?
- Is there another professional I should talk with about careers/trends in this field?
- What are some other good sources of information about this industry - articles, reports, journals, people?
- What are the current career opportunities in this field?
- In this industry, is it more likely that I will be hired through a direct application on-line or via a referral from a current employee?
- What skills, experience or other qualifications are sought by employers in this field for entry-level employees?
- What is the typical career path for entry-level hires?
- Of your organization’s hires the last three years, what qualities, backgrounds or achievements did they have that made them attractive candidates?
- Is training typically formal or on-the-job training?
- Can I contact you if I have further questions?