

Effective job shadowing programmes

The purpose of job shadowing:

1. Gain a realistic understanding of a career

The most obvious motivation for job shadowing is that it gives learners the chance to observe and hopefully practically experience a working day in a specific field.

2. Job application practice

Often, the first time young South Africans experience the challenging task of applying for a job is when they are doing it to find a job. Job shadowing gives learners a chance to experience this process in a safe environment – in other words, learners are given the opportunity to ‘practise’ applying for a job without the usual associated pressure.

3. Developing employability skills

Job shadowing gives learners the opportunity to develop key skills that employers value. Getting to work on time shows time-management and dressing appropriately illustrates professionalism. Job shadowing gives learners the chance to develop interpersonal skills within a professional environment and to begin networking. Learners should go into the experience aware that they may want to ask their job shadow host to act as a reference for their CV.

Tips for setting up an effective job shadowing programme

• Mirror the process of applying for a job

Part of the process of applying for a job involves putting together a CV and cover letter, networking and finding contacts to whom to send your application. Job shadowing should mirror this by involving as many of the same steps as possible.

Get started: Use the May 2012 issue to help you to put together a lesson on CV writing. In addition, ask learners to prepare a cover letter that is tailored to the job that they would like to shadow. At the end of the job shadowing process, learners are in a position to request feedback from their job shadow hosts regarding their CVs and cover letters.

• Create a task

To make the learning process of job shadowing a holistic one, it may be moulded into a task. In addition to the CV and cover letter, the task could include: researching the industry, daily reflections, conducting an interview with the host and finally, conducting a class presentation on their experience.

Get started: Have a look at the Lesson Plan that has been

created to assist you with facilitating job shadowing to your Life Orientation class.

• Develop a database

Independence in the job shadowing process is important and one of the key skills that learners will develop is that of networking and finding a job shadowing host. That being said, if past scholars have had a fantastic experience, it’s worth keeping tabs of their hosts for future learners to get in touch with.

Get started: Put together a simple excel spreadsheet to keep tabs of excellent job shadowing hosts, their professions and contact details.

• Get parents on board

One of the criticisms of job shadowing is that learners often simply job shadow within their parents’ organisations, often limiting the learning process of having to create a positive impression with a stranger.

Get started: Write a letter informing parents about the advantages of the process and deduct marks from the task for learners who have simply job shadowed their parents.

TO SUMMARISE

While there are challenges in implementing a job shadowing programme, it has often been referred to as a pivotal career decision making experience by the young, dynamic professionals that Achieve Careers has interviewed. Often the response to the experience is that learners decide not to follow a career path due to gaining a more realistic understanding of what it involves. This is just as valuable as it avoids years of wasted study and expense. ■



Joanne is the founder of Achieve Careers, an organisation which specialises in providing career development support to schools in the form of Career Development Manuals for learners and workshops designed to update LO teachers with the latest career development trends and information. To receive regular career information updates, visit Achieve Careers on Facebook or follow Achieve_Careers on Twitter.