

Job Shadowing not working out? Do an Interview

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 OCTOBER 2, 2015  JOANNE WOOD  CAREERS  LEAVE A COMMENT  0

Don't know what to study? Start your career research and interview professionals to figure out what you want to become.

Job shadowing is an extremely useful career research tool, but it can be time consuming for employers and tricky to organise. If you are struggling to set up a job shadowing experience, as a first step, start out with an informational interview. If you have managed to set up a job shadowing experience (which we strongly recommend), you could ask your host if you can conduct an informational interview on one of the days.

So what is an informational interview? It basically means you prepare a list of questions about a career, job or university course that you are interested in and then present these questions to someone who is working in a relevant career field, or studying the course of your choice.

An informational interview is a great way to start your career research, as it is relatively quick and easy (can be done in 45 minutes). Most professionals are only too happy to share information about their career. Informational interviewing provides you with an opportunity to network and to gain a deeper understanding of the world of work.

Finding Someone to Interview

Get hold of companies in your area to ask if they would be open to an informational interview. Remember to explain to them:

- Your goal (i.e. career research)
- How long it will take (plan on 30 – 45 minutes and stick strictly to this timeframe)
- What it will involve (provide them with some example questions that you have prepared).
- Ask if you can conduct the interview at their offices. If they are easy for you to get to (this makes life easier for them, and gives you an opportunity to experience more of the working environment).

Start the process by using your networks and contacts and asking your parents, parents' friends and teachers if they know of anyone you could interview, in the career field of interest to you. If you are battling to find anyone, google organisations in your area and, if you are able to, give them a call to explain what it is you are wanting to do.

A phone call is more effective and more personal than email, but email can be used as a last resort. Make sure that you prepare what you are going to say, be professional, and thank the person for their time, regardless of whether or not they agree to the informational interview. If you want to take it to a whole new level, offer to send through a CV too. Only do this if your CV is in tip top shape.

Preparing Questions

Make sure you are well prepared, by getting your questions ready before hand. Examples of questions that you could ask include:

- What does a typical working day involve? What are your day-to-day activities?
- What do you enjoy most about your job?
- What do you enjoy least about your job?
- Is there a qualification required to perform this job? Where and what did you study?
- What type of person would be well suited to this job?
- Do you have any additional advice for someone interested in pursuing this career?
- Is there anyone else in the industry that you would recommend I speak to?

Be careful of asking questions that the interviewee might see as being rude. For example, never ask someone what he or she earns. Rather word this question as:

- What is the earning potential of this career? OR
- What is a typical starting salary in this career field?

Being Professional

Remember that a working professional is giving up his or her valuable time to help you. Take the informational interview seriously, ***dress smartly*** and ***arrive on time***. When you arrive for your informational interview, you are creating an impression of yourself and it is important to ensure that this impression is a positive one. There is a possibility that your host may be interested in hiring you in the future, or putting you in touch with useful contacts to further assist your career research.

Stoogle 2cents

Career decision-making can be very overwhelming. There is so much information out there, it can be hard to know where and how to start. ***The key is just to get going.*** Start with some internet research into a career that sounds interesting, and take it one step further with an informational interview. You will never regret investing time and energy into finding out more about the world of work and the career options that appeal to you.
