



# JOB SHADOWING & INFORMATION INTERVIEWING

**Career Management Center**  
Student Union Rm. 2167  
(870) 972-3025

Visit our website:  
<http://careers.astate.edu>

Job shadowing is an opportunity for you to connect with or “shadow” a business professional who has specific knowledge about an occupation or career in which you are interested. You observe responsibilities and tasks associated with the mentor’s career and have the opportunity to ask questions about the knowledge, skills, talents and level of education required for the job. Informational interviewing is meeting with an employer to ask and gather some of the same basic information. While the purpose of job shadowing and informational interviewing is to gather career related information and expand your networking contacts, it also allows you to build interviewing skills, become aware of trends in the field and see workforce technologies in action. Multiple experiences of both may be arranged to allow you to explore a variety of career paths.

## Does This Really Work?

Yes! It works because most people:

- » Enjoy talking about their jobs and career fields.
- » Are flattered that you ask their advice to assist with your career and future.
- » Are empathetic about career transitions because they have experienced them.
- » Like to assist others because it makes them feel good.

## Why Participate in These Experiences?

A job shadowing or informational interviewing experience may:

- » Present up-to-date facts about an occupation that can assist in your decision making.
- » Inform you about the skills required for certain jobs so you can match them with your skills.
- » Provide valuable networking contacts to utilize when conducting your actual job or internship search.
- » Assist in developing communication skills and self-confidence in talking with professional people in a more relaxed work environment.
- » Expose you to occupational “buzzwords” unique to the career field of your choice.
- » Give you an edge in future interviews by providing inside knowledge not known by your competition.
- » Develop basic skills similar to a targeted job search.

## »»»»»»»»»»»»»»»» **Getting Started**

First, you must build a potential contact list. Career Management Center or faculty may be able to assist you with this task. Determine who has the information you are seeking. Identify those people who:

- » Share a common interest, enthusiasm or involvement in activities that appeal to you.
- » Work in a career setting you enjoy.
- » Work in career areas that interest you.
- » Work in specific jobs or in a specific organization which interests you.

### **Finding Potential Contacts**

Ask a career consultant about area employers and alumni who have volunteered to be contacted by students to show and discuss job and career related information.

- » Contact family, friends or acquaintances to see if they will serve as part of your networking system.
- » Contact the area Chamber of Commerce and Economic Development agencies.
- » Use the Internet! You might even make your first contact by e-mail.
- » Conduct a web search for employers in a specific geographic area you are interested in working.

### **Making Contact With The People on My List**

There are three ways to establish a job shadowing or informational interviewing experience. You may want to use all three:

- » Referral – Visit Career Management Center in the Student Union and look over the active businesses, friends of the university and alumni who have indicated interest in participating in the program.
- » Telephone – Contact area business professionals and explain that you are a student conducting a career research and wish to gather information to assist in making career decisions. Your goal for the call is to schedule a date and time for the experience.
- » Write a letter – If you have the name of a potential contact, you may wish to write a letter or e-mail before making the telephone call. Make sure your letter clearly states your purpose and desire to schedule a job shadowing or informational interview experience. Indicate that you will follow up by a telephone call in hopes of scheduling a specific date and time.

#### **Tips to Follow**

**Know what you want to accomplish** – The primary objective of an experience is to investigate a specific career field so you can make a more informed career decision.

**Identify your potential contacts** – When you know what you want to accomplish, ask yourself, “Who has the information I need?”

**Arrange for the experience** – You will want to discuss this with a career consultant. Your experience could be arranged for half an hour to a day, or a full week. It will typically start with questions related to the job or specific career field.

**Prepare for your experience** – Plan what you want to discuss with your primary contact. Come prepared with specific questions. Even though you are looking for information rather than a job, this same organization might have an opening in the future in which you would be interested. Being prepared will assist in providing a good first impression.

**Day of the experience** – Remember that this is a professional experience. You do not need to wear “interview apparel.” However, you should dress appropriately, “business casual.”

**Try to obtain additional contact names** – Before you conclude the experience, ask your contact if they can think of other individuals that might be helpful to contact for additional job shadowing and career related information. By doing this you will gradually build your professional network.

**Follow up** – Write your contact a thank you letter or email as soon as possible. Ask your contact person what is the best way to follow up on your experience. Mention some items that you found particularly interesting or helpful. Some contacts may ask you to stay in touch so they can monitor your career path. See example thank you letter on the back page of this pamphlet.



### **Student Responsibilities**

1. To contact the person you have selected by telephone, e-mail, letter and to arrange a meeting date. This meeting will be at the individual's place of work.
2. To become familiar with the job shadowing and informational interviewing process and prepare in advance the questions that will be asked during the meeting.
3. To arrive at the agreed upon time (10-15 minutes early) and be dressed appropriately.
4. To follow up the experience with a thank you note or email.
5. To complete and submit an Evaluation Form to the Career Management Center.

### **General Questions to Ask**

1. What are the main responsibilities associated with work in your field?
2. Please describe a typical day, week and month.
3. What interests and skills are needed for successful employment in this field?
4. What are the advantages of working in this field? Disadvantages?
5. What salary and benefits can I expect?
6. What education and experiences will I need to break into the field?
7. What type of work schedule does this field require?
8. Have standards or licensing requirements been established for this field by national professional organizations?
9. Are jobs in this field limited to any particular geographic area(s)?
10. How do people find out about openings in your occupation?
11. What opportunities exist for advancement and/or lateral movement?
12. What are the emerging jobs in this field?
13. What is the current outlook for new college graduates in this field?
14. Are you satisfied with the career field you have chosen?
15. What do you see happening to your profession in the next five to ten years?

### **Questions About a Specific Organization**

1. Please tell me more about your organization and its purpose.
2. Is your organization growing, diminishing, or maintaining its size?
3. How does your organization compete or cooperate with other organizations within this field?
4. How do you think your job would be different if you were working in a larger or smaller organization?
5. How is your organization funded?
6. What is unique about your organization?
7. In the future, do you think your organization will need more employees in this field?
8. What is your job security within this organization?

### **Questions About Personal Insights and Experiences**

1. What field did you prepare for and expect to enter originally?
2. How did you get where you are in your field?
3. If you needed to leave your present job, to what other jobs could you apply your skills?
4. Would you advise someone to enter your career field?
5. What would you have done differently in your career?
6. What do you like most about your job?
7. What would you identify as the top two personal rewards from the work you do?

## » THANK YOU LETTER «

{2 inch Top Margin}

Joseph Sanchez  
3227 Heather Avenue  
Jonesboro, AR 72467 {Double space}

November 15, 2009 {Double space}

Mr. Jon Hamilton  
3600 Chauncey Blvd  
Truman, AR 72401 {Double space}

Dear Mr. Hamilton, {Double space}

Thank you for taking time out of your busy work schedule to provide me the job shadowing experience on November 15, 2009. {Double space}

The tour of the facility and the career related information you shared to be extremely valuable. Being able to talk to other accountants helped me realize my career goals and the kind of company I would like to work for in the future. Specifically, I enjoyed attending a staff meeting to experience some of the everyday issues that can arise in an office setting. Thank you for answering all of my questions; the information was very educational and invaluable. {Double space}

Thank you again for your generosity and patience in helping me explore my career path. {Double space}

Sincerely, {Quadruple space}

Joseph Sanchez

\*\*If emailing thank you letter, avoid being too informal even though you have met the individual and developed a good rapport. You *always* want to represent yourself at a professional level. In your email, follow the above suggested format but exclude the addresses.