

CAREER & PROFESSIONAL

DEVELOPMENT CENTER

EXPLORE JOBS AND CAREERS THROUGH INFORMATION INTERVIEWS AND JOB SHADOWING!

What is an information interview and job shadowing?

An information, research, or networking interview is an appointment which you schedule with a specific person for the purpose of gaining career information from an “insider” point of view. Job shadowing is when you go to this person’s place of employment and observe or “shadow” them to get a first-hand glimpse of what a day in that job is really like.

Most people are very receptive to doing informational interviews or having you shadow them on the job (after all, who doesn’t like to talk about themselves and their work?) as long as you DO NOT ask them for a job.

Why should I do information interviews and job shadowing?

- To get valuable information for your career planning and job search. It’s a good way to “reality check” what you’ve read, heard and think!
- To learn about a particular organization, how you might fit in, what problems or needs the employer has. Knowing these things will help you to slant your qualifications toward the needs of the organization.
- To gain experience and self-confidence in interviewing with professionals through discussing yourself and your career interests.
- To expand your network! Networking is how 80% of people find their internships and jobs! You should ask each person with whom you speak for referrals (i.e. other people they know that may be willing to speak with you!)
- To get your foot in the door. While an employer may not grant a job interview because vacancies do not exist, information interviews can often be arranged regardless of whether vacancies exist.

How do I find people willing to do information interviews or job shadowing with me?

To find people working in an area that interests you, ask your family, your friends, your co-workers, your professors – anyone you know. Career & Professional Development Center may also be able to help you by searching Cal U Career Network, a database of Cal U graduates who have volunteered to help current students and alumni by providing them with career information about their chosen fields via e-mail or in person.

Cal U Career Network provides the opportunity for you to talk with alumni about their careers and the organizations with which they work, and “job shadow” alumni to see what a day in their job is actually like... which may even develop into an internship or Co-op experience where you can get hands-on experience!

How do I access Cal U Career Network?

To access the Cal U Career Network on LinkedIn, you must first be registered. To register, follow these steps:

1. Go to www.linkedin.com. Type your name, your email and create your password to join LinkedIn. Make sure to indicate if you are a student when prompted.
2. Confirm your email address. A confirmation will then be automatically sent to you via e-mail.
3. Once your email has been confirmed, you can add connections (see the “Finding Connections instructions on the second page of this handout.)

4. Choose the basic option, which is free.

Click on “Profile”, then “Edit Profile.” This is where you build your profile. Remember, when building your profile you are building your **PROFESSIONAL** brand. Proper capitalization, spelling and punctuation are very important! Your future employer may see this. For tips on building your profile and making connections on LinkedIn, visit <http://bit.ly/2dWpJ9W> and/or schedule an appointment with your Career Advisor in the Career Center.

Important preparation steps before doing an information interview

Before contacting professionals for information on their career fields, you need to do some homework. Be sure to do at least basic research on the career field of interest. This research will help you to define your areas of interest and help you to develop a list of pertinent questions. Make an appointment with Career & Professional Development Center to assist you in doing this research and preparing for an information interview or job shadowing experience!

Informational interviews should only last 20 – 30 minutes, and can take place wherever you and your interviewee choose to meet (offer to come to his/her place of employment), or via phone or e-mail. Shadowing can last anywhere from a few hours to a few days and usually takes place at the place of employment. Make sure you look professional, are well-prepared, and write a thank-you note afterward. Make sure you take notes, or audiotape the interview (be sure to ask the interviewee first!). Doing informational interviews with or shadowing several people in the same career area is a good idea, as you will be able to obtain a more accurate picture of work in that field.

Sample Questions

- Describe your typical work day (the kinds of tasks you do, how you spend your time).
- What kind of educational background is necessary for working in your field?
- Tell me your career history – how did you get to where you are today?
- What is the current job outlook for careers in your field?
- What are typical entry-level positions in this field?
- What is the typical entry-level salary range for jobs in this field?
- What do you like the most/least about your job?
- What is your work schedule like? Would you say you have a good work/life balance? Why or why not?
- What skills and personal qualities do you recommend I learn or develop before beginning to work in this field?
- Are there classes you wish you would have taken to help prepare for this field?
- What methods or resources would you recommend for finding a job or internship in this field? Are there professional associations I should consider joining?
- If you could give one piece of advice to someone seeking a career in this field, what would that advice be?
- Is there anyone else you would recommend I speak to about working in this field?
- May I have a brief tour of your facilities? (if time permits)