

## Guide to Job Shadowing

### What is A Job Shadow?

A job shadow is time spent with a person who performs the type of work the student may have an interest in doing. Job shadow events provide opportunities to gather information on a variety of career possibilities before making a decision on whether to pursue that occupation. The student “shadows,” observes, and asks questions of individual workers.

The job shadow learning experience typically lasts three to four hours, occasionally a full day.

### Why Should I Participate in a Job Shadow?

Job Shadowing:

- Helps individuals “test drive” a career
- Provides an environment in which one can network with professionals
- Allows one to ask “career-related” questions and to gain advice from professionals working in the field
- Exposes students to work environments
- Provides a snapshot of what it would be like to work in that profession
- Identifies the skill, qualities, training and education needed to succeed on the job
- Illustrates how academic work translates into practice
- Provides additional insight to careers of interest
- Helps to narrow a career focus
- Helps individuals make career decisions
- Learn about additional career options
- Helps one gain an understanding of competencies needed for a successful career

### When Should I Complete a Job Shadow?

A job shadow activity takes several hours from your regular work or school schedule and the work of the person you shadow. Therefore, you should only undertake a job shadow after you have investigated career objectives with several other methods, such as researching on the Internet/intranet, reading, networking, informational interviews and discussions with the Career Services staff.

When you have substantially narrowed down career areas of interest, you may be ready to “try on” a job by participating in a job shadow.

Another time that a job shadow is valuable is when you have a job offer in a particular area, and you would like to learn more about the environment before making a decision.

### How Should I Prepare for a Job Shadow?

Before participating in a job shadow you will want to ensure that you have completed the following:

- Complete a self-assessment to be able to identify and articulate your values, skills, interests and strengths.
- Establish the goals and objective of your visit.
- Contact a professional working in your area of interest and ask to shadow him/her. Be sure to tell the person how you got his/her contact information.
- Confirm the date, time and location of your experience. If necessary, conduct a “test drive” to determine how much time you’ll need to get there and to locate precisely where you are to go.

- Identify an outfit appropriate to wear. Ideally you will want to dress no less than business casual. However, you are encouraged to double-check with your host to ensure that you don't need to wear a particular type of shoes, etc.
- Research the organization as well as the particular division where you will be spending your time.
- Prepare questions to ask. For help on identifying questions, refer to Career Services "Informational Interview" guide. (<http://www.mcdaniel.edu/5740.htm>)
- Prepare a resume and bring a few extra copies with you.

### **What Should I Do During a Job Shadow?**

- Arrive on time and at the agreed on location.
- Upon meeting your host, thank him or her for allowing you to spend some time with him/her.
- Explain the reason for your visit and highlight that you would like to gain additional information about opportunities in the field.
- Acknowledge that you are there to observe and do not want to interfere with work obligations. Ask for advice on how to best accomplish this.
- While making observations, remain professional and ask questions when appropriate.
- Keep a positive attitude and remain engaged throughout your visit.
- Unless invited to stay longer, promptly end the visit at the agreed upon time. Sincerely thank your host and say goodbye.

### **What Should I Do After Completing a Job Shadow?**

- Immediately following a job shadowing experience record your thoughts and observations.
- Jot down what you liked, what you didn't like and any additional information that you need to obtain.
- Send a thank you note to your host expressing your gratitude for allowing you to observe him/her in his/her place of employment. Be sure to include information that you learned as well as what you enjoyed about the experience.
- Keep in contact with your host. After all, he/she is now a member of your professional network.

### **Need Help Identifying Someone to Shadow?**

If you need help identifying a professional to shadow, visit Career Services' Alumni Career Network. This database contains numerous alumni willing to share their career expertise with McDaniel students. The network allows for searches by major, career field, company name, job title, etc. When you find a graduate you want to contact, simply click the "Contact Me" button and type an email. It's that simple. For more information visit: <http://www.mcdaniel.edu/5656.htm>

### **Resources Offered by Career Services**

- 101 Smart Questions to Ask on Your Interview, Ron Fry.
- Career Services' *Professional Association Guide* can be found at: <http://www.mcdaniel.edu/5740.htm>
- Interview preparation resources can be found at: [www.mcdanielcareers.org](http://www.mcdanielcareers.org)
- *Networking for Job Search and Career Success*, L. Michelle Tullier, Ph.D.
- *Networking for Novices: The Basics Made Easy in 20 Simple Steps*, Susan Shelly.
- *Networking From Scratch: A College Student's Guide to Building Contacts*, Donald Asher, The University of Tennessee Career Services

### **Reference**

Information for this guide was adapted from: Cooperative Education & Internship Association (CEIA). (2002). *Job Shadowing*. Retrieved March 10, 2008 from: <http://www.ceiainc.org/membership/membersonly/Job%20Shadow%20handout.doc>