

INFORMATIONAL INTERVIEWING & JOB SHADOWING

Informational Interview - What is it?

A key strategy for both career exploration and the job/internship search process that entails a brief meeting to seek advice and first-hand information from a professional within a field/industry you are considering.

Job Shadow - What is it?

An opportunity to observe a professional in the field in order to experience a "day in the life" perspective, including job tasks, work environment and company culture.

Benefits of an Informational Interview or Job Shadow

- Expand your professional network
- Gain an inside perspective from industry/field experts
- Help confirm (or not) your interest in a career path

Ways to Connect

- LinkedIn profiles and groups
- Introduction through family/friends
- Professional associations
- Portfolium
- Faculty/club introductions
- + more!

How to Outreach by E-mail

Five Rules to Follow:

- 1) Start with your connection
 - People are more likely to connect when you have something/someone in common (ex. Cal Poly, person who referred you)
- 2) 125 words or fewer
 - Professionals are busy... keep it concise
- 3) Provide a general framework for the conversation
 - Sharing your intent allows the professional to better prepare
- 4) Ask for insight, not a job
 - The moment you ask for a job, people feel used and are hesitant to help
- 5) Write professionally
 - You may be their colleague one day, so showcase your professional self

Prepare for the Meeting

- Research the company/person
- What is the purpose of meeting with them? What do you want to learn?
- What impression do you want to make? (consider your professional brand)
- Prepare a list of questions you want to ask
- Prepare responses to questions about yourself, such as:
 - Tell me about yourself.
 - Why are you interested in this field?
- Dress business casual to business professional
- Bring a copy of your resume, but only offer it when asked
- Arrive 10 minutes early

Example Email:

Dear Ms. Martinez,

I am a Cal Poly student interested in a career in marketing. As a member of the American Marketing Association, I am looking to connect with AMA Cal Poly alumni who are successful in the field of marketing. As I explore potential career paths, would you be willing to share insight into current marketing trends and offer professional advice to a fellow Mustang?

Generally I am available between 1-4pm daily to connect over the phone, but can rework my schedule to best fit your availability. Additionally, I will be in the Bay Area the week of March 13th if you'd prefer to meet in person.

Thank you in advance for your time and consideration. Hope to connect soon!

Respectfully,
Christopher Johnson
(805) 555-1212

TIARA Framework and Sample Questions

- T** Trends: What trends have affected the way you've done business in the past year?
- I** Insights: What skills or attributes stand out about the strongest performers in your field?
- A** Advice: What advice would you give to someone who is interested in doing the work you do?
- R** Resources: What publications, thought leaders, or organizations do you use to stay informed on industry trends?
- A** Assignments: Can you share your main responsibilities and/or projects you are currently working on?

Follow Up

Why?

- To continue building a relationship

When?

- Within 24 hours of your conversation to thank them
- Every 1-6 months after to provide updates and reconnect over relevant topics

How?

- E-mail, LinkedIn, handwritten note

What to Include?

- Thank the individual for their time and advice
- Refer to the conversation you had - especially what you appreciated
- Include requested documents (ex: reports, resume, portfolio, projects)
- Reference suggested action items (ex: resume update, follow LinkedIn group)
- Relevant articles, class projects, or information of common interest

Job Shadowing

Since job shadowing is more time intensive, it may follow an informational interview at a later date. If you are interested in a job shadowing opportunity, request it during the informational interview or in a follow up e-mail. When job shadowing, take note of company culture, including collaborative vs. independent work, tone of conversations, office setting, etc. Afterwards, reflect on the experience and how it aligns with your career values and interests.

Additional TIARA Questions to Consider

Trends

- What topics or trends do you need to stay informed on in order to do your job well?
- What are the more recent buzzwords or new terminology that is defining your field/industry?
- What companies/agencies do you collaborate with? Who is your competition?

Insights

- When you see new employees, what skills or attributes do they typically bring to the company?
- What are the opportunities for continued growth within your position/this field?
- Have you noticed any hiring trends in the field/industry lately?

Advice

- What is the best career advice you've received and how did you apply it?
- How did you get into the field? What is your background in?
- What typical education credentials are required for entry?

Resources

- What professional associations or societies are you a member of?
- What resources have you used to better understand your field or advance your work?
- Is there anyone else you'd recommend I connect with to hear another perspective?

Assignments

- What project(s) are you working on now?
- What do you find interesting and/or challenging about current projects?
- Are projects typically completed independently or collaboratively?

TO LEARN MORE

- Explore careerservices.calpoly.edu
- Talk with a Career Counselor at Career Services
- Check out the "Networking Plan" handout
- Read *The 2-Hour Job Search* by Steve Dalton

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805-756-2501

Building 124