

Informational Interviewing...

**Gaining information for making
career decisions!**



Job Shadowing & Informational Meetings

Once you have researched and collected enough information about your field of interest, feel knowledgeable, and are still interested in the particular field, then next step is to talk with people who work in the occupations you are interested in and observe what they do. This can be done through job shadowing and/or informational meetings. Job shadowing can be for a day, half a day, or just a few hours whereas informational meetings are typically 20-30 minutes in length.

Benefits of Job Shadowing & Informational Meetings

- It will give you a realistic view of the field and an opportunity to hear how others have developed their career paths.
- It helps you build connections or a network with people who may be helpful to you in the future. The person being interviewed may give you referrals to others in the field for informational meetings.
- It's a great opportunity to practice your interviewing skills without the stress associated with the "real thing". People enjoy talking about their background and their jobs, so setting up and conducting these meetings is easy.

Difference between Job Shadowing and Informational Meetings

Job Shadowing:

- Puts the burden of the experience on the professional
- Is a request to an employer in order for the student to determine career interests by observing the work of the professional for a period of time at their workplace.
- Will take a substantial portion of the workday for the professional.
- Consumes a substantial amount of time for the professional in order to be sure that a quality experience is provided.

Informational Interviewing:

- Puts the burden of the experience on the student
- Is a face-to-face or a telephone conversation whereby the student is asking questions about the professional's career and career path.
- Rarely lasts more than one hour; usually a request of 20-30 minutes is appropriate.
- Will give the student a realistic picture of the professional's career path
- Will give the student specific information about careers and a realistic view of the profession
- Can be an excellent method of including and excluding certain careers.

Tips for Informational Meetings

1. Ask for information and advice only. Remember, you are only seeking information, not a job.
2. Don't limit your contacts to potential employers. Anyone working in the occupation of interest can give you the information you are seeking.
3. List names of people you already know such as your family, friends, acquaintances, etc.
4. Broadcast your career interest and ask for names of people they know. It will give you a whole new level of contacts.
5. Research companies and read the business section of newspapers.

6. Make contact or set up an appointment in one of the following ways:
 - a. Write a letter and follow-up with a phone call, OR
 - b. Contact by phone only
7. Never walk into someone's place of business unannounced.
8. When you do contact the individual, state your purpose and ask for a brief amount of time – 15 to 20 minutes.
9. Have your list of questions prepared before the interview.

Elements of an Informational Meeting Phone Call or Letter

1. Greeting and How You Were Referred
2. Purpose of Letter
3. ASK FOR ADVICE AND INFORMATION ONLY.
4. Ask for Meeting

Sample Informational Meeting Request

12345 Green Street
Henderson, KY 42420

Date

Mrs. Jane Doe, Office Manager
Company Name
Street Address
City, State ZIP

Dear Mrs. Doe:

As a student at Henderson Community College, I am interested in a career as a Medical Assistant and have been collecting information about this field.

As part of my research, I would like to set up a 20-minute meeting with you to ask you some questions about your Medical Assisting Career. Information that I'm seeking include: What type of skill sets would make someone competitive in your field? What is the biggest challenge you face in your field? What do you like most about your job? What do you least like about your job? Has it been rewarding?

I realize that this request may be out of the ordinary, but I truly want to get a better feel for where I want to go professionally and how to prepare myself.

I would like to thank you in advance for your assistance. I look forward to hearing from you soon.

Sincerely,

Signature

Name
Enclosure: resume

Job Shadowing & Informational Meeting Questions

1. How long have you worked in this occupation?
2. What other occupations have you worked in previously?
3. What do you like most about your job? What do you like least about your job?
4. How did you get started in this line of work?
5. What's a typical day like for you?
6. How much time do you spend working with people? Data? Things?
7. What personal qualities do you feel are needed to succeed in this line of work?
8. What type of education and training are needed for this occupation today?
9. What changes in your occupation have you seen occur?
10. What are the most frequently recurring problems in your job?
11. What are the challenges you face in this position?
12. Do you have any other long-term career goals?
13. Does this job require primarily independent activity or is there a lot of teamwork?
14. Who evaluates your performance? How is it done? How do they measure your performance?
15. What are the rewards of your position?
16. What hours do individuals in this job usually work? Is there much flexibility?
17. Are there opportunities for growth and advancement in this field?
18. Why do people leave this field?
19. What would my earning potential be in this field? What types of benefits do you see in this field?
20. Is there anything else I should know that I haven't asked?
21. What other people would you recommend I speak with? Do you have their contact information? May I use your name, when I call the person?

Reflection: What new insights, information or ideas did you gain? Did the interview increase or decrease your interest in the field? Does this job match your skills, interests, values, personality and skills? Is the work environment one that is comfortable for you? Why? Why not?

At the conclusion of the interview thank the interviewee for his or her time. As a professional courtesy you may want to send a thank you note or letter within two days of the interview. A sample is below.

Sample Thank You Letter for Job Shadowing & Informational Meetings

You will want to send a word-processed/typed letter or email within 24 hours of your job shadowing experience or informational meeting.

Dear Ms.....

Our meeting yesterday was truly informative and extremely useful in helping me clarify various questions regarding a career in Medical Assisting. Your experience and knowledge of this field is most impressive. I want to thank you again for taking the time from your busy schedule to meet with me and allow me to observe you in action.

Following your advice, I will contact Debbie Zee tomorrow to see if she might willing to meet with me to get a different aspect of the Medical Assisting career. I will give her your regards.

I hope to have a chance to meet with you again sometime.