

Career Exploration: Job Shadows

WHAT IS A JOB SHADOW?

A job shadow is a chance to spend time watching someone do their job and learning what it entails. It is an experience where you can get a firsthand look at the daily life in their field of interest, expand their professional network, and identify possible career paths. A job shadow allows you to spend a short amount of time (a few hours or up to a week) observing the life of a professional who is doing the job you are interested in, making connections, and determining if that particular career is a good fit.

WHY IS A JOB SHADOW IMPORTANT?

Some benefits of experiencing a job shadow are:

- A snapshot of a day in the life of an experienced professional can help students decide whether they would enjoy and feel passionate about the job or not.
- A job shadow experience also helps you assess whether you have the skills needed (or can attain the skills needed) to perform the job
- Learning the various educational paths that can lead to the particular job they're interested in
- Developing networking relationships with professionals

WHAT CAN YOU EXPECT

Every job shadow is different and based upon your needs as a student as well as the resources / availability of the host site. You may follow the employee for the day and observe them as they perform their job. You may participate in company projects, be involved in staff meetings, given a tour of the company and introduced to key employees, and even engaged in conversations with clientele. Some possible activities you may experience are:

- Take a tour of the company/organization.
- Shadow alumnus and/or colleagues in different departments during the day
- Participate in company/organization meetings (with staff, clientele, partners, etc.)
- Observe general office tasks, daily work, and/or interactions of one or more departments.
- Observe client interactions or assist clients directly, if able
- Experience an employee demonstration of industry-specific software or tools.
- Review the organization's website, mission, marketing collateral, organizational charts to learn more.
- Enjoy a meal with alumnus sponsor or others (typical of what staff might do if lunching together)
- Conduct informational interviews with different employees to understand the firm, industry, future trends, and career paths within this field.
- Meet with HR staff to understand what they look for when hiring college graduates.
- Meet with additional Kent alumni who work within the organization.
 - Meet a new employee to get a "fresh perspective."
 - Include student in a hands-on project related to company / organization goals.



HOW TO FIND ONE

You should follow these steps to create your own job shadow experience!

- 1) Identify at least 3 companies / organizations you would like to see first-hand.
- 2) Use Handshake to research these companies / organizations and identify at least one position at each that interests you.
- 3) Connect with a career advisor by emailing your interest to buscareers@kent.edu or call (330) 672-1285 and set up a time to talk about your job shadow thoughts!

HOW TO PLAN FOR A JOB SHADOW EXPERIENCE

To get the most out of a job-shadowing experience, it's important to be prepared and to follow some of these tips:

- **Prepare questions ahead of time.** You likely will have an opportunity to ask the employee questions about the job. While you will come up with questions throughout your experience job shadowing, [write down some questions ahead of time](#).
- **Dress professionally.** Because you are going to a person's workplace, you need to dress professionally. What is considered "professional" depends on the job and the industry. When in doubt, ask your guidance counselor, career counselor, or even the person you are shadowing for advice.
- **Bring something to write on.** You will want to take notes throughout your shadowing experience. You also will want to write down questions that arise. Bring a notepad and pen so you are prepared.
- **Pick a good time.** Pick a time to job shadow that works best for you. If you are a student, this might be your summer break, spring break, or winter break. However, you also need to consider the job. For example, if you want to shadow a teacher, it will be hard to find one working in the summer. Take both your schedule and the job's schedule into account.

WHAT TYPE OF FOLLOW UP SHOULD I DO?

The first thing you should do after a job shadow is to express your gratitude. The company that allowed you a chance to explore their company and their professionals volunteered their time and resources to help you in your career exploration endeavor, so you should ALWAYS show your appreciation to your host by sending a thank you letter or note. You can write a formal thank you letter or send a more informal thank you card. You may want to send an email thank you – that is ok, but still follow that up with a letter or handwritten note. Regardless of what you chose, thank them for their time and willingness to host you.

Ask yourself "what other questions do I have?" "Who can answer my questions?" You may also want to ask if you can follow up with any additional questions you may have. This also allows you to set the stage to remain in contact with this person, as they will be a valuable resource as you start your job search!

