

JOB SHADOWING BASICS

What is job shadowing?

Job shadowing allows you to gain insight into a specific occupation, career path or industry. Typically, a job shadow is a short-term educational opportunity, lasting one to two days that involves following a professional around their workplace and is focused on learning, networking, and observing.

What are the benefits of job shadowing?

EXPLORE POSSIBLE CAREER PATHS

If you are still trying to decide on the path you want to take after graduation, job shadow opportunities can be a beneficial and easy way to gain a better understanding of how your major(s) and broader liberal arts education can relate to future careers. Gaining first-hand exposure to potential career paths will give you insightful information to help reflect on how your skills, interests, values, and academic experiences influence your future direction.

ADDS EXPERIENCE TO YOUR RÉSUMÉ

Job shadow opportunities can also be added to your résumé as relevant experience. Along with internships and on-campus leadership positions, job shadowing is a great way to show your interest and knowledge of a particular career field or industry.

GROW AND STRENGTHEN YOUR PROFESSIONAL NETWORK

A large percentage of job shadow hosts have some kind of connection with Denison. So, not only can they tell you about their career paths and how they got started, but they can also provide ongoing mentorship and potentially connect you with internships or full-time job opportunities in the future. By participating in a job shadow opportunity, you will meet many different professionals, allowing you learn from different people in different career paths, thus growing your professional network.

Before Getting Started

Before you start the job shadowing process and contacting professionals to make your request, it's important do some preparation so that you are professional, don't waste anyone's time, and that you get the most out of the entire experience.

KNOW WHAT YOU HOPE TO ACCOMPLISH

Ask yourself these questions to help you identify what you want to get out of this job shadow experience:

- ▶ *What are my goals? What do I hope to learn from this experience?*
- ▶ *What aspects of the industry, career path or position do I want to learn more about (e.g., daily schedules, workplace culture, required skills, etc.)?*
- ▶ *Have I considered a broad range of jobs to shadow within my field of interest?* For example, if you are interested in publishing, you may want to consider a communications position at a business firm and/or a copy-editing role at a tech company.

DO SOME RESEARCH ON THE INDUSTRY, CAREER PATH OR PROFESSION

Having some general knowledge about the industry and profession will help you identify potential professions or career paths to explore more in depth. This will also help you narrow down a list of professionals to contact to make your request.

UPDATE YOUR RÉSUMÉS AND LINKEDIN PROFILE

Make sure that your résumé and LinkedIn Profiles are updated. Because you will be in direct contact with professionals who may want to learn more about you, having an updated résumé you can hand out and a well-crafted professional pitch on your LinkedIn profile is highly recommended.

The Job Shadowing Process

STEP 1: IDENTIFY A PROFESSIONAL TO SHADOW

Using Knowlton Center resources, start searching for individuals you may know in a particular career path, profession, or industry whom you would like to connect with and possibly shadow. Create a list of individuals with their job title/profession, company name, and contact information.

STEP 2: CONNECT WITH THE PROFESSIONAL

Asking to shadow a professional should not be your first contact with the individual. Typically, you want to have some kind of existing relationship before asking to shadow them. A great way to establish a relationship is by conducting an Informational Interview. If the conversation goes well, you could follow up with a request to shadow them.

STEP 3: MAKE THE REQUEST

Once your connection with the professional has been established, ask if you could shadow them to learn more about their profession. Be sure to include an expression of your interest, as well as a brief description of what you're hoping to learn from the experience. See an example email message on the next page.

STEP 4: PARTICIPATE IN THE EXPERIENCE

On the day of your shadowing experience, be sure to arrive on time at the correct location and dressed appropriately (these details should be communicated BEFORE you arrive at the workplace). Be prepared with questions to ask throughout the day. Make sure you are polite and professional with everyone you meet. Also, be ready for anything; some shadowing opportunities may be like extended informational interviews, while others may allow you to work on actual projects and tasks.

STEP 5: FOLLOW UP

Send a thank you email or card after your job shadow experience. Share something you learned or a particularly memorable moment from your experience. Be sure to thank your host for their time, and ask any follow-up questions you may have. Be sure to also connect with anyone else you met during the experience on LinkedIn, as they can now be part of your professional network.

Sources for Identifying Professionals


LINKEDIN

Make sure to join the official Denison group on LinkedIn, as all members of the Denison community are welcome. As a member of the Denison LinkedIn group, you can view profiles and send messages to other members. Also, the "Find Alumni" feature allows you to search based on location, major, industry, and more.

WISR

Through Wisr, Denison's online tool for students to connect with alumni and parents in their field of interest or desired city, you can easily search for individuals who have indicated they are willing to host a job shadow experience.

Example Job Shadow Request Email

 Send	To...	samantha.smith@bigred.com
	Cc...	
	Subject	Follow-up and Job Shadow Request

Good Afternoon Ms. Smith,

Thank you again for speaking with me recently to share some information about your career path and current role. Following our conversation, I am even more interested in a potential career in nonprofit marketing, and would love to learn more about your work at Big Red Group. I'm hoping to see what a typical day working in nonprofit marketing is like and would like to know whether it would be possible to shadow you at work for a few hours at some point over the next month. I would really appreciate the opportunity to learn more about what you do.

Please let me know if this is something you may have time for, and if so, what type of schedule would be convenient for you. I look forward to hearing from you. Thank you very much for your time.

Thank you,
David Alexson
alexson_d0@denison.edu
(740) 587-6656

Ready to get started or have some questions?

Once you've updated your résumé and LinkedIn profile, identified a potential career path and some possible professionals to shadow, meet with a career coach to finalize a plan. If you need help getting started, or if you would like more information about job shadowing, schedule an appointment and a career coach can help you through the process.