

Informational Interviews and Job Shadowing

An **informational interview** is a conversation with a professional from your field who can give you insight into a company, position or career path. This can be an HR professional, a recent graduate working at a company or an OSU alumnus—anyone who can serve as a connector in your field. Consider reaching out to your professors, family, friends, professionals you have met and/or alumni. Most informational interviews last about 30 minutes. **Job shadowing** is an unpaid opportunity to observe a professional in your field or position of interest. The time varies depending on availability and type of position—some shadows last an hour, others several days.

Informational Interview Questions

- How did you get started in this field?
- What do you enjoy most about your job?
- What are common entry-level positions in your field?
- What skills are needed to be successful in your role?
- How has the industry changed since you first began?
- What set of characteristics does your organization look for when hiring?
- What's it like to work at your company?
- What advice would you give a person aspiring to enter your field of work?
- What has been the biggest learning curve for you in this role?
- **Who else should I connect with at your company or at similar organizations?**

Reaching Out

- Introduce yourself with your name, major and university.
- Describe your interest in the person's field and/or position.
- Highlight why the contact is beneficial for you.
- Make clear that you want to conduct an informational interview and/or job shadow.
- Be flexible.
- Be clear on the amount of time this will take.
- Express your appreciation, excitement and passion. Remember, they are doing you a favor.
- Always respect the professional's time and consideration and stick to your agreed schedule. Informational interviews and job shadows are a courtesy to you as a developing professional and student.

Sample Email

Hello _____,

My name is _____, and I am a sophomore at Oregon State University in the College of Liberal Arts, majoring in psychology. My academic advisor gave me your name and contact information as an alumnus from my degree program who is open to meeting with students. I am specifically interested in pursuing a career in counseling.

I would be very grateful for an opportunity to introduce myself and ask you some questions about the marketing field and how you got to where you are. The interview will take approximately 20-30 minutes of your time, and I am flexible to work around your schedule.

Please contact me by responding to this email or by calling me at 555-555-5555. Thank you so much for your time. I look forward to meeting you.

Respectfully,
