

Can't decide on a career? Try Job Shadowing

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Choosing a career is a tough process. It's a lifelong decision and can be stressful thinking whether or not you are making the right choice. Not that your career choice is set in stone, just switching careers (majors) part way through college can become costly.

We've always suggested before selecting your major, consider taking a few related classes or even doing an early internship to make sure it's actually something you want to do. It's been one of our top pieces of advice for college students (See: #64 in College Advice: 100+ Tips for Survival).

Here's one student, Michael Warshafsky of Queen's University, who is taking a similar approach. In an effort to decide on a career path, he is job shadowing 60 people in 60 days and in the process, blogging about his experience. Check out his website at sixtyinsixty.com/theproject.

What is Job Shadowing?

Job shadowing is a career exploration process that enables an individual to experience a profession in person by following (shadowing) a professional and observing a typical day of work in the field. Job shadowing is a great way to get to know the ins and outs of a profession and requires very little time commitment or effort on your part (compared to what you will get out of it).

Even those who already have an idea of what they would like to do should still job shadow to see if you actually like the work and want to make a career out of it.

Job Shadowing: 60 Jobs in 60 Days

Michael, who is currently about halfway through his 60 jobs in 60 days project, reports that the project is going very well with some of his favorite job shadows so far being city councilor, judge, journalist, publisher, dentist, and pediatrician.

So far the experience has helped him narrow down what he's interested in: he really enjoyed job shadowing for both an optometrist and a dentist. "I could definitely see myself doing either of those careers and I probably wouldn't have known that without doing 60 jobs in 60 days."

The project has been a learning experience. Not only has it given him a deep understanding of what many professionals do every day, he has earned himself some great business contacts. Talking and meeting with new professionals has also enhanced his interview skills as he gets comfortable with the practice he gets during the project.

Another valuable tip he learned: people will want to help you if you take the time to reach out in an honest way. Meaning if you know someone in a career field you are considering (or, even if you don't know them), feel free to reach out, ask questions, and get advice. It's always great to have some type of mentor who can help lead you down the right path.

While he regrets not starting the project earlier (It would have been nice to put the innovative project on college and scholarship applications), it will surely be a rewarding experience in the end. Once he completes his objective he should

have a good idea of what he wants to go into and what he doesn't.

Benefits of Job Shadowing

- Career Direction. Will help with the career exploration process. Is this something I want to be doing the rest of my life?
- Networking. You'll gain contacts in the industry who can answer questions and point you in the right direction providing advice on the chosen career path.
- Valuable experience. Job shadowing will help you be more outgoing, improve your interview skills, and get you comfortable to these types of settings.