

# Job Shadowing

**Job shadowing gives prospective employees the opportunity to observe and ask questions about the job before a formal job offer is made.**

Offering a job shadow experience during the interview process is highly recommended. Shadowing provides a realistic preview of the responsibilities and can help the candidate determine whether or not they continue in the process. While shadowing is a good practice for any job at any level, it is especially helpful for

those who are new to the healthcare field or a specific discipline.

A basic shadowing experience can be formal or informal. Typically, it consists of a tour of the work area, a discussion about job responsibilities, and observation of current employees performing the job. It may also include attending meetings, an introduction to department policies and organizational/department culture, and a short debrief at the end of the day to discuss the experience and ask questions. Shadowing can occur on the day of an interview or as the next step in the hiring process.

## Why is Job Shadowing Important?



### Value for the Organization

Shadowing can help determine a good fit and reduce costs related to unnecessary turnover. By enabling the team and manager to interact informally with the candidate, they can better understand the candidate's attitude and personality. While skills and abilities are critical to a hiring decision, cultural fit and attitude are equally important.

Job shadowing can also increase the prospect of job satisfaction for new hires. Having been exposed to various elements of the job, there will be fewer surprises as a new hire begins employment. A preview of day-to-day responsibilities gives both candidate and department the opportunity to discover if the position is a good fit. The result is better hiring decisions which, in turn, reduces avoidable turnover.

### Value for the Candidate

Not only is the organization trying to determine fit, but so is the candidate. Job shadowing provides candidates a more holistic view of the potential job, work environment, colleagues and the organization. While conventional job interviews do not always provide the information candidates need to make an informed decision, shadowing allows them to see the job firsthand. The experience can correct inaccurate expectations or perceptions about a particular job. For example, a fast-paced position which requires multi-tasking and frequent change may be desirable to some candidates, while others may be seeking a slower-paced job.

# How to Conduct Successful Job Shadows

## STEP 1: Select Employees to Participate

Look for:

- Enthusiasm and knowledge about the department and the organization
- A balance of new and tenured employees for a variety of perspectives
- Diversity in age, gender, race, etc.
- Informal leaders and high performers

## STEP 2: Reviewing Pertinent Information to Cover

It is important to strike a realistic balance about the position. You certainly want to put your best foot forward without hiding the negative components. For example, if your department is struggling to establish effective processes, inform the candidate. Remember, they are trying to gauge whether or not the position is a good fit. Some may not want to work in a department that does not have defined processes; wouldn't you want to know this before you accepted the position?

Shadowing is a perfect time to share information that the candidate would not typically obtain during the formal interview:

- Departmental dress code
- Vacation schedules
- Orientation process
- Work environment
- Leadership style

## Share the good news!



- 2013 — University of Virginia Health System had 189 physicians selected to the 2013 Best Doctors in America® List.
- UVA developed Virginia's first Chest Pain Center that has helped set national standards for treating heart emergencies.
- In 2011, the Medical Center made Time's 50 Best Innovations list by being the first to use a non-invasive, surgery-focused ultrasound.

Do not wait for the candidate to ask; determine as a department what might be helpful information. You may wish to provide a brief overview of the organization, including information that will help applicants remember the UVA Medical Center. Focus on what is unique about our organization and what UVAMC provides employees:

- Organizational goals
- Uteam meetings
- Tuition assistance program
- UVA Care Connection
- Employee discount programs
- Community outreach

### STEP 3: Coordinate Logistics

Provide adequate notice so that employees are prepared and can plan accordingly. Schedule shadowing for a time that best reflects an average day on the job. You don't want the candidate to observe the position at the slowest or busiest time of day. Emphasize that this is an average day and discuss challenges when volumes fluctuate. For example, on a slow day people might work on special projects whereas at busy times wage staff may have to provide coverage.

Prior to the day, review the schedule to ensure adequate coverage. Consider adding an extra person to the schedule to ensure that employees being shadowed can devote their full attention to the candidate.

Every candidate who interviews must sign the [shadowing agreement](#). Click [here](#) for a form to document your observations. Completed forms should be retained within departmental files.

### STEP 4: Review the Evaluation

Note questions the candidate asks; they will give you insight into what is important to him/her and help to gauge their continued interest. If the team is unable to answer any of the questions, be sure to follow up via email or phone.

Schedule a debrief immediately following the shadowing experience. Ask the team to share their opinions regarding the candidate's ability to fit into the existing culture. Regardless of their opinions, encourage them to share specific examples as to why they feel the way they do.

