

SAMPLE CASE FROM *ON YOUR OWN AS A YOUNG ADULT: SELF-ADVOCACY CASE STUDIES*

Derek Gets an Informational Interview

Derek wants to work in the video field. He is 17 years old and although he thinks video will be a life long career he knows very little about the profession. Derek is completing high school next June. He has done well in a biology class and in a history class and not so well in many other subjects.

Derek's father was in the military and Derek has lived in five different countries and six different cities in the United States. When Derek was 15 he was sick for six months. His parents thought he might never recover. As a result of moving so often and not being good in sports Derek has had only a few friends in his life.

Derek has heard that many teenagers have a tough time getting started after they graduate from high school. Often they cannot find work or a suitable place to live. Many graduates from high school don't seem to ever get a job they really want. Derek has decided that he wants to have a better life. He wants to have a family someday and he wants to work at something he will enjoy as well as make a decent living. Derek thinks he would like to have a career in video. He heard that he should try to find out about what he needs to do to get into the video profession so he can be prepared after he completes college.

Derek has decided to do some informational interviews. These are interviews with experienced professionals in a career field in which you are interested. The purpose of these interviews is to find out more about the field and to learn how people prepare to get jobs and begin a career in the field.

It is Tuesday 7:30 A.M. Derek is meeting with Sharon Simms, producer of institutional training videos. These are videos produced for companies that need to train their employees in some type of new activity.

Derek: "Thank you for meeting with me. I understand that you started in this business as a production assistant intern and now you are producing your own shows. Your experience of starting at the bottom and then getting your own shows would be very helpful for me. I want to work in video."

Sharon: "Have you thought about what area you would be interested in?"

Derek: "I think I would like camera work but I want to find out more about the entire field. Like, what's the best way to learn about the field and how do I get hired?"

Sharon: "Why do you want to work in video?"

Derek: "Because it looks like fun. You're not working at a desk. And everybody watches what you produce."

Sharon: "Tell me a little about yourself."

Derek: "I will graduate high school this June. I did very well in my biology class and in a few history classes. I enjoy reading and spend a good deal of time reading adventure novels and watching all types of programs on television.

I think I'm very quick at learning how to do physical and technical things if I watch someone else do it. I've lived in many different places because my father was in the military. Although this experience was tough I learned how to adapt to many different situations and how to deal with a lot of very different people."

Sharon: "It sounds like you have some experiences that would be very useful. The media field is very stressful and you have to deal with lots of different people. Learning from watching is very important."

Sharon: "You want to be a cameraperson. So do a lot of other people, so there is a lot of competition. You should also think of many of the jobs that people don't always think

about. Lighting, gaffing, sound, production manager, directing, assistant producing, location scouting, researching, props, picture editing, sound editing, sound effects, music, and on and on.”

Derek: “How do I learn about what all these jobs are?”

Sharon: “If you really want to work in this field you can. It would be helpful to prepare in several ways. You’re just at the right age to begin interning. Try to get an internship with a production company. The bigger companies usually like you to be in college before they give you an internship. But some smaller companies will take high school students.”

Derek: “How do I get an internship?”

Sharon: “It’s hard. Everyone wants them. You need to keep calling and going to as many production companies as possible. Offer your services. Tell them what you are good at. Tell them you’re definitely going into the video field and you want experience and are willing to do any work to get it. Get to know as many people in the business as you can and keep pestering them, nicely of course, for an internship. You’ll get one.”

Derek: “I hope so.”

Derek: “What about school? Should I go to one of those video trade schools?”

Sharon: “Maybe. But I recommend college. Look, you should talk to other people too not just me. Get their advice. It will be different. And then you’ll have to decide what advice suits you. But I’m a big believer in college. You won’t get far without a college education. You got to know something about what you are videoing and a college education really helps. Take classes in all subjects, not just communications.”

Derek: “This has been very helpful. Are there any books I should read?”

Sharon: “Absolutely. Read lots of novels. Videos are stories and you need to get as much experience with different ways to tell stories. Watch films. Not just new ones but old ones. Any film. Watch them again and again to see if you understand how they are made. Read some books about film and video. I’ll give you a list.”

Derek: “Can you give me any suggestions of who I might go to for an internship?”

Sharon: “Try Meg Halpern at HYT, they are a small video producer of travel videos. Also try Harold Jackson at National Express. They have their own video unit and might be interested in your experiences.”

Derek: “May I mention that you suggested I call?”

Sharon: “Certainly.”

Derek: “Thank you so much. May I call you in a few months and let you know how I am doing?”

Sharon: “I would like that. Sorry I have to go now but my shoot begins at 8:00AM”

Derek: “I know this is a lot to ask, but could I watch today or at some other time?”

Sharon: “You’re here. Why don’t you watch this morning? I won’t be able to talk with you. I’ll be too busy, but you are welcome to stay.”

Derek: “Thanks, I really appreciate it!”

Questions

1. List the important facts that relate to the main issue of the case.
 - a. List Derek’s long and short-term goals.
 - b. Identify Sharon’s needs.
 - c. Describe Derek’s strengths.
 - d. Identify Derek’s allies or supporters.
 - e. Missing information that would be helpful in planning strategies.
2. Describe the main challenge for Derek in reaching his long-term goal.
3. Develop a general plan to resolve the challenge you described above and move toward Derek’s long term goal