

Hungry For a Different Path: Dietitians & The Food Industry

THE EVOLUTION OF THE DIETITIAN

Employment of registered dietitians (RDs) and nutritionists is projected to grow 11% from 2020 to 2030.¹ As you think about the opportunities available to dietitians, general perception might be that they primarily work in hospitals, but in 2020, only about half of dietitians worked in a clinical setting (hospital, outpatient, long-term care facilities).² Additionally, 17% of internships are not part of a healthcare or educational system³, suggesting other options are available for dietitians to explore.

DIETITIANS & THE FOOD INDUSTRY

Did you know some RDs work directly with the food industry? Some RDs might view the industry as a source of the trusted brands they grew up with⁴, while others may focus on the opportunity the industry provides, looking to bring about change in areas like sustainability and resource efficiency⁵. There are a variety of opportunities for RDs to have an impact within the food industry.



R&D/FOOD SCIENCE

The RDs who have a hands-on interaction with food science and research and development. They are often on the front lines of product development and innovation, and work with their broader teams to set company's nutrition guidelines for foods and beverages.



RESEARCH

The RDs who performs research on behalf of a brand or company, or compiles literature into a compendium or white paper. This information can be used in a variety of ways, including to support new health claims, public policy or nutrition guidelines.



COMMUNICATIONS

The RDs who sets the nutrition communications strategy for a company or brand. There are roles both within food companies and as an agency partner/consultant. In this role, RDs help connect people to the brand, which includes working with fellow RDs.



NICHE/SPECIALTY

The RDs with an area of specialty who consults with brands on specific formulations or shares the benefits of particular foods or dietary supplements with other RDs and people within these groups (e.g., pediatrics, women's health, sports).



MEDIA

The RD is a go-to source for media on the latest nutrition research, new products, trending nutrition stories and topics. These RDs play a significant role in educating the public and helping their readers and viewers make better, more informed choices.



CULINARY

The RDs who create innovative and delicious new recipes for people to get more enjoyment out of their favorite foods. These RDs help people put it all into practice. They often provide cooking techniques or tips, kitchen hacks, and recipe inspiration, and can help provide training for fellow RDs who teach cooking classes or do culinary demos.



INFLUENCERS

The RDs who provides education and content for followers through their personal platform. Often through social media, these RDs can give an inside look at specific foods and beverages, highlighting nutritional benefits or how to enjoy them in everyday life.



CONSUMER RELATIONS

These RDs ensure a brand or food company is prepared to answer consumer questions about its products' nutrition attributes and label claims. RDs who work in consumer relations may work directly with consumers by fielding phone calls, emails and social media communications or educate their fellow consumer reps on the nutrition attributes and label claims of new products.

GETTING OFF TO A GOOD START

Whether you're looking to land an internship, your first job or explore a new niche within your industry, here are tips to being your most prepared.

1 Get experience.

It can feel like a catch-22 hearing that you need experience to get a job. But remember that holding down a job is a skill in and of itself. Industry-specific experience isn't the only way to go. You can demonstrate work ethic and gain core skills in many types of jobs. Know that experience of any kind can help you stand out, even a job you held as a teenager.

2 Communication is key.

Professional, confident and clear communication is one of the most important skills a young professional can have. The new landscape of the workplace means proficiency in many formats is required – face-to-face, over the phone, video conferencing, memos and email all have their place.

3 Be solutions-oriented.

The ability to focus on solutions, not just problems, is another key trait. Dietitians talk to clients about this all the time, reminding people to focus on foods they can enjoy, not on foods to avoid. Your manager wants that same mindset from you at work. Approaching work problems in the same way you'd approach getting to know a client can help ensure you fully understand the problem/barriers so you can bring the right solution.

NOTEWORTHY ADVICE

Here at Quaker, and its parent company PepsiCo, we're proud we've had dietitians within our ranks for decades. Here's some of their advice for interns and new RDNs.

"Learn from the bottom up. **TAKE ADVANTAGE OF EVERY OPPORTUNITY** you can, even if it doesn't fall under your role and responsibilities. Every role in an organization is important and understanding how they all work together makes you a greater asset to the company."

"**ASK QUESTIONS**, come prepared to engage in meetings and have a point of view. No matter how many people are in the room, or how "junior" you may be, you can still contribute. Don't miss out on your opportunity to be part of things."

"If there is someone with a job that sounds interesting to you, **REACH OUT** to them to learn more about how they got there and what advice they have for you."

"**OWN YOUR CALENDAR**. As much as you can, block off time for uninterrupted work and deep thinking. If you feel like you've lost [control of it], speak up. Ask for what you need so that you can do your best work."

KEEP LEARNING

Interested in learning more about the roles RDNs can play in the food industry? Check out the "Career PEP Talk: A Panel Discussion with PepsiCo Nutrition Experts" [here!](#)

"**LEARN TO GET BACK ON TRACK QUICKLY**. There are many distractions during the workday, and you must pivot often. This isn't always easy, but it will save your sanity."

References

1. Dietitians and Nutritionists: Occupational Outlook Handbook: U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics (bls.gov)
2. Dietitians and Nutritionists: Occupational Outlook Handbook: U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics (bls.gov)
3. Dietetic Internship Demographics and Statistics [2022]: Number Of Dietetic Internships In The US (zippia.com)
4. Gen Z in the workplace: Everything you need to know (firstup.io)
5. Gen Z is skeptical about American food and natural products industry | New Hope Network