

JOB SEARCH BASICS

Critical factors are those necessary for the right person/job fit. This fit will satisfy your career interests, use your skills and experience, focus on strengths, achievements, and deal with job market realities.

- First step to a successful search is to complete a self-assessment so you are clear on your skills, value systems, needs and goals.
- Priority based networking skills are responsible for finding the best jobs. Use all your resources and everyone you know who knows someone.
- Everyone has at least 250 contacts. A good job is only three to four people away.
- Use all the resources on the Internet; you can post your resume and find career listings.
- Never rely solely on classified ads and the Internet. You are responsible for creating your own opportunity and for your own career management.
- Find a verb action list to cover all of your skill areas. Create achievement statements and use key industry words.
- Set aside a workspace for your search where all information is kept up-to-date and organized.
- Follow-ups are critical. Use the fax and send new industry research as an alternative to constant telephoning. Be creative, but not a pest.
- Close the sale by asking for the job.
- Reference lists should include names, titles, addresses, and phone numbers. Also include your relationship to this person and the information they can provide.
- After you have supplied an interviewer with your references, call and tell them the type of position for which you interviewed.
- Attitude and persistence make a difference. If you are feeling stalled or not getting anywhere, get advice from a professional career counselor.



INTERVIEWING

Plan Ahead – First Impressions Count

Interviews often make decisions about an applicant during the first few minutes and spend the interviewing time justifying that decision. Be ready to take advantage of that small amount of time to make the right impression. The following tips will assist you in creating a positive image of credibility and likeability. Personal chemistry is an important as job qualifications.

- **Arrive Early** with extra resumes, research about the company, questions you want to ask, contact numbers of references, and work samples.
- **Be friendly to the receptionist** and others you meet. Show appreciation for any help or information given. Observe the work areas and how employees relate to one another, to customers or vendors. These are clues to the company culture.

- **Review your notes** to instill confidence in the expert on your skills and experience – YOU!
- **Greet the interviewer with a firm handshake and a smile.** Repeat his or her name along with your appreciation for the opportunity to interview.

Applications

Complete the entire application, even if the information duplicates the resume. The form often is an indication of how well you follow instructions. The consistency of information provided may be necessary for the final hiring records.

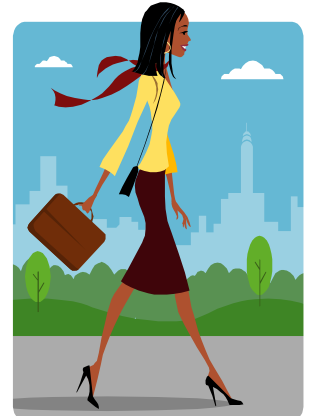
- **Read through the application first.** Determine what they are asking. Follow all directions explicitly. If the application states “print” do so.
- **Never leave blanks or say “see resume.”** Be specific; use notes and resume to be accurate.
- **Read disclaimers at the end of the application.** They refer to references, employment requirements and other information. Sign the application and be prepared to follow the rules.
- **Inconsistent or incomplete information can result in dismissal after hire.**

Professional Dressing

If in doubt, visit the location to see how current employees dress. A telephone call requesting information about dress codes WILL WORK FOR YOU. Avoid “casual Friday looks.” Clothing, hairstyles and accessories must fit the company image and the job. Conservatism is always in good taste. Your image is a sign of your credibility, and they expect you at your very best.

For Women:

- Wear a suit, skirt and tailored jacket, dress with sleeves, or dress with jacket in conservative style, color and fabric. Be feminine, but business-like. Avoid very short skirts. *Clothing must be appropriate to the position you are seeking and the season of the year. The following are general rules:*
 - Keep makeup and accessories to a minimum. Less is more when it comes to jewelry; avoid jangly bracelets and more than one pair of small earrings. Avoid fragrances – some people have allergies.
 - Hair should be worn in a conservative style; nails manicured, short to mid-length, with clear coat or light color polish.
 - Shoes should be suitable in color and style to your clothing, polished and repaired. Consider lower heeled shoes; sometimes and extend tour of the facility is part of the interview.
 - Hosiery is a must in colors that complement your outfit. Never wear hose darker than your shoes. Carry an extra pair in case of emergency.
 - Use a purse or a briefcase. Portfolios of your work are acceptable. Either should be of good quality and purses should match outfit. You need a hand free to greet people, open doors, etc.



For Men:

Consider the position you are applying for, the time of the year, styles, and the rules in general:

- Wear a suit, preferably in blue or grey, in a conservative style (pinstripe pattern is allowable). Blazers, slacks and a shirt with a collar but without a tie are acceptable in a few instances. Consider the image you want to project. Make certain the outfit is tailored to your body weight, height, and is freshly pressed.
- Shirts should be a solid color; ties should also be conservative (small pattern or stripe to coordinate with the suit and shirt).
- Keep accessories to a minimum. Eliminate earrings, flashy jewelry or strong after-shave. Some scents are unpleasant to others' tastes or allergies.
- Wear hair in a conservative style. Facial hair can be a turn-off.
- Wear shoes with a dress style suitable in color and style to your suit (no sport or evening styles), polished and repaired.
- If you do not have a quality leather briefcase, consider one of canvas or micro fiber.



INFORMATIONAL INTERVIEWS

Networking and Developing Contacts

Best way to research a company or industry and to make a positive first impression:

- Attempt to get a referral from someone who knows someone in the company or the hiring manager. Research the name of the hiring manager to ask questions about the company. This can be done by telephone calls or found on Web pages. Dispel expectations that you are seeking a job. You are seeking information, resources and referrals. Be on your toes; it is still a first impression.
- Organize questions to take a minimum amount of time. If time runs out, request another appointment or the name of another contact for additional information.
- Send a follow-up letter. Thank them for their time and information. Ask for additional referrals or leads that may be available. Find out if you can leave your resume with someone in the company.
- Keep your contacts informed of your process.

Sample Networking Questions

- What skills or training are needed for this work?
- Are there special qualities or attributes that enhance entry-level job seekers?
- What are the career paths or advancement opportunities?
- What advice do you generally give someone interested in this company?
- How do my skills and experience fit into this industry?

TYPES OF INTERVIEWS

Interviewers are not always trained and may not always ask the right questions. Your answers should help them focus on your accomplishments, skills, qualifications and the research you conducted. Pay attention to the interviewer's formal or informal interviewing style. Reading books about interviewing can be helpful. When appropriate, clarify your answers with a probing question of your own.

When You Know the Interviewer

Do not assume you have the job. The interviewer must hire the best person for the job. Their reputation is on the line. Stay on task; cover your experience and skills.

When It Is Your Turn to Ask Questions

Your questions indicate that you have researched and that you understand the employer's needs. This is a very important part of the interview.



COMPANY QUESTIONS

1. What are the plans of the company for the future?
2. How would someone with my background fit into the plan?
3. Is there a career path?
4. How would you describe the company culture?
5. What are some of the challenges and priorities of the company?

JOB QUESTIONS

1. Is this a new or replacement job?
2. Is there a formal training program?
3. How would the responsibilities of this position fit into the overall goal of the company?
4. To whom does this position report?
5. What qualifications does your ideal candidate need? (This is your opportunity to match your experience and skills to their needs.)

FOLLOW-UP

Follow-up is critical. It is an opportunity to build upon your first impression. Many companies wait for your follow-up, and eliminate anyone who fails to do so.

During the Interview

Collect business cards; give them your card. If you are not employed, have a generic card printed with your contact information. Take notes related to job duties and major points discussed.

After the Interview

Critique your performance immediately after the interview. Make additional notes on important points and answers requiring strengthened explanations. Write the interviewer within the first twenty-four hours. You may fax or email if appropriate, but also mail a hard copy on quality paper.

Follow-Up Letter

One type page expressing appreciation for their time and restating your interest in the job with a brief recap of how your qualifications meet the needs of the company. Close with another statement of your strengths, your belief that you can perform the job successfully and a statement that you will call at a specific time to follow-up on the process. Asking for the job is not only appropriate, it is a must.

Follow-Up Fax, E-Mail or Telephone Call

- Must be done within 24 hours of the interview, but others may follow at appropriate intervals to determine progress.
- Phone calls must be planned and organized just like a letter or an interview. Write a script and keep it short and business-like.
- When you have sent a follow-up and have not heard back for a week or two, a follow-up fax or brief note may generate some interest or an answer about whether you are still a candidate.
- When you have received another job offer, and a company you have not heard from is your number one choice, a call will let them know of another pending offer.
- If something affecting your application has changed, and you want to make the company aware, a telephone call or brief note should be sent.



MAKING THE DECISION

- List your priorities related to responsibilities, salary, location, working conditions, benefits, and how the position fits into your career goals. Match the offer with your list. Examine advantages and disadvantages separately. You may want to assign a numerical ranking system to make your decision easier.
- If you have had a firm offer, it is OK to contact other pending companies to find out their time frames for action.
- Contact all the people who have helped you in your search. Tell them about your new job and thank them for their help.

COMPENSATION ISSUES

Salary Questions

Never ask about salary. The company will discuss salary with you when appropriate. Usually reserved for the second interview or when there is a firm offer. You are in a better position to negotiate. **Be realistic and flexible. Know their salary budgets and the market ranges.** Companies want people who are interested in doing a good job for the company. When the offer is made, the following will help you negotiate a good compensation package:

1. Is there a sign-on bonus or commission in addition to the salary?
2. How often are reviews?
3. Is the salary at or above what others are getting for the same or similar jobs and experience?



Benefits Questions

Company benefits are often worth from 25% to 50% or more of the cash salary offered and are important to consider:

1. When am I eligible for each plan?
2. Do I have a choice of the benefits available?

Negotiations

Everything can be negotiated after you have received an offer. Know the market and request their consideration in terms of salary, benefits and perks. Salaries may stay consistent, but sign-on bonuses, temporary housing, tuition reimbursement, personal time off, etc. can be added to a package. Never demand. It will show an unpleasant side of your personality that could rescind an offer.

PRACTICE EVERYTHING

Visualize and rehearse the entire interview. Writing your answers in a practice session before you verbalize them is a powerful technique to make you more comfortable and effective.

- Determine marketable skills and be clear about your achievements.
- Research the company and the industry.
- Make a trial trip getting to the interview, if possible, to anticipate traffic or parking problems. If you are taking public transportation, allow time for delays.
- Be prepared for answering questions. Have short, summary type answers for questions that begin with words like “Summarize for me ...” or “Give me a brief recap of ...” as well as specific details to add to questions like “Give me an example of a problem you’ve had and how you handled it.” Or, “Tell me some specific details about ...” Be concise, but not so brief that important information is omitted.

- Rehearse with others. Ask a mentor, members of your network, friend or family to ask you questions and actually go through several interviews. The more you tell your story, the more relaxed and adaptable you are. A tape or video recorder can give you valuable feedback.
- Facts about the company. Find information about the company and decide how you will use it in the interview. Include how your achievements fit the company objectives.
- Questions you will ask. Asking questions shows your interest. The best questions are about the job, the company, expectations and other related areas. Sample questions can be found within this document.

What to take to the interview: extra copies of resumes, references, letters of recommendations, portfolios or work samples.

NON-VERBAL LANGUAGE

- Handshake: Always offer your hand; use firm, but not crushing pressure.
- Eye contact: Be natural as with any conversation. Avoiding contact is a sign of deception, disinterest, or lack of confidence.
- Sitting: If a place to sit is not indicated, choose the chair closest to the interviewer, sit relaxed, but do not slouch. Leaning slightly forward shows interest, but never lean on the desk.
- Gestures: Use hands naturally to emphasize a point. Do not cover your mouth, hold your head or twist your hands together.

Cocktails or Meals

They may be held to see how you handle a social situation. If there is a spill or other problem stay calm and on track.

- Order a non-alcoholic drink. You need to be in control.
- Order a meal in the middle price range or follow the lead of the interviewer. Order something easy to cut, chew and swallow. You will be doing a lot of talking and may not even have time to eat.
- Do not smoke.



TYPES OF INTERVIEWS

Screening

Conducted by the Human Resource department or an outside firm to eliminate persons who do not meet the basic requirements of the company. They will usually compare your qualifications against a job description or the job requirements.

- Treat screeners as if they were making the final decision – they are deciding if you will go to the next step.
- Use information from this interview to your advantage.
- Your main purpose is to make a good impression.

One-On-One

Most often used.

- Informal: Interviewer has a general idea of what will be asked, but after the first question, the interview follows the trend of a conversation rather than any pre-set pattern or list of questions.
- Structured: Questions will be written out, based on the job requirements, and will be asked of every applicant. This is often a longer interview, since all questions must be asked of all candidates and then compared.
- Unstructured: Can be interpreted as a type of stress interview if you are not prepared. After one or two questions, the interviewer may sit back and wait for you to make the next move. Ask questions about the job or the company and after an answer, respond with how your strengths and interests match.
- Sequential: Interviewing with several people, one at a time. Handle this as though each one was the only one, even if it means many things will be repeated.

Group

You may meet with more than one person at a time.

- Teamwork is important to the company. They want to see how effective you are as a part of a group.
- Take it one question at a time. Focus intently on the questioner.
- Answer the person who asked the question. Follow-up with a statement or summary to include the group. When you look around, see if anyone seems to need further clarification.
- Do not assume the questioner is the decision-maker. Try to figure out the power structure within the group, but do not let it distract you.
- Make eye contact with each member of the group.



Behavioral

- You will be called on to act as you would in a real-life situation. An example would be a sales presentation. If you have a choice of selling anything in the room, choose yourself.
- You will be asked questions that describe how you would do things under certain circumstances or how you have done things in the past.

Telephone

Designed to screen out less qualified applicants. Initial screening can also be done by faxes and e-mails.

- Expect a call outside of normal business hours.
- Eliminate background noises.
- Have all information by the phone.
- Stand while you speak. Your voice will sound stronger and more confident.

Stress

Conducted either to see how you handle pressure; or, may be an untrained interviewer on a power trip. Interviewer stares, lets long silences go by, fires questions, interrupts answers, uses sarcasm, etc.

When you recognize this:

- Take a deep breath and keep calm.
- Answer as much as possible before the next interruption.
- Do not let silence rattle you.
- Do not be defensive or argumentative.

TESTING

Companies often use pre-employment testing tools.

- **Drugs/Alcohol.** Includes questionnaires and blood, urine or hair analysis testing. If you are turned down because of a positive drug test, ask if a validation test was done. If you are taking prescription or over-the-counter medication, indicate it prior to the test. It often will point to positive results. Make certain that the employer is consistent in testing procedures.
- **Psychological.** Includes personality and career interest tests. Do not try to outwit the test. Be honest and truthful. Some questions may be culturally biased. If you find many of these questions, discuss them openly with the recruiter. You may inquire if this test is constructed to reflect job success in the position you are seeking.
- **Skills.** Includes keyboard, mathematics and dexterity tests.
- **Honest Reliability/Dependability.** Includes questionnaires and background checks.
- **Assessment Centers.** Various exercises simulate day-to-day (usually management) activities, including teamwork, conflict management, decision making and writing skills.
- **“In” Basket.** Type of skills test. Tip: go through the entire basket first and set priorities. You may find a later direction that cancels a prior one.

