

Empowering Job Seekers -- Third Tuesday Curriculum



Learn how to Stand Out in the Crowd!
Branding, Positioning, Resumes, Cover Letters, Interviewing and More



Content: Third Tuesday of Month Curriculum:

God in Your Job Search - Pages 3 & 4

Personal Branding Really Is The Key to Finding a New Job - Pages 5, 6 & 7.

10 Daily Habits to Boost Your Hire-ability - Pages 8, 9 & 10

10 Good Ways to “Tell Me about Yourself” - Page 11

Painting a Verbal Picture - Pages 12 & 13

References -- Page 14

Body Language Speaks Volumes on a Job Interview - Pages 15 - 20

Covering the Cover Letter -- Pages 21 - 24

Cover Letter Sample - Page 25

Dumbing Down your Resume is Not a Smart Idea - Pages 26 & 27

In Job Hunting, Honesty is Still the Best Policy - Pages 28 -30

The 24-Step Modern Resume - Pages 31 & 32

Six Things to Remove from Your Resume - Page 33

Resume Objective Statements to Catch a Managers’ Eyes - Pages 34 & 35

How Many \$ and % Signs are in Your Resume? - Page 36

‘Why Did You Leave?’ How to Address Past Employment - Page 37 & 38

Writing a Resume - Pages 39-43

Functional Resume Sample - Page 44

Chronological Resume Sample - Page 45

Student / Recent Graduate Resume Sample -Page 46

The New Hybrid Resume - Pages 46 & 48

How to Create a Scannable Version of Your Resume - Page 49

Is this an Interview or Interrogation? - Page 50 - 52

Common Job Interview Questions - Pages 53 - 55

Questions for You to Ask at the Interview - Pages 56 & 57

How NOT to Follow Up After a Job Interview - Pages 58 & 59

Tips for Successful Salary Negotiations - Pages 60 & 61

The Thank You Letter - Page 62

Summary and Contacts - Page 63



God in your Job Search

How you approach your job search has a direct effect on your success in landing a satisfactory position. It's possible to eliminate many possible rejections by doing your homework thoroughly before ever sending out a résumé. Do your homework! Do not apply to every possible opening for which you might remotely qualify. Research. Ask questions. Read. Find out what companies for which you would love to work and target them! Prepare for the interview by learning as much as possible about the position and company BEFORE going to the interview.

If you really feel it's not for you, cancel the interview! It's okay. By developing a focus that encompasses your goals and is aimed toward companies' needs, you will significantly improve the number of offers you receive and shorten your job search. Proverbs 14:8 says "The wisdom of the prudent is to give thought to their ways." In other words, have a plan.

Realize that not every interview will be successful. There are many reasons for that—the interviewer is looking for a specific personality type and you, the job seeker, don't quite match that profile; there is someone in competition that is more qualified; the job is already filled from within and they are just carrying out procedures to cover themselves (this happens a lot); the interviewer doesn't like your cologne or has a major case of allergies that day. There are many reasons for not getting an offer or second interview, many of which are out of your control.

However, there are many more that are in your control, primary of which is your knowledge and ability to do the job. Arm yourself with information and be prepared to address the needs of the company. Knowledge will always be your best weapon in the job search. Develop it and use it fully. Remember the words of King Solomon in Ecclesiastes 7:12 "Wisdom is a shelter as money is a shelter, but the advantage of knowledge is this: that wisdom preserves the life of its possessor." Wisdom will get you a lot further than assets and mass mailings of résumés.

Keep track. Track the number of résumés you send, the number of calls you receive, and the number of interviews you receive. If you are not receiving calls, review your résumé—it may need a tune up. If you are getting screening calls, but no interviews, you may need to practice your telephone interviewing skills. If you are receiving interviews, but no second interviews or offers, then maybe you need to brush up on your interviewing skills or take more time to prepare for the meeting.

Do not take it personally. This is probably the toughest one. Our careers are very much part of our lives and we are very sensitive about what people think of us as workers. Remember that an interviewer is just taking an instant snapshot of you, not looking at an oil portrait. A "no" doesn't mean they think you are a bad person! It's not a character judgment. It's a judgment based on 30 minutes of face-to-face meeting under extreme pressure.

Don't give up. Remember the salesman. If he gives up, he's not going to get to that eventual "yes". Aren't you glad Jesus didn't give up?!

Don't lose heart. Find a job search coach, whether it's a professional, a good friend, or your pastor, who can give you encouragement when you need it the most. The average job search lasts 12 weeks with that time extending proportionately to rise in salaries. The higher the salary, the longer the hunt (usually). See James 1:12 "Blessed is the man who perseveres under trial, because when he has stood the test, he will receive the crown of life, that God has promised to those who love him."

Pray regularly for God's will. He has promised that He will meet your needs. Luke 12:29 says "And do not set your heart on what you will eat or drink; do not worry about it. For the pagan world runs after all such things, and your Father knows that you need them. But seek his kingdom, and these things will be given to you as well." Pray for what God wants you to do with your skills and talents.

Learning to wait patiently on the Lord's will is something we all struggle with. What may seem like rejection to you might simply be something that is not in God's plan for your life. We live in a microwave society-we want it NOW. If NOW isn't in God's plan, we feel He's not listening to our prayers or He doesn't care about our situation. That is so untrue! God loves all his children and knows your troubles and worries. Give them to Him to carry. Trust Him with your career. You will be greatly rewarded for putting your job search on His schedule."

Faith is a good thing. If you didn't get a particular job, God has good reasons why you shouldn't have been there. Yes, He is working off of a master plan, so don't worry. Unfortunately, you don't get a copy. Try not to freak out over this. Things don't happen on YOUR schedule - they're being planned with a higher agenda in mind.



Personal Branding Really Is The Key to Finding a New Job.

If you're tired of hearing about personal branding, the following anecdote will convince you that it's not a passing fad.

Just when I was getting tired of reading about personal branding, I had a conversation with a hiring manager that reminded me why personal branding and marketing through social networking websites is so important if you're looking for a new job.

A strong personal brand enables hiring managers who have jobs to fill—jobs that you may not know about—to find you. Marketing yourself allows you to tap into the "hidden job market" and make yourself visible to organizations that may need your expertise. Personal branding truly helps you stand out.

Erik Huddleston, the CTO of Inovis, a B2B data exchange, is the hiring manager I interviewed this morning. He explained how he uses social networking websites to recruit people for jobs, and his explanation illustrates the role that personal branding and social networking play in the job search and hiring process.

Huddleston says that when he has a position to fill, he proceeds directly to LinkedIn to identify professionals in key staff members' networks who may be right for the job. He does the same on Facebook. If the people Huddleston identifies are also on Twitter, he checks out their Twitter streams, too.

"Looking at their background, their skill sets and what they're talking about on their Twitter feeds, I can get a pretty good feel for people who sound like they'd work well," he says.

Huddleston isn't the only hiring manager using the "LinkedIn first" approach. David Perry, the author of *Guerilla Marketing for Job Hunters*, says many other recruiters and hiring managers use LinkedIn to pre-screen candidates

If you have a strong LinkedIn profile that communicates your brand, expertise, accomplishments and unique value, you increase your chances of getting contacted about jobs that you don't even know exist because you stand out to hiring managers. By contrast, if you're not on LinkedIn or your profile is weak or out-dated, you're probably getting passed up for consideration by hiring managers and recruiters.

To be successful in business today, you need to have a distinct personal brand so that you can stand out from the crowd. Personal branding involves articulating a simple, clear statement of who you are, doing it consistently, and delivering on it again and again, so that when people think of, say, business turnarounds, they think of you. Or when people think of you, they think of a leader who gets companies back on track. Your brand should represent something different, relevant and valuable.

Personal branding is just as important to business and technology professionals as it is to politicians, especially in a down economy. Whether you're a recent victim of a layoff or you're employed but worried about job loss, personal branding can make all the difference in your future job security and career success. By making yourself known for something special—whether it be a unique skill, attitude or problem-solving approach—you can make a stronger impression on prospective employers and/or demonstrate to your existing employer that you're indispensable.

Most of us need to devote attention to our personal brands. The following questions will help you determine what aspects of personal branding you need to focus your attention on:

- **Your message:** Can you explain your big idea clearly in a couple of sentences, so that people know what's different, relevant and special about you?
- **Your scope:** If people were to Google your name, would they discover high-quality information about you and your accomplishments?
- **Your market:** Can you clearly define your key target markets and the best way to market yourself to them?
- **Your appearance:** Do you have a visual identity that appeals to your target markets, is consistent with your personal brand and is different from others?
- **Your style:** Do your personality and your **leadership style** engage others?

If you answered No to any of the above questions, you have work to do.

Here are eight tips for creating a strong personal brand.

Stay focused. A brand maven once said to me, "There is no 'and' in brand." The maven's point: The more specifically you define who you are and what you do, the better chance you'll have of selling yourself. It's counter-intuitive because so many people think that if they define themselves broadly, they'll have more options. In fact, the opposite occurs. If you come across as a Jack or Jill of All Trades, you will confuse people. People will wonder how good you are at any one thing if you say you are good at so many.

Differentiate your brand. Being like everyone else will stunt your success. Ask yourself, "What's different, relevant and special about me?" Find the "white space"—a brand position that you can

own, that's not associated with anyone else. When communicating your uniqueness to others, use analogies, such as, "I'm a cross between X and Y," or "I'm X on steroids."

When others zig, you should zag. Develop your own game plan for success: your own career path, visibility strategy and credentials. For example, during the presidential campaign, the politicians Obama competed against took a traditional fundraising approach with dinners and letter appeals. They zigged while Obama zagged. He built the largest campaign war chest ever by using the internet and encouraging small donations from individual contributors.

Use words wisely. One of the hottest ideas in business today is using a story to bring a company mission, project or accomplishment to life. Stories have been powerful for centuries because they are a memorable way to convey complex ideas. Work on your communication skills so that you are known for your adroit business stories and interesting presentations that people remember long after the PowerPoint ends. Also, master the elevator speech, a thirty-second personal "commercial" you can use when networking and when pitching yourself for new jobs or stretch assignments with your existing employer.

Make a visual statement. Like it or not, you are a package, just like a product on a shelf. Spend time thinking about how to make your image more powerful and distinct, whether it's by working on your posture or by updating your clothes. Women may have an advantage over men here, as they have many more "imaging tools" to work with, including their hairstyles, makeup, clothes, shoes and accessories. Of course, men can distinguish themselves with tailored clothes and shoes, too. Men also have the advantage of their physical size, which, studies show, gives them a more authoritative image.

Establish powerful alliances. The people, projects, causes and organizations with which you are affiliated help define who you are. For example, working for a Fortune 500 company or having graduated from an Ivy League school has caché, which helps your brand. If you don't have a Fortune 500 or Ivy League on your résumé, you can cultivate brand alliances. Get involved with alumni, community, professional, and/or philanthropic organizations that align with your personal brand and that will help you network.

Define and prioritize your target markets. Brand managers think in terms of markets. If you work in a company, your boss is your key target market, followed by other senior executives. Your secondary target market will likely include colleagues, clients, your network and your staff. All of these markets play an important role in your success; their perception of your abilities and accomplishments can make or break you.

In today's over-communicated society, the brands that stand for something relevant and that build positive perceptions are the ones that succeed. Follow these tips, and your brand will work wonders for you.



10 Daily Habits to Boost Your Hire-ability

A list of 12 tasks job seekers should do every day to get hired.

You must elevate your visibility. Anonymity in a job search is bankruptcy.

So, now that you've begun exerting your distinctiveness; expressing your vulnerability and acting smart; let's explore 12 daily practices to turn approachability into hire-ability!

1. Be radically honest.

Next time someone says, "Hey Karen – how's it going?" respond by cheerfully saying, "Still unemployed!" Three things will happen:

- He will appreciate your candor
- He will become one more person aware of your situation,
- He will become more likely to help you find a job.

How many people did you tell you were unemployed today?

2. Become the observed.

You attend chamber meetings, social or business networking events, job expos and trade shows to look for job openings, right? Well, let me ask you this: When was the last time you were the guest speaker?

Really? Never? Wow. Try this: E-mail every single chamber of commerce director in your city. Tell them you have an educational and entertaining presentation based on your expertise and career history that's perfect for their membership.

If they ask what company you're with, be radically honest and say, "Actually, I've been unemployed for six months, and I've had a lot of time to practice my presentation!" They'll love you; and so will the audience, if you do it right.

When was the last time you gave a public presentation?

3. Print business cards.

"But I don't have a job!" What's your point? All the more reason to have your own business card.

Make them yourself. Use Vista Print, pay the 50 bucks, and carry a dozen with you wherever you go.

Tips: Red stands out. Pictures aren't a bad idea. Remember: Everybody is somebody's somebody.

How many opportunities have you missed because you didn't have a card with you?

4. Change your e-mail.

If your e-mail address contains the letters "AOL" in it, change it. Come on. This is 2009. If you use it, people will prejudge your messages before they read them. People will unfortunately prejudge you before they meet you.

Please also make your email address professional, not something like hotsoccermom@gmail.com. If you must, you can keep on thinking you are the hot soccer mom of yesterday, and thus keep the email address dear to you, but in a job search pick one as close to your name as possible.

Seriously consider getting your own Web site.

What does your e-mail address say about your professionalism?

5. Don't be clever or cute.

Clever is using other people's conversations as springboards for your little jokes that nobody thinks are funny but your cat. It annoys people and won't encourage anyone to hire you.

Cute is sending a pink ribbon on your resume because you think it will get you noticed. It won't. You need to be smart and strategic. Like creating an online video resume. That's smart.

How much money is being cute costing you?

6. Get up one hour earlier.

Single best piece of advice I've ever been given. And just imagine – at the end of three months, you will have put in more than two extra weeks of time. Talk about outworking everyone!

What time did you get up today?

7. Internetworking gets jobs.

Whatever social media outlets you currently use – Facebook, LinkedIn, Twitter, whatever – commit to spending at least one hour every single day leveraging those tools.

Comment on blogs. Send messages. Connect people. Write killer posts. It doesn't matter which ones you use; it matters that you use them consistently.

How e-pproachable are you?

8. Set up your Web site.

Doesn't have to be fancy. Doesn't have to be expensive. Here's what you do:

- Register an easy- to-remember URL – hopefully, something simple like www.yourname.com,
- Get a professional picture taken of you that does not include that overdone pose with your fist on your chin,
- Publish pillars or bullet points of your personal philosophy by asking yourself the question, "If everybody did exactly what I said, what would the world look like?"
- Include all possible contact links, references, PDF s of resumes and the like.

All of this can be done for less than \$1,000.

Why don't you have a Web site yet?

9. Shift your attitude.

You may be unemployed. You may be broke. But the reality is, finding a job needs to become your job until you find a job.

Let me say that again: Finding a job needs to become your job until you find a job. That means structuring your days. That means having regular lunch meetings. That means treating it like any other job.

How much television did you watch yesterday?

10. Write it first.

Now that you're getting up an hour earlier, you can use (some) of that time for writing. My suggestion is to make a list of the Top 100 Interview Questions You Might be asked.

Every morning, pick three of them out of a hat. Then spend a few minutes writing out your answers. If this sounds challenging to you, good! That's why you need it.

Writing is the great clarifier. Writing is the basis of all wealth. Most importantly, writing makes you better at everything you do. Your interviews will be amazing if you've already thought out – and written out – your answers.

What did you write today?

Remember: When practiced with commitment and consistency, your approachability will be the ticket to your hire-ability.



10 Good Ways to “Tell Me about Yourself”

“If Hollywood made a movie about my life, it would be called...” and nine more memorable answers to this dreaded job interview question.

You know it’s coming.

It’s the most feared question during any job interview: Can you tell me about yourself?

Unfortunately, hiring managers and executive recruiters ask the question. Even if you’re not interviewing and you’re out networking in the community – you need to be ready to hear it and answer it. At all times.

The medium is the message. The interviewer cares less about your answer to this question and more about the confidence, enthusiasm and passion with which you answer it.

The speed of the response is the response. The biggest mistake you could make is pausing, stalling or fumbling at the onset of your answer, thus demonstrating a lack of self-awareness and self-esteem.

Next time you’re faced with the dreaded, “Tell me about yourself...” question, try these examples:

1. **“I can summarize who I am in three words.”** Grabs their attention immediately. Demonstrates your ability to be concise, creative and compelling.
2. **“The quotation I live my life by is...”** Proves that personal development is an essential part of your growth plan. Also shows your ability to motivate yourself.
3. **“My personal philosophy is...”** Companies hire athletes - not shortstops. This line indicates your position as a thinker, not just an employee.
4. **“People who know me best say that I’m...”** This response offers insight into your own level of self-awareness.
5. **“Well, I Googled myself this morning and here’s what I found...”** Tech-savvy, fun, cool people would say this. Unexpected and memorable.
6. **“My passion is...”** People don’t care what you do - people care who you are. And what you’re passionate about is who you are. Plus, passion unearths enthusiasm.
7. **“When I was seven years old, I always wanted to be...”** An answer like this shows that you’ve been preparing for this job your whole life, not just the night before.
8. **“If Hollywood made a movie about my life, it would be called...”** Engaging, interesting and entertaining.
9. **“Can I show you, instead of tell you?”** Then, pull something out of your pocket that represents who you are. Who could resist this answer? Who could forget this answer?
10. **“The compliment people give me most frequently is...”** Almost like a testimonial, this response also indicates self-awareness and openness to feedback.



Painting a Verbal Picture

Helping the interviewer to visualize your experiences provides a unique twist to our campaign interview strategy. The true art of storytelling will help to set you apart from the pack in a competitive situation and raise your credibility in a job interview. The three step verbal picture is the hub of your interview communication strategy.

The verbal picture is a simple story-telling routine that allows you to visually illustrate those capabilities that you possess which are seemingly relevant to the position desired.

There are three elements to a verbal picture:

1. Set the stage. Describe in some detail the situation in which you found yourself. Cite quantifiable details to add credibility.
 - a. Why you felt you had to act.
 - b. How critical was the situation?
 - c. How would the unresolved situation have affected the bottom line for your employer?
 - d. What was your role and why did you feel you had to act?
2. Action: Specifically, what did you do? Why did you do it? Explain your rationale if it is not obvious. What was your goal?
3. What happened? Quantify and detail the results. How long did it take? If you had not acted, what was the logical outcome?

Remember, the goal of this visualization is to demonstrate your skills at benefiting your employer. Be sure your story's bottom line reflects the employer's gain, whether it be in profits, savings, morale, etc.

As a true verbal artist, you will be able to watch your interviewer trying to visualize the scenario. At the end of the day he will have retained some portion of the message.

The proper length of the story should be between 60 and 90 seconds, neither much more, nor much less. Remember to use "I" instead of "WE". You are looking for the job, not your team. You can give a verbal picture to illustrate that you are a team player.

Ideally you should have at least a dozen stories ready to illustrate your best characteristics and abilities. In a typical interview you would use no more than three of them, but the more you have prepared the easier it is to work them into the interview. A form is included on the next page to help you prepare stories for your verbal pictures. Make as many copies as you need.

Painting a Verbal Picture Exercise Sheet

Demonstrate specific characteristics through short stories:

CHARACTERISTIC: _____

1. Briefly, what was the setting, and the challenge or opportunity for improvement?
What was your responsibility within the setting?

2. What actions did you take? (Use "I" not "We.")

3. What was the outcome? (Quantify, or project Quantification)

4. Additional Characteristics used/demonstrated by this story:



References

References can have a significant impact on the final hiring decision. Be ready at a moment's notice to provide potential employers with at least three solid references.

Approach only your natural contacts, the people who would unquestionably offer a glowing report about you. You want people who know you well professionally and can relay information about your proficiency, skills, attitudes, and behaviors.

Consider mentors, bosses, or co-workers in positions of authority. Also look at professors, coaches, or counselors. Steer away from family, friends or pastors, those who may be unaware of your work habits.

Ask early and carefully. Ask for references before you leave your current job. Say something like, "If I need a reference, would you feel comfortable offering a positive recommendation?" If there is any hesitation, avoid using that person. If he or she is a solid mentor, talk about the type of position you are seeking, your hopes, and your goals. Asking for advice educates and engages your references in your efforts.

Do their work for them. Make it easy for your references to say good things about you.

- Provide an updated resume.
- Give them warning that a potential employer has asked for references.
- Describe the job you are seeking, the challenges it might provide, and your ability to meet them.
- Outline why you are the best candidate for the job.
- Ask them to let you know when or if they've been contacted.

Have References Available and Ready to Contact

It is important to have references available to contact after the interview process has been completed. The references should have been contacted beforehand to inform these past employers and references that they are going to be contacted in the near future from potential employers. Giving these employers the heads up can increase the chances of the past employer having time to prepare for the phone call to receive the best results.



Body Language Speaks Volumes on a Job Interview

Body-language tricks to use (and some to avoid) during a job interview.

Actors know that body language speaks volumes, and the good ones use it subtly to persuade the audience.

Poses, positions and postures tell the audience what to think about the character.

A job interview is no different, says Jodoe Bentley, owner and co-founder of The Savvy Actor, a firm that coaches actors on the business of acting and teaches them how to market themselves.

Your body language tells the interviewer things about you.

"I think it is important to have body awareness before you go into an interview," she said. There are many actions and habits that we should consider doing or avoid doing to tell the right story during the interview setting.

Comfort with your costume

What you wear for your interview or audition can set the stage for your nerves - it can sap your spirit or boost your confidence, Bentley said. "I'm coaching an actress right now who is really a leading lady, but she is having trouble owning (those roles)," she said. "You need to dress that part, and that confidence will come. I think (the right clothing) helps body language in an interview as well."

Your appearance goes beyond clothes, Egan said. It extends to all aspects of your physical presentation - your posture, pose, expressions and voice.

"Always try to put yourself in comfortable situations," Egan said. "You have a lot of people around you in the professional world to help you. Ask them, 'Does my outfit look correct? Does my voice sound right? Is my hair cut right?' Practice interviews with your friends."

Breathe and shake!

What if you are well dressed, well groomed and well prepared but you still feel like a panic attack is approaching? Stage fright, said Egan, usually occurs about five minutes before the actor goes on stage. Actors beat back the paranoia by breathing, he said.

“Whenever you start to experience fear, the first thing that you have to do is remember to breathe. Fear stops your breathing, and everything starts to tighten. Breathing opens the door to relaxation.”

“You can tell right away when someone walks up and they are not breathing,” Bentley said. “They are not in their body, and they look uncomfortable. Breath is a force of life. I really believe that.” She recommends a breathing exercise that she does before going on stage or before a big meeting or audition: “It is rapid breathing through the nose. It really centers you and calms you.”

Egan advises that you give yourself a chance to shake it off. Literally. “Shake your limbs and jump up and down and give the adrenalin the chance to have an outlet of actual movement.”

If you’re feeling the pains of panic set in, find yourself a private space - a lobby bathroom or a secluded corridor - and practice these breathing and shaking tips to beat back stage fright.

The elevator pitch

Bentley instructs her clients to practice role-playing exercises before an audition and to have an elevator pitch or monologue memorized and at the ready. Everyone’s interview routine should include a 45-second blurb, she said. “If someone says, ‘Tell me about yourself,’ you already have a monologue or blurb ready to go.” She encourages her clients to rehearse their elevator pitches and asks that it convey “something personal about you. Showcase your strengths and show what you are passionate about.”

Bentley believes the elevator pitch should be carefully crafted and learned. “Type it out. Say it to yourself in the mirror. Look at yourself while you are doing it.”

Also, research all you need to know about the company where you hope to work. Prepare your thoughts about the business and industry and have some ready answers about them, she said.

From the moment you walk in, be real

The interview isn’t just how you answer questions or explain your skills, Egan said. That would be like limiting an actor’s audition to his reading and singing, he said. “From the moment you walk through the door, you have to be available as a real person. You cannot shut down when you aren’t singing and dancing. You want to be present for all of it. It is the same for an interview. You take yourself on as a character.”

Bentley warns her clients about being overly intimidated and losing the essence of their personalities in the process. “Many people get into interview settings and look at that person across the table as an authority figure. I think that is the worst thing that you can do.”

Bentley encourages interviewees to show their passions and interests because people want to work with people they like. “That is definitely a rule in theater. If a director is going to be working with you for four to eight weeks straight, he has got to like you first. And it is the same if somebody is going to bring you onto a team in their company: they need to like who they are going to be working with. People want to work with people who are passionate.”

The multiple-person interview

In a one-on-one interview, you can balance your energy against that of the other person. “You can sense the temperature in the room much quicker in a one-on-one than with a group,” Egan noted. If the interview is with a group of interrogators, your balance and attention are taxed like an actor on stage connecting to an audience.

The first rule: Acknowledge everybody in the room, he said.

Bentley agreed. “When you have a room full of people,” she said, “I think it is your job to keep the energy up in the air a little bit more. It is more of a hot-seat situation. I think you really need to take in the whole room and not just answer one person. Eye contact is really important.”

Ask questions; don't freeze

Confidence in the interview or audition is evident when you are fully prepared. "I would recommend preparing stories about your resume that show your personality, your strengths or your work ethic," Bentley advised. "If you have these prepared and memorized to a certain degree, you will always have something that you can pull out of your back pocket if the nerves begin to take over."

Egan suggested note cards as a last resort. "Even if you have to look down, at least you're getting your point across as opposed to freezing."

Another way to keep grounded and in the moment it is to have a few questions prepared to ask the interviewer. "If you get stuck and you don't know what else to say, don't just sit there. Have a couple of questions prepared and know your audience," Bentley said. She instructs her clients to have three personal questions and three business questions prepared that they can insert at any moment. "So if you know that a person lives in a certain area of the town, you could ask if they have ever gone to a particular pizza parlor. Or if you know that they went to a certain college and you know someone that went there, you can bring that up."

"Always ask questions," Egan said. "An interested person is an interesting person."

1) Wardrobe



Bentley emphasized the importance of wearing clothes that show you in your best light during an interview. "I really think that the clothes that you wear impact who you are, and if you wear something that makes you feel fabulous, your body language is going to be so much more comfortable in the moment."

2) Hold onto a talisman



"Wear a piece of jewelry or a scarf or something that has meaning to you and can ground you in the moment," Bentley said. "If I get nervous, sometimes I will look at my wedding ring and think of my husband who supports me, and I realize I should be doing this and I am on the right path. When we get nervous, we feel ourselves being removed from our bodies slightly. I think that having that talisman is a great way just to keep us grounded and present in the moment."

3) Feet on floor



Egan recommended that you keep both feet on the floor and sit up straight. Crossing your legs, he said, portrays complacency.

4) Sit still



"Nervous energy isn't good," Bentley said. "And so a lot of people cross their legs and shake their legs over and over again. Not that we need to sit with ankles crossed and be stiff."

5) Hands on knees



"If you have to make a point," Egan said, "you can use your hands." But rather than speaking with your hands, he recommends you rest your hands on your knees until you need to make a gesture.

6) Sit a little bit forward



"You don't want to sit back," Egan said. "Leaning backwards can leave the impression that you are overly relaxed and can make you look untidy."

7) Don't fold your arms



"I think that is a bad habit that a lot of people fall into. It definitely closes you off (from the interviewer). Not a lot of actors do it," Bentley said.

8) Avoid body tics



Don't crack your finger joints or fiddle with your cufflinks. "I have big, red, curly hair, and I used to twirl my curls when I got nervous," Bentley said. "It is about really being honest with yourself and saying to yourself: 'What are my habits when I get nervous, and how can I eliminate them?'"

9) No hands in pockets



"If you are standing at all in the interview, then hands in the pockets are a big no-no. That just looks so clumsy and messy," Bentley said. "Let your hands drop to your side, and talk," is Egan's advice. "When you need to use your hands, engage them."

10) Don't invade the interviewer's space



"Some people just get too close for comfort," Bentley said. "They think that they want to make a connection, so they get closer. Really knowing that boundary is really important." For example, don't stretch your hands or body over the interviewer's desk.

11) Props

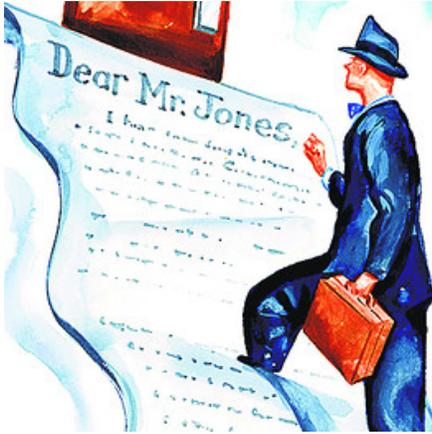


"If you need a prop like a pen, use it if it makes you feel a little bit more comfortable," Egan said. "Start with the place where you feel safest, holding your hands together or holding a prop, but give yourself the chance to step away from that during the presentation or interview. It makes you look stronger."

12) Don't stare



"In a conversation, (actors) never fully lock eyes with people," Bentley said. "We talk, we look people in the eyes, we have a thought, and we look away. We look to the right, and we look to the left." Sometimes in an interview setting, you focus too much on impressing the audience. "And we start really staring at them, and staying focused so much, that we start to look a little crazy." Egan concurred: "If you feel like you are looking the person in the eye too long, hold it one more second and break away."



Covering the Cover Letter

By Janet White, Author

“Secrets of the Hidden Job Market: Change Your Thinking to Get the Job of Your Dreams”

Available on Amazon

I've written cover letter after cover letter, but I'm still unemployed. I'm following all the advice about how to write a cover letter that will compel an employer to call me, but I haven't gotten a single response to the dozens and dozens I've sent out. (My resume is excellent, by the way, so I know it's not that.)

What am I doing wrong?

Traditional System response: I know exactly what your cover letter says, yet I can assure you I'm not a mind reader. It's a single-spaced, full page, four paragraph letter, organized as follows:

Paragraph 1: How I heard about the job

Paragraph 2: Why I want the job

Paragraph 3: My qualifications for the job

Paragraph 4: How I'll follow up for the job

In addition, you've taken what's already on your resume and simply rewritten it in paragraph form. How do I know this? Because virtually every single person writes the exact same cover letter!

Recruiting directors are flooded with resumes and spend about fifteen seconds looking at each one individually. Now try tacking on a full-page, extremely boring document that basically says what's already on the resume. How many cover letters do you think actually get read?

That being said, you still need to create one. It shows that you're interested in the job and are willing to take the time and effort to write something. But the trick is to make your letter different.

Think about your cover letter as a teaser ad for your resume. It doesn't have to tell your entire life story, but it does need to attract interest in your resume. Keep it short; make some sentences just a few words, and make some paragraphs one sentence. Write it very personally and be conversational.

You need to catch the hiring manager's attention in the first sentence or two so they actually read on and give your resume extra review time. But beware, there's a fine line between clever

and stupid. In this sample, you'll quickly see the difference between this one and the typical cover letter:

Dear Hiring Manager,

Most people start studying advertising in college, but I got my start when I was ten years old.

It all began in Mrs. Kurtzweil's fourth grade classroom, when my teacher explained to us how the entertaining commercials we watched on Saturday morning television were actually designed to make us try Lucky Charms or a Happy Meal. Ever since, I've been fascinated by the power of advertising to affect attitudes and behavior.

Whenever and wherever possible, I've sought out opportunities to learn more about the business. While at Wake Forest University, I had the chance to work on nationally recognized advertising projects for Coca-Cola as part of the AAF's National Student Advertising Competition.

I can't tell you how exciting it was to see my ideas and my work come to life in front of judges and company executives. I'm now ready to parlay my experience into a position at DraftFCB.

I'd love the opportunity to talk in detail about my passion for advertising and to share some of my creative work with you. I look forward to speaking with you soon.

Sincerely,

This certainly isn't the perfect cover letter for everyone (don't just copy it), but it does give you a sense of what to do. Often, it's helpful to think about how you got interested in the field, why you like the particular job or company, or even some special connections or skills you have that the reader would find interesting.

Keep it short and personal, and let some of your personality shine through. Good luck!

Contrarian System response: One of the most powerful yet misunderstood tools in your job-finding arsenal is your cover letter. But typically, either it's a "son of resume" with a pitch for a meeting or, as in the case of the Traditional System's example, a self-serving advertisement about how wonderful you think you are, coupled with subtle pitch for a meeting.

I know the conventional thinking is you have to "sell yourself" and make your case hard and fast because your letter will only get 10, 15 or 30 seconds before being tossed aside, but the truth is there is a deeper issue here.

Someone, preferably your future boss, "Mr. Bigg," will be reading your materials, and it is essential you always remember that he is not a "hiring manager," a computer or an inanimate object. He is a real, live human being just like you who has two eyes, a brain and feelings and, just like you, he uses all of them all of the time.

And just as you don't like it when someone tries to impress you by telling you about themselves, neither does Mr. Bigg like it when you try to impress him by telling him about yourself. Oh, you're impressing him all right, but not the way you want.

In fact, by following the Traditional System's advice, you're actually alienating the very person you want to attract. Imagine you are Mr. Bigg and read the Traditional System's letter again -

how do you feel about the person who is writing it? Well, that's exactly how Mr. Bigg feels about you if that's the kind of letter you send him.

Because everyone is the center of their own universe and automatically thinks, "*Why should I care?*," it is extremely unlikely that Mr. Bigg is going to pick up the phone and call you after reading your Traditional System cover letter, however short and personal it may be.

Contrary to what the Traditional System will tell you, the purpose of your cover letter is NOT to "sell yourself;" it's to give Mr. Bigg a reason to want to know you, which is the first step to helping him "buy you." And the truth is that no one likes to be sold, but everyone loves to buy, including Mr. Bigg.

The core problem with the Traditional System letter is that it's all about the person who is writing it - you - and there isn't a single word in it about the person who is reading it - Mr. Bigg. It won't matter a bit how much you write or what you say about yourself; Mr. Bigg will not care about you or be inclined to give you what you want as long as you write about yourself.

Because Mr. Bigg is a human being, he only cares about himself and what is important to him - his company, his family and his life, and the reason Mr. Bigg does not care about you is because you have given him no reason to. It is obvious from your letter that you clearly do not care about him, and he's merely reflecting that unconcern right back at you.

Here's another flaw of the Traditional System letter: after talking about who you are, how you got to where you are and what you want, you then blithely abdicate all responsibility for what happens next, proving you are incapable of the kind of thoroughness, persistence and follow-through required in any career, especially advertising.

So let's rewrite this letter from Mr. Bigg's perspective by using this simple formula:

Paragraphs 1 - 2 The Grabber: Use a referral, recap a function you both attended, complement Mr. Bigg's presentation if you attended a program he spoke at, or if you have none of these, make a comment about an industry trend, news about his company, its people, products and progress - something, anything Mr. Bigg can relate to.

If you do your homework about his company, the industry and what's going on in the world that may affect it, you shouldn't have a problem coming up with something to write about.

Paragraphs 2 -3 Identify Mr. Bigg's Problem: Since this letter is about Mr. Bigg, suggest - not tell - him that he may be facing a problem or an opportunity and then briefly discuss this problem or opportunity *without offering solutions*. It is critical that you do NOT offer yourself as the solution to his problem so that he can come to that conclusion all by himself.

Simply by stating what you know or have read about what may be happening that affects him, Mr. Bigg will automatically credit you with having insight into his situation, and assume you have some ideas he hasn't yet thought of. This is the difference between "selling yourself" and helping Mr. Bigg "buy you" and it's incredibly powerful.

Paragraphs 3 - 4 Maybe I Can Help: By this time, Mr. Bigg is thinking, "*Who are you?*" and here's where you casually mention who you are and refer to the attached material or information (not "resume") very briefly as if it's not really all that important. Actually, it's not, because this letter isn't about you at all; it's about him.

Paragraphs 4 - 5: Wrap It Up: If you want to get hired, you must assume 100% responsibility for following up, that that mean you must call Mr. Bigg, not expect him to call you.

With it all put together, notice how your cover letter has been completely transformed when you write as if you were talking *to* Mr. Bigg about him, not *at* him about yourself:

Dear Mr. Bigg,

Back in 2005, your agency ran an advertising campaign for Collegiate University, a small, private liberal arts college in Minnesota that has a unique program for students with learning disabilities. I felt something special when I saw your ads and applied to the school, although I had never heard about it before.

Thanks to the magic you created through your ads and the staff at Collegiate, I graduated with honors with a major in advertising and communications last year despite having dyslexia.

When I first saw your ads, I didn't understand why they had such an appeal to me, but now I think I do; you really care about the learning disabled, and your compassion shows through your work.

I read in Advertising Age that you do a lot of pro bono work for organizations that treat those with learning disabilities, and it occurred to me there may be a way for you to maximize your investment of time and energy by adding in some additional marketing elements you may not have considered.

My career goal is to touch others through advertising the way your ads for Collegiate University touched me, and I've tried to do that with some campaigns for local non-profits as you can see at www.thisismysite.com. Please take a few minutes to look at my online portfolio; I would really appreciate your professional feedback.

Mr. Bigg, I have some ideas about how you can make your pro bono work profitable, and I will call you next week to set up a convenient time for us to get together. Thank you for all you do, and I'm looking forward to meeting you.

Sincerely,

Of course Mr. Bigg wants to see you; how could he not? You've made a professional connection and more importantly, a personal one, primarily because you're not attempting to dazzle him. When you finally meet with Mr. Bigg, you'll find out why he's as eager to meet you as you are to meet him.

Cover Letter Sample:

SUSAN FITZGERALD

1010 Conway Ave SE • Minneapolis, MN 55401
s.fitzgerald@myisp.net • 612.555.8000

February 22, 20XX

John Smith
Vice President, Investment Banking
Nova Investment Corporation
137 Kings Way
Minneapolis, Minnesota 55401

Dear Mr. Smith:

With a proven track record of success in the management and marketing of investment services, I believe my experience would contribute greatly towards the continued success of Nova Investment Corporation. I have enclosed my résumé to provide an overview of my career achievements and qualifications.

As you will note, my tenure in investment banking with Visio Lake Bank exhibits continuous advancement in client-base growth and revenue generation. Examples of my key contributions include:

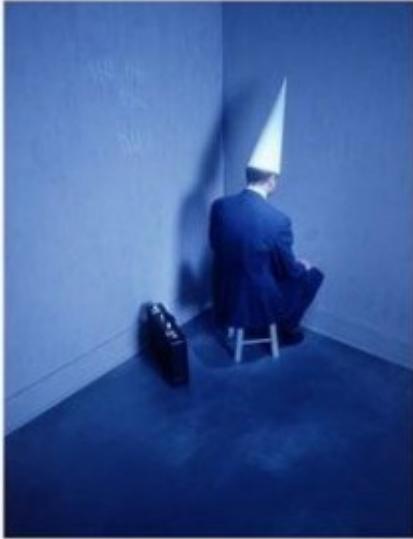
- Achieved 127% of the business development goal set at \$10 million in assets; maintained 100% or better for all established production goals from 1998 to the present day.
- Built client base to more than 600 customer relationships, far exceeding account development and client retention goals and generating solid revenue growth.
- Recognized as one of the top 100 advisors worldwide.

In addition, I offer a comprehensive knowledge of numerous investment tools and the ability to deliver products and services seamlessly to customers. My professional experience, combined with my dedication and enthusiasm, will enable me to make an immediate and valuable impact on your organization.

I look forward to meeting with you and learning more about the position, your objectives, and how I can contribute to the success of your department. In the meantime, feel free to contact me if you have any questions.

Sincerely,

Susan Fitzgerald
Enclosure



Dumbing Down your Resume is Not a Smart Idea

What are your thoughts on "dumbing down" a resume to get a job? I've read that it's the only way to get called for jobs that I'm overqualified for. I worked hard for my advanced degrees and senior positions, but I'm seeing evidence that it is placing me out of the market.

Traditional System response: You describe yourself as "overqualified," and I concur that if you give even the slightest hint that you thinking that way, managers will not hire you for fear that you'll come to the job "with an attitude" and set yourself apart from the team.

But the issue here is with the resume. And I've seen managers react in two ways to getting applicants with unexpectedly high qualifications: there are those who consider such applicants overqualified and assume they'll be know-it-alls and/or leave the moment the economy perks up, then, there are those managers who are delighted by the possibility of picking up a "bargain" employee.

The former tend to be managers who are insecure and thus threatened by star employees; the latter tend to be those confident, broad-minded leaders who are always looking for a chance to upgrade their teams. When you dumb down your resume, you're sending a mating call of mediocrity, appealing to managers who'll turn on you once you start, creating a "set-up-to-fail syndrome."

Instead of talking down your qualifications, amp up your networking. Make it so the resume is the second or third thing a hiring manager sees about you, after he or she has heard from a colleague about what a great addition you'll be, or maybe after your first phone conversation or visit to the company.

By the time they see your resume, they'll already have concluded that you're a good fit, and those qualifications will seem like what they are - an added bonus that makes you a more appealing candidate.

Contrarian System response: You said, "I've read that [dumbing down my resume is] the only way to get called for jobs that I'm overqualified for. I worked hard for my advanced degrees and senior positions, but I'm seeing evidence that it is placing me out of the market."

It's clear that you have a very strong belief you cannot get hired at the senior level you desire, and your advanced degrees and many years of experience are detrimental to you. You believe you must downplay who you are and what you know, and now you're seeing "evidence" that this is so.

Well, I have news for you: this "evidence" is not proof you're right. You're only seeing this "evidence" because - whether you know it or not - this is exactly what you wanted to see.

Whether you realize it or not, you are using the Law of Attraction every minute of every day, and it is turning your thoughts, feelings and beliefs into your experiences. This is "Ask and it shall be given" - think positive thoughts, and you get positive experiences; think negative thoughts, you get negative experiences.

Whatever you think about, you bring about, and the more you think about it, the more you get of it. Because the Law of Attraction has no opinion about the demonstrations it creates from your thoughts, it will continue to bring you exactly what you ask for as long as you keep asking for it.

And since the Law of Attraction operates automatically, you can automatically begin to change your situation by changing your thoughts; the key is to keep your attention focused only on what you want.

It is very important you turn away from the "evidence" you manifested from your previous thoughts, and the negative and limited opinions of others, such as what you've been reading and the Traditional System's advice about what you have to do to get hired.

I suggest you post affirmations like these everywhere - in the bathroom, on your bedroom mirror, inside kitchen cabinets, and all around your computer, so you constantly bombard your mind with uplifting, encouraging, positive thoughts:

- I now attract companies and colleagues who appreciate how my experience, expertise and education can benefit them.
- Opportunities for me to work at my highest level of expertise are everywhere.
- I am a highly-respected expert in my field.
- I rejoice in life's abundance and appreciate all that God has given me.
- I trust God to supply me with everything I need.
- Unexpected good is coming to me from unexpected sources.
- God knows my needs and generously supplies them all.
- I am unlimited in my wealth and good fortune.
- I am open and receptive to new avenues of income.
- New doors are opening.

Thanks to the Law of Attraction, as you begin to accept these new beliefs and start thinking, speaking and acting as they were true, you'll start seeing "evidence" of a completely different kind.

And that's when you'll realize that the only thing that was "dumb" was your previously-held belief that you couldn't be hired for exactly who you are.



In Job Hunting, Honesty is Still the Best Policy

What's the harm in a little white lie on your résumé; especially if it will help you finally nab that full-time position?

Just ask George O'Leary, the Notre Dame football coach who was forced to resign five days after being hired when lies about his academic and athletic background came to light. Or Marilee Jones, an MIT dean who fudged on her credentials and quit when she was found out.

Sure, these are high-profile examples, but rank-and-file workers also fall into the trap -- and get caught.

Yet with all the uncertainty and anxiety these days over landing a job with a steady paycheck, more job seekers are finding it harder to resist fudging on a résumé or job application in order to paint themselves in the best light.

After all, while the unemployment rate remained at a steady 9.7% in March, more than 6.5 million people are still facing long-term unemployment, according to the Department of Labor Statistics. It will be a slog to make a big dent in the nation's unemployment numbers.

"It's such a tough spot that many people find themselves in right now with the number of long-term unemployed at historic highs," says John Challenger, chief executive officer of global outplacement consultancy Challenger, Gray & Christmas. "It's easy to falsify or embellish beyond a point that would be an ethical representation of your accomplishments."

According to the 2009 Screening Index released by ADP, a human resources and payroll provider, 46% of employment, education or credential reference checks conducted in 2008 revealed discrepancies. That's up from 41% in 2006.

And the current job climate is even riper for résumé fraud, says Jenifer DeLoach, a senior vice president at Kroll, a New York-based global risk consultancy.

Crossing the Line

The art of résumé writing does allow you to push skills to the limit of an imaginary line, says Wendy S. Enelow, an executive career consultant in Coleman Falls, Va. "It's about

merchandising and selling a product. You do want to highlight the benefits and value of that product, but only within the realm of reality."

The hard part, of course, is to avoid crossing that line.

Say you're an accountant and spend 80% of your time focusing on accounting and 20% on IT-related work, says Ms. Enelow. If you now want to pursue an IT job, you should highlight your skills and qualifications on a résumé in a way that places more emphasis on the IT. "This way someone sees a qualified IT professional who happened to be an accountant as opposed to the other way around," she says.

Crossing the line would be stating that you "single-handedly spearheaded the effort to switch from system A to system B" or some other claim to leadership in the IT department, Ms. Enelow adds.

Résumé Rules

Walking that line between promoting yourself and being untruthful can be difficult. Here are some ways to do so:

- If you haven't earned a degree, disclose how far you've gotten. For example, "completed 50% of requirements for Bachelor of Science in Business Administration" or "Bachelor of Arts Candidate, anticipate completion in 2011."
- If you were fired from your last job, leave that detail out. But be prepared to discuss it during an interview if asked.
- If you're over age 45, focus on the relevant experience, achievements, skills and qualifications that position you for your next role. It's OK to omit specific dates.
- If you've never held a leadership position, state the activities and achievements that convey leadership skills and experience.
- If you're looking for a salary boost, don't state salary requirements or inflate your most recent salary.

Steven Lurie, the author of "Handbook for Early Career Success," says he worked with a woman who exaggerated her responsibilities and previous salary when applying for an administrative job at a law firm last year. She got the job. But her exaggerations were discovered during a background check soon after and she was fired.

"A lot of companies have zero-tolerance policies if they catch you" lying, says Mr. Challenger.

People who didn't complete a degree program can still list the school on a résumé, but they should indicate the "strongest possible presentation that is truthful," such as "completed 50% of requirements for Bachelor of Science in Business Administration" or "Bachelor of Arts candidate, anticipate completion in 2011," says Louise Kursmark, an executive résumé writer and career consultant. Crossing the line would be saying you graduated with that degree.

Older job seekers can leave off the years they went to school. Changing the years is lying.

Also a no-no: stating that you were part of a mass downsizing when you were actually fired, says Mr. Challenger. But do leave off the reason for leaving a previous job, says Ms. Kursmark.

In fact, you want to avoid filling a résumé with too many details, especially personal ones. If you have a black mark -- a stint in jail, a trip to rehab or you've been fired from a previous job -- "that's something that should be dealt with during an interview," says Meg Montford, an executive career coach in Kansas City, Mo. If you're asked or it looks like a job offer is imminent, "you have to be honest," she says, especially since more companies are doing reference and background checks.

ADP says the number of background checks it performed for companies rose 24% in the first quarter from a year earlier.

You should be upfront and briefly explain why you parted on negative terms with a former employer, or why you were arrested. "Don't blame anyone but yourself," says Ms. Montford. "And end your story about your situation with what you learned and how that impacts how you work going forward."

Damage Control

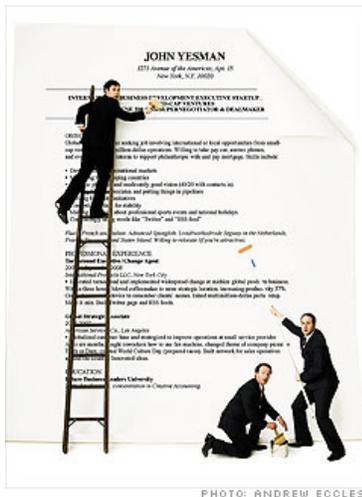
What if you've already sent out a résumé that paints a less-than-accurate portrait of your accomplishments?

Mr. Challenger says there's no need to call employers you sent a résumé to if you haven't heard back from them.

If you have an interview lined up, however, that's the time to clear up any exaggerations. "You could say something as simple as, 'After I submitted my résumé I realized that this date is wrong and should be this date,'" says Ms. Montford. "Or, 'As I looked over my résumé, I realized that this project was more of a team effort rather than an individual responsibility.'"

But if you've told a whopper about where you worked or went to school, it's nearly impossible to recover, Ms. Enelow says. A prospective employer will think: "You've told me you're a liar. I've got 500 people in line for that job, and how do I know that you won't lie to a client? To a colleague?"

If that's the case, Mr. Challenger says, you should move on, fix the mistakes on the résumé and be honest going forward.



The 24-Step Modern Resume

Resume Checklist: Follow these best practices to ensure your resume gets through the spam filter, applicant tracking system, and to the recruiters and hiring managers.

What's the difference between a computerized ATS (Applicant Tracking System) and a black hole?

Not much, if you don't know which aspects of your resume give you a good ranking vs. what makes these software programs choke.

The people who work with these tools say it best: “[They’re] a wonderful tool (if utilized correctly) for recruiters and hiring managers; however, they can be a black hole for the applicant if their resume is not accurately targeted to the open position with appropriate keywords and/or highlighted experience,” according to Laurie M. Winslow, principal at Talent Innovations Group, Inc. Winslow has worked with a slew of vendors’ ATSes over her 20-plus years in human resources, as an executive search consultant, an in-house corporate recruiter and as a career coach and professional resume writer.

Use this list to ensure your resume gets where it needs to go and that it receives as high a ranking as possible, optimizing your chances of getting an interview.

1. Do not apply to a company multiple times if the positions do not match your experience and skills. Recruiters notice multiple submissions, and it reflects poorly on a candidate if he or she applies for jobs that aren't a good fit.
2. Don't send your resume as an attachment. To avoid getting caught by security scans, paste it into the body of the e-mail.
3. When e-mailing a resume, keep exclamation marks out of the subject line and body of the text.
4. When e-mailing a resume, don't use words in the document or headline that could be misinterpreted by spam filters. For example, use “graduated with high honors” instead of “graduated cum laude.”
5. Include a professional or executive summary at the resume top, followed by a list of bulleted qualifications and/or achievements.
6. Customize the professional/executive summary and bulleted list(s) with keywords that match a given job.
7. Make sure the keywords in the executive summary and bulleted qualifications and achievements replicate those in the job posting.

8. Keywords alone aren't enough. State-of-the-art ATS technology relies on contextualization as well. Frame keywords with descriptive material that demonstrates experience and familiarity with the subject.
9. Do not use abbreviations such as "Mgr" instead of "Manager." It is unlikely that the ATS has been programmed with a list of abbreviations to stand in for keywords.
10. Avoid misspellings. A misspelled keyword is a keyword that the ATS will miss, lowering your ranking.
11. Use standard capitalization, not all lowercase or full capitals. Improper capitalization annoys recruiters.
12. Fill in all the information requested by an online application process, even if it's listed as optional. Recruiters often sort by optional information to filter out applicants, and filling in all fields will ensure you don't erroneously get caught in a screening filter.
13. Fill in all information requested by an online application process, even if it's included in your resume. This information can be used to filter out applicants before a hiring manager comes to the point of opening the resume itself.
14. If you're being referred by an employee, make sure the ATS knows it, because it's smart enough to care and will rate your resume higher.
15. If the ATS offers options, opt for uploading your resume instead of cutting and pasting. This feature often parses information and saves it in the optimal format, ensuring the cleanest presentation.
16. To avoid choking an ATS with a highly formatted resume, make sure your resume is in a clear, concise format, with your contact information located at the top instead of in the header or footer.
17. Do not include graphics or logos on a resume; they can garble the information the ATS processes.
18. Respond within 24 hours after hearing back from a company.
19. Keep an eye on spam folders. Filters are so sensitive today that they can recognize e-mail that's automatically generated – a category which both spam and follow-up e-mail generated from an ATS program can fall into.
20. Adhere to instructions provided in follow-up e-mail. If the follow-up e-mail lacks a phone number but directs you to respond with your availability, respond via e-mail, not by calling. This will likely get you the fastest response.
21. If you receive an automatically generated rejection e-mail, immediately contact the recruitment office of the rejecting organization or a sympathetic administrative assistant – anyone who can advise you as to the best way to replace the resume currently in the ATS with one containing better keywords and phrases.
22. When reapplying after an initial rejection, tweak executive summaries and bulleted lists of key skills and achievements. Don't alter your work history elements.
23. When reapplying, don't try to use a different e-mail address from the one you used on your first try. This isn't enough to avoid a duplicate record in advanced systems such as Taleo, which use multiple candidate identifiers, so make sure to follow Step #21.
24. Once your customized resume has been resubmitted, contact the appropriate recruiter (or sympathetic administrative assistant) and request that your updated resume be reviewed for the open position.



"An 'ability to smell fear' is a quality I've never seen listed on a resume before."

Six Things to Remove from Your Resume

In an age of Facebook, Twitter and FourSquare, we've gotten used to broadcasting any and all information about ourselves. But when it comes to your résumé, it might be best to take a cue from architect Ludwig Mies van der Rohe, who coined the phrase, "Less is more."

Specifically, here are six things to take off your résumé:

1. Graduation dates

Include your degree, major (if it is relevant) and the institution. But take off the date. Age discrimination is a concern for many people looking for work. Avoid tempting reviewers to do the math to discover your age.

2. Irrelevant experience

If you are applying for sales and you have substantial experience in IT project management, downplay the irrelevant experience and create new achievement statements that support your experience with customers. Make your non-sales experience sound more like sales. Shorten job entries that don't support your sales message.

3. Jobs in the dim, dark past

The rule of thumb is to include your last 10 to 15 years of experience. If you need to prove expertise you gained long ago, you might use the title "Other Relevant Experience" and describe your achievements, without the dates of employment. Baby boomers should be careful not to include 30 years of experience. Why give hiring managers a clue you are over 50 until they meet you in person?

4. Personal section

Résumés of the past often included personal information such as marital status, family members and even church membership. All of that information is illegal to collect, so don't include it. Also eliminate references to hobbies, clubs and political views. A "Community Work" section can show your leadership skills, but stick with non-controversial organizations such as Rotary, Lions, the Chamber of Commerce and recognized nonprofits.

5. Gaps in history

Eliminate gaps in your work history by filling in with short, truthful statements. "Homemaker sabbatical" will explain a five-year work hiatus and allow the interviewer to focus on your history. You can also fill gaps with part-time jobs, direct sales positions or consulting projects.

6. Photos

No photos. Period!



Resume Objective Statements to Catch a Managers' Eyes

Professional resume writers have abandoned the objective statement for an executive summary, but young professionals still rely on them and many amateur resume writers still insist.

Time was, you would use the prime real estate atop your resume to declare your objective, to tell prospective employers how you wanted "to obtain a position at a well-established organization with a stable environment where you could maximize your management skills and effectively utilize your experience to... blah, blah, blah."

Resume objective statements were all about what *you* wanted, not about what you could do for a prospective employer.

And that is precisely why your old-fashioned, objective-topped resume will make many professional resume writers shudder. Professional resume writers have replaced these messages with "Executive Summary" sections that sum up what skills the applicant brings the employer.

Amanda Collins, chief of staff at The Grammar Doctors, explains the attitude adjustment: "Objectives disappeared years ago when resumes switched from applicant-oriented to employer-oriented. They need to instead share the WIIFM Factor - What's in it for me? - from the employer's prospective."

But the objective statement has not entirely disappeared. Young professionals, with little to include in an executive summary, still rely on them and many amateur resume writers still insist on them. If you're in the latter group, the best advice is to make the transition to an executive summary, say professional resume writers and human resources (HR) executives. But if you are still a young professional, and still rely on the objective statement to introduce yourself to employers, there are best practices to follow. TheLadders spoke to hiring managers and certified professional resume writers to determine the best way to structure this pithy alternative to an executive summary. Here's what they had to say.

Be clear, and be what they need

In a nutshell, a worthwhile objective statement must:

- Be crystal-clear about your career direction
- Position yourself as someone who wants to do exactly what the employer is offering
- Be tailored to fit the job for which you're applying.

Jillian Zavitz is the programs manager for TalktoCanada.com, an online English language-training course based in Canada, where she is responsible for hiring. She said that she does in fact see objective statements that catch her eye because they point to a candidate who's "exactly what I am looking for," which, in her case, is somebody with experience "related to teaching and specific to the job offer."

Here are some examples of objective statements that have crossed her desk, some of which are spot-on and some of which are from the school of me-me-me resume writing:

Bad objective statements:

- "Career employment or contract (twelve months)."
- "My Goal is to find employment that will help me begin paying off my student loans."
- "ESL Teaching position with Talk to Canada."
- "To obtain a challenging position where my education, skills and experiences can be highly utilized and later be applicable for growth and possible advancement."

Good objective statements:

- "Position of ONLINE ENGLISH TEACHER with MarcMedia's TalktoCanada, where I can apply my education, teaching experience and native linguistic skills to the delivery of quality language instruction."
- "English-Language Trainer/Tutor of ESL or standard English. To assist, encourage and motivate students of every age to demonstrate and improve their verbal and written skills."

Too general:

- "To obtain a position that will enable me to use my educational background and transferable skills to manage and create new opportunities in international trade and networking."
- "A full time position in the Human Resources Training Department."
- "A position in the Business and Marketing Administration field."
- "To obtain a position which will enable me to utilize my education and experience in the fashion industry."
- "Fall Internship."

If you really want to use an objective statement, make sure it's about the employer, not just about you. Mention your skills and experiences. If you're not getting interviews, consider graduating to an executive summary and a summary of qualifications and/or career highlights, the standard for a modern resume.



How Many \$ and % Signs are in Your Resume?

These are both good indicators to employers of your individual ROI.

"You + Action(s) = Great Result(s)."

In order to stand out, you have to treat your resume as a marketing document -- not some boring recounting of where you've been, what you did and how long you did it.

We're talking dollars generated, time saved and percentages gained! Count up the \$ and % signs in your resume; these are great indicators for how well you proved your return on investment "ROI" to your previous employers! Don't just say what you did; describe the outcome in the most glowing -- and accurate -- terms possible. Make sure everything you say can be independently verified.

You can say 'Increased revenues by 20%' or 'Reduced costs by 15%', as opposed to vague, ambiguous data. These are just two examples of presenting your individual ROI.

Additional questions to answer at the top portion of your resume:

- What recognition or promotions have I received?
- What achievements, recognition or bonuses made me proud?
- Have I come in under budget, beaten a deadline, developed an innovative idea, or solved a problem my company was facing?
- Hiring managers are also looking for growth and responsibility in your resume: How have I progressed from early in a career to present day and how have I contributed in different areas?

Additional important resume tips:

- Misspelled words are like gravy on your lapel - keep it clean!
- Keep sentences short and crisp.
- Personal interests are rarely appropriate.
- No need to add "References are available."
- Make sure you have pre-confirmed with your references their accurate contact information and that they will give you a good reference.
- And finally, keep your resume to two pages, unless you're a Nobel Prize winner, in which case a resume is probably not required. People take 30 to 45 seconds to scan a resume, so an overly long resume may not go over well.

Define well what separates you from other people. Describe the situations or tasks and what your accomplishments and results were; all very important and it's what will separate you from all the other resumes.



'Why Did You Leave?' **How to Address Past Employment**

Parting can be sorrow if you explain it wrong in your next interview. Here are tips on positioning your resume (and your head) to provide a positive answer to the question: "Why did you leave?"

Like any hiring professional worth her salt, Jillian Zavitz's eyebrows go up when she sees short work stints on a resume - say, less than three months. Of course she'll ask the job seekers to explain.

The answers she's received speak volumes.

From the professional side: "The job wasn't suited to my needs?" Fine. "I was offered a better opportunity?" You're golden.

From the unprofessional side: "My boss was an ass." "They didn't pay me enough." "I had problems with the management."

Hear that buzzing noise? It's the sound of the paper shredder preparing to destroy your resume and your chances of being hired.

"Their answers ... [help] me determine what kind of person they are," said Zavitz, programs manager responsible for hiring at TalktoCanada.com, an online English language-training course based in Ottawa, Ontario. "Are they easy to get along with? Is it really the boss who is the ass, or is it you? Do they take risks? [Was the] once-in-a-lifetime opportunity an exchange? An internship? Travel? A lot of people who don't answer the question directly obviously have something to hide. If they stammer and make up a lie (you can tell) it makes me question their credibility, and I usually end up contacting that reference even if they aren't listed as a reference."

Obviously, answering the "Why did you leave?" question in a way that reflects negatively on you can be interview poison. TheLadders talked to hiring managers, resume writers and career coaches to get some pointers on how you can prepare positive answers to that touchy question. Here's how to position your resume and interview responses to describe bidding a company farewell - fondly or otherwise.

Tackle it head-on

Debra Benton, president of Benton Management Resources, an executive coaching firm, suggests the best way to handle the question is to bring it up first. The trick is to stay away from being defensive by keeping your answer upbeat, Benton said.

"More like, 'Here I am telling you how wonderful I am, but I'm wondering, are you curious why I left XYZ?' If they answer, 'No, we know that happens,' fine, it's taken care of. If they answer, 'Yes, we were wondering,' then you can give your thought-out answer," she said.

Benton provided this sample of a positive spin:

XYZ is a great organization, and I enjoyed my time there very much. They felt I was a real contributor to their organization, as evidenced by the two company awards I won. But, as you know, things change: New people come in, the economy; a new culture is put in place, and so forth. I could see that my work was done there and I needed to move on. ... So let's talk more about where/how I can contribute to your organization.

Your cover letter and resume can help answer the question

Barbara Safani, owner of the career-management firm Career Solvers, said she believes your resume should include a reason for the transition - under specific circumstances: "If it were due to a downsizing or other business reason," she said, she'll include the transition detail on the resume. Otherwise, if a client left for a political or personal reason, she doesn't include an additional explanation on the resume.

The best place to handle the situation is in a cover letter, Benton said. She recommends direct statements like:

It was the right time for me to leave XYZ. I completed (other words could be: reduced, presented, solved, accelerated, controlled, executed, established, expanded) my objectives. They benefited from my contribution. Their and my goals and objectives changed, and that is why I left.

Safani also coaches clients to lead with a positive statement about the work experience, such as "I was fortunate to work for company XYZ for five years, and during that time I contributed to a \$20M increase in sales." Next, she recommends clients explain the reason for the move.

"If the transition was related to a downsizing, I encourage the client to use language such as 'Unfortunately, a business decision was made to ... (Here the candidate can explain the situation, whether it was a company closing, office relocation, position elimination, etc.)'"

She also encourages clients to cast the job loss as a part of a bigger corporate picture instead of making it personal. For example, don't say, "My position was eliminated." Instead say, "MORE THAN *X number* of positions were eliminated as a result of this business decision."

"If the reason for the leave was political or personal, I coach the client based on the exact situation," Safani said. "For example, if it was political, I may recommend they say that management changed and they wanted to bring in their own team. If it was personal, I may suggest they say that the direction of the position changed and was no longer well-suited for (me)."



Writing a Resume

Your resume isn't your autobiography. It's a short document, meant to show an employer that you're a desirable candidate for an available job. Writing an effective resume presents you as a well-qualified, interesting individual who is worthy of a face-to-face interview.

Employers may receive over 100 resumes for a single job opening. While ideally each candidate would receive equal time, the fact is that employers or their human resource departments typically sort through a pile and put the most interesting specimens at the top of the heap. Statistically, your resume has about ten to thirty seconds to either float to the top (for further analysis) or sink to the bottom (obscurity in the employer's personnel files). Tailor your resume to catch the eye.

The common question for those attempting to land a new position or switch professions at mid-career is – how to get noticed when applying.

An important step is to tailor your resume to fit the criteria for jobs you are targeting.

Your goal with any resume creation today is to get the interview, and then in the interview you can tell your story.

At many companies, the first review of résumés is done electronically, because hundreds of applications are often submitted for one opening. And when companies with jobs to fill tap into a database like Monster's, they do searches through countless resumes.

That means that while some mid-career professionals may remember the days when the way to get noticed was high-quality paper or a well-designed resume, today it's more important for your résumé to contain the words or phrases targeted by impersonal key-word scanning software.

You want to make sure you don't get missed accidentally, just because you didn't have a certain keyword in that electronic resume. That's not to say applicants shouldn't pay attention to the paper quality or presentation of the resumes they carry when meeting prospective employers, but it is the electronic one these days that's going to get you to the interview.

For instance, someone looking for a job in the technology field might pay attention to what software is mentioned in an advertisement, and if they know it, mention it by name on their resume. Sometimes, a recruiter may search that one software name, and if you haven't included it, you will be missed.

Consider any job posting as the “Cliffs Notes” for the job in question. Those words that are on the job posting are the same words that they are going to type in when they are key-word searching electronically through resumes.

Gathering Information

Whether you’re writing a resume for one employer or several, the job of writing a resume is much easier when you take the time to put all of your information in front of you. Besides that, putting all of your information in one place gives you a handy reference to make sure that each resume you write has all the information you want to disclose to prospective employers. It also makes updating and writing new resumes easier than starting from scratch.

Resumes are divided into three sections: experience, skills, and education. Using these sections, brainstorm a list of all the data that might be pertinent to getting the job you want now and jobs you may consider in the future.

If you’re writing a resume for a specific job, put the employer’s job description at the top of the list and use it to target the specifics you’ll include in your resume. If you’re looking into positions with several different employers, you may want to write more than one resume for each different job. Using a list helps you “slice and dice” your information, emphasizing qualities that are most relevant to each specific job.

Checking Your Resume

Don’t rely on your spell or grammar checker to pick up resume mistakes. Automated checkers often ignore homonyms (like way and weigh) and acronyms. In addition, although a good grammar checker can help you make the right choices, it may red flag some commonly used phrases in deference to letter-perfect language.

The best way to check your resume is to get up and walk away from it after you’ve finished writing. Frequently, no matter how many times you read a sentence, you can still miss a single typo that would be glaring to another reader.

You know what you mean, but will an objective pair of eyes see your writing the same way you see it? After you’ve checked your resume draft, it’s a good idea to have someone else critique it as well to make sure that your points are as crystal clear to others as they are to you.

Resume Writing Styles

Your resume format builds structure in your resume and makes it easy for an interviewer to read and follow your resume. Resume style is the design of your page that makes it pop out of the pile and encourages your employer to read it. Resumes styles can be informal (#1), creative (#2) or conventional (#3). Tailor your resume style to the position for which you are applying, but also allow your resume style to introduce your personality and the creativity you’ll bring to the job.

Resume style elements include:

Paper: Use white paper, black text. First, colored paper is inappropriate for a business letter. Although you want your resume to stand out from the crowd, colored paper stands out in a negative way, making you appear manipulative and pushy.

Fonts: The type and size of font you use not only adds to your resume style, but determines how easy your resume is to read. Although fonts come in thousands of variants, there are really only two types of acceptable business fonts:

- **Serif fonts:** Those with feet like Times Roman, Bookman, and Georgia.
- **Sans serif fonts:** Those with no feet like Arial, Tahoma, and Verdana.

You should limit font size in your resume body to either 10 or 12 points and heading size to 12 or 14 points. If you need more emphasis for some areas of your resume, use shadings, underlines, bold text, or italic text. Most importantly, be consistent with your font choices and styles.

Tip: Before settling on fonts, print some sample copy using a few different font types to see what your resume will look like in print.

Text alignment: Refrain from centering or right aligning your resume text. Justified text is acceptable, however be aware that often justified text may leave unexpected spaces. Resumes styled with left-aligned text and bulleted lists are easy to read and maintain a clean, professional look. Bulleted lists: Emphasize skills and areas of achievement with bulleted lists. Standard bullets include the disc, the circle, and the square, however many symbols will serve as bullets. What ever type of bullet style you choose, keep the look professional and consistent throughout your resume. Graphical elements: Shading, vertical or horizontal lines, and table cells can be useful in adding extra appropriate style to your resume. Refrain from using pictures. Your goal is to build a paper that is totally relevant to the job at hand. Use graphical elements to separate sections or information and draw attention to the unique talents and skills you have to offer to your prospective employer!

Resume sections include:

1. Contact Information- Goes at the top of your resume
 - Name
 - Mailing address
 - Daytime phone
 - Night time phone
 - Cell phone
 - Fax
 - Email
2. Resume Objective - this is one or two short sentences that explain if you are seeking employment:
 - With a particular company
 - In a specific field of employment
 - For a specific job
3. Profile or Summary of Qualifications - Your short statement of why you feel you are an appropriate candidate for the job. Another optional section that is most often used in the skills resume format.
 - Publications
 - Awards
 - Achievements
4. Employment History - A reverse chronology of your work experience. Generally, your resume needs to list the details of only your last three positions or the last ten years of your employment experience. If you have extensive work experience, you may want to follow the employment history section with a bulleted list of additional experience- usually a reverse chronological record of employment, but in addition to jobs may include:
 - Military Experience
 - Paid Internships
5. Education - Unless you are still in school or a recent graduate, your resume needs to list only 1) the name of your college or trade school, your degree, and the year of graduation and/or 2) the name of your high school and the year you graduated.
 - Colleges
 - Trade School

- High School (GED)
 - Continuing Education
 - In-house training
 - Honors & awards
 - Internships
 - Relevant Course Work
 - Advanced Career Training
 - Continuing Education
6. Skills - Organize skills into the order they are most relevant to your job, or subdivide them into categories so that an employer can easily see what additional attributes you'll bring to the job.
- Technical Skills (i.e. office machines you can operate, programming skills) Office Skills (e.g. clerical skills like filing, data entry skills, bookkeeping or accounting skills)
 - Languages
 - Organizational (e.g. seminars, events, presentations)
 - Sales skills
 - Administrative
 - Licenses
 - Certifications
7. Activities- Another optional section for either professional or community projects in which you participated.
- Professional
 - Community Service
 - Memberships
 - Volunteer Work
 - Affiliations

Some sub sections work equally well in two or more sections. For instance a certification might have earned you a promotion in a prior job. In that case, keep it with employment information rather than as a type of continuing education. Remember your goal is to make it easy for an employer to see that you are the right candidate for the job!

Most employers prefer you format your resume using one of three basic methods: chronological, skills, or combination. Chronological is the most common type of resume format and most often preferred by potential employers. However, unless an employer requests a particular resume format, choose your resume format based on your resume objective and the skills and employment experiences that best highlight your qualifications for the job.

Resume Formats

There are several basic types of resumes used to apply for job openings. Depending on your personal circumstances, choose a chronological, a functional or a Hybrid / combination resume.

Chronological Resume

A chronological resume starts by listing your work history, with the most recent position listed first. Your jobs are listed in reverse chronological order with your current or most recent job first. Employers typically prefer this type of resume because it's easy to see what jobs you have held and when you have worked at them. It is also the easiest to develop.

Some of the benefits of a Chronological Resume include:

- It emphasizes the organization(s) you worked for and the educational background that you have. If you work for a large well-known company (or have worked for 2 or more) this might be the right design for you.
- Did you attend a respected educational institution? The Chronological format will highlight that better than the other formats.
- If you will be staying in the same line of work, this style leads the employer through your progress easily and chronologically.
- Do you work in a conservative field? Once again you will find that the Chronological format may be the best one for you. Many employers truly prefer a traditional approach.

Of all the resume "flavors", the Chronological is good to use in nearly all circumstances. When it is well-written, it will almost never work against you, except perhaps in the most progressive of industries.

Functional (or Skills) Resume

In a functional resume your skills and abilities are emphasized more than who you worked for or where you went to school. Dates are also de-emphasized. It is a good style to use if you have developed a set of skills over a wide variety of work-related experiences and/or employers. It is also a good resume if you are entering the job market after a long absence or if you are entering the job market for the first time with little related experience but a lot of skills.

Some of the benefits of a Functional Resume include:

- Any gaps in your employment dates are better disguised in this format. For instance, if you took time off to be a stay-at-home-mom, your break in employment will not be as noticeable using this type of resume.
- Your skills and achievements are accentuated rather than where or when you developed them.
- If you have done the same kind of work for more than one employer, you have an advantage using the Functional style. Repeating the same job responsibilities from job to job is eliminated so you can focus your energy on highlighting additional skills.

Combination / Hybrid Resume

The combination format includes components from both of the other resume styles. While it is more difficult to write, it has some advantages in certain situations. You are able to call attention to your skills and abilities and focus them on the job target (objective) more effectively. It can be utilized in a number of ways to allow some creative designs that you can tailor to your prospective job. Keep in mind, though, that all of that creativity takes time.

Some of the benefits of a Combination Resume include:

- It allows you to detail your work experience and accomplishments in a way that provides the prospective employer with a clear picture of how you will fulfill the job requirements of the position you seek.
- There is no clear way to design the combination style of resume correctly or incorrectly, so you have a lot of flexibility.
- You are still able to disguise anything that might be viewed as a disadvantage (a gap in dates of employment, for instance).

If that means you need a functional resume for a particular job and a combination resume for a different type of position, then you probably ought to create both. You lose nothing by creating both. In fact, it will help you to focus once again on your strengths, skills and accomplishments.

Functional Resume Sample:

PAUL MALONE

222 West First Street ~ Williamsburg, Virginia 23081

804-555-1212

support@resumeedge.com

SUMMARY OF QUALIFICATIONS

Accomplished, seasoned Professional with proven success in operations management to achieve the organizational mission. Superior communication skills, easily interacts with executives, regulatory agencies, clients, vendors, and staff. Technically proficient in spreadsheets, word processing, graphics, & accounting software. Member AICPA.

PROFESSIONAL EXPERIENCE

Operations Management

- Oversee all operational matters for a contract electronic manufacturing plant, in particular management development and strategic planning.
- Spearheaded effort for ISO 9001 certification.
- Secured financing for turnkey manufacturing; implemented new methods to track and improve profitability.

Financial Administration

- Supervised accounting staff with direct oversight of all accounting, payroll, & banking activities.
- Acquired lines of credit and initiated effective collection processes.
- Implemented GAAP-compliant financials and tax-planning strategies.

Compliance & Training

- Administered all areas of Agency compliance.
- Established periodic compliance audits & reviews; performed daily compliance supervision.
- Organized and conducted full operations training, from investments & insurance to financial & tax planning; directed client relations.

WORK HISTORY

ELECTRONICS EDGE, INC., Williamsburg, Virginia <i>Chief Operating Officer</i>	1999 – Present
FINANCE TEAM, INC., Baltimore, Maryland <i>Director of Compliance & Training (1996-1999)</i>	1993 – 1999
SPHERE ROBOTICS, Washington, D.C. <i>Subcontract Administrator (1992-1993)</i>	1985 – 1993

EDUCATION

GEORGETOWN UNIVERSITY, Washington, D.C.
Master of Business Administration, Financial Management Emphasis, 1987

STANFORD UNIVERSITY, Stanford, California
Bachelor of Science in Accounting, Minor in Business, 1979

Chronological Resume Sample:

CAROLE CHUN

122 Kismis • Singapore 598063

+65-55512121

support@resumeedge.com

ACCOUNTANT

Audits ~ Internal Controls ~ Reports

Meticulous, bilingual Professional with extensive experience at major accounting firms. Audit portfolio includes private and publicly held companies in diverse industries, including banking and manufacturing. Technically proficient in MS Excel / Word and the SCALA Business Solution. Excellent communicator who is fluent in English and Mandarin, conversant in Cantonese and Hokkien, and possesses working knowledge of Malay language. Strong team-working and multi-tasking skills, successfully completes projects within time & budget constraints. Attended the AIESEC Management Training Program. Willing to relocate.

PROFESSIONAL EXPERIENCE

LEVERPOL & SOLOMON, Singapore

2000 – 2001

Accountant

- Supported outsourced financial services of Infineum, Singapore, a joint-venture between ExxonMobil Chemical Company, Shell Petroleum Company Ltd., and Shell Oil. Infineum is one of the market leaders in the development, manufacture, and sale of additives for petroleum fuels & lubricants.
- Directed activities of four staff members in the general ledger department.
- Facilitated communication with the internal and external auditors.
- Refined operational controls in the management reporting process.
- Examined journal vouchers, general ledger reconciliations, and numerous analyses including P&L variance, inter-company accounts, and aging.
- Generated monthly close of financial statements; prepared management reports concerning purchases, sales, and inventory.
- Prepared submission of Exxon US Tax Conform Reporting package and various statutory reports & surveys.
- Assumed responsibility for resolving outstanding balance sheet items from 1999, including payroll-related accounts, suspense & accruals, and purchase reports on long outstanding orders; established more effective internal controls.

Accomplishments

- Awarded significant pay increases within an 18-month period for superior service.
- Designed and developed a general ledger procedure manual.
- Enhanced productivity by automating the month-end reporting process.

ACCELLOR & DAMIEN, Singapore

1997 – 1999

Auditor

- Audited a diverse portfolio, including private and publicly listed concerns involved in trading, investment holding, retail, manufacturing, and banking.
- Coordinated audit team activities to meet objectives within time constraints; mentored junior staff.
- Generated statutory accounts, management letters, and audit issues memoranda.

Accomplishments

- Established strategies to carry out comprehensive audit plans.
- Made recommendations for effective internal controls after careful examination of current system.

EDUCATION

UNIVERSITY OF LONDON, United Kingdom

Bachelor of Arts in Accounting and Financial Management, with Honors, 1997

TEACHER'S COLLEGE, Malaysia

South Australian Certificate of Education, 1994

INDEPENDENT HIGH SCHOOL, Malaysia

Unified Examination Certificate (Equivalent to GCE 'A' Level), 1993

Sijil Pelajaran Malaysia (Equivalent to GCE 'O' Level), 1992

Student / Recent Graduate Resume Sample:

THAM HUGHES

101 Main Street • New York, New York 10008
thughes@myisp.net • (C) 212.880.8800

QUALIFICATIONS PROFILE

Detail-oriented and thoughtful professional prepared to excel in the field of chemical engineering and contribute to organizational objectives.

- ◆ **Chemical Engineering:** Prepare water treatment plans for up to 6 million gallons of water per day. Develop water cleanup plan for nuclear reservation. Monitor and test air emissions and evaluate air pollution control processes. Develop physical and chemical methods for controlling air pollution. Utilize gas chromatography and dispersion modeling.
- ◆ **Process Design:** Analyze plant and equipment needs. Contribute to and develop most economic and effective practices. Establish lab procedures; ensure compliance with EPA guidelines, environmental regulations, and emission standards. Design digital control systems.
- ◆ **Computers & Administration:** Program in JavaScript and HTML and assist in Web site development. Utilize Windows-based PCs with various software: Matlab, Simulink, Equation Solvers, Lotus; Microsoft Office. Order lab equipment and supplies. Prepare technical reports and documentation.
- ◆ **Key Strengths:** Finely tuned analytical and research skills with dedication to clear communication and presentations. Adept at maintaining an exceptional rate of productivity, accuracy, and efficiency; well organized and proficient with details.

EDUCATION

Bachelor of Science Degree in Chemical Engineering (2008)

NEW YORK UNIVERSITY, New York, New York
Magna cum Laude Graduate, Academic All-American

Member, Society of Chemical Engineers, 2006 – 2008

EXPERIENCE HIGHLIGHTS

CITY OF NEW YORK, New York, New York

Air Quality Technician (Internship), 2008

Conducted studies in air pollution control and designed spreadsheets in Excel. Measured levels of pollution and made recommendations to improve air quality, including written reports and public speaking presentations.

- Commended by City Manager for contributions to environmental improvement plan.

NEW YORK UNIVERSITY, New York, New York

Teaching Assistant, 2006 – 2007

Assisted professors in chemical and environmental engineering courses. Led small group discussions and answered student questions. Graded tests and assignments. Supervised students in lab. Provided instruction in use of software including Matlab, Simulink, Excel, and Word.

- Selected from 75 students to become a Teaching Assistant.

MANHATTAN COMPUTERS, New York, New York

Sales Associate (concurrent with education), 2004 – 2007

Sold computers, peripherals, and software. Answered technical questions from customers. Demonstrated use of systems and applications. Generated a strong referral business through quality service.

- Built stellar reputation for quickly and effectively resolving issues and ensuring customer satisfaction.

--

RICHARD VASSOR

400 Summit Hill ~ Denver, Colorado 80127

303-555-1212

support@resumeedge.com

SALES PROFESSIONAL

Client Relations ~ Negotiations ~ Inside & Outside Sales

Dynamic and results-oriented with a successful track record in the industrial sales industry and a desire to move into pharmaceutical sales. Articulate and persuasive in dealing with all levels of management, peers, staff, and a diverse clientele. Consistently meets and exceeds corporate sales goals, while also mentoring staff to improve customer satisfaction. Special abilities in attention to detail, decision-making, organization, and marketing plans. Willing to travel.

CAREER ACCOMPLISHMENTS TRENT CORPORATION

Outside Sales

- In six months achieved an 80% overall sales increase in accounts excluding the Mohawk-Karastan national contract that Trent Corporation previously lost, with this account representing 59% of the territory's revenue.
- Retained 50% of Mohawk-Karastan business through creative marketing plans.
- Selected to attend and successfully completed company's prestigious outside sales / management trainee program.

Inside Sales

- Chosen to manage VIP clients, including APV Baker and E.I. Dupont representing annual revenues of \$2 million.
- Led inside sales staff in monthly gross profit and total sales.
- Increased total monthly gross profit by 249% in seven months.

PROFESSIONAL EXPERIENCE

TRENT CORPORATION, Denver, Colorado

1999 – Present

Sales Professional, Outside Sales (2001-Present)

Inside Sales (2000-Present); Corporate Trainee (1999-2000)

- Recognized by company for outstanding sales service and consistent leadership in reaching company goals.
- Chosen to be a corporate trainee.
- Taught *Introduction to Distribution Class* to branch employees.
- Completed training in all phases of business, including operations, product lines, sales, and distribution.
- Traveled to numerous branches to assist with sales-related issues.
- Marketed territory for new sales representative; developed improvements to cold-calling technique.
- Mined sales opportunities by conducting on-site surveys with consumers.

Additional Experience as a Collections Manager and Collector for Industrial Acceptance Corporation in Denver, Colorado

EDUCATION

COLORADO CITY COLLEGE, Denver, Colorado

Bachelor of Arts in Psychology, English Minor, 1996

The New Hybrid Resume

Forget what you've been told about chronological resumes.

It's easy to find advice on how to format resumes--just Google "proper resume format."

Just because it's easy to find doesn't make such advice correct or up to date, however.

One example that crops up in many resume advice sites and gets passed along by well-meaning friends, family members and colleagues is to use a reverse-chronological format, i.e.

the most-recent jobs listed first, instead of a functional resume structure, which describes your skills and experience without necessarily linking those elements to dates or even employers.

Which one is right? Both and neither, said Steve Burdan, a certified professional resume writer who works with TheLadders. The most effective resume is a hybrid that combines both functional and chronological information, with a summary section that outlines career highlights and key qualities and accomplishments, and a chronological section that puts those elements into context in well supported blurbs for each job title that not only state where you worked and when but also the nature of your top achievements and details of your job responsibilities.

Burdan recently used the hybrid approach to overhaul the resume of a sales professional. The salesperson's original resume used only the functional approach, which Burdan called the "least effective" format.

"The first thing I knew when I looked at the [original] version of his resume, I saw it and said 'Man, we got to melt it down and recast it,' so to speak," he said. "The primary drawback of the functional resume is it takes all these neat accomplishments out of chronological sequence. You don't know if the guy did something last week or 20 weeks ago."

The Hybrid resume

But a chronological resume doesn't stand alone, Burdan said. While a reverse-chronological resume clearly presents how recently in your career you accomplished a given achievement, it doesn't necessarily focus the reader's attention on the job seeker's strengths.

Burdan compares the job search to online dating, and he extends the metaphor to liken the hybrid resume to a well-positioned suitor in a speed-dating scene.

"You really want to put your best foot forward," he said. "In speed dating, you have 3 minutes to make that chemical connection. It's the same with your resume: At the beginning of the resume, you insert a strong profile and areas of expertise section. [The job seeker in question] didn't have that on his old resume. With the new hybrid resume, right at the beginning of the resume, I'm focusing the reader's attention immediately on what he's capable of doing. I wanted to make a big splash right up front."

In a hybrid resume, build up separate sections that cover both chronological information and functional information.

With the sales professional's resume, Burdan first built a branding statement area to encapsulate exactly what an employer would get were it to hire the candidate. The title of the revamped resume reads "Management -- Business Development," followed by a profile that begins: "Entrepreneurial leadership experience in new business development, territory management, branding strategies and industry networking initiatives in consumer-oriented and start-up business environments."

This branding section should also include a bulleted list with such items as "Profitably develop and implement successful business plans and high-impact product launches with a creative, visionary approach; ensure delivery of high-growth revenue results."

The hybrid resume then lists "Areas of Expertise" in its own section that includes such keywords as Strategic Planning, Relationship Building and Performance Metrics. Finally, the hybrid format details the job seeker's employment history in reverse-chronological order, with achievements highlighted in bulleted lists preceded by job-function descriptions in brief paragraphs.

In all the sections each sentence and key phrase are like nails in a strong building, Burdan said. "I'm nailing home what I want the reader to understand about what [a job seeker] is capable of doing."

PATRICIA CHOPIN
5540 B Street * Bridgeton, Missouri 63044
314.555.1697 * patti@anyisp.com

QUALIFICATIONS SUMMARY

Skilled and dedicated Executive Assistant with more than 12 years' experience coordinating, planning, and supporting daily operational and administrative functions.

- ** Demonstrated capacity to provide comprehensive support for executive-level staff; excel at scheduling meetings, coordinating travel, and managing all essential tasks.
- ** Proven track record of accurately completing research, reporting, information management, and marketing-support activities within demanding time frames.
- ** Adept at developing and maintaining administrative processes that reduce redundancy, improve accuracy and efficiency, and achieve organizational objectives.
- ** Highly focused and results-oriented in supporting complex, deadline-driven operations; able to identify goals and priorities and resolve issues in initial stages.
- ** Proficient in Microsoft Office Suite (Word, Outlook, Excel, PowerPoint), Visio, QuickBooks; Windows and Mac OS; type 90 wpm with complete accuracy.

Keyword Summary

Executive Assistant, Executive Support, Administrative Support, Office Administration, Office Manager, Office Administrator, Research, Customer Service, Time Management, Appointment Setting, Scheduling, Customer Support, Client Relations, Accounting, Budget, Finance, Financial, Documenting, Reporting, Invoicing, Data Entry, Phone Support

PROFESSIONAL EXPERIENCE

SPTM Systems, Inc., St. Louis, Missouri, 12/2004 to Present

– Executive Assistant

Provide high-level administrative support to Chief Financial Officer of leading manufacturer of solid imaging products and solutions with more than \$75 million in annual revenue.

Perform a variety of key investor-relations functions, addressing inquiries of current and potential shareholders, communicating with marketing department regarding investor-relations initiatives, and maintaining investor database. Collaborate with CFO to oversee distribution of financial releases to NASDAQ. Develop spreadsheets to improve and inform quality and risk-assessment initiatives. Prepare meeting agendas and carefully monitor all action items.

** Reduced company travel expenses by \$47,000 within first three months of tenure by identifying cost-effective travel agencies and negotiating vendor contracts.

** Successfully coordinated and hosted numerous client seminars, creating invitations and promotional materials, booking venues, and selecting guest speakers.

SMITH, INC, St. Louis, Missouri, 10/2000 to 11/2004

– Administrative Assistant

Served as Administrative Assistant for three partners and one principal of financial-services firm with more than 75 locations nationwide.

Continued ...

How to Create a Scannable Version of Your Resume

A scannable resume is a paper resume that is likely to be scanned into an applicant tracking system by an employer. Typically, larger companies scan resumes and, while systems vary, resume formatting needs to be modified to ensure any scanning technology will accurately read your resume.

Follow these steps to create your Scannable Resume:

1. Remove all graphics; they confuse scanners. This includes art, shading, bullets, and to be safe, horizontal and vertical lines/rules. You can use an asterisk, tilde, or hyphen to replace various symbols.
2. Be sure your name is on the first line of the resume and no other text is on that line.
3. Although tabs and centered text may be readable on most systems, it is safest to move all text to the left margin, remove tabs, and use the space bar to indent.
4. Use common and easily recognizable fonts. Ideally use a sans-serif font (without the little “feet” on characters) such as Arial or Helvetica, or a common serif font such as Times or Times New Roman.
5. Keep all point sizes between 10 and 14 points.
6. Use standard line spacing, i.e., avoid compressing lines of text.
7. Remove bold, italic, script, and underlining. Use all caps sparingly to create visual emphasis.
8. Keep “To” and “From” dates on one line, and use a single date on college degrees.
9. Use hyphens (rather than parentheses) around telephone area codes: 303-456-3945.



Is this an Interview or Interrogation?

By Janet White, Author

“Secrets of the Hidden Job Market: Change Your Thinking to Get the Job of Your Dreams”
Available on Amazon

I have an interview coming up next week and with luck, I'll make it past this screening and be invited back for round # 2. What can I say or do for those 30, 60 or 90 minutes that will increase my chances of having a shot at getting this job?

Traditional System response: It's important to remember that the point of an interview is to explore two main things:

1. Do you really know what you're doing, or "is that stuff on the resume real?" There's a lot of BS in some resumes, and interviewers will ask pointed questions to determine if you actually have the skills and experience you claim to have. Questions about this could be:

- Tell me about this accomplishment. How did you do it?
- Why did you decide to go into this field?
- How did you make the transition from this job to the next?
- What is your greatest strength?
- How do you manage people?
- Tell me about a project you managed/a plan you developed and implemented/a team you worked on/a goal you achieved.

Be prepared with stories about what you've done in the past in order to illustrate a key message you want to deliver about the reasons you are successful, the skills you have and want to use again, the way you work with others, and the value you will bring to your next employer.

2. Will you be the "right fit" for our culture and can you really help us reach our company goals?

Interviewers want to know how you think, how you approach and solve problems, and your attitudes toward colleagues and customers - internal and external. Questions about this will focus on your behavior and attitudes, and attempt to discover your values and work ethic, such as:

- Here's a scenario or problem we face at this organization...how you would go about dealing with it?
- Tell me about your greatest challenge at work and how you addressed it successfully.
- How would you deal with someone on your team who isn't pulling their weight?

- What failures have you had and how did you deal with them?
- Tell me what you would do in your first 90 days here and why.
- What do you like to do in your off-time and why?

For the questions that concern how you would work at the company, take your time answering the questions. It's OK to give it some thought. You can prepare somewhat by reading as much as you can about the company to understand the business and the challenges it might face. Also, thoroughly go over each part of the job description to understand exactly what is in the job and what you might be called on to do.

Identify what you've done in past jobs that are similar to what is required in the new job, so you can refer to that experience VERY briefly (e.g. "When I was at XYZ, I had a similar situation. Based on that, here's how I would approach this scenario...").

To prepare for questions related to past jobs, come up with stories in these categories. Construct the stories to illustrate the key points you want to make about your abilities, talents, skills, attitudes, and work style.

If you are asked the question about hobbies, it shows the interviewer is aware how you spend your off-time is indicative of your core personality and underlying talents. We tend to pursue things as hobbies based on what feels good and fun, what comes naturally. That usually means we'll contribute a LOT of value when we do similar things at work.

A great example of this is Captain Sullenberger, who successfully landed the bird-stricken airplane in the Hudson River. His hobby is flying glider planes. You couldn't ask for a better person to land a "glider jetliner."

More examples: People who play team sports as a hobby - softball, basketball, soccer - will work well in a team and probably do very well in client-facing jobs because they are social by nature. Someone who runs marathons can usually be counted on to stick with jobs until they are completed no matter the obstacles. A cook will be pretty creative and seek ideas and inspiration from others, and have the ability to synthesize information into something new. I think you get the idea.

Be prepared to draw a correlation between what you do off-time and how it can translate into why you would be an excellent part of the new company.

Contrarian System response: Just for a moment, imagine you are sitting across a table from someone you are meeting for the first time - the classic blind date. The reason you two agreed to come together face to face was because from what you know about each other, you seemed to have enough in common to explore whether the two of you could have some sort of a relationship.

As you settle into your chair, your potential partner whips out a checklist of questions, and begins to fire questions at you to verify what's in your personal profile (there's a lot of BS in some dating profiles) and determine if you actually have the qualities and life experience you claim to have. Questions about this could be:

- Tell me about your most recent relationship. What made it work or not?
- Why are you pursuing a relationship after such an extended period of being single?
- How do you make the transition from one relationship to another?
- What is your greatest strength?
- How do you manage conflicts in a relationship?

- Here's a scenario I have faced with previous partners...how you would go about dealing with it?
- Tell me about your greatest challenge at in a relationship and how you addressed it successfully.
- How would you deal with a partner who isn't pulling their weight?
- What failures have you had and how did you deal with them?
- Tell me what you would do in your first 90 days in a relationship and why.
- What do you like to do in your off-time and why?

Sound ludicrous? Well, that's exactly what the Traditional System will have you believe your job interview is supposed to be like - a terse, tense, impersonal, one-sided interrogation about you, your career and your life on and off the job.

You are not only expected to put up with this scenario, but you're supposed to sit there sweating bullets trying to respond to questions that have no correct answers. The truth is that none of the Traditional System's questions have anything to do with your ability to do the job, do it right and make everyone happy while you're doing it.

Since these questions are irrelevant to the meeting, you never have to answer any of them. The best way to avoid them entirely is to realize that your meeting is not about you, it's never about you, and should never be about you. Ever.

What the Traditional System fails to realize is that the hardest part about getting hired is getting your future colleagues to believe you have what they need to do what they need done, and that hurdle is behind you the instant they invited you to meet with them.

Let me repeat that: They asked to see you because they *already* believe you had what they needed. They had to believe that; otherwise, they wouldn't be wasting their time talking to you.

That's why, contrary to what the Traditional System will have you believe, the point of your interview is to explore only one thing: how well the two of you get along as people.

Who is this other person you're having this "date" with? No, it's not HR, a recruiter or any other intermediary. It's your future boss, "Mr. Bigg," who is either a department manager or corporate executive. While everyone else has the ability to say "no," only Mr. Bigg has the authority to say "yes," so he is the only one whose opinion about you matters.

Mr. Bigg is far too important and his time is far too valuable to play idiotic question and answer games. He already knows you can do the job (that's why he asked to see you), and any doubts he has about your "fit" with the company will be answered intuitively when you transform your meeting from an *interrogation* about you into a *conversation* about him.

Yes, it's the old secret to popularity: if you want someone to be interested in you, you have to be interested in them first. So, rather than talking about yourself, get Mr. Bigg talking about whatever is important to him, especially the problem/opportunity he has that he thinks you can help him with), and keep him talking about it or anything else he's interested in for as long as he wants to talk about it.

And when you make Mr. Bigg the center of your universe for those 30, 60 or 90 minutes, you'll discover how quickly and easily he will welcome you into his.



Common Job Interview Questions

There are certain questions that are asked at nearly every job interview. Knowing the right way to answer these questions can make the difference in a successful or not successful interview. To prepare, simply have a friend or family member, or rehearse out loud with yourself and the mirror to practice these common questions. Be sure to avoid sounding rehearsed when answering the questions as this can lead to the potential employer questioning if the answers are genuine.

Here are some common questions and tips to keep in mind when answering them. Too many job seekers stumble through interviews as if the questions are coming out of left field. But many interview questions are to be expected. Study this list and plan your answers ahead of time so you'll be ready to deliver them with confidence.

What Are Your Weaknesses?

This is the most dreaded question of all. Handle it by minimizing your weakness and emphasizing your strengths. Stay away from personal qualities and concentrate on professional traits: "I am always working on improving my communication skills to be a more effective presenter. I recently joined Toastmasters, which I find very helpful." Or, you could say that my weakness in my previous job was the lack of computer skills, but, I have since taken a course and can now make great spread sheets, etc.; which with this response you turned a weakness into a strength.

Why Should We Hire You?

Summarize your experiences: "With five years' experience working in the financial industry and my proven record of saving the company money, I could make a big difference in your company. I'm confident I would be a great addition to your team."

Why Do You Want to Work Here?

The interviewer is listening for an answer that indicates you've given this some thought and are not sending out resumes just because there is an opening. For example, "I've selected key companies whose mission statements are in line with my values, where I know I could be excited about what the company does, and this company is very high on my list of desirable choices."

What Are Your Goals?

Sometimes it's best to talk about short-term and intermediate goals rather than locking yourself into the distant future. For example, "My immediate goal is to get a job in a growth-oriented company. My long-term goal will depend on where the company goes. I hope to eventually grow into a position of responsibility."

Why Did You Leave (Or Why Are You Leaving) Your Job?

If you're unemployed, state your reason for leaving in a positive context: "I managed to survive two rounds of corporate downsizing, but the third round was a 20 percent reduction in the workforce, which included me."

If you are employed, focus on what you want in your next job: "After two years, I made the decision to look for a company that is team-focused, where I can add my experience."

When Were You Most Satisfied in Your Job?

The interviewer wants to know what motivates you. If you can relate an example of a job or project when you were excited, the interviewer will get an idea of your preferences. "I was very satisfied in my last job, because I worked directly with the customers and their problems; that is an important part of the job for me."

What Can You Do for Us That Other Candidates Can't?

What makes you unique? This will take an assessment of your experiences, skills and traits. Summarize concisely: "I have a unique combination of strong technical skills, and the ability to build strong customer relationships. This allows me to use my knowledge and break down information to be more user-friendly."

What Are Three Positive Things Your Last Boss Would Say About You?

It's time to pull out your old performance appraisals and boss's quotes. This is a great way to brag about you through someone else's words: "My boss has told me that I am the best designer he has ever had. He knows he can rely on me, and he likes my sense of humor."

What Salary Are You Seeking?

It is to your advantage if the employer tells you the range first. Prepare by knowing the going rate in your area, and your bottom line or walk-away point. One possible answer would be: "I am sure when the time comes, we can agree on a reasonable amount. In what range do you typically pay someone with my background?"

How to Answer Job Interview Questions

Questions are an important part of the job interview; they allow the employer to determine if you are indeed a good fit for the company and the environment in which the company is run. There are many standard job interview questions that employers choose to take advantage of, with the occasional creative question used to gauge the on-the-spot thinking skills of the potential employee to determine if they are a good fit for the environment. Use these tips when answering job interview questions to ace the job interview and get the job!

Take a moment to think About Your Answers

Taking a short moment to think about the answer that you are going to provide to a question that has just been asked can help to narrow down the answer. Think about the answer in parts, if there are two parts to the question be sure to answer one part of the question at a time. When you feel yourself going off track, the question has more than likely been answered. Take this time to pause or allow the employer to follow up with a different question. Keep answers to a

maximum of one or two minutes long. This will ensure that the interview will flow. Be sure to look for cues from the employer that can determine when the answer has been answered. Keeping answers longer than this could lead to the interviewer feeling like you are rambling and avoiding parts of the question.

Keep answers concise and answer the Question

It is easy to go off track and realize that you have not answered the question; using the above tips like thinking about your answer and using a time limit can ensure that you stay on track through the process of answering the questions that are asked by the employer. Keep your answer short and be sure that it answers the question that has been asked. Don't be vague when answering questions. Highlight your answers with pauses and enthusiasm when you speak to keep the potential employer interested.

Look for Cues from the Interviewer

Body language can be an important part of the interview process. The employer uses body language and the interviewee can often mirror this body language to establish a rapport between the person conducting the interview and the person that is interviewing for the position. Cues can lead the interview to the places to answer those hard questions. Be sure to keep your body language open and look for signs like agreeing and nodding while you are answering the questions. If this is happening, than you know that you are going in the right direction. Job interview questions can be a breeze when you know how to answer. Use a mirror, friend or family member to practice common interview questions with to allow you to think on your feet, easily.



Questions for You to Ask at the Interview

You should be prepared to ask questions of the interviewer. Ask questions throughout the interview as appropriate. For instance you should ask for clarification if the interviewer's questions are not clear to you. Usually towards the end of the interview the interviewer will ask if you have any questions. Do not reply "no, everything seems clear." Such a response may communicate to the interviewer that you lack of interest in the company or position or that you do not have enough knowledge to ask meaningful questions.

Do not ask questions about pay or benefits at this point. Wait until you either have the offer or are assured of an offer before asking this type of question. Ask only questions which really have meaning for you. Do not ask questions merely for the sake of asking them. However, some of your questions could be as follows. Questions about:

1. Prospective duties, opportunities, etc.

- Does this department have its own budget?
- Are the reporting relationships of this position clear?
- How long has the supervisor of this position been with the company? What is his/her reputation?
- What are other employees' tenure with the company, reputation or academic training?
- Does a position guide exist for this position? Might I please have a copy?
- Has the position you describe been evaluated by some set means? How long have you had this position in your organization?
- What would be the next career progression from this position? Does the company see growth for this position or its department? What kind of people are in the department?
- Do you have an appraisal system?

2. Previous incumbent

- Does the position have a present incumbent? Why would you wish to replace the incumbent?
- Does the incumbent know he/she is being replaced?
- Does the incumbent know how long he/she will be in the present position?
- Why did the present incumbent leave?
- Was he/she successful or was he/she a failure?
- Why was he/she a failure?
- Why was he/she a success?
- How long did the incumbent hold the position?
- Did other people hold this position previously and, if so, how long was their tenure?

3. Prospective employer

- Do you have documented company policies and procedures? Do you have a management development program?
- Do you have an annual report that I might have?
- What are the goals of the company over the next 5-10 years?

4. How and when the job will be filled

- Who will make the final decision on the filling of position?
- Why are you looking for a candidate outside of the organization? How long have you been searching for a candidate?
- Are other candidates being considered?
- Am I a serious candidate?
- Are there other people I must see? When are you going to make a decision?

5. May I call you by _____?



How NOT to Follow Up After a Job Interview

Angry e-mail? Check. Thank-you messages read from scripts? Check. Here's a rogues' gallery of what else not to do.

By Lisa Vaas, TheLadders.com

If you can craft an intelligent letter or e-mail to follow up after a job interview, it could be the tipping point that pushes you into the job candidate finalist category.

"The thank-you note remains one of the most overlooked marketing tools of the job search," said Stephanie Daniel, vice president and group program manager at Keystone Associates, a career-management and transition services consultancy.

And then there's the not-so-well-crafted message, which can put you, the job seeker, in the "loser" category. A number of professionals on the receiving end of follow-up e-mail, snail mail, FedEx packages, singing telegrams and other communications shared with us this rogues' gallery of infamously inappropriate follow-ups. They caution readers: Do not to try this at home.

The monologist

Heather Krasna, an expert in public-sector executive jobs, tells of a client who left a long-winded thank-you message on an executive's voicemail, directly reading from the thank-you letter she was going to send.

"This was just weird from the employer's perspective and came across as too intense or desperate as well as an inappropriate use of voicemail," Krasna said. "She would have been better off had she just mailed a thank-you note."

The unprofessional e-mailer

Carl Gould, Chief Discovery Officer at business mentoring firm CMT Mentors, told us about one job applicant who used a personal e-mail address that referenced a side job as a part-time clown. "Needless to say, we filtered that one into the garbage rather quickly," Gould said.

The aggressive ones

Scott R. Gingold, CEO of Powerfeedback, has had follow-ups come via Twitter, LinkedIn, FedEx, snailmail, fax, Web site and at business events. They can get creepy regardless of the medium. His personal rogues' gallery features:

- Being invited to a sporting event by an applicant who doesn't know him
- Having female candidates be sexually suggestive
- Multiple phone calls after he's told the job seeker not to call
- Daily e-mail after he's told applicants to stop
- Being told in a letter that he reminds an applicant of a deceased relative

The angry guy

Krasna had a "horrific" experience years ago in which a job candidate, still in school, sent an angry e-mail to a recruiter because he didn't get the job. The job seeker said he was "glad he didn't get the job because he wouldn't have wanted to work for the company anyway," Krasna said, and then "complimented" the recruiter on her figure.

"Needless to say, this e-mail was forwarded along to the college career center, and the student was informed that he would no longer be allowed to use our career services," she said. "It was a while before the college's reputation would be recovered at that company!"

The cranky guy

Thomas Tuft, an attorney with Tuft & Arnold Law Offices, in Maplewood, Minn., once had a law student send a "very cranky letter" after the firm hadn't responded to his resume submission within a week. Mind you, this was at a time when the firm wasn't hiring. "It is not our practice to respond to the dozens of resumes we receive unsolicited," Tuft said. "That student will never be hired here."

The casually sloppy

While the preceding are all somewhat spectacularly bad follow-ups, Krasna pointed out that people often hurt their chances simply by not using good grammar and spelling in their communications. "Taking the time to write a careful thank-you note that touches on all the reasons you want to work for the organization, as well as how you would be a perfect fit for them, will make you stand apart in a more positive way," she noted.



Tips for Successful Salary Negotiations

During my first job interview, my mom drove me to Baskin-Robbins while we practiced interview questions. One question we did not practice was "How much money are you expecting?"

When the ice cream store owner asked, I said, "Well, my parents are cutting off my allowance for the summer so I'd like \$20 a week." That seemed like a lot because I wouldn't have to buy school lunches with that money. Later, my mom pointed out that I gave a number so low that it would have been illegal. In the end, he paid me minimum wage for a 40-hour week, and because I had asked for so little at the beginning, by the time I was a manager I was still making less than the scoopers.

So I quit, and moved to a pizza parlor where I got extra money for cutting the salami with the machine that cuts peoples' fingers. It wasn't until later in my career when I realized that there are established strategies for salary negotiations, and if you follow them, you will likely get the salary you deserve without risking the loss of a limb.

Don't give a number during the interview.

The first person to talk establishes the range. If you give a number first, the interviewer will either tell you you're in the same ballpark as him, or you're high. And probably you will never know if you hit below the range the interviewer was considering. The opposite is true, too. So the interviewer will always want you to tell your range first. (Do not try to remedy this situation by giving an unreasonably high number because then you will sound unreasonable.)

Your first line of defense is to say you'd like to talk about salary once you have an offer. If the interviewer is good, he will persevere. So try asking the interviewer what he would pay for this job. Whatever number he gives, you can say, "That will be a fine starting point." (You will ask for more later.)

You can also say that you are still learning about the job responsibilities, which impact what salary you'd expect. Mention that the opportunities for you to contribute to the company are more important than the salary. This tactic makes you look like a team player, and it gives a direction that the interview can go down besides the salary path.

If all else fails, think package. Say, "My package at the last company was worth" Be sure to include benefits and bonuses. Your interviewer will have no idea what percentage of the number you gave is salary, and what sort of benefits you are counting, so you will appease him with a number while guarding the useful information for yourself.

Have courage: The interviewing manager should pay you for your current worth, not what you were being paid by another company. Do not feel guilty about withholding a number; if nothing else, corporate America values good negotiators. I went through this process at interviews for my last job. And after hemming and hawing I gave my "package" answer, and the interviewer laughed. He said, "I hope you negotiate this hard when you are working for me."

Do not negotiate until you have an offer in writing.

Here's why (and you should remember this for when the tables are turned): Let's say the hiring manager knows she's going to give you salary and bonus. If you do not get the complete written offer before you start negotiating, then you might get her to go up \$5K in base salary but you will lose \$10K in bonus without even knowing it because she will take the bonus off the table before even bringing it up with you. She will go back to her boss and say, "I saved us \$5K." Instead, you want her to put the full offer in writing so that you know what you have to work with in negotiations.

Once you have that written offer, ask for a night to think about it and come back with a counter offer. You might say you hate confrontation, and negotiating is not your strength, but if you try you will almost always get more money, and you will definitely get better each time you try.

Do your research and plan your attack.

To know what offer to come back with, you need to know the pay range for your position. Check out salary surveys online and in trade journals. Talk with friends who have similar jobs or recruiters who regularly fill this type of position in your geographic region. Find the top of the salary range and ask for that. Show the hiring manager your research and remind her why you are worth the top of the range.

If you are fortunate enough to find that you are at the top of your salary range, then expand your job duties slightly so you can ask for a slightly higher salary. For example, if you are a marketing manager with a background in technical writing, then you could ask for slightly more money because most marketing managers will pass off technical writing in marketing documents to someone else. You will be able to handle those tasks yourself.

Know what you need.

Each person has needs that extend beyond money. You can listen to advice from your friends, but in the end, you have to go to the job every day, and you have to decide if you are going to like it. No salary survey can tell you that. Some people will trade money for time at home with their kids. Some people will trade money for the opportunity to work with movie stars. You need to know what you will trade money for, but be sure to be honest with yourself. Don't give up extra money just because you hate negotiating. The combination of good self-knowledge and good negotiation skills can take you far down the path of finding a job that's right for you at the salary you deserve.



The Thank You Letter

Have you recently gone for an interview and are wondering about the follow up that should occur? For those people that have recently finished a job interview, here is the proper follow up that should occur after a job interview has been completed - who knows, it could help you to increase the great first impression and nail the job!

A great follow up for an interview is a small thank you note written to the employer which will thank the employer for the time that they have spent with you during the job interview. The thank-you letter should include contact information and welcome a follow up from the employer at their convenience. Many job hunters fail to write this thank-you letter which can create a large effect from such a small gesture.

The thank you letter should be hand written, never typewritten or written on a computer. It is best written on a small note card that can make a great impression to follow up on a great interview.

And the follow-up phone call

A follow up phone call to the company is often seen as an inconvenience. However, there are proper ways to make this phone call to obtain the information without disturbing the potential employer and ruining your chances of being called back for a second interview - or even to be offered the job. Simply phoning to ask if the position has been filled is an effective way that can lead to an answer - as well, you can avoid waiting by the phone to hear from the company. This information can be obtained from the front desk, or you can simply leave your number to gain the information in a return phone call. These methods can be used with success when following up on a job interview.

Unfortunately, many interviewers state that they will only contact potential applicants that are going onward towards the next level. This may be a second interview, testing or even a job offer. If you are not one of these select few, or even the one - then you may not be contacted from the company to come back into the office. The important thing is not to get discouraged - keep going with your job search to find a position that is best for you.



Summary

Until we meet again in our First Tuesday session next month, may God bless you on your job search. Remember: The most important things you must do are to be positive and include Him in every step of your journey.

Empowering Job Seekers consists of two different topic-specific sessions:

- 1st Tuesday of each month: How to find the hidden jobs since 90% of the good jobs are never advertised.
- 3rd Tuesday of each month: Proven tips on how to make the best impression in your resume, cover letters, interviewing, and much more.

Each session is held in The Hills Church of Christ (NRH Campus), 6300 NE Loop 820, North Richland Hills, TX, in room 207, from 7 p.m. to 9 p.m. -- except on holidays. 817-581-3303



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- Join our Yahoo! Group: <http://finance.groups.yahoo.com/group/EmpoweringJobSeekers/>
- Join us on LinkedIn “Groups” under “Empowering Job Seekers”