



Oklahoma City Chapter presents

***2006 CAREER NIGHT
& ZENITH AWARDS***

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Bricktown Brewery

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25 Insider Tips – Career Planning

Before you begin your career search, ask yourself a few questions. What do you want to do? What are you trying to do? What kind of job do you want? By answering these questions at the outset, you create a career plan that focuses your search. Review the following 25 tips organized to help you in your career planning process.

1. Know what skills you enjoy using.

Job-hunting requires going back to "square one." Make an inventory of your abilities and acquired knowledge; this will assist in making career decisions. You should develop an understanding of yourself including values, interests, aptitudes, abilities, personal traits, and desired lifestyle, and become aware of the interrelationship between you and your occupational choice.

2. Match your interests to career-related skills.

To make a successful career choice, you must match your interests with the skills you want to offer a prospective employer. Try using a self-assessment test to help identify your aptitudes, personality, and interests. These tests allow you to determine your strengths and match them to career-building skills.

3. Identify a career direction.

Career planning is a lifelong process, requiring continuous effort to meet changing employment conditions. To achieve and manage a satisfying career, it is crucial to identify a preferred career direction and to implement effective career-enhancing strategies.

4. Maximize your resources.

There are many resources available to help in planning a career. Use these resources for career assessment, exploration, and planning to help you identify potential careers, gather information about those careers, and match the career to your own assessment of skills. Resources include career-planning software, career workshops, school career service centers, Internet resources, library resource centers, employment service departments, career fairs, and career days.

5. Research occupations.

Find out more about the nature of the jobs that interest you, such as educational requirements, salary, working conditions, future outlook, and anything else that can help you determine the best career for you.

6. Gain practical experience.

Evaluate your occupational choices and gain practical experience through internships, cooperative education, relevant summer employment, volunteer work, and campus activities.

7. Interview people whose occupations interest you.

You can always find someone who has done something that at least approximates what you want to do. If possible, set up personal meetings or phone calls with these people to discuss the nature of their work. You will learn a great deal about your new career and will be better informed when choosing a career direction.

8. Prepare a career portfolio.

Prepare a collection of work samples, a resume, recommendations, a list of references, transcripts, copies of applications, and other pertinent job search tools.

9. Plan your personal job search campaign.

Once you are aware of your career values, interests, and skills and are ready to launch yourself into a new career, you need to plan your personal job campaign. This entails establishing your career goals, planning and organizing your job search campaign, preparing materials, and achieving your job search campaign objectives within the time frame you have set.

10. Begin preparation for a job search.

Before embarking on a new career search, it is crucial to learn how to prepare resumes and cover letters specifically designed for a career change. Additionally, since you will need to practice identifying and communicating your transferable skills, you will need more time to prepare for interviews.

11. Anticipate and prepare for problems.

Planning for potential problems will help ensure your career change goes smoothly. You may not be able to predict exactly what problems might arise, but make a list of potential concerns that may be likely in your case. If you take the time to plan for potentially difficult situations beforehand, you may be able to turn an obstacle into a solvable problem when the need arises.

12. Determine the best way to market yourself.

Think of your job search as a campaign; you are promoting your skills, training, and experience to potential employers. Your career change strategy includes repositioning your resume to highlight your relevant accomplishments, using your network of friends, relatives, and professional contacts to generate job leads, and developing effective interview skills.

13. Determine what skills employers want.

Employers are demanding more skills and accomplishments from their candidates, not just job titles. Find out what skills today's employers are looking for in your career field by reading the requirements of job advertisements for your occupation.

14. Expand your horizons.

Do not limit yourself to looking for new careers in growing industries. What is hot today is not always hot tomorrow, and there is usually strong competition in these areas. Let your research carry you into unexpected and unanticipated areas. You may be surprised at what you discover.

15. Learn new skills.

From your research, you will know which skills employers value most in your target career field. If you do not possess these skills, you will need training. There is a variety of training options that will help you prepare for a new job: self-learning, workshops, conferences, Internet, e-learning, on-the-job training, and internships. Explore your options and make a choice based on the needs of your career path.

16. Decide which employers to contact.

Once you have completely researched the companies you are interested in working for, determine which companies offer the best potential for career advancement and which companies have positions open in your field. These are the best employers to contact during your initial search and offer the best chance for success.

17. Probe the marketing trends of the workforce.

The better understanding you have about how global events affect the workplace, the more prepared you'll be to meet the challenges. To learn where the job market is going, it is necessary for you to probe the current trends. Which industries are spurring new jobs and opportunities? What skills will be needed to compete in the future?

18. Develop a daily plan.

Once you have narrowed your career choices, create a workable plan with a schedule for each of the strategies and steps you will take. Map out which activities you will do each day, e.g., Monday and Wednesday will be devoted to networking, Tuesday and Saturday for online job search strategies, etc. and stick with your plan. Your job search needs to be treated as a new job and it is far easier to manage when you give it a structure and have a routine.

19. Start planning now.

If you are unhappy with your present career, and do not start planning a career change now, your attitude may continue to deteriorate and begin affecting your job performance. Begin your job search before your attitude affects your performance and you put your job in jeopardy. This will give you control over the time you can spend on your search and your ability to find the right job to transition to. Additionally, you will maintain your reputation as a quality employee.

20. Assess your career choices.

Compare the facts you have collected about yourself and facts you have collected about jobs and decide questions such as: Can you see yourself carrying out all the different duties of the job? Would you be happy doing those tasks? Can you use your abilities in that job? Does this career satisfy your needs? Based on these and other questions, decide which job is best for you.

21. Discuss career choices with people you know.

Talk to friends, parents, teachers and career counselors. Brainstorm with them; let them know what your interests and skills are and they may be able to think of possible career choices that you were not able to identify.

22. Maximize your online resources.

There are many sites on the Internet, which discuss the thousands of career options available. Discover a variety of these sites by typing "career planning" or "career" into your favorite Internet search engine.

23. Narrow your focus.

After all of the researching, interviewing, exploring, and assessing you have completed, you should have a general idea of your likes and dislikes and a general idea of what you are good at. Now it is time to focus on the specific careers that maximize all of these areas.

24. Look for new career ideas in all areas of your life.

New careers can be built on ideas from anywhere. Look for, or create, environments in which they can flourish. Foster creativity in all areas of your life: at work, in traffic, or while shopping. Make brainstorming a part of your career search. Encourage others to help you generate new ideas. Use outside sources for new thoughts. Break your routines. Go to a library, museum, or city hall. Read a different newspaper or magazine. See a different kind of movie. You want new ideas and they can come from anywhere.

25. Be Patient.

Be patient and be realistic. Do not expect a glamorous career to appear immediately. Use your common sense, listen to other people's advice, be yourself in interviews, and do the necessary work it will take to find the right job in a new career.

Insider Advice – Job Searching

Searching for a new job can be one of the most challenging, yet potentially rewarding, endeavors you undertake. The challenge is to maintain the commitment, patience, and perseverance that a job search requires. The reward is finding a job that is a perfect fit for your personal and professional needs. For a successful job search, it is important to be prepared, focused, and organized. An important tool for achieving this goal is a Job Search Plan that clearly defines, tracks, and measures the progress of your search. Use a notebook or personal organizer to create your own personal plan.

Necessary Steps for a Successful Job Search

Define your Career Objective

Identify the type of job you are looking for and what skills and abilities you are looking to use. Having a clear objective will help keep you focused on finding the right job.

Develop a Positioning Statement

Develop a concise statement, 30 seconds or less, outlining what you can bring to your new career. This should include your skills, capabilities, and key accomplishments; and can be similar to the summary statement of your resume. Memorize your positioning statement so you can quickly and succinctly state your qualifications to a prospective employer.

Create a List of Target Companies

Determine the type of company you would prefer to work for. Consider the type of work, size, location, and corporate culture. Sources of information include area business guides, chambers of commerce, articles on local companies or industries, and company Web sites. You should identify at least 30-50 companies for your initial job search effort.

Establish and Measure Goals

Set aggressive daily, weekly, and monthly goals for yourself and track your progress. One goal might be to contact three hiring managers each week, another might be to send out 20 resumes each week. Keeping a log of your job search activity will give you clues on how to improve your job searching abilities.

How Do You Know Which Job is Right for You?

Deciding if a position is right for you will be one of the most important decisions you make during your job search process. You need to determine if the position meets your personal and professional needs. What do you like to do? What kind of work environment do you enjoy? What level of salary are you looking for? How many hours a week are you willing to devote to your career? Each job will represent a balance between a variety of potentially opposing factors. You have to determine the right balance between your professional and personal life.

Essential Job Search Tools

The following list represents the essential tools every job seeker needs for a successful job search.

Resume: an updated and professionally written resume. Be prepared to tailor your resume to the requirements of each job opportunity.

Cover Letter: a persuasive cover letter. Start with a persuasive cover letter that you can modify for each employer.

References: a list of personal and professional references. Contact potential references and obtain their permission to include them on your reference list.

Samples: examples of your work. If appropriate for the type of job you are seeking, gather examples of your best work to bring to the interview.

Research: research you gathered about the company. Bring research so that you can refer to these materials during the interview to generate questions and topics of discussion.

How to Manage Your Job Search

Think of your job search as a job. It is important to spend the time doing the research, tracking down leads, and pursuing opportunities. Each day review your Job Search Plan. Analyze your progress and determine if you need to adjust your plan. Set daily and weekly goals for yourself and monitor your plan to ensure your goals are being achieved.

The Best Sources for Finding Your Next Job

Networking

Studies have shown that the majority of all jobs are filled before they are published in newspapers, listed on corporate Web sites, or posted at career Web sites. The best way to locate these jobs is through networking. Your network includes friends, family, industry contacts, and members of professional, community, or volunteer organizations to which you belong. Try to contact at least one or two people per day, either to make initial contact or to follow up on a previous conversation. Give your resume to family, friends, former colleagues, and industry contacts. Stay in touch with each person at least once every two weeks to see if they need additional resumes or information. This repeated contact should ensure that if they do come across a job opportunity that meets your needs, they will think of you first.

Direct Contact

You have done research and identified 30 to 50 companies you would like to work for. Call each company directly to determine who the hiring manager would be for the type of position you are seeking. Once you have identified that person attempt to make personal contact. Explain why you would like to work for the organization, and describe how your skills and abilities can help the company achieve its goals. If there is a position open, ask for an interview. If there is no position available, ask for an informational interview to learn more about the company and its business. If you meet the hiring manager in person, and the meeting goes well, when a position opens in your field, you will have an excellent chance of being on the list of candidates for the job.

Staffing Agencies and Search Firms

These organizations -- including Search Firms, Recruiting Agencies, Private Employment Agencies, and Temporary Employment Agencies -- work with job seekers to fill open positions. Ask members of your network to recommend search firms, recruiters, or private employment agencies that have the ability to provide quality job leads. Another way to locate staffing agencies and search firms is through the Internet or your local yellow pages.

Advertisements

Employment ads can be found through the Internet on company Web pages, local and national job sites, and career-related Web sites; or in newspapers, trade magazines, and some government publications. Your local library will have a variety of these resources available. When you find a job that meets your search criteria, keep a record of the company name, job title, required qualifications, and contact information. If you found the job on the Internet include the Web page address so you can locate the listing again. Remember to tailor your resume and cover letter to the requirements of the position before replying to the advertisement.

School Placement Offices

Your school should have a placement office with a variety of resources available to assist you in your job search. These should include tools for assessing what career is right for you, resume and cover letter advice, job listings, and job placement services.

Job Fairs

You can find announcements for job fairs in newspapers, magazines, or through the Internet. Note the location, date, time, and companies that will be present at the fair. Research each company beforehand to learn what job openings they have in your career area. Visit booths for the companies you are interested in first, while you are still energetic and enthusiastic. Prepare and practice a 30-second introduction that describes your best qualifications quickly and succinctly. Finally, bring plenty of resumes, dress professionally, and wear comfortable shoes.

Resume Databases

Potential employers and recruiters use resume databases to find candidates, so it's a good idea to have your resume listed on as many of these sites as possible. You can also use the Internet to post your resume on local or industry specific job banks.

How to Stay Focused and Productive

Job searching can take a lot of time and energy. You need to stay positive, focused, and productive. Do not become discouraged if your search doesn't produce immediate results. Remember, you are not the only person looking for work. It may be helpful to contact a local support group for people seeking employment, to hear how others are dealing with the problems and frustrations of a job search. Members of these groups might also become valuable networking contacts in the future.

Questions & Answers – Job Searching

Q: What is networking?

Many studies have shown that a majority of jobs in the United States are filled through a process called networking. What is networking? It means building contacts with people through professional groups, trade associations, volunteer and community work, alumni associations, church groups, etc., who can help you learn more about a job or industry and can also help you identify jobs when or even before they become open. As contacts lead to more contacts, you develop a network.

Q: Who should I try to meet? Why would anyone take the time to speak with me?

It's a good idea to think broadly about the people you would like to meet as you're building your network. Anybody who has a job similar to the job you want, works for a firm you're interested in, or is in the same industry could be helpful to you. But why would they spend time talking to you? One reason would be a sense of professional obligation - to help a colleague in the industry move on to their next step. Remember, someday you might be able to return the favor to them. A second reason is social obligation. Most people feel a sense of social obligation to assist those in need. Sometimes all you have to do is ask for help.

Q: How can I develop a network?

If you don't know anybody in the field you would like to enter, then speak to family, friends, neighbors, the friends of neighbors, the neighbors of family members about your job search. These people have a kind disposition toward you and have a sense of social obligation to assist. Odds are you'll find at least one person who's doing the kind of job that you want through your friends or family. A second source is professional associations. People in professional associations are usually very willing to help somebody who wants to join their profession. You can get information about the professional associations in a good reference library or through the Internet. A third source is your local business news. If somebody's name is mentioned in the paper, you might want to drop a note, or call him or her directly, and express your interest in the article as a means of networking.

Q: Is networking really necessary?

You may ask, "You know, I just want a job. Is all this networking really necessary?" Since the majority of the jobs filled in the United States every year are through networking, it's a good idea to use this process even though it's less direct than you may be comfortable with.

Q: How can I evaluate a job offer to determine if I really want to accept it?

Congratulations! Someone has offered you a new job opportunity. Should you accept it? The first thing to do is ask yourself, "What do I really want in my next job?" Then make a list of things you want and rank them in order of importance. If you have a Career Transition Plan, you may have done this already. Once you have made a list of what you want from your next job, you can compare that to what you expect to gain from the offer. If most of what you want is going to be met, you should seriously be considering saying *Yes*. If you find that there are some things important to you that are lacking, you should seriously be thinking about giving a polite *No*.

Q: What ethical issues will I face in the job search process?

There are some important ethical issues for you to remember in a job search process. First, pursue only those jobs in which you have a reasonable and sincere interest. Secondly, make sure that everything you tell an employer is honest, whether it's on your resume, in your cover letter, or at your interview. Third, if an offer is extended to you, and you say Yes, then live up to that obligation. Also, you should notify other employers that you are withdrawing from the job search process and provide your current employer with an advanced notice of at least two weeks before leaving.

Q: Should I visit the company again before accepting an offer?

When a new job has been offered to you, spend at least one day at the firm. Watch people work, see how they relate to each other, and get a sense of the atmosphere and company culture. It's true that you've been exposed to the company during the interview process, but then you were nervous and tense and focused on selling yourself. At a follow-up visit, you can make observations and ask about things, which may not have occurred to you previously.

Q: In what way has technology changed the way people look for a job?

Advances in technology provide you with additional ways to look for a job. For example, traditionally you would send one resume to every employer of interest to you. That's fine, but now you can also send your resume to very reliable databases that employers access when they have a particular need. This makes your resume available to a broader set of employers 24 hours a day. Another great advantage for you is accessing information on your own computer, or on a computer in your local library. You can now access information through the Internet in a matter of minutes that used to take hours to collect.

Q: How can I use the Internet in my job search?

The Internet contains an enormous amount of information for job searchers. You can:

- Research companies by viewing the company Web sites and general business Web sites.
- Submit your resume and cover letter to national and local career Web sites.
- E-mail your resume and cover letter to prospective employers.
- Locate job listings through career Web sites.

Q: What are the risks associated with using technology in a job search?

Technology can be a useful tool in your job search, but there are some things to be aware of. First, set reasonable expectations. Keep in mind that finding a good job requires preparation and hard work. Second, if you submit your resume to a database, it is possible that your own employer could access it. Before you submit your resume, find out what safeguards you have. Third, as wonderful as the Internet is for meeting new people electronically, nothing should replace meeting people face-to-face.

Q: Should I fax or e-mail my resume?

You can deliver your resume by fax or by e-mail faster than by conventional methods, but is it a good idea? Yes, if the employer has requested that you send your resume by fax or e-mail. However, some employers may be annoyed when their fax machines and their e-mail get cluttered with resumes that they did not request. Also consider that your faxed resume, if read by a human being instead of being scanned into a resume database, will not be on the same quality paper you would have sent through the mail, and may not retain its professional appearance when printed.

Q: Should I submit my resume to a resume database?

Should you submit your resume to a firm, which manages a resume database? There are several things to take into account. The first is cost - it should be free or almost free to you. Second, make sure to safeguard your confidentiality unless confidentiality is not important to you. Also, keep in mind that just posting your resume is no substitute for your own preparation and hard work in contacting companies directly. Finally, with a database,

many employers will have access to your data. It's a good idea to be prepared in case you hear from somebody unexpected. It's much better to say, "I'm very glad that you called," or "I'm very excited about meeting with you," than to say, "I just don't know what you're talking about," or "I haven't even heard of your company."

Q: Is it better to look for a new job in a weak economy or a strong one?

Many people wonder how the state of the economy should affect their plans for looking for a new job. You should only be concerned about things that you can influence, and you can't influence the state of the economy. What you want to do is put your energy into looking for a new job that best suits your purposes. Whether the economy is good or the economy is bad, the time to look is when the time is right for you.

Q: What personal characteristics will help or hurt my efforts to find a new job?

There are three personal characteristics, which will help you in your job search effort. First, be patient, it takes time to find your next good job. Secondly, be persistent. You're going to find disappointments along the road, but if you keep going you'll eventually find the job you want. Third, remember to always be polite. Sometimes our frustration or concern comes out as anger or rudeness towards people, and you want everyone in your job search to be left with a favorable impression.

On the other hand, two characteristics are very dangerous in a job search. One is feeling entitled, "Somebody owes me a job." "I work hard." "I'm a smart person." That may all be true but nobody "owes" you anything. You have to earn everything you're going to get. The other dangerous characteristic is feeling threatened. "If I don't have a job tomorrow I don't know what I'm going to do." Well, what you're going to do is look for a job tomorrow, and the next day, and if you're a person with talent and perseverance, you will get a good job.

Q: Can you outline the important steps in a successful job search campaign for me?

The first step in a successful job search campaign is identifying a real desire for change. This includes a willingness to put up with the stress, time, commitment, and possible expense of a job search and may involve giving up some of the positive aspects of your current career. Secondly, it's very important to network. You want to speak to people in your new job, profession, or company, to find out the skills, attributes, and characteristics that would be necessary to succeed there. You also want to identify and research potential new employers and job leads. When you've done that, you're in a good position to put together your resume, a persuasive cover letter and follow up with phone calls to schedule interviews with companies you've contacted.

Q: Should I focus my job search on the hot jobs and the growing industries?

Some people wonder if they should focus their job search efforts on growing industries and hot jobs. Well, you should certainly include the hot jobs and the growing industries, but don't limit yourself to them. First of all, what's hot today could be cold tomorrow. Secondly, if something is hot today there's going to be a lot more competition for jobs in that industry. Thirdly, there may be growing industries with hot jobs in career fields that you won't find satisfying.

Q: What if I have been out of work for a long time?

You may ask, "How is my situation different from someone who has worked continuously?" For one, your work experience is not as current as other people who did not leave the work force for any period of time. In addition, because you've been away from the work force, you're not as well connected with a professional network. Remember that you still have strengths, and talents you can contribute, but even though getting back into the work force will be a little bit more difficult, you can and will be successful.

Q: What should I research about each company?

Research a company to discover the following key information:

- The company's products and services
- The company's short-term and long-term goals
- The size of the company, both in terms of the number of employees and overall value

The company's annual revenue and profits
The company's competitors
The location of their main corporate offices and facilities
The names of the president and other senior officers of the company
How to pronounce the name of the person interviewing you
Where the interview is located and how to get there

You can find this information on the company Web site, in the company's annual report, through the local chamber of commerce, or by researching materials available at your local library.

Insider Advice – Cover Letters

A cover letter should address the needs of the employer, display enthusiasm and excitement, and describe how the skills, abilities, and experience outlined in your resume are a perfect match for the requirements of the position. Use your cover letter to show how your experience, knowledge of the company, and positive attitude will enable you to excel in this job.

Your cover letter is also an example of your work. It should be concisely written, have a professional appearance, and be free of grammatical and spelling errors. Use your cover letter to create a positive impression that, along with your resume, will convince your prospective employer to invite you in for an interview. When sending a resume to a prospective employer, you should always include a cover letter.

What Should a Cover Letter Include?

A cover letter should accomplish these three basic objectives as described below:

1. Introduce yourself and express your interest in the job.
2. Describe your qualifications and how they will benefit the company.
3. Request an interview and suggest follow-up.

Introduce Yourself and Express Interest

In your initial paragraph, you want to convey how you heard about the position. If someone recommended you apply for the position, be sure to mention that person's name in the beginning of your letter. A personal referral creates a connection between you and the hiring manager and represents a vote of confidence from someone the employer may trust. You also want to use this introductory paragraph to identify the position you are applying for and the reasons you are interested in the job.

Describe Your Qualifications

In the body of your cover letter, you want to translate how your skills and experience meet the requirements of the position. One powerful method for accomplishing this is to list each of the requirements as outlined in the job description and then, next to the requirement, describe the skills, abilities, and experience you possess that demonstrate your ability to meet these requirements. If you have researched the company and understand their current and future needs, then describe how your skills, abilities, and experience will help the company achieve their short and long-term goals.

Request an Interview

In the concluding paragraph of your letter, you want to summarize your qualifications and why you are a strong candidate for the position, restate your interest and excitement in the job, and request an interview. Also state when and how you will follow up. Usually, this will be a phone call to confirm that the hiring manager has received your resume.

Successful Cover Letter Professional Advice

Here is some professional advice for writing a successful cover letter:

- Address your letter to the hiring manager responsible for filling the position.

- If you do not know who is responsible, research the company and find out.
- Keep your letter to one page.
- Tailor each cover letter to the position you are applying for.
- Describe what you can bring to the company, not what you are expecting from them.
- Use your research to demonstrate you know something about their company, their needs, and how you can address them.
- Write in a professional, energetic, and personal tone.
- Mention that you have included a resume with your letter.
- Check and recheck for spelling and grammatical errors.

Main Types of Cover Letters

Every cover letter should express your interest in the position, provide a description of your qualifications, and request an interview. Below are descriptions of different cover letters you may use throughout your job search:

Cover Letters

Use this letter to inquire if a certain type of position is available within the company. Highlight the key skills, abilities, and accomplishments listed in your resume and describe how this experience qualifies you for the type of position you are seeking. You would direct this letter to the company's head of human resources or to the hiring manager for the department you wish to work for.

Broadcast Letters

Use this letter to apply for a variety of positions with one or several companies. Describe in detail your skills, abilities, and experience and demonstrate how they add value to the company. Because this letter provides additional details about your experience normally included in a resume, you may not need to include your resume with this letter. Broadcast letters usually target a specific type of position, or positions that use your specific set of skills and abilities. You would direct this letter to the company's head of human resources or to the head of the department in which you wish to work.

Advertisement Reply Letters

Use this letter to respond to specific advertisements placed in newspapers, periodicals, journals, and the Internet. Describe where you learned about the position, and highlight the key skills, abilities, and accomplishments in your resume and how this experience qualifies you for the position. You would direct this letter to the person in charge of hiring for the listed position.

Referral Letters

Use this letter when someone has personally referred you for a position or company. In a referral letter, be sure to include the name of the person who has referred you in the first paragraph of the letter. Highlight the key skills, abilities, and accomplishments in your resume and describe how this experience qualifies you for the position.

Relocation Letters

Use this letter when you are planning to relocate to another area. Announce that you are moving to the area on a specific date and describe the type of position you are seeking. Highlight the key skills, abilities, and accomplishments listed in your resume and describe how this experience qualifies you for the position you are seeking. Also include a suggestion for an initial phone interview, and include information on when you will be in the area and available for a face-to-face interview.

Fax Cover Sheet Letters

Always use a cover sheet when faxing your resume to a prospective employer. In the content area of the fax cover sheet, highlight your key skills, abilities and accomplishments, describe how this experience qualifies you for the position, and ask for the interview. You would direct this letter to the hiring manager in charge of hiring for the position you are applying for.

E-mail Cover Letters

When sending a resume by e-mail, you may use the body of the e-mail message to highlight the key skills, abilities, and accomplishments in your resume, describe how this experience qualifies you for the position, and ask for the interview.

Other Possible Letters in Your Job Search

Letters for Staffing Firms, Headhunters, or Recruiters

These letters should include information about the type of organization you want to work for and the type of work you are interested in. Highlight the key skills, abilities and accomplishments listed in your resume and describe how this experience qualifies you for the type of position you are seeking. This letter could be targeted to a specific type of position, or to any position that uses your specific set of skills and abilities. You would direct this letter to the head of the staffing firm or the individual recruiter with whom you will be working.

Networking Letters

Use this letter to contact people in your network that can provide leads for possible job openings. A networking letter can be sent to people you know, or people to whom you have been referred. Describe the type of job you are looking for and what assistance you hope the person can provide. Highlight the key skills, abilities and accomplishments listed in your resume and describe how this experience qualifies you for the type of position you are seeking. End the letter by thanking them for their time and effort.

Letters for after the Interview

Thank You Letters

Use this letter to express appreciation for interviews, job leads, or any other help you have received during your job search. When addressing these letters to prospective employers, be sure to include information on when you will contact them next and what additional information you can provide. When writing to someone you have received help from, be sure to update them on the progress of your job search and describe how you followed through on suggestions or recommendations they made.

Follow-up Letters

Use this letter after the interview to follow up and show your continued interest in a position. Be sure to thank employers for their time and restate your interest in the job. Indicate when you will contact them next and ask if there is any additional information you can provide.

Offer Acceptance Letters

You are accepting a job offer. Congratulations! This letter expresses your gratitude for the offer and acceptance of the position. Use this letter to confirm your understanding of the requirements of the position and the overall compensation package and acknowledge the date you will start.

Offer Rejection Letters

Use this letter to express your appreciation for the job offer and tactfully decline at this time. Describe how you enjoyed your interview and how you were impressed with the quality of the company and people you met. Politely explain your specific reasons for not accepting the offer and thank them for the time they spent on your interview. Do not use an Offer Rejection Letter to negotiate a better offer. This should be done in person or over the telephone.

Insider Advice – Resumes

What is a Resume?

A resume has traditionally meant a brief account of your professional work experience and qualifications. However, in today's job market, your resume must be much more. In order to stand out your resume needs to be a demonstration of your ability to fulfill a certain role and achieve results that will make a positive impact on the bottom line of a company. Before writing your resume it is essential that you know the career field you are seeking and understand the skills, abilities, and experience required. You must analyze your professional experience and determine which elements best demonstrate your qualifications for the position. Your resume must communicate your accomplishments, achievements, skills, abilities, and talents in a way that sets you apart from other candidates in your field.

A resume is often the first formal communication with prospective employers. Its purpose is to demonstrate the value you can add to the company, and convince them to invite you for an interview. A resume is also a demonstration of the quality of your work. Be sure your writing is clear and succinct and that your resume has a professional presentation.

A resume will do two things for you during your job search. First, it will be a sales brochure, advertising the best reasons to consider you for a position. Remember that, on average, a hiring professional will spend about 30 seconds reviewing your resume; so you have a very limited amount of time to convince a prospective employer that it's worth his or her time to add you to the interview list.

Second, your resume will provide a guide for the interview. Employers often base their interview questions on the skills and experience listed in your resume. Use your resume to lead interviewers to ask questions about your most impressive and relevant qualifications or achievements. Prioritize the most relevant information at the top of your resume.

Writing a Winning Resume

The first step in writing a winning resume requires you to define the position or type of position you are looking for and assess your top qualifications. If you are applying for several types of jobs, consider writing a different resume for each. Your resume will be most effective when you target a specific type of job, and then describe how your skills, abilities, and experience qualify you for that position.

For each job type, research the job responsibilities and requirements for the position. You can find this information by browsing through the job advertisements for your occupation. Determine what your responsibilities will be, what skills, abilities, and knowledge you'll need, and what personal and professional characteristics are required for success. Once you have determined the requirements of the position, analyze your past experience, accomplishments, education, and training for examples of work and personal characteristics and begin building your resume in a way that best demonstrates your ability to succeed.

The best resumes describe your accomplishments and experience in terms of an Action-Benefit statement, which is a precise description of an action you took that produced a tangible and measurable result that benefited your company.

Writing Powerful Action-Benefit Statements

Action-Benefit statements use your accomplishments and experience to demonstrate the positive impact you can have on a company's bottom line. An Action-Benefit statement consists of:

Action: A job responsibility or specific action that you took when faced with a situation, problem or opportunity that enabled you to achieve a positive result.

Benefit: The positive result or benefit to the organization, such as an increase in revenue, a reduction in costs, streamlined processes or systems, or improved morale.

An Action-Benefit statement might read "Analyzed declining sales and developed campaign that increased orders by 30% in less than one month." This statement describes the situation or challenge you faced (declining sales), the Action you took (developed a campaign), and the Benefit of your actions (a 30% increase in orders). Always quantify or qualify the accomplishments and achievements described in your Action-Benefit statement.

When you are "quantifying" results, consider the impact of your work in measurable terms and include the numbers, percents, dollars and other values that represent your experience in the best possible light.

Quantify Action-Benefit Statements

Before: Supervised a large staff of retail employees covering multiple territories. Effectively managed business unit P&L and consistently grew profits.

After: Ten years experience managing 15 employers across multiple territories. Effectively managed P&L of \$10 million business unit. Consistently generated 30-35% gross profit.

Alternatively, when you are "qualifying" accomplishments, consider describing the process, depicting the environment and including the personal characteristics that a future employer would consider valuable.

Qualify Action-Benefit Statements

Before: Increased sales through cold-calling, follow-up and account management.

After: Consistently grew revenue and profits in a rapidly changing environment through aggressive cold-calling, persistent follow-up, and relationship-focused account management.

When writing an Action-Benefit (statement, it is unnecessary to provide details on how you solved the problem. You can provide this information at the interview. Focus on the results as opposed to the process. If your Action-Benefit (statements are powerful enough, employers will invite you in for an interview just to see how you achieved the results.

How Long Should a Resume Be?

A resume should be as long as needed to list your best and most relevant qualifications for the job you are seeking. For recent graduates or those with only a few years of experience, you should be able to put all your relevant experience on a single page. If you have extensive experience in your field, you may require a two-page resume to list all or your relevant experience. Instead of considering the length of your resume, make sure that it is clear and concise, and that the information is relevant to the position you are seeking. The most important consideration for a resume is not length, but whether it sufficiently describes your best qualifications for the job.

What Type of Resume Should I Use?

There are three basic types of resumes, chronological, functional, and combined. This section describes each type of resume and their advantages and disadvantages.

Chronological Format

Chronological is preferred by most employers because it clearly demonstrates your work history and professional growth. The chronological format focuses on the chronology of your work history by highlighting dates of employment, places of employment, and job titles. This format directly ties responsibilities and accomplishments to companies and time frames. This is usually the preferred format if you are applying for a similar or more advanced position in the same field.

Use this format if you:

- Want to highlight stability, consistency, growth, and development in your career.
- Are looking for a similar or more senior position within the same industry.
- Have job titles that are impressive stepping stones and your most recent position is the one most likely to impress prospective employers.

Advantages

- Enables an employer to determine, at a glance, where and when you've worked and what you accomplished at each job.
- Is the most common and widely accepted format.
- Provides the employer with a clear sense of your career progress.

Disadvantages

- Limited work experience and employment gaps are obvious.
- Could reveal a history of changing jobs frequently.
- Could reveal if you were in the same job too long or have held the same type of job too long.
- Does not highlight skills and accomplishments as much as it highlights work history.

Functional Format

If you are changing careers, or have gaps or other inconsistencies in your work history, a functional resume is recommended. The functional format emphasizes your skills, capabilities, and accomplishments, and de-emphasizes your job titles, employers, and dates of employment. The functional format allows you to prioritize your experience and accomplishments according to their impact and significance, rather than chronology.

Use this format if you:

- Have changed jobs frequently in the past few years.
- Have gaps in your employment history.
- Have limited work experience in your job target.
- Are changing careers.
- Gained significant experience outside your career path.

Advantages

- Highlights accomplishments, skills, and experience most relevant to your career objective.
- Takes focus off gaps or inconsistencies in your work history.
- Draws from a range of paid and non-paid experiences.

Disadvantages

- Experience is not directly tied to specific job titles and dates of employment which can lead employers to suspect you're trying to hide something.
- Does not emphasize promotions and career growth.
- Makes it difficult for hiring managers to tell exactly what the candidate did in each job.

Combined Format

To highlight specific skills, abilities or accomplishments, you could choose a combined format, which adds sections for the areas you would like to emphasize at the top of your resume. The combined format includes the traditional Experience section of a chronological resume as well as the skills and accomplishments sections of a functional resume. This format is the most flexible, allowing you to highlight those sections of your resume that are most relevant to your career objective. This is an increasingly popular format for resumes.

Use this format if you:

- Are a senior-level professional or executive and have significant accomplishments.
- Want to highlight your relevant abilities during a career transition.
- Are targeting your resume to fit specific job requirements while displaying the continuity of your career history.
- Want to emphasize skills and abilities you have not used in recent jobs.
- Have been freelancing, consulting, or performing temporary work.

Advantages

- Highlights your primary skills and accomplishments at the top of your resume.
- Format can be arranged to emphasize either skills and abilities or work history, whichever is most appropriate for your career objective.
- Groups qualifications into categories that relate directly to your career objective.

Disadvantages

- Resume could become longer than necessary and may lose the employer's interest.
- Resume may contain redundant information or lack focus.

Gathering Material for Your Resume

The material you gather for your resume can come from a variety of sources, both personal and professional. When deciding which qualifications best demonstrate your ability to succeed in your new position, consider the following topics:

| | |
|------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Skills | The necessary tools, areas of expertise, or proficiencies that enable you to excel in your position. |
| Capabilities | The job responsibilities you have performed and the results you are able to achieve based on your skills. |
| Accomplishments | Achievements and the results of your work that had a positive impact on the company. |
| Experience | A combination of your job responsibilities, abilities, accomplishments, and the ensuing measurable results as they apply to each position in your work history. |
| Education | Your academic background. |

| | |
|-----------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Publications | A listing of articles, books, or portions of books which you have written, and have been published. |
| Training | Relevant personal or professional training you have received. |
| Licenses | Licenses, certifications, or other documentation required for your position. |
| Honors | Any relevant personal or professional honors and awards you have received. |
| Affiliations | Affiliations with organizations that demonstrate your familiarity with a career field or illustrate a personal characteristic that future employers would consider valuable. |
| Volunteer Work | Any volunteer work that is relevant to the position you are seeking or that demonstrates some quality you would like to highlight. |

Reviewing Your Resume

Once you have made any necessary edits to your resume, give it to several people for review. Ask them for suggestions on ways you can improve your resume. In many cases a fresh set of eyes can catch errors or obvious omissions.

Once you have finished writing your resume, consider the following points as you review:

- Have you included all the best reasons for hiring you?
- Is all information relevant to your job target?
- Does the resume flow from one section to the other in a logical fashion?
- Are the statements you made in your summary elaborated in the body of your resume?
- Are there any spelling, typing, or grammatical errors?

In addition to demonstrating your experience, qualifications, and achievements, ensure that your resume illustrates the personal and professional characteristics that employers look for in a candidate. Which of the following characteristics would an employer see in you as they review your resume?

| | |
|--------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Reliability | The ability to follow through on your commitments, and keep management informed of potential problems so that they can be resolved in time to get the job done. |
| Analytical Skills | The ability to evaluate a situation, consider different alternatives, and come up with a reasoned approach. |
| Communication | The ability to clearly present ideas both verbally and in written form both to team members and to management. |
| Dedication | The ability and desire to do what it takes to get the job done. |
| Team Building | The ability to build rapport with others and work well as a member of a team. |
| Integrity | Being honest and taking responsibility for your actions. |
| Confidence | Being self-assured, confident, and poised when communicating with employees of all levels within the company, customers, and the general public. |
| Efficiency | A desire to identify and improve systems or processes in an effort to save time, reduce costs, and improve products and services. |
| Leadership | Capability to direct and motivate a team and provide guidance toward a successful outcome. |
| Knowledge | Expertise or knowledge in a specific area or the ability to gain new knowledge quickly. |
| Motivation | A desire to take on extra challenges and to succeed at what you are doing. |
| Ownership | Taking pride and ownership in your work and wanting to always do the best job possible. |

Common Resume Myths

I should be able to create my resume in just a few hours

Describing your experience in a way that best demonstrates your qualifications for a position requires a significant amount of careful thought and hard work. Most successful resumes are written with a specific occupation in mind, emphasizing the job seeker's areas of experience most relevant to the requirements of the job. If your last resume emphasizes your relevant skills and accomplishments in a clear and quantifiable way, and you are applying for a similar position, you might be able to make the necessary modifications fairly quickly. On the other hand, if you are starting from scratch, changing careers, or have a resume that is not written using powerful Action-Benefit (statements that present you in the best possible light), you may need to spend more time polishing your resume into a successful marketing tool for your career.

It's okay to exaggerate the truth on your resume

Many people think it's acceptable to exaggerate the truth on a resume. Understand that in today's competitive job market, an employer will usually check the employment history and references of candidates, and employers are skilled at asking interview questions that reveal inconsistencies in your resume. Even if you initially get away with exaggerating your experience, your company may eventually discover the truth, which could have a negative effect on your career or even result in your termination.

A resume should be limited to one page

Your resume should be as long as you need to present your important and relevant qualifications for a job. Don't leave out important qualifications just to keep your resume under one page. Also, placing too much information on a page makes it much harder to read. It is better to have a two-page resume that is neatly laid out with plenty of white space than a one-page resume that is dense and difficult to read.

To apply for a job, I just need to send in my resume

When applying for a job, you need to do more than just send in your resume. You will also need to write a cover letter that clearly describes how the qualifications on your resume match the requirements of the position. You will also need to follow up by calling the company to determine if they received your resume, inquire if there is any additional information you can provide, and to ask for an interview.

One resume is all I need

If you are applying for only one type of position, or several positions with exactly the same requirements, you can probably use the same resume. However, if you are applying for a variety of career fields, you should have several different resumes that present your qualifications for each type of career in the most effective manner.

You should include my salary history and expectations when asked

You should always avoid listing your salary history and expectations. You want to discuss salary during your interview after you have had a chance to sell yourself and have learned more about the roles and responsibilities involved in the position. If pressed, explain that you are confident once the requirements of the job are explained and your talents and experience are demonstrated, that you will be able to reach a reasonable salary figure. If you list a desired salary in your resume, you might either price yourself out of the position or receive less money than you might otherwise be able to negotiate.

Your resume is a work history

You want to use your resume to focus the reader on the best reasons for hiring you. Your entire work history might not be relevant to the job you are seeking, so consider de-emphasizing irrelevant experience. Some of your personal history, such as volunteer work or hobbies, might represent important and relevant experience for your next career, so include it. You need to decide for yourself what represents your best qualifications and include that information in your resume. As a general rule, make everything in your resume a reason that a future employer would want to hire you.

You should always use a Chronological resume

How you construct your resume depends on which elements of your experience qualify you for the job you are seeking. Your most important experience should be listed first, whether it is work-related, educational, or from your personal life. When considering how to position your skills, experience, and accomplishments in the best possible light, review the Chronological, Functional, and Combined resume formats, each which offer different strategies for presenting your qualifications.

The person that will land the job is the one most qualified

The person that can, using both their resume and interview skills, sell his or her skills and experience and demonstrate the ability to achieve results and add value to the company will usually get the job. Additionally, don't underestimate the necessity of establishing rapport with your future manager and demonstrating how you fit into the company culture. Sometimes the relationships you have established are the deciding factor.

An employer won't read my cover letter

If a resume captures an employer's attention, they will read the cover letter and sometimes a powerful, well-crafted cover letter is enough to get you an interview. Hiring managers may also review your resume and cover letter after the interview to refresh their memory, compare you to other potential candidates, and evaluate your writing abilities.

I should include "References available upon request"

It is obvious to today's hiring managers that references are available from a job seeker. Since an employer will assume you have references, you do not need to include this information on your resume.

Common Resume Mistakes To Avoid

Misspellings, typing, and grammatical errors

Always have several people proofread your resume. You cannot count on the spell-checking or grammar-checking functions of your word processing system alone. Remember that a single error can land your resume in the reject pile.

Using the pronouns and articles

Resumes should always be written in the third person without the use of *I* or *me*. A resume should also be concise with minimal use of articles such as *the*, *a*, or *an*. Instead of writing "I was responsible for managing a 12-person production department where the result was a more streamlined operations unit.", write "Managed 12-person production department, which resulted in 26% increase in productivity."

Omitting keywords

Given the number of companies that are storing the resumes they receive electronically, simply including the proper keywords may be enough to get your resume pulled for review. Keywords are mostly nouns that describe what you do, your experience, your skills and abilities, and the processes and software in which you are knowledgeable. You can determine appropriate keywords by reading job descriptions for the type of job you are seeking and including keywords in your resume, either interspersed throughout the resume or listed in a separate Skills section.

Overuse of highlighting, such as bold, italics, or underline

Drawing attention to everything is the same as drawing attention to nothing. Use highlighting such as bold, italics, and underline sparingly for maximum effect on specific areas you want to draw attention to and be consistent in your highlighting technique.

Including too much or irrelevant information

A resume should only include information that will help convince an employer to interview you. Descriptions of relevant skills and accomplishments should be concise and to the point. Including irrelevant experience and lengthy descriptions will bury the important information. Only include personal information where it demonstrates an important personal quality or qualification. A resume should represent what you can do on the job, not what you do in your personal life.

Negative information

Never include any negative information about yourself or anyone else. Your resume should only make positive statements about you, your qualifications, and should never imply anything negative about former employers.

Missing an opening statement at the top of the resume

If you are a recent graduate or have limited experience in your career, you should include a Job Objective statement at the top of your resume, which will help focus the reader's attention and describe what type of position you are looking for. If you have experience in your career field, you want a powerful Summary statement that illustrates your best qualifications for the position at the top of the resume. A well-crafted opening statement should convince an employer to keep reading.

Using Clichés

Avoid using adjective clichés like "self-motivated" or "dynamic." Instead, demonstrate these qualities through powerful and measurable Action-Benefit statements in your Skills, Capabilities, Accomplishments, and/or Experience sections.

Using a boring list of job responsibilities

The best resumes describe experience using Action-Benefit statements, which describe an action you took in response to a challenge or opportunity, and explain how your action had a positive benefit for your company. This method brings your experience statements to life and demonstrates how you can achieve success and produce results.

Repeatedly using the same Action Words

Never use the same action word repeatedly. Instead of using a word like directed over and over, use synonyms such as controlled, supervised, guided, or managed.

Using a chronological resume when a functional resume was needed

If you are looking for a job for which you have relevant experience and a consistent work record, then the chronological resume is probably your best choice. If you are seeking a job for which you have no recent experience, a functional resume might be better. A functional resume allows you to de-emphasize your work history, recent jobs, and any gaps in employment. It also enables you to list your relevant skills and experience at the top of your resume where a potential employer will notice it first.

Describing the reason you left your former job

If discussed at all, discuss your reasons for leaving previous employers at your interview, and always put your departure in a positive light. Rather than focus employers on the negative aspects of your former job, discuss the exciting opportunities you see in your new job or career.

25 Insider Tips – Resumes

Are you suffering from resume-writer's block? Does everyone else's resume seem more professional and better worded than yours? The following are some guidelines to help you create a better resume:

1. Be neat and error free.

Catch all typo's and grammar errors. Make sure someone proofreads your resume, preferably someone attentive to details. Even the smallest error could land your resume in the reject pile.

2. Write a powerful opening statement.

Form a solid, clear opening statement that will help you carry a focused message throughout the resume. The best opening statements summarize your skills and emphasize your strengths.

3. Focus on your benefit to employers.

Focus on highlighting accomplishments that will arouse the interest of employers who read your resume. Answer the question: "How can this candidate fulfill the role and make a positive impact?" Remember that the goal is to get the interview.

4. Make a good first impression.

On average, employers spend less than 30 seconds scanning each resume. Most employers are more concerned about career achievements than education. Place the most interesting and compelling facts about yourself at the beginning, such as a list of accomplishments in order of relevance.

5. Emphasize your skills.

Use a skills or capabilities section in your resume that is organized around the main talents you have to offer. Prioritize everything.

6. Use keywords.

Include specific keywords and phrases that describe your skills and experience, such as Product Launch, Income Statement, Balance Sheet, Sales, Account Management, C++, Visual Basic, Word Processing, MS Excel, Adobe Illustrator, Graphic Design, and Advertising.

7. Use industry jargon.

Use industry jargon and acronyms to reflect your familiarity with the employer's business, but not to the point where it makes your resume hard to read or understand. Spell out acronyms in parentheses if they are not obvious, such as TQM (Total Quality Management).

8. Use action verbs.

Portray yourself as active, accomplished, intelligent, and capable of contributing. Examples: Managed, Launched, Created, Directed, Established, Organized, and Supervised.

9. Avoid personal pronouns.

Never use personal pronouns such as I or me in your resume. Instead of complete sentences, use short Action-Benefit statements, like: Coordinated and published a weekly newsletter that raised awareness for local community events.

10. Highlight key points.

Use bold, italics, and underlining to highlight the most relevant information on your resume. For ASCII text-only resumes, you may use capital letters, quotation marks, even asterisks, to emphasize important words or section titles.

11. Summarize information.

In your resume, use only the amount of space required to demonstrate your qualifications for the position clearly and succinctly.

12. List only recent information.

The general rule of thumb is to show your work experience only for the last 10 to 15 years, unless there is specific prior experience that is especially relevant to the position you are seeking.

13. Quantify or qualify experience.

Numbers are a powerful tool, and should be included in your Action-Benefit statements. Instead of writing "Responsible for increasing sales in my territory," use "Increased sales in my territory 150% over 6 months. Managed 30 accounts increasing revenues from \$1.5M to \$2M annually."

14. Be organized, logical, and concise.

In addition to reviewing your experience, employers also use the resume to sense whether you are organized, logical, and concise. Make sure your resume is balanced, neat, visually appealing, and flows consistently. Clearly separate sections and emphasize section titles. Leave sufficient blank space between sections for easy reading.

15. Just communicate.

Abandon the use of exorbitant, exquisite vocabulary. In other words, don't try to impress employers with the depth of your vocabulary. Use words everyone can understand.

16. Omit salary information.

Never refer to salary in your resume. Save this information for the interview.

17. Avoid questionable subjects.

Never refer to personal information such as race, religion, marital status, age, political party, or even personal views. In all but a few instances, it would be illegal for the employer to consider such issues. Also, avoid the use of humor and clichés in most resumes.

18. Be honest.

Lying or exaggerating your abilities will always come back to haunt you. Since employers usually check into serious candidates, you will want every detail to check out.

19. Sell your strengths.

Do not under-emphasize your strengths and experience. Portray yourself in the best possible light. Skills that seem natural to you, others may never grasp.

20. Write your own resume.

Be personal, yet professional. Create a resume that reflects your best personal characteristics and positive traits.

21. Personal traits.

If you want to include personal traits in your resume, such as "Dependable, Highly-Organized, Self-Motivated, and Responsible," rather than just listing these traits, try demonstrating these characteristics using examples from your experience. For example, instead of writing "Dependable," write "Never missed an important deadline in five years as a project manager."

22. Position yourself in the best possible light.

To de-emphasize glaring gaps in your work history, consider using a Functional resume, which focuses on your skills and accomplishments rather than a Chronological format, which emphasizes the progression of your experience.

23. Combine sections when possible.

Try to combine any short sections together to make your resume more compact. For example, if you only have one entry under training, consider placing it under your education instead and change the section title to "Education and Training."

24. Use common section headings.

Use common section headings. Examples: Objective, Experience, Employment, Work History, Skills, Summary, Summary of Qualifications, Accomplishments, Achievements, Capabilities, Education, Professional Affiliations, Publications, Licenses and Certifications, and Honors.

25. Be positive.

Remove any negative comments or feelings conveyed in your resume, especially when it comes to previous employment experiences. Emphasize a positive, can-do attitude.

Questions & Answers – Resumes

Q: How is a resume read?

Employers scan your resume for about 30 seconds on average, and ask themselves the following questions. Does this candidate possess the necessary skills to succeed at this position? Does this candidate demonstrate characteristics that fit this role and this company? Does this resume provide proof that the candidate can produce positive results and achieve success? Should I invite this candidate in for an interview to find out more? Employers want to find evidence in your resume that you will be successful on the job.

Q: A resume is a work history, right?

Some people make the mistake of thinking that a resume is just a work history. More importantly, it's a presentation of the "professional you" on paper. The importance of the work experience component on the resume is to put your skills and characteristics in a context that is understandable and believable to the employer and to demonstrate your qualifications for the position.

Q: How can I make my resume stand out against the competition?

The best way to make your resume stand out is by tailoring your resume to the exact requirements of the position you are applying for and by describing your accomplishments and experience using Action-Benefit statements that illustrate how your actions produced a measurable benefit to your previous employer. By doing these two things, you will create a resume that demonstrates you have the skills, abilities, and experience required for success in the position, and that you have the proven ability to apply those skills and abilities to achieve a positive result and add value to the company.

Q: What type of resume will be best for me?

Many people wonder what would be the best type of resume for a given situation. Should it be chronological? Should it be functional? Most importantly, your resume should be logical. You want to include the most interesting and compelling facts about you first on your resume. If those facts are shown in your current job, you probably want to use a Chronological format. If not, you may want to use a Functional format that highlights your skills, capabilities, and accomplishments up front.

Q: What are the biggest blunders people make on resumes?

Avoid these resume blunders that you might find on the resumes of inexperienced job seekers:

- **Lack of Focus:** Be sure to start your resume with a clear objective or a summary statement. This gives you a roadmap for writing the resume and the employer a roadmap for reading it.
- **Poor Organization:** Define a logical principle that supports the structure of your resume and carry this theme throughout. Be consistent with use of highlighting such as bolding, italicizing, and underlining.
- **Dull Responsibilities:** Would you be interested in somebody's basic job descriptions if you had 100 resumes in a pile? Probably not. You can avoid this blunder by listing accomplishments and developing measurable Action-Benefit statements that demonstrate your ability to achieve results.
- **Spelling and Grammatical Errors:** Even one error could land your resume in the reject pile. Make sure you proofread. Proofread and have someone else proofread your resume before you submit it to an employer.
- **Unconventional Formats or Styles:** In an attempt to be different, variations from conventional format can be construed as too creative or abnormal. Instead, ensure that your accomplishments and unique talents make you stand out. You're better off using a conventional format and addressing your skill set to the business needs of your prospective employer.

Q: What can I do if my resume doesn't seem to be working?

If you have put a great deal of energy and thought into your resume but are still not getting the results you expected, ask yourself these questions. "Am I sending it to the right people? Are they hiring managers? Am I being realistic about the kind of job I should be looking for?" Secondly, look at the message of your resume. If

someone who didn't know you read your resume, what would they say about you after a 30-second glance? One way you can test that is to have a stranger read your resume and ask that person, "Just based on what you've read about me, what can you determine about my ability to achieve results or make a positive impact?"

Q: How much time does a hiring manager spend looking at the average resume?

The average hiring manager looks at a resume for about 15 to 30 seconds, so be sure to put the most important information, such as your accomplishments and qualifications, at the top of your resume.

Q: If applying for a part-time job, do I need a resume?

Though many part-time or entry-level jobs do not require a resume, presenting a resume along with your application form may serve to separate you from the rest of the candidates. Also, since writing a resume is a life-long endeavor, it is never too early to start creating a list of your skills and experience in the form of a resume.

Q: What format should I use if I am just leaving the military?

Unless your career in the military is identical to the career field you are seeking outside the military, the best format for someone just leaving the military is a functional resume. It may be difficult for a civilian employer to understand your military accomplishments and level of experience in civilian terms. Before creating your resume, define what type of job you are looking for and the skills and abilities needed for that job. Then extract from your military experience those items that demonstrate these skills and abilities. It is probably more important to describe the skills and abilities you've gained from your experience than list the positions you've held in the military.

Q: Why are keywords important to include in a resume?

Keywords are used by computer search engines to locate candidates in a resume database based on the skills and experience described in their resume. Keywords may include industry-specific jargon, career-related skills, computer programs you have an expertise in, machines you use, and any nouns and terms that describe the tasks you perform and the requirements of your position. When you have generated a comprehensive list of these keywords and terms, add them in a Skills section of your resume, or include them throughout your resume in the descriptions of your capabilities, accomplishments, and job experience.

Q: What information should not be included in my resume?

Providing a picture, or any information about race, religion, political affiliation, gender, marital status, number of children, sexual preference, health, or weight is not appropriate for a resume, unless it is relevant to the position you are seeking. Also, do not include information about salary or any negative information about previous employers. Also, avoid including personal information such as hobbies or interests unless they demonstrate skills relevant to your next job.

Q: Should I exaggerate my experience to make myself more attractive?

You should always market yourself in the best possible light, but it is never a good idea to exaggerate your qualifications on a resume beyond the truth. If you are selected as a potential candidate, companies will verify the information in your resume. Additionally, they may ask specific questions about your experience and education, and you will need to feel comfortable and confident in your response.

Q: If I e-mail my resume, should I also mail a hard copy?

It is always a good idea to mail your resume in addition to sending it by e-mail. A resume presented on quality paper and correctly formatted will make the best impression.

Q: How long should my resume be?

A resume should consist of as many pages as necessary to present the skills, abilities, experience, accomplishments, and education that qualify you for the career field you are seeking. A general rule of thumb is one page if you are a recent graduate or new to your career path and more than one page if you have sufficient experience in your career path to merit an extra page.

Q: Can I use the same resume for several different job types?

You will get the best results if you create an individual resume targeted to each job you apply for. That doesn't mean, however, you have to start from scratch each time. Create a base resume that contains all the skills, accomplishments, and experience you have developed over your career. Then rearrange and refocus the critical information to position you in the best possible light for each job.

Q: Is the layout and appearance of my resume important?

Layout and appearance is very important, as it can convey to a potential employer your ability to communicate and present information. Make sure your resume is easy to read and contains plenty of white space. Use bold fonts to emphasize section headings, and bullet points to separate important pieces of information.

Q: Should I have someone review my resume?

You should always have someone check your resume for spelling and grammatical errors. Others may also have suggestions on improving your resume in ways you have not considered.

Q: How are scan-able or electronic resumes different from regular resumes?

If you anticipate that your resume will be added to a resume database you will want to prepare your resume accordingly. Scan-able and electronic resumes should be plain, readable fonts with minimal additional formatting, so they can be scanned into a computer with the fewest errors. Employers will look for potential candidates by searching for keywords that best describe the skill set required, so be sure to include the keyword nouns when describing your experience, skills, and abilities.

Q: Is there a special format for e-mailing resumes?

When an employer requests an e-mailed resume, they will often have instructions on the format and delivery method they prefer. If no instructions are available, your best choices are ASCII or text only (.txt) or Rich Text Format (.rtf). These formats can be opened in most word processing applications and operating systems, and can be copied into the body of an e-mail with minimal reformatting.

Q: Should I include a list of references on my resume?

You do not have to include references on your resume. Most employers will assume you can provide references if they are requested.

Q: Should I send a letter of recommendation along with my resume?

You should only send a cover letter with your resume. Any additional materials, such as references, letters of recommendation, or examples of your work should be introduced at the interview.

Q: What's the best way to send a resume?

There are several ways to send your resume to an employer: fax, e-mail, regular mail, and express mail. When deciding which way to send your resume, it is always best to ask your potential employer which format they prefer, and then follow their instructions. If you are unsure of the company's preference, here are some things to consider: The advantage of postal mail is that you can ensure your resume will be seen in its best form, properly formatted and printed on quality paper. The advantage of e-mail and fax is that your resume can be seen immediately, usually the same day. Express or overnight mail is probably unnecessary since most resumes are removed from their envelopes before landing on the employer's desk so they won't be impressed by your extra effort.

Q: Where on my resume do I place professional titles?

There are several places where it would be appropriate to put your professional title. You can place your title next to your name in the format "John Stevens, CPA." You can include it in your Summary, Education, or Licenses/Certifications sections. If your title is an important qualification in your job search, be sure it appears at the top of your resume.

Q: I have several resumes. Which resume should I post for public view?

When posting a resume to a public resume database, you should try to identify as closely as possible the type of position you are most interested in, and then tailor your resume to that position. If there is more than one position, consider posting several different resumes, but keep in mind that a potential employer may end up seeing both resumes which would make you appear less focused than other candidates.

Q: The job I'm applying asks for desired salary. What should I do?

The most favorable salary strategy is to negotiate in person, later in the hiring process, after you have demonstrated your abilities. Do not include salary information in your resume or cover letter. If a job ad requests your salary requirements or salary history, you can either overlook it and not address the issue of salary at all, or state in your cover letter that you are confident their salary range is fair and competitive, and you would prefer to discuss salary during your interview.

Q: Should I always send a cover letter with a resume?

A cover letter is your personal introductory statement, and should always be sent along with your resume. Use your cover letter to explain why you are particularly interested in the position and draw attention to the experience on your resume that best qualifies you for the job. Also, use your cover letter to initiate the next step, a telephone call to answer questions about your resume or to request an interview.

Q: What tense should my resume be written in?

Generally, your Experience, Skills and Accomplishments, and most other sections should be written in the past tense and in the third person. Your Objective section should be written in the present tense.

Insider Advice – Interviewing

An interview is usually your first meeting with a prospective employer and is your opportunity to convince your interviewer that you are the right person for the job. For a successful interview, you must make a positive first impression. Answer the interviewer's questions in ways that demonstrate that your experience and qualifications meet the requirements of the job, ask intelligent questions, and conclude by determining when the next point of contact will be.

Before the Interview

The key to a successful interview is preparation. Research the company to find information on their products, services, and industry trends that could influence present or future operations. Find out how to pronounce your interviewer's name. Determine the appropriate dress for an interview by calling or visiting the company. Locate the company on a map and find out how long it will take you to get there. If you can, visit the company beforehand to ensure you can find the company on the day of your interview. Additionally, you will want to:

- Develop and practice a 60-second introductory statement that describes who you are and what you can bring to the company.
- Practice describing your experience and accomplishments.
- Practice identifying and describing your weaknesses in a positive light.
- Practice your answers to interview questions
- For the interview, bring several extra resumes, examples of your work, letters of recommendation, a list of your references, and any research you have gathered on the company. Also, bring a note pad and pen.
- Finally, get a good night's sleep. You will make the best impression if you are in a calm and positive state of mind.

During the Interview

Arrive at the company a few minutes early. Greet everyone in a positive and friendly manner. You never know if the person you meet in the parking lot is the same person who will be interviewing you, or whether the hiring manager will ask the receptionist about your behavior and attitude. When you meet your interviewer, look him in the eye and greet him by his first name. Follow his cues about handshaking. If he offers his hand, shake it in a firm manner.

One of the things a potential employer looks for in an interview is whether your personality will fit well within the group. Try to establish a personal connection with the person interviewing you. Be friendly and personable as well as professional. You want to sell yourself as a person as well as an employee.

The interviewer may begin by revealing information about the company and position. If he says something you would like to address, put a reminder in your notebook to mention it later. When the interviewer begins asking questions about your experience, answer each question confidently and honestly in a way that highlights your abilities as they pertain to the requirements of the job. If you are not asked questions about key strengths and abilities, find other ways to describe them during the interview. If asked about your weaknesses, answer by describing a quality that could also be considered a positive trait. For example, you could say, "I am sometimes seen as being too demanding. I work hard and expect others to do the same."

Ending the Interview

Ask questions about the position and the company. This lets an employer know that you are interested in the position, took the time and energy to research the company, and that you care enough to want to know more about this opportunity. Use your questions to initiate discussions that reinforce how your skills and abilities will fit the needs of the department or company. Asking questions can also help you determine whether the company is the right fit for you.

Try to delay answering questions about salary until the end of the interview. If you are asked for a target salary before you had the chance to demonstrate your experience and qualifications, explain that you would like to learn more about the position before discussing salary. The more the employer understands how your skills, abilities and personality will be a good fit for the company, the more you will be worth to them.

When your interview ends, determine what the next step will be. Ask where the company is in the hiring cycle and how many candidates they are considering. Ask if you can provide any additional information to support your qualifications, such as references or examples of your work. Finally, always remember to thank the interviewer for his time, re-affirm that you are interested in the position, and ask when would be an appropriate time to follow up.

Following-up After an Interview

After your interview, be sure to send a Thank You letter. A handwritten letter will provide a personal touch that an employer will appreciate. It is the polite thing to do and demonstrates your personal and professional courtesy. Be sure to follow up with a telephone call within the time frame set during the interview to ask: where the company is in the decision process, whether you can provide any additional information, or if they would like to schedule another interview. Follow up at least once a week unless given a specific time frame for the decision-making process. This will demonstrate your continued interest in the company.

Common Interview Mistakes to Avoid

Some of the top reasons that candidates are eliminated from consideration are:

1. **Poor communication skills.** You must speak clearly, look the employer in the eye when talking, answer his or her questions directly, and communicate your skills, abilities, accomplishments, and experience succinctly and confidently.
2. **Lack of confidence or overt arrogance.** You want to give the impression that you know what you are doing, but you don't want to appear as if you are trying to tell the employer his or her business.
3. **Dishonesty.** Dishonesty in your resume, interview, or follow-up can end your candidacy or even your job if discovered. Always be truthful in your resume.
4. **Inappropriate attire.** Your clothing and personal hygiene should reflect the social standards of the company and that of other professionals at your level.
5. **Lack of research.** By researching the company and industry, you have the opportunity to learn how the job you are applying for affects the short-term and long-term goals of the company, and how your skills and abilities will help in achieving these goals.
6. **Political correctness blunders.** You should not talk about issues such as race, religion, or lifestyle choices; or display prejudice of any kind in an interview.
7. **Inappropriate salary discussion.** Bringing up salary too early in the interview, or not negotiating salary effectively at the end, will reduce your chances of getting the offer. Be sure to get a clear understanding of the position's requirements, communicate the value you can bring to the company, understand what an appropriate salary would be, and research the range of salaries the company can offer before entering into salary negotiations.

25 Insider Tips – Interviewing

The interviewing stage of your job search is the most critical. Your success or failure in obtaining a position is often determined at the interview. However, anyone can learn to interview well, since most mistakes can be anticipated and corrected. Learn the following top 25 interviewing techniques to give you a winning edge.

1. Bring extra copies of your resume to the interview.

Nothing shows less preparation and readiness than being asked for another copy of your resume and not having one. Come prepared with extra copies of your resume. You may be asked to interview with more than one person and it demonstrates professionalism and preparedness to anticipate needing extra copies.

2. Dress conservatively and professionally.

What you wear to an interview can make a tremendous difference. It is important to convey a professional image, and it is better to overdress than underdress.

3. Be aware of your body language.

Be alert, energetic, and focused on the interviewer. Make eye contact. Non-verbally, this communicates that you are interested in what the interviewer has to say.

4. Consider first and last impressions.

The first and last five minutes of the interview are the most important. It is during this time that critical first and lasting impressions are made and the interviewer decides whether or not you are a viable candidate. Communicate positive behaviors during the first five minutes and be sure you are remembered when you leave.

5. Fill out company applications completely - even if you have a resume.

Even though you have brought a copy of your resume, many companies require a completed application. Your willingness to complete one, and your thoroughness in doing so, will convey a great deal about your professionalism and ability to follow through.

6. Remember that the purpose of every interview is to get an offer.

You must impress your interviewer both professionally and personally to be offered the job. At the end of the interview, make sure you know what the next step is and when the employer expects to make a decision.

7. Understand employers' needs.

Present yourself as someone who can really add value to an organization. Show that you can fit into the work environment.

8. Be likeable.

Be enthusiastic. People love to hire individuals who are easy to get along with and who are excited about their company. Be professional, yet demonstrate your interest and energy.

9. Make sure you have the right skills.

Know your competition. How do you compare with your peers in education, experience, training, salary, and career progression? Mention the things you know how to do really well. They are the keys to your next job.

10. Display an ability to work hard to pursue an organization's goals.

Assume that most interviewers need to select someone who will fit well into their organization in terms of both productivity and personality. You must confirm that you are a hard-working, productive, and personable individual by emphasizing the benefits you will bring to the company.

11. Market all of your strengths.

It is important to market yourself, including your technical qualifications, general skills and experiences as well as personal traits. Recruiters care about two things, credentials and personality. Can you do the job based on past performance and will you fit in with the corporate culture? Talk about your positive personality traits and give examples of how you demonstrate each one on the job.

12. Give definitive answers and specific results.

Whenever you make a claim of your accomplishments, it will be more believable and better remembered if you cite specific examples and support for your claims. Tell the interviewer about business situations where you successfully used a skill and elaborate on the outcome. Be specific.

13. Don't be afraid to admit mistakes.

Employers want to know what mistakes you have made and how you have learned from them. Don't be afraid to admit making mistakes in the past, but continuously stress your positive qualities as well, and illustrate how you have turned weaknesses into positive results.

14. Relate stories or examples that heighten your past experience.

Past performance is the best indicator of future performance. If you were successful at one company, odds are you can succeed at another. Be ready to sell your skills and performance using relevant stories from your work experience in the interview.

15. Know everything about your potential employer before the interview.

Customize your answers as much as possible in terms of the needs of the employer. This requires that you complete research before the interview about the company, its customers, and the work you anticipate doing. Speak the employer's language and address his or her needs.

16. Rehearse and practice interview questions before the interview.

Prior to your interview, try to anticipate the types of questions you may be asked and rehearse the appropriate answers. Even if you do not anticipate all of the questions, the process of thinking them through will make you more confident and relaxed during the interview itself.

17. Know how to respond to tough questions.

The majority of questions that you will be asked can be anticipated. However, there are exceptional questions tailored to throw you off guard to see how you perform under pressure. Your best strategy is to be prepared, stay calm, collect your thoughts, and respond as clearly as possible.

18. Address the relevant needs of the employer.

While you undoubtedly have specific strengths, skills and experience, identify how these qualifications address the prospective employer's needs. Emphasize the benefits you are likely to provide in the new position. Whenever possible, give examples of how your strengths, accomplishments, and contributions relate to the employer, using the appropriate language for the job or industry.

19. Identify your strengths and what you enjoy doing.

Skills that you enjoy are the ones that are most likely to benefit a future employer. Prior to the interview, understand what it is that you enjoy doing most, and what benefits this provides to both you and your employer.

20. Know how you communicate verbally to others.

Strong verbal communication skills are highly valued by most employers. They are signs of educated and competent individuals. Know how you communicate, and practice with others to determine if you are presenting yourself in the best possible light.

21. Don't plan to arrive on time, plan to arrive early!

No matter how sympathetic your interviewer may be to the fact that there was an accident on the freeway, it is virtually impossible to overcome a negative first impression. Do whatever it takes to be on time, including allowing extra time for unexpected emergencies. However, don't show up too early either. A good time to announce your arrival is 5 - 10 minutes before your interview is scheduled to start.

22. Treat everyone you meet as important to the interview.

Make sure you are courteous to everyone you come in contact with, no matter who they are or what their position. The opinion of everyone can be important to the interview process.

23. Answer questions with complete sentences and with substance.

Remember that your interviewer is trying to determine what value you would bring to the company and the position. Avoid answering the questions asked with simple "yes" or "no" answers. Give complete answers and use examples of past experiences that demonstrate your qualifications.

24. Reduce your nervousness by practicing stress-reduction techniques.

There are many stress-reducing techniques used by public speakers that can certainly aid you in the interview process. Practice some of the relaxation methods as you approach your interview, such as taking slow deep breaths to calm you down. The more you can relax, the more comfortable you will feel and the more confident you will appear.

25. Be sure to ask questions.

Be prepared to ask several questions relevant to the job, the employer, and the organization. These questions should be designed to elicit information to help you make a decision as well as to demonstrate your interest, intelligence, and enthusiasm for the job.

Questions & Answers – Interviewing

Q: What is a typical interview structure?

Although there is no set rule, a typical interview is scheduled for about one half-hour to an hour, and will include several phases. The first phase is an icebreaker, a few minutes of pleasant conversation so that you and the interviewer will feel comfortable with each other. Then the interviewer will get into some substantive questions, behavioral questions, and questions about your background. This will be the bulk of the interview and lasts anywhere from 15 to 50 minutes.

An employer will usually leave 5 to 10 minutes for you to ask questions. That's a very important part of the interview and you should be prepared for it. Then there'll be a close. The interviewer will thank you for coming in. You'll have the opportunity to tell the interviewer what a pleasure it was to be there and how much you want the job. Usually, you'll have to interview a second time, perhaps even a third time before getting a job offer.

Q: How many interviews should I expect with any one employer?

You can expect anywhere from two to three interviews depending on the company's interviewing process and the number of qualified candidates applying for the position.

Q: What is an interviewer really looking for?

Some people wonder, "What can interviewers learn about me from the questions they ask and what do they really want to hear?" There are several things going through the interviewer's mind during an interview. The first is, "Why should we hire you?" With questions of this nature, an employer is trying to learn if your skills and abilities meet the company's requirements, if you have good communication skills, and whether you are dependable, honest, and a team player. He or she wants to find out what you will bring to the team if hired.

Another underlying question is about your motivation, "Why do you want to work for us?" With questions of this type, an employer is trying to learn what motivates you, what your ambitions are, and whether you are the kind of person who will do the hard work to get ahead.

Interviewers often determine how well prepared you are with questions such as "What do you know about our company? Or our profession?" With these questions, an employer is trying to learn if you have done the necessary work of researching their company and business environment before the interview. This will indicate two things. One, that you cared enough about the position to learn more about it. Two, that you are the kind of person that puts the extra effort into preparing for important assignments, interviews being one example. An

employer also wants to know if you have the necessary knowledge to make intelligent business decisions based on the goals of the company and the industry in which it operates.

Q: What are the best ways to prepare for an interview?

There are eight important steps for you to take in preparing for your job interview:

- Use your resume. Have a friend ask you "how" or "why" about each line. This exercise will help you get a better understanding of your own motivation, thought process and accomplishments so that you can better communicate this information to an employer.
- Be able to articulate how the employer's needs are met by what you have to offer.
- Be able to articulate your own motivation for being interested in that particular job. What attracts you to that particular company? And what is your interest in that industry or profession?
- Be prepared for behavioral questions, which are asked to determine how you responded to certain situations, or where you demonstrated certain behaviors that are important to the job.
- Practice answering some background questions which are commonly asked, such as "Can you describe how your experience qualifies you for this position?", or "Can you describe some of the companies you've worked for?"
- Research the firm and its industry. Know the firm's major products or services. Have they been profitable? What challenges will they face over the next 3 to 5 years?
- Be sure to have at least five good questions ready to ask about the job, the firm, the industry or profession.
- Practice interviewing with a friend. Be sure to play the role of both the interviewer and the job applicant.

Q: What if I am not sure that I want the job when I go to the interview?

It's very important to let the employer know that you really want the job even if you are unsure or need more information to decide. Remember that your objective at the interview is to get an offer. Once you have the offer you can make a decision whether or not you want to accept it. Focus on those reasons that you want the job, even if it's not the only job that you would ever consider. Remember, that you don't have to be certain about this particular job until you have the offer.

Q: How important is honesty?

There are two important things to remember about honesty in an interview. First of all, although you don't have to reveal everything in response to a question, everything you do say must be absolutely true. Secondly, you still will want to position yourself in the best possible light. Focusing on and emphasizing the positive aspects of your previous experience is not dishonest.

Q: What should I know about a company before the interview?

Before your interview, research the company and see if you can discover the following key information:

- The company's products and services
- The company's short and long-term goals
- The size of the company, both in terms of the number of employees and overall value
- The company's annual revenue and profits
- The company's competitors
- The location of all corporate offices and facilities
- The names of the president and other senior officers of the company
- How to pronounce the name of the person interviewing you
- Where the interview is located and how to get there

You can find this information on the company Web site, in the company's annual report, through the local chamber of commerce, or by research materials available at your local library.

Q: What is the question-answer-question cycle? How important are specific examples?

The answer you give to any question may give the interviewer material for the next question. We refer to that as the question-answer-question cycle. So when you're preparing answers for a question, include some material that you'd like the interviewer to follow up on. Examples are an extremely important part of your answer - they give your answer both context and credibility.

Q: How long should my answers be?

Your answers should be informative but concise. As a rule of thumb, think in terms of 6 or 8 sentences. If you're not sure if you've answered the question fully, feel free to ask. "Have I answered your question?" or "Would you like me to tell you more about that?"

Q: Why do interviewers ask if I have any questions for them?

Employers almost always give you time to ask questions of them. They have two reasons for doing this. One is simple courtesy, they've been asking you questions, so you should be able to ask them questions in return. A second reason is this: your questions are an important means of evaluating how interested you are in the position or company.

Q: What kinds of questions should I ask during the interview?

There are four rules to follow in preparing your questions for the interviewer.

- Stay positive. Don't let the questions you ask raise doubts or barriers to getting hired. For example, don't ask a question like, "Is weekend work necessary?" or "Will I have to travel a lot?" Phrased that way the question makes it seem that you won't be available for weekends or that you don't want to travel.
- Consider asking more detailed questions about the position, the company environment, and the management style of the person you would report to. During the interview, make notes of areas you would like more information on, then ask questions based on your notes at the end of the interview.
- Ask about external influences. Ask questions that demonstrate your knowledge of the industry and profession in general, and how external influences such as government policies and the state of the economy could impact the company.
- Only ask questions that you sincerely want to hear the answers to. If you ask questions at the end of the interview just for the sake of asking questions, you may not be as attentive to the answers as you should be and might appear bored or indifferent. If you have been asking questions throughout the interview it may not be necessary to ask any further questions at the end of the interview.

Q: What is the best way for me to close an interview?

At some point the interviewer is going to thank you for coming in and wish you the best of luck. Some job candidates just say, "Thank you," and leave but that's a mistake. The proper way to close your interview is to say, "Thank you, I've enjoyed this interview and believe I would enjoy working here. When should I follow up or what should be my next step?"

Q: Is the interview over when it's over or do I still have work to do?

After you leave the interview you might feel very relieved and think, "Gee, I'm glad that's over." Well, it's not really over yet. It's important to take notes about what happened. What was the first question? How did you answer it? How did the interviewer follow up on your answer? What was the second question, and so on? What questions made me feel very confident? What questions made me feel uncomfortable? These notes will come in very handy if you're invited for a follow up interview with that company, or if you interview for a similar job, or with a similar company. You can also look over those notes and see what you can do to improve your interview techniques the next time. It's also important and courteous to send Thank You letters to those people who spent time interviewing you that day.

Q: How important is proper dress to interview success?

The key point to remember about dress is that it's something you want to neutralize. That is, you're not going to gain points for wearing fancy or expensive clothes. You simply don't want to lose points for being improperly

dressed. To determine the proper dress, try calling the company, describe the job you are interviewing for, and ask how to dress appropriately for that type of position. Another option would be to visit the company and observe how people are dressed. If in doubt, dress professionally, modestly and conventionally.

Q: What if I'm asked where I see myself in five years?

This question is commonly used to evaluate your drive and ambition and to assess your career stability and potential for future growth with the company. An appropriate answer would be one that portrays you as a dedicated professional who is motivated to succeed.

Q: How do you answer the question, "What did you like least about your last job?"

Never say anything negative about your former employer before, during, or after an interview. An excellent strategy for answering this question is to describe a situation that says something positive about you. One answer might be, "There were limited opportunities for growth in my former position. Though I enjoyed what I was doing, I felt that I was ready to grow beyond what my position would allow."

Q: How can I be more assertive in an interview?

Being assertive is knowing what you want, having confidence in your abilities, understanding how you can contribute, and not being shy about expressing yourself. To be more assertive, look the interviewer in the eye, answer their questions quickly and confidently, and don't be afraid to ask for what you want.

Q: What if my skill set doesn't match the position exactly?

It is important to research the company and position and discover exactly what skills, abilities, and knowledge are required to succeed. Determine, based on your experience, which of your current skills and abilities meet the requirements of the position. Demonstrate how the skills and abilities you have are a strong reason for hiring you, and explain that you can quickly learn the additional skills needed to excel in the position.

Q: How should I handle a Job Fair interview?

Job Fair interviews are simply a faster paced version of a normal job interview. You still must demonstrate that your skills, abilities, and experience are a good match for the position. Before attending the Job Fair, research the companies that will be attending and ascertain which companies have positions available in your field. Determine the requirements of the top positions you are interested in and practice a positioning statement for each, describing how your skills and abilities are a perfect match for that position. Then, as for any interview, prepare to answer questions about your qualifications.

Q: How can I overcome being nervous at interviews?

Prepare, prepare, prepare. Also, give yourself a pep-talk before each interview. Convince yourself that you are the perfect candidate for the job and that any employer should be glad to have someone with your abilities. If you are confident in your own abilities going into an interview, you will also be confident during the interview.

TRADITIONAL INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

1. How would you describe yourself?
2. Why did you leave your last job?
3. What are your long range and short range goals and objectives?
4. What specific goals other than those related to your occupation, have you established for yourself for the next ten years?
5. What do you see yourself doing five years from now? Ten years from now?
6. What do you really want to do in life?
7. What are your long-range career objectives?
8. How do you plan to achieve your career goals?
9. What are the most important rewards you expect in your career?
10. What do you expect to be earning in five years?
11. Why did you choose this career?
12. Can you explain this gap in your employment history?
13. How well do you work with people? Do you prefer working alone or in teams?
14. How would you evaluate your ability to deal with conflict?
15. Have you ever had difficulty with a supervisor? How did you resolve the conflict?
16. What's more important to you -- the work itself or how much you're paid for doing it.
17. What do you consider to be your greatest strengths and weaknesses?
18. How would a good friend describe you?
19. Describe the best job you've ever had.
20. Describe the best supervisor you've ever had.
21. What would your last boss say about your work performance?
22. What motivates you to go the extra mile on a project or job?
23. Why should I hire you?
24. What makes you qualified for this position?
25. What qualifications do you have that make you successful in this career?
26. How do you determine or evaluate success?
27. What do you think it takes to be successful in a company like ours?
28. In what ways do you think you can make a contribution to our company?
29. Do you have any hobbies? What do you do in your spare time?
30. Have you ever been fired or forced to resign?
31. What qualities should a successful manager possess?
32. Do you consider yourself a leader?
33. What are the attributes of a good leader?
34. Describe the workload in your current (or most recent) job.
35. Which is more important: creativity or efficiency? Why?
36. What's the most recent book you've read?
37. Describe the relationship that should exist between the supervisor and those reporting to him or her?
38. What two or three accomplishments have given you the most satisfaction? Why?
39. Describe the most rewarding experience of your career thus far.
40. If you were hiring a job-seeker for this position, what qualities would you look for?
41. Do you have plans for continued study? An advanced degree?
42. In what kind of work environment are you most comfortable?
43. How do you work under pressure?
44. Are you good at delegating tasks?
45. What's one of the hardest decisions you've ever had to make?
46. How well do you adapt to new situations?
47. Why did you decide to seek a position in this company?
48. What can you tell us about our company?
49. What interests you about our products?
50. What do you know about our competitors?
51. What two or three things are most important to you in your job?
52. Are you seeking employment in a company of a certain size? Why?
53. What are your expectations regarding promotions and salary increases?
54. What criteria are you using to evaluate the company for which you hope to work?
55. Do you have a geographic preference? Why?

56. Are you willing to relocate?
57. Are you willing to travel for the job?
58. Why do you think you might like to live in the community in which our company is located?
59. What major problem have you encountered and how did you deal with it?
60. What have you learned from your mistakes?
61. What have you accomplished that shows your initiative and willingness to work?

BEHAVIORAL-BASED QUESTIONS

1. Describe a situation in which you were able to use persuasion to successfully convince someone to see things your way.
2. Describe a time when you were faced with a stressful situation that demonstrated your coping skills.
3. Give me a specific example of a time when you used good judgment and logic in solving a problem.
4. Give me an example of a time when you set a goal and were able to meet or achieve it.
5. Tell me about a time when you had to use your presentation skills to influence someone's opinion.
6. Give me a specific example of a time when you had to conform to a policy with which you did not agree.
7. Please discuss an important written document you were required to complete.
8. Tell me about a time when you had to go above and beyond the call of duty in order to get a job done.
9. Tell me about a time when you had too many things to do and you were required to prioritize your tasks.
10. Give me an example of a time when you had to make a split second decision.
11. What is your typical way of dealing with conflict? Give me an example.
12. Tell me about a time you were able to successfully deal with another person even when that individual may not have personally liked you (or vice versa).
13. Tell me about a difficult decision you've made in the last year.
14. Give me an example of a time when something you tried to accomplish and failed.
15. Give me an example of when you showed initiative and took the lead.
16. Tell me about a recent situation in which you had to deal with a very upset customer or co-worker.
17. Give me an example of a time when you motivated others.
18. Tell me about a time when you delegated a project effectively.
19. Give me an example of a time when you used your fact-finding skills to solve a problem.
20. Tell me about a time when you missed an obvious solution to a problem.
21. Describe a time when you anticipated potential problems and developed preventive measures.
22. Tell me about a time when you were forced to make an unpopular decision.
23. Please tell me about a time you had to fire a friend.
24. Describe a time when you set your sights too high (or too low).

CONTENT SOURCE

The career information provided in this packet is from ResumeMaker software, version 11.0.

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