

WSLCB Job Search Preparation Packet

Washington State Liquor Control Board

Introduction

Our careers mean more to us than we realize. Beyond the obvious – a paycheck – our jobs occupy about half of our waking lives and enrich us in a multitude of important, yet often unappreciated ways.

Employment rewards us through the on-the-job friendships we build, the daily work rituals we create a sense of self worth and identity as well as an outlet for creative expression and personal growth. Who wouldn't be a bit on edge when these important aspects of our lives disappear due to a layoff or voluntary job transition? A

natural reaction is to wonder “what is going to happen to me?” From that reaction, arise rational, but often overwhelming emotions like fear, anxiety, uncertainty and depression.

These feelings are normal and, to an extent, necessary. It may be difficult for the majority of us to apply and interview for jobs when we're preoccupied with worry and stress. Therefore, we must deal with these feelings, not only for our emotional wellbeing, but also for that of our careers.

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First Steps

One of the first major steps in this transition is to work through this manual. It won't find you a job, but it will equip you with the knowledge, skills and tools to help you locate, apply and interview for a job that is meaningful to you.

In this manual, we cover the following topics:

- Facing the transition head on
- Knowing and leveraging your unique knowledge, skills and abilities
- Preparing and updating your resume

- Letters of interest and references
- Networking and social media – finding a new job
- Interviewing
- Negotiating a job offer

Only you will be able to decide which job is best for you. Our job is to help you build the knowledge, skills and abilities to help you search, apply and interview for those jobs by helping you demonstrate just how great you really are.

A useful way to start the process is to evaluate what you already know; or at least think you know, about the job transition process. Begin by answering the following True-False Questionnaire.

Employment Quiz

1. The best way to find a job is through networking.
2. When providing references, it's better to provide names of your friends than coworkers since they can speak more about how good of a person you are.
3. If an interviewer asks you if you have children, you have to answer them.
4. Being nervous in an interview is normal, even for the well practiced.
5. You should never accept a job for less money than you previously made.
6. Before an interview, it's appropriate to research the company and call the recruiter to find out more about the hiring authority and the position.
7. There's no need to privatize your Facebook page, whatever's on there is none of your potential employer's business anyway.
8. In an interview, you should always have a couple of meaningful questions to ask the hiring authority at the end.
9. What you wear to an interview matters.
10. It's OK to smoke right before an interview.
11. You should make your resume as snazzy as possible with fonts, tables and graphics to make it stand out and demonstrate you're computer savvy.
12. Your letter of interest should be personalized rather than generic.
13. Try to be as modest as possible in an interview. Nobody likes a bragger.
14. Your resume should include dates so employers know how long you've worked with a particular skill set.
15. Don't include volunteer work in your resume if it's not paid.

Answers: 1 - T, 2 - F, 3 - F, 4 - T, 5 - F, 6 - T, 7 - F, 8 - T, 9 - T, 10 - F, 11 - F, 12 - T, 13 - F, 14 - T, 15 - F

Chapter 1: Facing the transition head on

In this chapter, you will learn to:

- Understand and cope with the feelings you're having regarding your employment transition.
- Find ways to process these feelings and turn them into positive motivation.
- Practice the elements of a good job search.

Facing the Transition Head On

Reductions in Force, Layoffs, Reorganizations, Bumps. There are plenty of names for it and no matter what you call it, it's a stressful and anxiety-filled ordeal that is not confined to working hours. This stress and anxiety will undoubtedly follow you home and affect your relationships and your overall happiness. However, it doesn't have to.

Believe that it's not your fault – first and foremost, YOU didn't do anything wrong. The State of Washington is facing the largest economic downturn since the Great Depression. Layoffs during these times are inevitable, and happen based on seniority. Don't confuse layoffs with firing and don't blame yourself for something you could not control. In the space below, list the reason why you were laid off. It's written in your formal layoff letter. Once you've written it down, take some time to think about what this means. Understand that it was about budget, reduction of FTE's, bumping, etc. Keeping this in the back of your head will help you to remember that this was not your fault and that you are a worth, talented person who is employable.

Reason for my layoff was: _____

Express yourself – Knowing that the above mentioned feelings are normal, don't be afraid to talk about the stress and anxiety that you're feeling. Talk about it to a family member or a close friend. Or, you can also use the Employee Assistance Program (877-313-4455) which is a free, confidential service provided to all state employees, even after you've been laid off. They are trained professionals who are there to help you through tough times like these. If you'd rather do it privately, you can use the following space below.

1. When I was first informed of this layoff, I initially felt:

2. A few days later, I felt:

3. Now, I feel:

Chapter 1: Facing the transition head on

Washington State Employee Assistance Program

The Washington State Employee Assistance Program supports the well-being of state employees to promote a resilient and productive work environment.

■ Olympia (360) 753-3260 ■ Seattle (206) 281-6315 ■ Statewide Toll-free 877-313-4455

Now that you've accepted that change is inevitable, you're most likely feeling emotions like grief and anxiety for what's to come. The Washington State Employee Assistance Program has published some tips on how to deal with stress:

Are you feeling stressed? There is no way you can eliminate stress from your life, and that can be both good and bad. Stress can create interest and add zest to life, or it may be a helpful motivator, convincing you to make positive life changes. Continued high levels of stress, however, can create harmful physical, emotional and mental problems.

Symptoms of stress

- Headaches, backaches, neck tension
- Fatigue
- Anxiety, irritability
- Forgetfulness
- Crying
- Eating, drinking, smoking more
- Flu-like symptoms
- Depression
- Skin eruptions
- Diarrhea
- Elevated blood pressure
- Sleep disturbances
- Overreacting to situations and people
- Accidents



Chapter 1: Facing the transition head on

Causes of stress

- Overwork
- Unreasonable expectations of others
- Guilt – unreasonable expectations of ourselves
- Overspending
- Unexpected traumatic incidents
- Overeating, excessive drinking
- Overstimulation
- Life changes: death, divorce, moving, children born or leaving
- Job or schedule change
- Health changes/concerns
- Lack of sleep

Stress-Busters that work

Accept the things you cannot change and change the things you can. For example, you cannot change the way another person drives, but you can change the way you react to rude or incompetent drivers.

Leave your worries on the doorstep. Put the worries of the workday into an imaginary box and consciously make the decision to leave them outside before you enter your home.

Breathe deeply. Inhale deeply through your nose. Hold for a moment. Slowly exhale through your mouth. Repeat several times. Imagine breathing in good, positive thoughts and exhaling those that are stale or negative.

Take a warm bath. Dim the lights and light candles for a relaxing ambiance. Lather soap onto your feet and massage your entire foot in a circular motion from heel to toes. Then imagine you are rinsing stress and tension away.

Practice progressive muscle relaxation. Choose a specific muscle group. Tense the muscle tightly. Release and let the muscle relax. Clench and release again, and feel the relaxation deepen. Move to a new muscle group and repeat the process. Focus on the muscle groups where you tend to lock in your tension. Before going to sleep, while lying in bed, try beginning with your feet and working up the muscle groups in your body until you reach your head.



Chapter 1: Facing the transition head on

Visualize a peaceful place. Think about a relaxing place where you have been. Close your eyes and involve all of your senses as you focus on the scene. Imagine sights, sounds and smells.

Stretch and Exercise. Simple stretching exercises provide relief to tense muscles. All kinds of physical exercise help to reduce stress. Pick an exercise that you enjoy such as walking, gardening, dancing, running, or bicycling.

Eat well. Eat a well-balanced diet rich in fruits, vegetables, whole grains and lean protein. If you don't know how to begin changing your diet, consult with a dietician to develop a good plan that will work for you.

Reduce caffeine. Caffeine (in coffee, mocha drinks, black tea and chocolate) is a stimulant and can aggravate anxious, stressful feelings.

Avoid alcohol. Alcohol is a central nervous system depressant and not beneficial when you feel stressed or "down."

Talk. Expressing how you feel to a good listener, such as a counselor, clergy, trusted friend, mate, or even your pet can release stressful feelings. The listener may provide you with a new perspective or in listening to yourself talk, you may discover the answer was already within you.

Laugh or Cry. Both laughing and crying can be good emotional releases. Spend time with a friend who makes you laugh or read a book that is a tear-jerker, and get rid of pent-up stressful emotions.

Pray or Meditate. Both prayer and meditation may change the way you view a problem and can be beneficial methods of relaxation.

Do what you love to do. Engaging in a favorite activity either by yourself or with a friend will relax your emotions.



Chapter 1: Facing the transition head on

Excessive stress can often be reduced by more effectively managing the time allotment each of us is given – 60 minutes each hour; 24 hours each day; 365 days each year.

Time management techniques maximize quality time at home

Identify your priorities. What people, activities or projects are most important to you? *Make sure* your schedule is consistent with your priorities. Don't add a new activity to your priority list unless you are able to subtract another.

Evaluate activities regularly. Does the activity matter? Eliminate or delegate activities that no longer fit into your priorities.

Determine the best time of your day. Do you find your greatest energy is in the morning, mid-day or late at night? Maximize that time by addressing your most challenging tasks during your peak time.

Get organized. Find a method that works for you and use it. Placing **piles** (of receipts and important papers) into **files** can save countless stress-filled hours.

Eliminate clutter from your life. Cleaning off your desk, or organizing a closet can save precious time and energy.

Take time to do what you enjoy doing by yourself or with others. Schedule fun times on your calendar. Consider these times important commitments.

Get up a few minutes early so you can have some time to yourself.

Prepare the night before. Set the breakfast table, prepare lunches, and lay out clothes. Involve family members in this process.

Maintain a large family calendar. Use a different color pen to enter individual family member's activities.

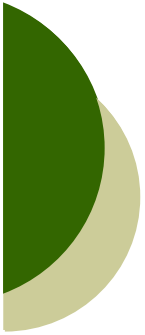
Keep a portable file in the kitchen with clearly-marked folders for items you frequently need such as:

- Petty cash envelope
- Spare keys
- Bank deposit slips
- Babysitter information
- Health care information

Take 15 minutes each evening to do a quick pick-up of the house. Turn off the television, put on some fun, high tempo music, set a timer and engage all family members in this activity.

Hold weekly family meetings to discuss each other's schedules and listen to each other's concerns.

Make a double recipe and freeze the extra for a quick-fix meal.



Chapter 1: Facing the transition head on

Work-related stress

No job is free from stress. All work brings responsibilities, problems, demands and pressures. Not all pressure is negative. We are often kept motivated by the challenges and difficulties we are able to solve at work. However, when the pressure is excessive, it can become harmful.

Levels of stress that become harmful are likely to occur when there is:

- Prolonged or increasing pressures occurring without relief.
- A sense of powerlessness over the demands being made.
- A series of conflicting demands without easy resolution.
- A continuous threat of violent or aggressive behavior with little or no defense.

The following four areas may indicate work-related stress:

Performance at work

- Decline in output or productivity; poor decision making
- Error rates increase; excessive misuse of time; deadlines not met.

Employee morale

- Decreased motivation and commitment.
- Increased work time does not lead to improved results.

Relationships at work

- A team spirit is difficult to maintain.
- Tension between colleagues increases and decisions become harder to reach.

Sickness/absenteeism

- Vague illnesses increase.
- Breaks from work increase.
- Late arrivals and early departures become more frequent.

If you are concerned about work-related stress, remember the Employee Assistance Program is a CONFIDENTIAL service for employees, supervisors and managers.



Chapter 1: Facing the transition head on

Hints for coping with change and stress

Do not take responsibility for everyone else's happiness. Delegate or divide the work among those with whom you share your life. Don't rescue. If someone fails to carry out their part, let them find their own solutions and let them deal with the consequences. Don't take on the responsibility for other people's attitudes.

Do not reinforce whining behavior. Don't let someone else's stress become your stress.

View any task you take on as a choice you have made. Attitude makes a difference. "I choose to..." rather than "I have to..."

Work at staying in the moment. Don't worry about tomorrow's tasks today. Give positive attention to the tasks before you at the moment.

Give yourself gifts. Nurture yourself. Be a little selfish.

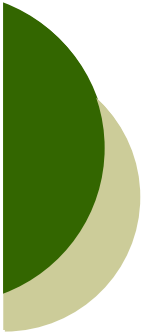
Eliminate a sense of competition. Life is not a contest.

Do things with your family and friends that you all enjoy. Don't pretend to be enthusiastic. Look for alternative activities that everyone will enjoy.

Refuse to be lonely, even if you are alone. You can choose what you think and experience. Again, nurture yourself. Remember that doing is an antidote for depression.

Do not overspend. Avoid setting yourself up for "future stress" when the bills come in.

Avoid self-defeating habits. You know those things that are harmful to your health and well-being. Do not overeat. Do not drink too much. Get enough rest.



Chapter 1: Facing the transition head on

Elements of a Good Job Search

Believe in yourself - In all likelihood, lows will occur during your job search. People may not answer your emails or return phone calls. Another person may get the job you want. Through it all you need to believe in yourself, your ability to do a job, your value as a worker, and your value as a human being. It's important to know that, in the end, you will get a good job. It may not be immediately, but you are a worthwhile person who will succeed.

Know yourself – Look at what you have done well and the skills you have acquired. From these, you'll be able to decide where to look for good jobs. You'll be able to talk about yourself to others in a way that will give them confidence in you. Self assessment is a very important part to knowing your weaknesses as well as your strengths so you know what you will be able to do in the future and where you need additional training.

Decide what you want to do – Look at what you have done. What did you like or not like about your previous work? From this list, you can create a profile of the job you want.



In my last job, I really enjoyed:

In my last job, I did not enjoy:

Game plan – If you know what kind of job you want, what kind of job you can do, what you need from a job, and where that job might be, you can make a game plan to:

- Find and talk to people who can help you.
- Learn how to pick companies that might hire you and you would want to work for.
- Learn how to present your applications materials to show that you can do the job.

Interviewing – To have successful interviews, you need to:

- Learn what interviewers are looking for and how to answer their questions.
- Learn what to ask interviewers.
- Prepare and practice talking about yourself in a way that conveys confidence, your skills and that you are eager for the next opportunity.

Chapter 1: Facing the transition head on

SELF REFLECTION FROM CHAPTER 1

- What are some roadblocks that might be holding you back from an effective job search?
- Are there any lingering emotions from your job loss that you haven't addressed?
- From the five elements of a good job search, which area do you feel most comfortable with? Which area do you think you need the most practice in?
- Are you open to new possibilities?



Chapter 2: Knowing and leveraging your unique knowledge, skills and abilities


Getting to know the product or service you are selling – **YOU** – is the first step in identifying the perfect job and being able to sell yourself to that company. In this chapter, you will learn to:

- Recognize the factors that make a job ideal for you.
- Define your skills, interests and values.
- Identify the criteria you want in a job.
- Establish goals.
- Develop a financial plan.

Self Assessment:

In many ways, the job hunt is like a sales job where you are the product. The skills to being an effective sales person – knowing the product, believing in the product, and making the buyer believe in the product – are very much the same. In order to sell yourself, you must first know who you are and what you can offer, believe what you can offer is valuable and be able to make the hiring authority believe you as well.

People have a unique blend of hard and soft skills that make them who they are. Your **hard skills** are the tangible knowledge and skills you've learned on the job or at school. Things like degrees, certificates, licenses, as well as skills like typing speed, programming languages, familiarity with equipment and software, etc. are all hard skills you have accumulated throughout your career. Making a list of all the hard skills you have will help you to quickly read through a job announcement's list of qualifications to easily assess whether or not this is the right job for your skill set. Some examples are:



Analyzing	Decision making	Operating equipment
Arranging	Directing	Persuading
Assembling	Editing	Problem solving
Auditing	Facilitating	Repairing/restoring
Adapting to change	Installing	Researching
Bargaining	Learning quickly	Scheduling/planning
Coaching	Listening	Teaching
Computers – hardware	Marketing	Troubleshooting
Computers – software	Motivating	Typing
Computers – programs	Multi-tasking	Writing
Detailing	Operating tools	

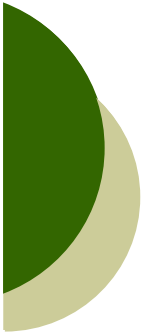
Chapter 2: Knowing and leveraging your unique knowledge, skills and abilities

Equally as important, but not quite as tangible, are your **soft skills**. These are things like motivation, worth ethic, ability to get along with diverse groups of people, ability to handle high stress situations, etc. Even though these are things that you don't necessarily put on a resume, they are important skills that attribute to why you are successful in various positions and situations and why you may not prefer to work in some environments or jobs. Some examples are:

Ability to follow regulations
Adaptability
Cooperation
Courtesy
Good eye contact
Good attitude
Easy going
Interpersonal skills
Personal energy
Self-directed

Team skills
Accountable
Caring
Common sense
Critical thinking skills
Dependability
Flexibility
Modest
Follows directions
Good attendance

Good listener
Honesty
Integrity
Generous
Reliable
Tenacious
Service-oriented
Spontaneous
Tolerant
Competitive



Chapter 2: Knowing and leveraging your unique knowledge, skills and abilities

Conducting a self assessment will help you not only know yourself better; it will help you know what type of job you'll be happiest in and where you will be successful. So take a few minutes to list out your skill sets. Think about not only what you've learned on the job but what personal attributes have led you to be successful. In order to really understand where and how you will be successful, you will also want to evaluate the type of job you thrive in.

Hard Skills:

Soft Skills:



Where YOU want to work (size, type of organization, location, commute, work schedule, etc.):

Chapter 2: Knowing and leveraging your unique knowledge, skills and abilities

Interests

Just because you may be good at what you previously did for work doesn't mean that you have to go into that same line of work. Part of looking at this layoff as an opportunity rather than a catastrophe is looking at what other types of work you might be interested in and possibly consider a different career track.

Aside from assessing your skills, you must also assess your interests – things you enjoy but may not have had enough time to master in your career. The reason why it's important to seize this opportunity right now is because the Employment Security Department partnered with WorkSource will usually extend your unemployment benefits beyond the normal time frame if you're enrolled in a worker retraining or education program. Meaning, you might have the opportunity to go to school and get paid for it! But, before you can know what career path you want to go into, it's important to figure out what your interests are.

The following exercises help you prepare an inventory of your interests and values so as to see what type of occupational field you might be most interested in working. "1" means that you DON'T like it at all, while "5" means you DO like it a lot.

Mechanical Interests

Do you like to:	
Work with your hands?	1 2 3 4 5
Repair things?	1 2 3 4 5
Work with tools?	1 2 3 4 5
Operate machinery	1 2 3 4 5
Work outdoors?	1 2 3 4 5

Theory Interests

Do you like:	
To solve problems?	1 2 3 4 5
Ambiguous challenges?	1 2 3 4 5
To read and study?	1 2 3 4 5
Math and science?	1 2 3 4 5
To investigate things?	1 2 3 4 5
To think through problems more than work them out?	1 2 3 4 5

Artistic Interests

Do you like:	
To express yourself?	1 2 3 4 5
Freedom from structure?	1 2 3 4 5
Unconventional solutions?	1 2 3 4 5
Aesthetic environments?	1 2 3 4 5
To work alone?	1 2 3 4 5
Creative solutions?	1 2 3 4 5

Social Interests

Do you like to:	
Care for others?	1 2 3 4 5
Work with people?	1 2 3 4 5

Be part of a group?	1 2 3 4 5
Train others?	1 2 3 4 5
Supervise people?	1 2 3 4 5
Help others?	1 2 3 4 5

Business Interests

Do you like to:	
Persuade others?	1 2 3 4 5
Be the leader?	1 2 3 4 5
Speak to groups?	1 2 3 4 5
Manage projects?	1 2 3 4 5
Sell things?	1 2 3 4 5
Make things happen?	1 2 3 4 5

Organizational Interests

Do you like:	
Things to be orderly?	1 2 3 4 5
Well-defined tasks?	1 2 3 4 5
Office procedures?	1 2 3 4 5
Stable situations?	1 2 3 4 5
A chain of command?	1 2 3 4 5

What are your top three interests?

- _____
- _____
- _____

Any Surprises?


- _____
- _____
- _____

Chapter 2: Knowing and leveraging your unique knowledge, skills and abilities

Values

No matter how good of paying a job that it is, we all have a line of values that cannot be crossed. For example, a practicing Vegan would probably not take a job at a butcher's shop even they were offered a six figure salary for it. Some values we already know and feel strongly about. For example, we know that it's not right to cause undue harm to innocent individuals. But what about the other things that aren't so apparent right off the bat? For example, how much overtime are you willing to put into a work week? What about the power to control your own hours versus a set schedule? Are you willing to risk a stable income for the opportunity for large bonuses? Do you need to get along with your coworkers to be able to work with them? How much traveling are you willing to do? Do you need access to executive support and feedback?

These are all values that many of us have little time to ponder while in the midst of our busy schedules between work, family and other priorities. However, assessing these values and knowing what you need out of a work environment will help you not only in choosing the appropriate future job but in your life outside of work as well. Consider the following values and how they rate in your life on a scale of "1" NOT Important to "3" Somewhat Important to "5" Very Important.



Personal growth: The ability to develop your skill set and knowledge	1 2 3 4 5
Achievement: Being able to work on projects with tangible accomplishments	1 2 3 4 5
Knowledge: A chance to develop and use a specific expertise	1 2 3 4 5
Status: Hold a position and possibly office space of recognized importance	1 2 3 4 5
Change/variety: Have a job with varied job responsibilities and tasks	1 2 3 4 5
Service to society: A job that contributes to the betterment of society or group	1 2 3 4 5
Physical activity: Work that requires strength, agility or working outdoors	1 2 3 4 5
Money: The job has significant financial rewards	1 2 3 4 5
Security: The work, hours and pay are stable	1 2 3 4 5
Teamwork: Being a part of a satisfying work group	1 2 3 4 5
Integrity: Work that is both ethical and honest	1 2 3 4 5
Friendship: Having friendships with coworkers outside of work	1 2 3 4 5
Career advancement: The opportunity for internal promotion	1 2 3 4 5
Detailed work: A job that requires attention to detail	1 2 3 4 5
Location: A job that is close to your house and requires little commute	1 2 3 4 5
Schedule: A job that allows for a flexible or rotating schedule	1 2 3 4 5
Recognition: Being at a job where you receive recognition for your work	1 2 3 4 5
Health: Having time/support to be physically and mentally fit	1 2 3 4 5
Positive atmosphere: Being in a friendly place where you are supported	1 2 3 4 5

Going through this list, what are your five highest values? Is there anything not on this list that's important to you?

Chapter 2: Knowing and leveraging your unique knowledge, skills and abilities

Criteria for job satisfaction:

Now that you've gone through the self assessment exercises, you are ready to figure out which criteria are important to you in rating your job satisfaction. It's important to do a holistic view of all of the criteria before accepting a job offer to avoid taking a job because of one important reason (for example: high salary) and then realizing once the job starts that it's missing another criteria (for examples: no health benefits or schedule flexibility). Knowing what you want and need in a job to be happy will help you identify which jobs to apply for as well as salary/benefits negotiations at the point of offer.

Consider the following list and rate each according to the value you place on it. When you're finished, circle the top five that are most important to you.

	VERY	SOMEWHAT	LESS
Salary	_____	_____	_____
Benefits	_____	_____	_____
Promotion potential	_____	_____	_____
Decision-making authority	_____	_____	_____
Responsibilities	_____	_____	_____
Work relationships	_____	_____	_____
Leadership/supervision	_____	_____	_____
Opportunity for variety	_____	_____	_____
Autonomy	_____	_____	_____
Challenge	_____	_____	_____
Prestige/title	_____	_____	_____
Desired schedule/flexible hours	_____	_____	_____
Size of company	_____	_____	_____
Product and quality	_____	_____	_____
Environmental awareness	_____	_____	_____
Industry	_____	_____	_____
Physical environment	_____	_____	_____
Geographical location	_____	_____	_____
Corporate image/integrity	_____	_____	_____
People/culture/style	_____	_____	_____
Competent staff	_____	_____	_____
Management style	_____	_____	_____
Stability/economic security	_____	_____	_____
Flexibility for family	_____	_____	_____
Recognition	_____	_____	_____
Contribution/service to others	_____	_____	_____
Physical/mental health/quality of life	_____	_____	_____
Leisure	_____	_____	_____
Self-expression	_____	_____	_____



Chapter 2: Knowing and leveraging your unique knowledge, skills and abilities

SELF REFLECTION FROM CHAPTER 2

Now that you've had an opportunity to really look at yourself, what skills you have to offer and what you need from your next job, take a few moments to review what you've learned about yourself in this chapter.

What are some of the insights you have gained?

What matters most to you?

What role does your work play in your life?

What kind of life balance do you want to have? What kind do you need to have?

Are you willing to relocate?

Is there something outside of your previous job that you would consider switching to?



Chapter 3: Preparing and updating your resume

In this chapter, you will learn to:

- Create a document that markets you as a candidate
- Put your accomplishments into words
- Write a succinct career summary
- Put all the pieces of your skill sets together into one final document

Preface

Recently, I did a search on *YouTube* trying to find a “how to write a resume” video to use on website I was constructing. I suppose that I should not have been surprised when my search brought back about 200,000 available options. After viewing several, I came to this conclusion: if you ask 100 people what should be in a resume and what it should look like, you’ll more than likely get 100 different opinions. The intent of this chapter is not to add volume to the already cluttered subject of resume writing. Rather, I’d like to walk you through the creation of a resume from the perspective of the first person who views it – the recruiter.

From my perspective as a recruiter, a good resume is usually the end result of constructive input, criticism, and borrowed verbiage. It is, or should be, a collaborative effort between you and people you know and trust. A resume, especially one that works, is an art form. It is your calling card. In most cases, it is the only item a prospective employer will use to determine whether an applicant will or will not receive an interview. I cannot stress enough the importance of a quality resume.

I encourage you to use what you can from this document and to think about the rest. You may disagree with some of what I have to say, and that's fine. I do not advocate that I am the ultimate resume guru or expert. I have arrived at my views based solely upon comments and actions of those in a position to hire. The information contained herein is given in the true spirit of public service. I ask only one thing of you in return: If you think that it is of use, share it.

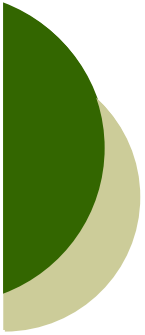
The Bottom Line.....Right at the Beginning

Assuming that you are fully qualified for a position and that you have done your homework- e.g. researched the employer with regard to budget, policy issues, staffing, organization etc.- what you really want is an interview.

If you are not interviewed for a position, you will not be offered that position. The bottom line is that the resume - and other accompanying or requested material - must interest a prospective employer enough so that you will be asked to interview. Plain and simple.

Why do some resumes draw interview requests while others do not? Two reasons: either they tell too much or they don't tell enough. In either case, the possibility of being interviewed is small.

A resume is a self-marketing tool and above all, it must pique interest or create excitement with the prospective employer. It should look good and read well.



Chapter 3: Preparing and updating your resume

No one knows you better than you; A lesson in self-marketing

A resume is a living, breathing document. As such, it must be cared for regularly. That means it must be updated and available to you in a form that will accommodate quick and accurate edits. Mine, for example, is always on the computers I regularly use as well as my smart phone. I look it over every 30 days and usually add or rewrite something.

I do not believe in "buying" a resume. This is not to say that professional resume writing firms have no use, but they cannot possibly know you better than you. Write your own resume and then spend the time to keep it up-to-date. Run it by people you trust. Ask for constructive criticism. Listen to what they say and use what you believe will make the document better.

Besides knowing yourself better than anyone else, store bought resumes have a tendency to stick out like a sore thumb. I remember a recruitment I did recently where over 150 people applied for the job. Ten resumes in that group were identical, all created by the same firm. The hiring authority noticed this as well and was not impressed.

Several years ago, I got into the habit of asking people for their resume. I have a file in my desk with probably 30 or 40 individual resumes. I add to this file every time I see something that I like - be it format, verbiage, organization, or presentation. Like Frank Zappa once said: "Ain't no sense in re-inventing the wheel when you can steal the whole damn car."

There are some who believe that every job you apply for should have a resume written specifically for that position. I do not believe this. If you think it necessary to re-work your resume for a specific job, then one of two things is wrong: 1) you are probably not qualified for the position; or, 2) your resume is poorly written. You are who you are. You have done what you have done. Use one resume. Supporting documentation, such as cover letters, writing samples, and letters of reference, can all be zeroed-in at a specific job.

Three reasons why someone will hire you

There are hundreds of reasons why someone could or maybe will hire you, but inevitably I have found that these usually fall into three main categories and in no particular order. They are: 1) communication skills (oral and written); 2) technical skills (usually directly associated with a specific job); and, 3) "people skills" (getting along, good sense of humor, personality, etc.).



Chapter 3: Preparing and updating your resume

Job diagramming; giving yourself credit for what you have done

I have found that most people, myself included, have a tendency to under-sell their experience. And maybe it's not so much under-selling as it is under-thinking. Every position has many components - even those jobs you believe were insignificant or menial.

I use the following example to demonstrate my point. I was helping a young woman re-write her resume. She was applying for an internship position and needed to show that she had certain experience. I asked that she go into her career and tell me every position she had held. Then, I asked what she had done in each job. Time after time she told me something like: "Oh, I was just a secretary or just a bookkeeper or just a receptionist." So I asked her: "Does being a secretary mean that all you did was type letters and answer the phone?" She said no. So, we started a comprehensive inventory of what she did as "just a secretary".

This is a partial list of what we came up with: answered the phone, gave instructions, solved problems, signed for incoming freight, edited letters, wrote letters, organized computer files, assisted with interviews, wrote parts of the new employee manual, organized company picnics, designed monthly employee awards certificates, key operator for office business machines, maintained boss' schedule, compiled expense reports, sorted mail, secured office at night, company time and payroll keeper, wrote newspaper advertising, took notes.

As you can see, "just a secretary" does not mean that the only job duties were answering the phone and typing letters. Most jobs have considerably more responsibility than a formal description gives credit for. A job diagrammed in the preceding manner has at least 15 or 20 components. I have seen positions where people have come up with 50 or more.

Once you identify specifically what you have done in a particular job, group the components together. Keep in mind the three main reasons why an employer hires: people skills, technical skills, and communication skills.

Using the example above, this is what the second part of a job diagram would look like: **People skills**-assisted in interviews, organized company picnics; **Technical skills**-organized computer files, key operator for office machines, compiled expense and payroll/attendance reports, sorted mail, solved problems, designed award certificates; **Communication skills**-answered the phone, gave instructions, edited and wrote letters, wrote parts of new employee manual, took notes, wrote newspaper advertising, etc.



Chapter 3: Preparing and updating your resume

From these groupings, write succinct sentences explaining what it was you did. This is the third and final part of the job diagram. Add the sentences together in paragraph form so they flow and are easy to read.

Do this exercise for each job you have held. Use descriptive action verbs like these: interview, operates, compares, appoints, weighs, schedules, authorizes, recommends, tabulates, writes, teaches, hires, etc... Stay away from non-descriptive verbs such as: works with, difficult, complex, highly skilled, assists, responsible for, significant number, administer, under broad framework, coordinates, etc.

It may be to your advantage to have someone read and comment on what you have written. Don't be afraid of doing two or three "drafts." Writing about what you have done is not easy. It takes time and a great deal of patience.

As a final note to job diagramming, whatever you do, do not lie or embellish. Give yourself credit where credit is due, write it up well, and then leave it alone.

Initially, what it looks like may be more important than what it says

Why is it that you bought the car you drive? The clothes you wear? The house you live in? If you gave these questions serious thought, I believe you'd see that the first reason is probably because you were physically attracted to them. Of course there are questions of budget, individual taste, location, etc., but for the most part, the red sports car, or the pin stripe suit, or the condo on the lake all drew you to them in a very physical sense. The same is true with a resume. It must entice or excite the reviewer. It must be physically attractive.

If you are going to spend the time writing a good resume, equal time must be spent designing it. If a resume is supposed to entice or excite, it must look like something someone would want to read. Not all of us can do a layout and this is where it is advisable to ask for help. You may find layout information in the library or on the Internet or by looking at what other people have done.

Here are a few important tips:

- Leave room in the margins for reviewer's notes. With regularity I'll write impressions, thoughts, or questions in the margin. I have seen others do likewise.
- Do not be afraid to change font size (although size 10 is really as small as you want to go). You can squeeze more information into a resume using smaller font in the body and larger font for headings.
- Strategically placed lines, shades, bolding, and italics considerably improve the looks of a resume. If you have that capability on your computer, use it.
- Do not spend a great deal of time debating paper. A good linen bond in white or off-white is just fine if an employer asks for hard copy or you are handing a resume out. In most cases, employers will ask for electronic submittal of application materials. At this point, paper is a moot topic.
- One final note. Do not over-design. Your resume is information about you, not a flyer for the circus that is coming to town. Don't be so clever that you outsmart yourself. And remember, looks can only take you so far. In order to keep a reviewer interested, your resume must also be written well.



Chapter 3: Preparing and updating your resume

Objective vs. career overview; don't box yourself in

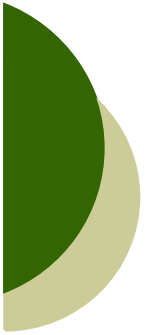
Most people want to tell a prospective employer what they are trying to do with their own career. I agree that this is important. However, careers have a tendency to flourish in windows of opportunity that may or may not be what you were looking for.

When I came into state government, for example, I was really looking for a job with a municipal corporation, such as a port district. I spent a great deal of time nosing around the ports of Seattle and Tacoma looking for an internship opportunity that would lead to permanent employment. On the verge of completing graduate school, I did not have any real talents that were marketable for a port district other than good research skills. It was these skills (coupled with a great interview) that landed me an Executive Fellowship opportunity with the Department of Personnel.

I believe that objective statements have a tendency to box-in and/or label. This is especially true when they are used as a lead statement on a resume-e.g. right under a candidate's name. I cannot tell you how many times a hiring authority has said to me: "If this is the candidate's career objective, why did they apply for this job?" This has happened even when the objective was reasonably close to the offered position. A career objective that does not jibe with an offered position tells the prospective employer that even if you were hired, you may not be around very long.

There is another side of career objectives that you should be aware of. If you re-write that objective each time you send a resume so that it regurgitates the job announcement, it has an even more detrimental effect. Employers are wise to this; they see it every time they offer a job.

Based on the reasons given in the paragraphs above, I suggest that objective statements be replaced with a career overview statement. I admit that this is not my idea. It was taught to me by my significant other who has probably the best career overview statement I have ever seen. One, by the way, that I have borrowed and re-written to accommodate my needs.



Chapter 3: Preparing and updating your resume

A career overview statement is simply a synopsis of your career to date. The statement is usually three to five sentences long and is written in paragraph form. It says something that other components of your resume do not. It is unique and succinct. Like a fingerprint, no two are, or can be, exactly alike.

Reviewers, such as myself, are partial to a career overview statement in that we can glean, in a very short period of time, whether the person is or is not a viable candidate. Properly written, a career overview statement draws a reviewer into the body of your resume. And, you are not boxed-in or quickly labeled.

There is a danger you need to be aware of. The career overview statement is very tough to write. If it is not done properly, it will have the same effect as the career objective statement it was designed to get rid of.

Education; Either You Got it or You Don't

Like it or not, there is no substitute for formal education. Using educational credentials to sort and separate is a valid method of determining the best applicants. It is, however, not the only method. In my opinion, experience is more important. But, if you can get experience and a degree, why not hire both?

Education is another form of experience. It is the vehicle that gives us additional, marketable skills. For the most part, I view education as an exercise in discipline, i.e. for a period of time in your life you dedicated time, money, and energy toward a goal. Of course attaining that goal doesn't necessarily guarantee anything (like being smarter). It just says that you have the fortitude to stick it out.

Whatever your educational credentials, don't lie and don't embellish. It is too easy to get caught. Schools are more than willing to provide information. In fact, checking education is the easiest task associated with background checks. And, make no mistake, most backgrounders check education with regularity. I do it every time.

Washington, in comparison to some states, has many educated people. Our own school system is good and people who come here usually have solid experience and a degree or two. Competition is stiff.

Your resume should have a section devoted solely to education. This includes college degrees as well as appropriate formal training. If education is your strength, it should be one of the first things mentioned in your resume. If you believe your education is not your strong suit, take a look at your formal training. You may find that some of it is transferable toward a degree. *(In fact, I have mentioned this to several people who have found that over the years they have accumulated as much as 50% of the credits required for a BA through training courses. Some schools, like the Evergreen State College, can and will convert formal training and experience into college credits at both the graduate and undergraduate levels.)*

Chapter 3: Preparing and updating your resume

Computer literacy; flattening the learning curve

Most everything today is, or should be, or could be, automated. Everything is about "paperless" processes. Making something quicker, more efficient, more effective. If you don't know how to use a computer, learn now - today. Like education, there is no substitute for computer knowledge.

This does not mean that you have to be a programmer or fully understand systems analysis. It means that you should know how to word process and run a spreadsheet or database software application. I am convinced that if you know how to type, you can run and be proficient with a computer.

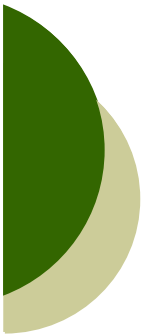
Most hiring authorities are somewhat knowledgeable about computers. Not very many are experts. Somewhere between "knowledgeable" and "expert" is the level where you must write about what you know with regard to computers. My approach has been to identify hardware you are familiar with (IBM compatible, Macintosh, mainframe, iPad, etc.) and then name what software you are fluent in (Word, Excel, PowerPoint, etc.). Finally, you should say something about your proficiency in using the Internet.

Why is computer literacy so important? Two main reasons. It shortens the learning curve. It alleviates the cost of training. It is yet another item to sort and separate candidates. Again, your resume should have a section devoted entirely to this. Many job announcements mention specific software applications. Do not lie about what you know, but be aware that training exists for most software. It may be possible that what you are familiar with is knowledge applicable and/or transferable to other programs. Make sure that as you learn new programs they are mentioned on your resume. This is another reason to continuously update your resume.

Volunteerism and community service; what do you do besides work?

Besides watching TV and eating potato chips, what do you do when you are not at work? This sounds like a ridiculous question, but you might be surprised how many hiring authorities ask it (and not necessarily in the same verbiage). Most interviews, by the way, also have this question in one form or another.

Some people think that a resume is just a place for paid work experience. This is not true. In fact, some of the volunteer work I have done has been much more intense and demanding than my regular work. And, I have learned and benefited from what I have done as a volunteer. Somewhere on your resume should be a section noting what you do between the hours of 5 p.m. and 8 a.m. and on the weekends.



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Some of the best management experience is gained from volunteerism and through community service organizations. Think about it. Volunteers are not paid, so managing by incentive (like money) is out. Volunteers are where they are because they want to be, or have a little time to donate or they have been court ordered. Usually a volunteer campaign goes 100 miles an hour and runs strictly on adrenaline and creativity. What better place to gain confidence and experience?

Again, it matters how you write it up. Go through the same exercise as job diagramming.

A word of warning: stay neutral. Do not get labeled as a democrat or republican or liberal or conservative or free spirit or whatever. If you worked, for example, on the Republican Committee to Elect the Governor, write it up as "extensive campaign experience as local campaign manager for statewide political race" (or something like that). You never know who will be sitting across the table from you on an interview. Remember, the idea of a resume is to get an interview. It should not be a political, social, or ethical statement.

Two pages is all you get; dispensing with the "fluff"

A professor in graduate school once told me that it is a lot easier to write ten pages of "fluff" than it is two pages of succinct quality. I believe that is true. With a resume, you only get two pages maximum, so you might as well make them count.

There is a notion that one page resumes are always the norm. I suppose if you had limited experience, one page would do. However, most jobs are not given to those with limited experience. Use two pages if you can. Don't tell too much. Don't tell too little. On a good resume, every word means something. Every space, line, shade, italic, or bold must have a purpose.

Prioritize what should be on your resume. Read it a few times. Does it make sense? Do you understand what you have done? Have someone else read it. Do they understand what you have done?

Does your resume make sense to them? Does it cover all your career highlights?

I said it before, and I will say it again. Resumes are not a one-shot deal. They are a continuous, collaborative effort. Make sure you find a good editor - or two - or three.




Chapter 3: Preparing and updated your resume

Putting it all together

A resume that is effective enough to result in an interview is probably creative and original. It serves as a personal advertisement of your skills, training, experience, and goals. The format, as well as the content, is very important. The appearance, the language, and the style will all determine the first impression an employer has of you.

Here then, is my laundry list of items that should be on your resume.

1. Your name, address, phone number(s), primary e-mail address
2. Career overview
3. Education/training
4. Work/employment experience
5. Computer literacy/skills
6. Community service, et al
7. The all important REFERENCES AVAILABLE UPON REQUEST statement



Speaking of references, in addition to your two-page resume, you should also construct a separate reference sheet. *Do not include references on your formal resume.* That is not the place for them. Depending upon the position you are applying for, it would be advisable to change, or at least think about, who you should use as personal references.

Your reference sheet should list the following for each entry: name, title, present employment, and telephone numbers — work and home. You should also briefly introduce the person - e.g. "Bob Smith was my immediate supervisor at the Office of Financial Management."

Good references are not relatives, boyfriends or girlfriends, husbands, wives, or partners. Usually, three to five professional and two or three personal references will do. You do not need to mention every supervisor or boss you've ever worked for and you need not mention ones that you did not get along with. Everybody has good and bad work experiences.

Whatever you do with regard to references, make sure people know you are using them as such. I was recently contacted by an employer asking for a reference on a person I did not personally know. This proved to be a major embarrassment for him.

Chapter 3: Preparing and updating your resume

And, finally, here is another laundry list entitled "Seven Things to Remember When Writing Your Resume":

1. Regardless of what you have read or been told, there are no resume writing rules.
2. Do not hold back. Toot your own horn. Market yourself.
3. Succinct and concise is usually better. Every word should count. If it doesn't, get rid of it.
4. Make sure your resume draws readers in rather than scaring them away. A well-written career overview statement can accomplish this.
5. Anything can be checked. Tell the truth. Make sure that you are accurate with dates, degrees, employers, titles, etc.
6. If you – or those you trust to review your resume – cannot quickly and completely understand what you have done in your career, it is time to re-write.
7. A high-quality resume will go through at least five DRAFTS and could take several weeks to write. Stay patient and focused. Once you have created a quality document, all you need to do is feed and water it every 30 days.



Chapter 3: Preparing and updating your resume

SELF REFLECTION FROM CHAPTER 3

Now that you've had the time to assess your career summary and how you're going to put all of the pieces of the puzzle together, take a few moments to review what you've learned about yourself, your career and your accomplishments in this chapter:

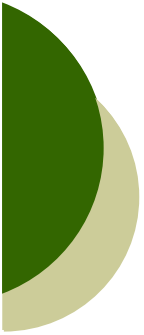
Self-marketing – Do you tend to under-market yourself? If so, how can you improve at talking yourself up?

Why is self-marketing so important?

What are your major accomplishments? What part of your career are you most proud of?

Is there any area of your resume that's lacking in depth (i.e. education, volunteer work, computer skills)? If so, what can you do to build it up?

Looking over your resume, does it sell everything you have to offer?

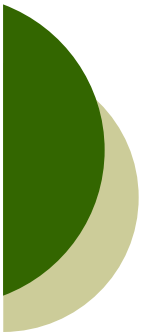


Chapter 4: Letters of interest and references

Although your resume and interviewing skills are the meat of what recruiters and hiring managers look like, writing a solid letter of interest and having stellar references can, and usually are, the “make it or break it” factors of a recruitment.

In this chapter, you will learn to:

- Write a letter of interest that’s about them, not just about you
- Read through a job announcement and structure your letter of interest accordingly
- Formulate a reference list
- Include the right references on your list



Chapter 4: Letters of interest and references

Letters of interest and cover letters

Let's start from the beginning and be frank. There's not really a fundamental difference between a letter of interest and a cover letter. Their titles can be used interchangeably. However, what I want to focus on is the difference between what most people *think* they are and what they should be. If you Google "Cover Letters and Letters of Interest" you'll find plenty of discussion blogs that say you should just write to "declare your interest in a position and blah, blah, blah". The irony is that most of these comments are written by applicants, **not** by those who are reviewing the application materials and selecting who should be interviewed.

Over time, the purpose of a cover letter/letter of interest has changed from being about you, to being about them – the business. The traditional view of these letters is that you can write a generic letter and, aside from changing the company name and job title, it can be used for any and every job you apply. The reason you can do this is because this type of letter is like a preview of what general skills you have to offer, regardless of the employer.

An example would read something like this (that which is bold is all that needs to change for each job):



Jody Doe
1234 1st Ave S
City, WA 98000
(360) 555-1212
yourmail@gmail.com

12 March 2000

Attn: Pat Smith, Shop Manager
United Employment Company
4321 2nd Ave S
City, WA 9800

Dear Mr./Ms. Smith

*This letter is in response to the advertisement for the **Shop Manager** position advertised on **XX Website**. I believe my **XX Knowledge, XX Experience, and XX Education** would make me an excellent fit for this position and addition to your company.*

I have a bachelor's degree from XX College and a master's degree in XX Program from the University of XX. After finishing school, I began working for XX Company where I gained valuable experience in XXX, XXX and XXX.

Over the years, I have developed and honed my XX skills and am frequently sought after by colleagues and other managers for help and consultation. I am a dynamic leader, and have been chosen to head up various projects within the department.

Chapter 4: Letters of interest and references

*I am a hard worker, who's not afraid to stay late or go out of my comfort zone. I am excited for the next challenge in my career and I believe that the opportunity for the **XX Job** with your company is the perfect fit.*

I would appreciate an interview to further discuss my skills and abilities. I can be reached at the contact information below.

Regards,

*Jody Doe
(360) 555-1212
yourmail@gmail.com.*

Now don't get me wrong, this letter is not horrible. The odds are (if you've been employed before) that you've gotten a job with this type of letter. At the same time, this will not make you stand out in the crowd and with the quality of competition increasing and the average number of applicants per job in the triple digits, having a so-so application packet won't cut it.

If you want to make your letter memorable and your application packet desirable, you need to make the letter about them. This does mean extra work on the front end – you'll be writing a different letter of interest for every job you apply – but you're more likely to be noticed in the long run.

So, now that we've concluded that a personalized letter of interest that is specified to the job you're applying for is important, here are some tips on how to do it.

- Before you even sit down to write the letter, do your homework. Research the company and the job. Know what their mission statement is, and how that position contributes.
- Find out about the hiring manager. Who are they? What are they like? What are they looking for? Much of this information can be done by calling the contact information on the job announcement. Ask the recruiter for information and ask who the hiring manager is. See if you can get an informational interview with the hiring manager before you apply. They won't always let you do this, but it will be advantageous if you can.
- Start your introductory paragraph declaring that you're applying for the position and why you're interested. This is standard and similar to a five paragraph essay where you always state your thesis in the first couple of lines.
- Make sure you have the job announcement, describing the position duties and qualifications in front of you when you write the job. I find it helpful to keep them side by side so that I can make sure I cover all of the points of the job announcement in my letter.
- Don't just say you can do something or that you have the ability to do something, give examples showing you actually can do something. Anyone can say that they can do something, but you make a more compelling case if you show them how you've already done it (or something similar to it) in the past.
- In the final paragraph, always ask (but don't assume) for an interview and leave your contact information for them to get ahold of you for questions or scheduling an interview.

Chapter 4: Letters of interest and references

An example of this type of letter would look more like this:

Jody Doe
1234 1st Ave S
City, WA 98000
(360) 555-1212
yourmail@gmail.com

12 March 2000

Attn: Pat Smith, Shop Manager
United Employment Company
4321 2nd Ave S
City, WA 9800

Dear Mr./Ms. Smith

*This letter is in response to the advertisement for the **Shop Manager** position advertised on **Craigslist.org**. After reviewing through the job description, I believe my **previous shop mechanic experience, my proven ability to interact and lead with diverse groups of people and my advanced education in Business Administration** would make me an excellent fit for this position and helping your company succeed in its mission in being the most trusted and referred mechanic shop in the Bay Area.*

I've worked in the mechanical field for 11 years for three different major corporations. During this time, I worked my way up through the ranks from tool fetcher to being a front-line supervisor of more than 30 people during the busiest shift. This upward movement came because of my willingness to put in 110%, my strong attention to detail and my ability to work well with others and mentor them in all aspects of the job. In my current job as a front-line supervisor, I gained valuable experience in strategic scheduling, reverse tiered management and the LEAN model of project management.

Knowing that my education and experience would only take me so far, I took the initiative to go back to school and obtain my master's degree in business management. I took night classes while I continued my full-time job and found that this allowed me to not only pay for school, but also to apply what I was learning to my day job. During my graduate program, I was able to further refine my skills and understanding of the LEAN project management process as well as learn more about running a successful budget and marketing a business correctly.

Chapter 4: Letters of interest and references

I am a hard worker, who's not afraid to stay late or go out of my comfort zone. Although I am happy in my current job, the thought of being able to use my education, project management skills and shop maintenance experience to help your company in becoming the best in the area is an opportunity I would love to take on.

I would appreciate an interview to further discuss my skills and abilities. If you have any questions or would like to schedule an interview, please feel free to contact me at the information below.

Regards,

*Jody Doe
(360) 555-1212
yourmail@gmail.com.*

As you can see by this letter, it's in a similar format to the previous one, but it's much more specific to the actual job I'm applying for. I mention in the first paragraph the skills that I have that are posted on the job announcement as well as the company mission to let them know I understand what the job is about.

I then go on to give examples of my skills and my accomplishments. I end the letter stating that it's this particular job I want, not just any job. A company and the hiring manager don't want someone who just wants a job; they want to feel special and believe that you only want to apply for their job. The reason is because a manager knows that someone who is passionate about a job will work harder and be more loyal than someone who just wants a job.



Chapter 4: Letters of interest and references

Letter of Interest: Practice

So now that you've learned some basic tips about writing a strong letter of interest and seen an example of what one would look like, let's get some practice in actually writing one.

First and foremost is the preparation before writing the letter. Go out and find a job announcement that you would be interested in applying for.

Start by listed out the qualifications on the job announcement and a brief note on how you meet them.

Qualification

My skills and abilities

Now list out the job duties described in the job announcement and compare it to what you've done that similar or relatable.

Job duty

My experience



Chapter 4: Letters of interest and references

Now that you've gone through and assessed the job announcement with your skills, do you meet all or most of the qualifications? Can you demonstrate that you've done all or similar work described in the job duties? If you're having trouble demonstrating your qualifications or showing your related experience, you probably don't want to apply for this job. As much as it may sound like your dream job, you're probably not qualified and won't be given an opportunity to interview. That being said, if you still feel like you could do the job, it never hurts to apply. Just keep in mind that you'll really have to make a compelling case for why they should interview you.

Once you've gone through the assessment process, now you can start writing the letter of interest. Don't be surprised if it's really hard to demonstrate how you meet all of the qualifications and how you can really do this job in one letter of interest. Writing about your skills like this is a lot harder than it seems. But putting the effort into a quality final product is worth it.

As a closing reminder, always have someone review your letter of interest for readability and grammar before turning in your application. Let them see the job announcement too. If they can't see that you qualify for the job based on the letter, odds are the hiring manager won't be able to either.

And, as always, if you would like someone from WSLCB Human Resources to review your letter for you, just email us at wslcbjobs@liq.wa.gov.



Chapter 4: Letters of interest and references

References

Almost every job you apply for is going to ask for references. They will most likely not call reference until after the interview, but many ask at the time of application so having your reference list ready is important. Knowing who to put down as a reference and making your reference list have a professional appearance is key to finishing off the interview process with a bang.

Who you put on your reference list is the most important part of this section. If you don't remember anything else I talk about regarding references, remember this: make sure those on your reference list are professional, well spoken, and will speak highly of you.

My old boss told me on more than one occasion that he had great hopes for me and thought highly of my abilities. He was also a perfectionist, who thought everybody had room for improvement and no one was exceptional. Although he promoted me twice, I would never put him on my reference list. Why? Because if you asked him what my weaknesses were, he would have listed off a hundred different things that I needed to work on. If you asked him how I was as a worker, he would say that I was "OK" because in his mind, that was good and most people were sub-par.

Now, I'm not saying you should pick references that say you're the best thing since sliced bread regardless if it's true or not. What I am saying is you should think about what these people might say before you put them down as a reference. There is nothing wrong with only selecting the people who will speak very highly of you.

The second part of references is the actual formatting of your reference sheet. Some places want both personal and professional references and other places just want professional. In order to make sure you've got it all, you will want to put together a list of references that covers both personal and professional. On the professional side, you will want to include at least one manager/supervisor and one coworker. If you've supervised or managed, you will want to include at least one subordinate so that the recruiter can get a holistic view of your working style. And, just to make sure that the person checking your references knows who they're calling and what questions to ask them, identify your relationship with the reference on your sheet. An example of a comprehensive reference list would look something like this:

References for Jody Doe

Professional References

Mike Smith, Manager of XYZ Distributions

Phone: 206-555-1489, email: mikesmith@fakemail.com

Relationship: Mike was my manager from 1999-2003. After I was promoted, he became my co-worker.

Pat Miller, Lead production worker of ABC Distributions

Phone: 360-555-9876, email: patmiller@fakemail.com

Relationship: Pat and I were coworkers from 1992-1993. After I was promoted, I became Pat's supervisor until 1999.



Chapter 4: Letters of interest and references

Chris Jones, Night Shift Manager at XYZ Distributions

Phone: 206-555-1488, email: chrisjones@fakemail.com

Relationship: Chris and I have been peers from 2003 to present.

Personal References

Jamie Jameson, Washington High School Head Football Coach

Phone: 206-555-5555, email: jamiejameson@fakemail.com

Relationship: Jamie and I coached high school football together from 1993-2005.

Geri Wilson, King County Food Bank Lead Coordinator

Phone: 206-555-6543, email: geriwilson@fakemail.com

This is just one example of how to put together a reference list and is by no means the only way to do it. I've seen some references that are much more inclusive where it's explained which attributes each reference will be able to speak about as well as a more extensive background of the reference. What I'm trying to show here is the basic information that should be included in a reference list. How you format it is up to you.



Chapter 4: Letters of interest and references

References: Practice

Now that we've gone through and identified what to look for in a reference and what information to include, it's time to start thinking about whom your references are and what they will say about you. Below, write down a list of people you would want to include as your references and what they might say about you. If you don't know, feel free to ask them.

Reference List

What they will say about you

Personal Reference #1

Personal Reference # 2

Professional Reference (Manager)

Professional Reference (Coworker)

Professional Reference (Subordinate)

Professional Reference (misc)

Professional Reference (misc)



Chapter 4: Letters of interest and references

SELF REFLECTION FROM CHAPTER 4

In this chapter we covered how to write a letter of interest that will make you stand out from the crowd, as well as how to put together a comprehensive list of references. After reviewing this chapter, take a moment to self-reflect on the following questions:

Do I have a comprehensive list of references that can (and are willing to) speak on my behalf if an employer calls them?

How long will it take me to fully research a company so I can write a letter of interest for my application packet?

Is there anyone that I wouldn't want to include on my reference list? Why?

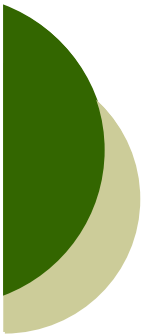
Have I made notified my references to know that they are on my list and that someone may be calling them? Is their information up to date?



Chapter 5: Networking and Social Media – Finding a New Job

Effective networking and understanding the unwritten rules and morays of social media are skill sets in identifying and securing your next employment opportunity. Generally, jobs are obtained more by *who* you know rather than *what* you know. Establishing and effectively using both your personal and virtual networks moves you one step further into accomplishing the ultimate goal of obtaining your ideal job. In this chapter, you will learn to:

- Find where the jobs are.
- Track and monitor your progress.
- Expand your personal network.
- Recognize the benefit of informational interviews.
- Conduct an informational interview.
- Understand the difference between social networks and professional networks online
- Network successfully



Chapter 5: Networking and social media – finding a new job

Finding the job

Half the work involved in finding employment is knowing where to look for jobs. The days of going door to door, and stopping in to introduce yourself to the director are gone. Newspaper and shop window wanted ads are becoming a thing of the past and online job postings on internet job boards, professional affiliations and company websites are becoming the preferred – and sometimes only – way to find and apply for jobs. The internet gives applicants 24X7 access and employers 24X7 exposure, but getting started in an electronic job search can be confusing.

Listed below are a number of employment websites. From the recruiter's perspective, these sites are usually the ones where the majority of jobs are advertised. By learning how to navigate and check these sites on a daily basis, a job seeker can quickly assess who is hiring.

On the local scene, newspaper internet employment want ads usually give a good picture of what is happening in that paper's circulation area. Be advised that there are also a number of "niche websites" designed for specific employment opportunities. Recruiters use these sites because they are inexpensive and very focused on a targeted audience. The bottom line is that these are just a few sites to get you started. Working with a recruiter from the WSLCB Recruitment and Training Office will help you to identify which sites are more likely to have the jobs you're looking for. They can be reached at wslcbjobs@liq.wa.gov.

Washington State Government:

[Careers.wa.gov](http://careers.wa.gov)

National Job Boards:

Career Builder

<http://www.careerbuilder.com>

College Recruiter

<http://www.collegerecruiter.com>

Craigslist

<http://www.craigslist.org>

Government Jobs

<http://www.governmentjobs.com>

Indeed

<http://www.indeed.com>

Job Central

<http://www.jobcentral.com>

JobPing

<http://www.jobping.com>

Job Fox

<http://www.jobfox.com>

Monster

<http://www.monster.com>

Net Temps

<http://www.net-temps.com>

Simply Hired

<http://www.simplyhired.com>

USA Jobs – Federal Gov't Official Site

<http://www.usajobs.gov/>

Employment Agencies

Aero Tek

<http://www.aerotek.com/Locations/United-States/Washington.aspx>

Express Employment Professionals

<http://www.expresspros.com/>

Humanix

<http://www.humanix.com/>

Kelly Services

<http://www.kellybranchlocator.com/default.aspx?s=ker&l%20>

ManPower Professional

<http://manpowerprofessional.com/us/en/job-seekers/default.jsp>

Volt Workforce Solutions

http://www.volt.com/jobs/template_jvc_office_locations.aspx?id=1335

Chapter 5: Networking and social media—finding a new job

Making your network

I've said it once and I'll say it again. Statistics show that when it comes to job searches, it's more about *who* you know rather than *what* you know. Don't get me wrong, having the knowledge, skills and abilities for a job is still a requirement and just knowing someone will not guarantee you a job. However, if a hiring authority is looking through a stack of qualified resumes and recognizes a name as being *recommended* by someone they know, who do you think they will take the risk on? One of many names in a pile of resumes? Or a name of a person who was recommended by someone they know and hopefully trust. Odds are, as long as the person in your network is trustworthy, their recommendation will hold a lot of weight.

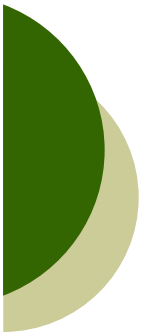
So what is networking? Networking is using your contacts – family, friends and coworkers – to leverage yourself to potential employers. Be advised, you don't have to necessarily know someone that works at Company X to get hired at Company X. Sometimes it's two to three degrees of separation. All you need to know is the person who knows the person who works at Company X. Take this as an example:

- You hear that Boeing just received a new long-term contract and want to work in the inventory department.
- Your aunt is part of a card group that gets together once a week to play Pinochle.
- A member of this Pinochle group happens to be a manager at the Auburn Boeing Location.
- You quickly research how to play pinochle and attend one of these weekly games with your aunt to get introduced to this manager.
- While counting your meld, you two start talking about what's happening at Boeing and your aspirations to work in the inventory department.
- He gives you the name of the manager in that department and tells you to call him.

BAM! You've officially created a network contact!

It's important not to overestimate the Return of Investment on networking. Not all network meetings will turn out the way the previous example did and some might turn into dead ends and others may be dormant at the time. Networking takes a lot of time, effort and hard work. You can't be "fake" when building your network and although you can be strategic in choosing who to network with, some of the best contacts will come from connections you wouldn't normally think would be strategic. The above mentioned example is one where the initial connection was not professional but the end result was worthwhile.

Networking starts with contacting the people you know but definitely doesn't end there. It's a process that involves going out of your comfort zone (for most of us) and contacting tiers of people, getting to know them, learning about what they do and making them understand why you are a valuable asset to their company.



Chapter 5: Networking and social media—finding a new job

Rules of Networking

Expect to invest more than you gain - No one wants to help out someone they think is only in it for their personal gain. Networking works both ways and if you can connect someone to someone else you know, odds are they will be willing to help you out at a later date.

Don't be flaky – If someone gives you a name and number to call, do it. Cold-calling someone to set up an informational interview can be one of the most intimidating things you'll do, but you've got nothing to lose and everything to gain.

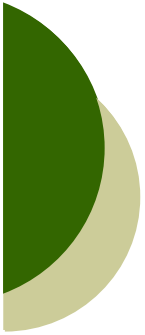
Be clear, concise and organized – When you meet with a contact, come to the meeting prepared with insightful questions, a list of things you want to say and don't take up too much time. This person is most likely busy but nice enough to meet with you; coming prepared and organized will show that you are respectful and business savvy.

Remember: An informational interview is NOT a job interview – Keep your expectations realistic. Many companies only hire when a vacancy opens up. Just because they meet with you does not mean they have an opening right then. Expecting or asking for a job is too brazen and will most likely annoy the person that just took the time to meet with you.

Leave a lasting impression – Bring a resume or business card with you so they have your contact information. Like we mentioned earlier, they may not have a job open right then and there, but if you leave your contact info, they will have a way for them to get a hold of you rather than you having to keep checking in with them.

Be gracious – Giving a formal "Thank You" is about the easiest thing to do, yet it's used less and less as time goes on. Following up your informational interview with a handwritten letter or email will go a long way and help etch your name in their brain.

Keep your network alive – We've already mentioned on more than one occasion that networking is not a simple task and requires a lot of time and energy. Keeping your network alive once you've established your contacts will not be any easier. You'll need to occasionally follow up with these people and find things to talk about with them so that the conversation is enjoyable and not just about you wanting a job. Find similarities between the two of you and make sure that you remember the names and information about each of those contacts so that when they do call you, you're not scrambling trying to figure out who they are.



Chapter 5: Networking and social media—finding a new job

Social Networking

Social networking is a fairly new phenomenon, but growing in popularity and use every day. We're devoting a small part of this packet specifically to social networking because we recognize how important it is in today's networking scene, how different it is from face-to-face networking but also keeping in mind that because of its *newness*, there exist few regulations or rules on how to do it.

First and foremost, there are various sites that are used for *Social Networking* but few that should be used for professional social networking. Since these sites are creating and going out of existence on a daily basis, rather than print a list of outdated social networks, I would instead suggest you go to Wikipedia and search a list of social networks (currently there are over 80!). At this point, I'm going to discuss the difference between social and professional social networking by using two most common current examples, which are Facebook and LinkedIn.

Facebook is by far the most popular social networking site with more than 500,000,000 members and is currently ranked second in the Global Alexa Page Ranking system for all Internet pages. Almost everyone you know in the working world has a Facebook page and it's a great way to connect with friends and family and sometimes even make new friends. However, we would caution using it for professional networking purposes. This is because most people use Facebook for social purposes only. They use it to catch up with friend and family, see what's going on and stay in touch. Contacting someone out of the blue that you may not be "active" with on Facebook and asking them for a favor could easily be misconstrued as rude. This is not to say that you can't use Facebook to network for jobs. However, we do caution that you should probably only network for jobs on Facebook with people that you are already active with on the site.

If you are not active friends with a person, your chances are better if you friend request them on LinkedIn. At this time, LinkedIn is the most popular professional networking site on the Internet with more than 90 million members in over 200 countries. It was created and is used for the purpose of creating professional contacts and using it to leverage your skills and further your career. If you contact someone via LinkedIn asking for a referral or a recommendation (both services the website offers) it would not be considered rude at all, as it's a service that is supposed to be used on the page. The rules for creating a quality profile on LinkedIn are similar to creating a quality resume (see Chapter 3) and building your contacts is as easy as just a few clicks per request.

A third site which is fairly new but deserves mention as it grows in popularity and is specifically geared toward professional networking for public servants is GovLoop (<http://www.govloop.com>). It's the not most organized page out there, but creating a profile is quick and easy and it offers services like localized job postings, informational blogs and professional groups that will make networking quick and simple. Based on my experience with the page, the benefits are that this page is for government workers so members understand what you're going through and have been more than helpful and extremely friendly. Bottom line, this is one of the few pages where you currently don't need to be connected to a person to create a contact, and you can do it without it being creepy.



Chapter 5: Networking and social media—finding a new job

Practice: Networking Successfully

Making that initial contact—whether it be via telephone, face-to-face or online—can be intimidating. What do you say? How long should it take? When is the best time? The best way to make that initial contact a successful one is to go into it as prepared as possible. Know what you're going to say before you call, know which questions to ask and have your schedule set out so that you're ready to tell them when you're available to meet. The following is an example of an outlined telephone and email conversation setting up an informational interview. It is by no means the only way to do it, and as you begin to feel more comfortable reading the person on the other end, you'll find yourself deviating from this example. However, if you're nervous, this example can help add some structure to your conversation and keep you on subject.

Phone Contact:

Before the call, make sure that you do your research. Google the name of the person you're supposed to be contacting to figure out what they do, possible interests (you might be able to find this on a Facebook page or other social networking site), etc. If you're unsure of how to pronounce the person's first or last name, find a number of someone else in that office to call and ask them how to pronounce it. You don't need to tell them your name or why you're calling, just say you're trying to figure out if a Mr. XXX works there and then listen to how they correct the pronunciation.

Know why you are calling the person and what you want out of the conversation. For example, do you want an informational interview with that person, or are you trying to get contact names for people who work in a different office?

Prepare an outline. I tend to discourage scripting things out because people tend to *read* scripts rather than *speak* them and a listener can tell when someone's reading. If you prepare an outline, it will help you stay on task and get all your points across but still allow you to maintain that conversational speaking style. Here's one example of an outline:

Hello, Mr./Ms. _____, My name is _____. I'm calling because _____ gave me your name and told me that you would be an excellent person to speak with regarding _____ at _____ Company.

- Tell them why you're calling (to gather information, to learn more about company, etc)
- Acknowledge they are busy
- Request a time where the two of you could meet for about 30 minutes to discuss more about _____

If they say "yes", confirm the date and time and thank them for meeting with you. Also ask them if they would like you to bring anything (i.e. resume, business cards, etc).

If they say "no", accept their response, restate your interest in the company/office and kindly inquire whether or not they know of someone else that you could contact.

No matter how the conversation ends, thank the person for their time.

Chapter 5: Networking and social media—finding a new job

Email contact

Whether it's via your work, personal or social network account an email request for an informational interview should be formal. Sending the communication through email versus a telephone has its advantages in that you don't have to worry about forgetting what you want to say, sounding silly or anything like that. The disadvantages are that you don't know if or when they read your email and it's much harder to make a lasting impression. In some ways, sending an email is a much more passive approach and less likely to yield you the informational interview. However, it may be the only option. If so, you will want to make sure you include the following information:

Introduction: You will still want to be formal in your introduction, writing something along the lines of "Dear Mr./Ms. XX" rather than "Hey there Pat". You will also want to let them know how you got their name and contact information and the purpose of your email.

Body: Acknowledge that they are busy but then affirm your interest in their company/office and kindly request a short informational interview (about 30 minutes) at their convenience.

If the location is far away, let them know if you'll be in town on a specific date or that you would be available for a phone interview if that is easier for them.

Closing: Tell them that if they are not the correct person to speak with regarding XXX, request that they please let you know who you should contact instead.

Thank them for taking the time to read your email and let them know that you are excited about learning more about XXXX and looking forward to the possibility of meeting for an informational interview.

Informational Interview Tips

An informational interview is not a job interview but you're still leaving an impression about who you are. The following tips will help you make a strong and lasting impression.

- Be on time.
- Be respectful of the interview's timeframe. Don't go over the timeframe unless they say it's OK.
- Come prepared: bring a resume, business cards, etc.
- Dress appropriately for the environment.
- Do your research: on the dress environment, on the emerging issues for the company and similar companies, on legislation and current law that will affect the company, etc. Be able to speak about the minutia and the big picture as well, and how it affects the company.
- Keep in mind this is an *informational interview*. You're gathering information, NOT trying to get an interview. If you do, it's a bonus, but that's not the purpose of this meeting.
- Obtain as many other contacts to add to your network as possible.
- Prepare questions in advance so you don't draw a blank in the meeting.
- When the meeting ends, thank them for their time and let them know that you're available to be contacted at any time if they need anything or have any questions, etc.
- After the interview send a "thank you." It can be via email or a written card, but make sure you do it within 36 hours of the meeting.

Chapter 5: Networking and social media—finding a new job

Sample Informational Interview Questions

An informational interview differs from a job interview in that your purpose is to get as much information about the company and/or a specific job instead of trying to impress the person you're interviewing so that they want to hire you. Don't get me wrong, you still want to impress the person you're interviewing but in a different way. In an informational interview, the roles are reversed and you are the interviewer. The manager is the one being interviewed and the best way to impress them is to ask insightful questions and show them how much you are interested in their company. Although you will be doing some talking in between their answers and will have plenty of opportunities to show your skills, you should not be the one doing the majority of the talking during an informational interview. Keep in mind that an informational interview is pretty open and you can really ask anything that you want to know about the company, job, or working environment. Here are some examples of informational interview questions you may want to ask:

Why is this company a good company to work for?

What is the mission or vision of the company and or specific job?

Why do you work for this company/in this job?

What's your favorite part about your job?

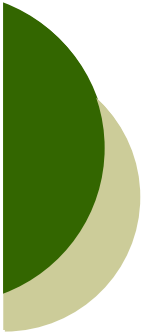
What do you look for in a colleague or subordinate?

What does it take to be successful in this company/job?

What is the biggest challenge of XX job?

What is this company/manager looking for in a stellar employee?

What is the company culture like? What are its values?



Chapter 5: Networking and social media—finding a new job

SELF REFLECTION FROM CHAPTER 5

How does the informational interview differ from a traditional interview?

What's the difference between face-to-face and online networking?

What are some rules of networking?

What are some rules of informational interviewing?



Chapter 6: Interviewing

Interviewing is a two-way street. While most articles and brochures will focus on how you can impress the interviewer(s), very few focus on the fact that you too must also be interviewing the company to see if it's the right fit for you. The reason for this is that in an interview, we normally get so caught up in trying to make a good impression that we ignore all the warning signs or don't ask the right questions and run the risk of finding ourselves in a bad job that we could have avoided. In this chapter, you will learn to:

- Research and prepare for a successful interview.
- Avoid common interviewing mistakes.
- Break down the questions being asked so you know what they're asking and how to answer.
- Perfect your *About Me* and your *Closing* speeches.
- Wrap up the interview process.



Chapter 6: Interviewing

Interviewing and being interviewed

The following are some basic rules of making a strong and positive first impression in an interview:

- **Timely** – If your interview is at 10 a.m. plan to be there by 9:40 so you give yourself plenty of time to park, go to the bathroom and find the office where the interview will be held. If there's a commute to the interview, check traffic and plan for construction or other delays. It's much better to show up too early and wait in a local coffee shop than arrive late and miss the interview.
- **Appearance** – First impressions are fast to form and last much longer than they should. Dressing professionally, but conservatively, is always the best bet. If you're unsure of how fancy to go or if it's a company that may have some safety guidelines (no open toed shoes, etc) it's best to verify ahead of time what the dress code is like. You'll also want to avoid large jewelry that will cause attention to drift from what you're saying to the bling. Bottom line, you don't want anyone interviewing you to be more dressed up than you are.
 - **Smell** – Deodorant is good if you use it but we would recommend not using perfume, aftershave or cologne as some people have sensitive noses or allergies. The best bet is to shower before the interview and just come clean without too many other smells.
 - **Grooming** – Make sure your clothes are ironed and your shoes are shined. For the guys out there, facial hair is "ok" but try not to show up with a five o'clock shadow or an untamed beard.
 - **Gastronomical** – Try not to eat anything with too much garlic or other strong scents that could make your breath stink. Soda and other carbonated beverages can cause gas bubbles which can be unpleasant and embarrassing no matter which end it comes out. Drinking alcohol, smoking or chewing tobacco is also strongly discouraged. Having a mint in the interview is "OK" but no chewing gum as it's distracting and tacky.
- **Attitude** – No matter what the reason is for the interview (layoff, fire, hating your boss) always keep your attitude positive. If you criticize your current or previous boss or agency, the interviewers will wonder what you might say about them. Instead of saying, "I'm looking for a new job because this one doesn't pay well," say something along the lines of "I'm interested in new opportunities for growth".
- **Body Language** – According to experts, more than 90% of communication is non-verbal. Sitting up straight, using animated hand gestures when you speak, leaning forward into the conversation (as opposed to slouching or leaning back), smiling, maintaining appropriate eye contact, nodding and acknowledging other people's social cues, and giving a firm handshake are all ways to express confidence as well as make a good, lasting impression.
- **Do your research** – Make sure you know who the hiring manager is (Google them), what the company's mission statement is, size, locations, industry challenges, anything they've been in the media for, etc. Showing up and being able to talk about the company shows you're not only a thorough person but also that you want this job rather than just a job.

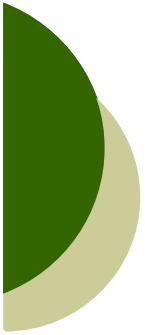


Chapter 6: Interviewing

At the same time you're being interviewed, you should also be doing an evaluation of your own. Although the things that will either "make it or break it" for you will be of your personal preference, we can highlight some things to specifically look for or ask in an interview so that you leave the interview with a better understanding of who you could be working for.

- **Timely** – Did the interview start on time? If not, did they apologize or explain why the delay? Or were you expected to sit there and wait since you are the one who wants the job?
- **Interviewers** – Was the person(s) interviewing you knowledgeable about the position or was it a stock person from HR?
- **Knowledge of the position** – When you asked specific questions about the position, did the interviewer(s) know the answers? Did they know about pay, starting dates, process timelines, travel requirements, job expectations? Or did it seem like they were ad libbing?
- **Body language** – Was the interviewer(s) interested in your answers? Did they write anything down? Did they look at you when you spoke? Was anyone yawning or checking their mobile phone while you spoke?
- **Conversation** – Did the interviewer(s) do most of the talking or did they ask questions and then listen for your answer? Did the hiring authority sound like they already knew everything and instead of interviewing, just wanted a platform for them to talk about themselves?
- **Attitude** – Did the panel members express any strong judgments or opinions? Did anyone make any inappropriate jokes or comments? Did they ask any illegal questions?
- **Environment** - How did the interviewers treat each other or other office workers while you were around? Did people seem like they got along in the office? What was the interviewer's answer when you asked what the office environment was like?

Although it looks like some of these points have value automatically given to them, you need to assess the situation from your personal point of view. Maybe the hiring manager seemed conceited and just wanted to talk about himself but you are transitioning into a new career field and want to know as much as you can. This might be a perfect scenario for you. Maybe the panel members expressed some strong political judgments that just happen to be exactly along the lines of how you feel. This might be the perfect working environment for you. Although none of these points are things that should completely deter you from accepting an offer with a company, they are points you need to look for when you're in an interview so you can know who you could be working for and properly evaluate if it's the right decision for you.



Chapter 6: Interviewing

Breaking Down the Questions

We've all heard someone else do it and whether or not you want to believe it, we've all done it. Misinterpreting someone's question and subsequently giving a completely wrong and unrelated answer happens to the best of us. In an interview, you've got two, possibly three things working against you, making you more likely to misinterpret a question. The first is that you're nervous. When you're nervous, your adrenaline goes into overdrive and you get a bunch of energy that helps you think faster. What it also does is allow your body to answer the question before you might have had the chance to fully digest the question and figure out what they're really looking for. The second is that most interviews are auditory why the majority of us are visual learners. What this means is that you're more likely to misunderstand a question that's spoken to you than if it's written down in front of you where you've got the time to look at it, digest it and relook at it while giving your answer. The third possible reason is that not all interviewers are good at phrasing questions. Whether it be because they are reading the question and their cadence is poor, or the question is just poorly written, just because they are the interviewer does not mean their questions are good ones and you'll find plenty of questions you may not understand. This being said, the following is some basic advice to help you understand what's really being asked so that you can give a correct answer.

1. First and foremost, if you don't understand the question, don't be afraid to ask for clarification. Whether you ask them to repeat, reword or clarify a certain part of the question, requesting this will never make you look as bad as answering the question incorrectly.
2. You're not Flo-Jo. Pending that you're not applying for a job that has *lighting fast reaction time* as one of its qualifications, don't be afraid to take a moment to digest the question before answering it. Although too much silence (probably around 20 seconds) can be uncomfortable, taking a little time to fully comprehend the question is completely acceptable and shows that you are a pensive and critical thinker.
3. Key in on key words – Listen for those key words like “What, how many, why, etc” as well as any *front loaders* like “Our company puts high value on respect for” or anything else that will give away what type of response they are looking for.
4. When in doubt, rephrase – If the question is just plain poor and you're having trouble understanding, try rephrasing the question back to them to see if that's what they are asking.
5. It depends – If you're given a really vague question like “How do you handle conflict” and the interviewer does not want to get more specific about the situation, giving a similarly vague response is OK as long as you follow it up with different examples. For example, If I were to answer this question, I would say, “Well, that depends on the situation. If I were in conflict with a customer, I would most likely try to diffuse the situation by using active listening to show them I care about what they have to say and then see what we can do together to resolve their problem. Normally, my boss and I experience conflict on a daily basis, but it's how we build ideas and get out our creative thinking, so in that situation I try to encourage conflict.” You can see from my example that with vague questions, giving an extreme answer like “I always try to resolve the situation” is not always the best answer. For one, it shows that you're inflexible in how you do things. For another, it makes it look like you might not be able to see how things can change depending on the situation.

Chapter 6: Interviewing

PRACTICE: Here are some sample interview questions that you are likely to hear in a traditional interview. With a partner, practice having one person ask the question and another answer them. Then, have your partner give you feedback on whether or not you answered the question given, if you missed anything and if you went off topic at all.

- Tell us more about yourself and why you're interested in this position (or some variation of this).
- Tell me about a major accomplishment.
- Tell me about a time when you failed. Why did it happen and what did you do to overcome it?
- What are your strengths and weaknesses?
- Who was your best (or worst) boss and what characteristics did they possess that made them your best (or worst) boss?
- Why should we hire you?



Chapter 6: Interviewing

Preparing Your Introduction and Closing Speeches

Although it's impossible to know exactly what you're going to be asked on an interview, there are a couple of items within the body of an interview that are almost guaranteed. Your *opening* and *closing* speeches are two things that are almost always guaranteed to be a part of your interview. The ironic thing is that people usually spend the least amount of time preparing for these. As someone who's been on hundreds of interview panels, I can tell you for certain that the majority of people tend to bomb these two parts of the interview, which is unfortunate considering how important they are to an interview.

Your About Me speech – In an interview, you will either start with small talk or simply be asked to tell them a little bit more about yourself. What they really want to know is **who** are you as a person, **why** are you interested in this job and **what** skills do you have that make you the most qualified? And, they want to hear all that in three minutes or less. If you think you're already able to do this, we caution you that it's much harder to do (it well) than it sounds. The only way you'll get better at this one is to self-reflect once again about your accomplishments as well as how they relate to the job you'll be interviewing for. Although my *about me* speech has the same foundation, the points I choose to highlight will differ depending on the job I'm interviewing for.

PRACTICE: With a partner, work on introducing yourself to them covering the Who, Why and What and timing yourself to make sure you can do it in three minutes or less.

REFLECTION: How did your speech go? Did you finish on time? Did you leave anything out? Did it flow well? Or was it choppy? How was your cadence? Do you feel like you were able to adequately explain the Who, Why and What?

Your Closing speech – also known as the hammer, this is where you are expected to release words of pure genius, wowing your interviewers so they want to hire you that instant. OK, that might be overdramatizing it a bit. Realistically, what you want to do is make sure you a) tell them that you want the job, b) tell them why you want the job and c) tell them why you think you are an excellent fit for the job. At the end of this speech, there should be no question in the interviewer's mind that you want this job. You will also want to talk about the specifics of the job and your skills. You will want to be careful not to phrase it in a way where it sounds like you're telling the interviewers what they want since only they know what they want (e.g. In this job you really need someone who has the drive to initiate and finish projects, and I definitely have that drive). Instead, you want to try to stick to the facts of the job announcement or reiterate what they've already told you and how you have that skill or can do that task.

PRACTICE: with a partner, work on a closing speech for either a real or potential job that you are interested in. Make sure you stick to the facts of what the job requires and your skills.

REFLECTION: How did it go? Did you forget anything? Was your partner convinced? Did you remember to say you want the job?



Chapter 6: Interviewing

Post Interview Etiquette

Just because the interview concluded does not mean your work has finished. After every interview it's pertinent to send a follow-up "Thank You" note to everyone who interviewed you. This not only shows that you practice good etiquette, but it's also a chance for you to follow-up with anything that you might have forgotten in the interview and reaffirm your interest in the position.

Previously, it was appropriate to send an actual "Thank You" card via the mail. However, because the interview process usually moves quite rapidly and you want to make sure that you make this good impression before they make their final decision, we recommend that you send your "thank you" letters via email.

You will want to send it within 24 hours of your interview and to all panel members. If you don't have the email for someone on the interview panel, contact their secretary or the recruiter and they will most likely be able to get you that contact information.

A basic "Thank You" email will look something like this:

Dear Mr./Ms. Interview Panel Member,

I would like to express my gratitude for the time you spent with me in my interview today. You asked a lot of insightful questions and after seeing how professional the interview process was and learning more about Company XXX, I am even more interested in XXX position and believe I would be able to contribute a lot to XXXX program or position.

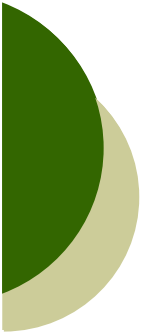
I also wanted to use this as an opportunity for follow up regarding XXXX SPECIFICS. In the interview we talked about XXXX and I would like to reaffirm that with XXX SKILLS that I have, I would be able to jump into this job and hit the ground running.

If you have any questions or would like to speak further, please feel free to contact me at the contact information below at any time. Thank you again for meeting with me today.

Regards,

YOUR NAME HERE

YOUR CONTACT INFO



Chapter 6: Interviewing.

SELF REFLECTION FROM CHAPTER 6

Now that you've had the opportunity to think about the interview process, go over some practice questions and answers and also think about how you need to interview the company as well, take a few moments to review what you've learned in this chapter.

What part of the interview do you feel most comfortable with?

What part of the interview do you think you need to work on the most?

What things will you need to know about the company before going into an interview? Where would you find this information?

Do you have your interview outfit prepared?

What things will you look for when interviewing a company? Are there any *make it or break it* qualities that the company must have or not have?

Do you have a template "Thank You" letter written that you can quickly send out after the interview?



Chapter 7: Negotiating a job offer

Congratulations! At this point in the job search, you've managed to search and apply for jobs. The hard part is over. Now it's just a matter of sealing the deal to ensure you'll be happy in your new job.

This chapter is guest written by veteran human resource executive, Career Coach and co-founder of YourCareerDoctors.com, Lee Miller. In addition to this article, Mr. Miller has published many books on securing your next career including:

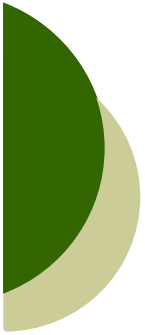
UP: Influence Power and The U Perspective: The Art of Getting What You Want

Get More Money on Your Next Job...In Any Economy

A Woman's Guide To Successful Negotiating

In this chapter, you will learn to:

- Take the time to learn how to negotiation
- Get a potential employer to "fall in love" with you before you talk about money
- Understand how to negotiate whether you're currently employed or not
- Negotiate for more than just money



Chapter 7: Negotiating a job offer

The following is an article published by Author Lee E. Miller entitled Five Ways to Negotiate a Better Job Offer...Despite the Economy

In the early 1980s the country was in the midst of a major recession as bad as the one we are currently experiencing. Unemployment was in the double digits and so was inflation. Yet I was able to negotiate a 50 percent salary increase when I took a job with a new firm in Washington, D.C.

Although I would like to be able to say my success was due to my extraordinary skill as a negotiator, it wasn't. I was still in my 20s at the time; this was the first time I ever really had to negotiate my compensation and, in hindsight, I made a lot of mistakes. The things I did do right though, were to negotiate with the right employer at the right time, and convince them that I was the right candidate for the job. Then and only then did we seriously talk about money.

In a tough economy most individuals don't think they have the ability to negotiate salary. Regardless of the state of the economy, if you are able to get a job offer you probably are in a better position to negotiate than you think.

When it comes to negotiating, as in every aspect of your life, you limit yourself by what you think you can do. If someone wants to hire you, it is because you offer something they value. As a result, you are in a position to negotiate for additional money, benefits and opportunities. There are, however, right and wrong ways to go about it. Here are five tips to help you negotiate when the job market is weak.

1. Take the time to learn how to negotiate.

Like math and good writing, negotiating skills have to be learned. Take a class, attend a seminar or read a book on the topic. The ability to negotiate effectively will help you throughout your working career, not only when you are discussing compensation.

Every day at work you negotiate about deadlines, to get resources, about time off and to get assignments that will propel your career forward and enable you to earn more money. Ultimately your career success depends on your ability to effectively negotiate. Time spent learning how to hammer out a deal is time well spent, and will pay dividends throughout your career.

2. Get a potential employer to "fall in love" with you before you talk about money.

The time to be asking for things is after an employer has decided to hire you. Focus on what is important to the employer and what you can do for them. In tough times, making or saving money is always important. So is your ability to make your prospective boss look good.

Employers want to hire people who bring value, and they are willing to pay what is necessary to hire them. Once the employer has decided to make you an offer, then, and only then, should you start discussing the terms of employment. Until that time, whenever the subject of money comes up, talk about the job. Be enthusiastic about wanting the job. Show that you really want to work there. Ask for the job. No one wants to hire a person who is only looking for a paycheck.

If asked what you are looking for in terms of compensation, say something like "I am sure that if I am the right person for the job and the job is right for me, something that is fair will be readily worked out." Then ask some questions about the job. You will look good to the employer and defer the conversation until a time that is more appropriate.



Chapter 7: Negotiating a job offer

3. The only difference between being employed and being unemployed is your self-confidence.

You are same person when you are unemployed as you were when you were working. You have the same skills and same experience. The value you can bring to an employer doesn't change just because you don't have a job. The only difference is your confidence. If you exhibit confidence you not only can negotiate effectively, you probably can land the job you want.

Competition for your services will also make you seem more valuable in the eyes of a prospective employer. Talking with several prospective employers at the same time will not only increase your confidence but will enhance your bargaining leverage.

4. Don't act like you are negotiating.

While you want to arrange the best possible deal, you should do so in a way that doesn't look like you are negotiating. Remember, once the employer has decided to offer you a job, they are trying to recruit you. Let them. Tell them what your concerns are. Ask for the things you want without ever suggesting that you won't accept the job if you don't get them. "Would it be possible..." or "Could you..." or "Other companies I have been talking to have offered, is it possible...." are non-threatening ways for you to ask. Don't make "demands." Throughout the process, and especially when you are asking for something, let the employer know how excited you are about the opportunity and how much you want the job.

5. Negotiating is not only about salary.

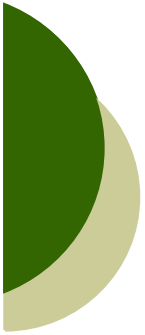
Understand how a prospective employer structures its compensation, and seek what is easiest for an employer to give. For some employers that is salary; for others it is bonuses or equity. Often, particularly early in your career, the most important thing that you can negotiate is the chance to learn new skills. When you learn new skills it will enable you to get better jobs and negotiate more money.

You can arrange what projects you will be assigned to, who you will be working with and what training you will receive. Asking for the opportunity to attend seminars and receive additional training is usually looked on favorably by employers. If the company doesn't have a formal tuition-reimbursement program, sometimes you can get the company to agree to pay for additional formal education.

Regardless of the state of the economy, most employers are not trying to hire based solely on whom they can get for least amount of money. They are seeking individuals that add real value, especially in a tough business environment. If you have demonstrated your worth sufficiently that an employer wants to hire you, you are in a good position to negotiate your compensation.

Most employers want to be seen as being fair, and want you not only to accept the position but also to feel good about doing so. Within the constraints of their budgets and organizational structures, employers usually will agree to any request that seems fair and reasonable. So being able to give a rationale for what you are asking for that will resonate with your prospective employer will make it more likely they will agree to give it to you. Asking for things that will help you in your work but which you would otherwise probably buy for yourself anyway, like certain computer equipment and software or an iPhone, is generally a fairly easy sell.

Understanding these principles will allow you to effectively negotiate the best possible terms in your next job regardless of the state of the economy. Once you are hired, do a good job and continually seek out new challenges. As you take on added responsibilities and learn new skills, there will be opportunities to negotiate further improvements.



Chapter 7: Negotiating a job offer

SELF REFLECTION FROM CHAPTER 7

Now that you've had an opportunity identify effective negotiating skills, take a few minutes to think about your own job negotiations in the past and also what you expect out of your next job.

What is your ideal salary? What is the lowest acceptable amount?

Are there factors such as work hours, health care, vacation, work supplies and technology, etc that will affect the salary you are willing to accept?

What things other than salary are necessary for you to be happy in your next job?

Try negotiating with your spouse, coworker or friend on a job. See how you respond to their offers. What aspects do you need to work on? Do you appear confident?



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