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College Recruitment Media and The Office of Cooperative Education and Career Services at Rochester Institute of Technology wish to thank the above participating sponsors for making this publication available to students.
Career Services for RIT
Graduating Students and Alumni

The RIT Office of Cooperative Education and Career Services is driven by a simple mission: to provide effective, high-quality services to RIT students and alumni, empowering and supporting them in the achievement of their career and employment goals. We are committed to outstanding customer service and effective use of state-of-the-art technology. Here we have highlighted key services and resources that are available to you. More information and resources can be found through the main student/alumni page of our site.

Contact Us
RIT Office of Co-op and Career Services
Bausch & Lomb Center | 57 Lomb Memorial Drive
Rochester, NY 14623 | 585.475.2301
www.rit.edu/co-op/careers

Hours
We are open Monday through Thursday from 8:00 am to 5:00 pm and 8:00 am to 4:30 pm on Fridays in the Bausch & Lomb Center.

Walk-In Hours—for quick questions or dealing with pressing issues. Walk in hours are offered Monday through Friday 9:30 am-11:30 am and 1:30 pm -3:30 pm Monday through Thursday in the Office of Cooperative Education and Career Services. This service is available on-site in some of the colleges as well.

Personal Support and Expertise
Each major has its own program coordinator providing support for students and alumni as they maneuver through the job search process. Visit the Staff Directory on our site for your program coordinator’s contact information.

• Job Search Advisement—Program coordinators in our office support specific academic departments and are available to meet on a one-to-one basis with students and alumni on career and employment matters. These sessions are critical to developing individual job search plans and addressing the many questions and issues that arise during the job search process. Call our office at 585.475.2301 to make an appointment. (If you need an interpreter, make arrangements through https://myaccess.rit.edu/. RIT deaf and hard-of-hearing undergraduate students/alumni may want to work with the staff of the National Technical Institute for the Deaf in addition to the program coordinators in our office).

• Job Development—We work hard to maintain and expand our working relationships with employers in order to post job openings or on-campus interviews for our graduating students and alumni. These opportunities are accessible through RIT Job Zone, our web-based system. Once you have graduated, you will continue to have access to these job postings—set up a Job Zone alumni account through our site.

• Graduate School Information—Information related to selecting and applying to graduate schools is available in our reception area and through the grad school page on our site. For assistance, make an appointment to meet with our graduate school program coordinator, responsible for helping students through this process. We also host a Grad School Fair that brings many school representatives to campus every year.

• Professional Network—RIT alumni, employers, and friends of the Institute volunteer to provide current students and alumni with career development support, counsel, guidance, reinforcement and constructive examples. The Professional Network is accessible to students and alumni on-line through RIT Job Zone.

Programming and Events
We offer a variety of programs and events that ultimately will help you launch a successful career. Some of our key events include:

• Career Fairs—Our office sponsors two major fairs and a number of specialized career fairs throughout the year. These are free and open to RIT students and alumni only.

• Workshops/Info Sessions—Our staff prepares individuals for their job search through workshops and info sessions. Topics include: job search strategies, resume writing, cover letter writing, interviewing techniques, dress for success, use of social media, how to work a career fair, on-the-job success, alumni job club, and much more.

• Company Info Sessions—Many companies schedule visits to campus because it is a great opportunity to meet students/alumni. It is an opportunity to learn more about the company and what they look for in their candidates.

• Executive in Residence Program—High-level company representatives visit campus and are available for one-on-one meetings, to meet with student clubs, and offer their advice through workshops.

• Interview Preparation—We post many job listings and on-campus interview opportunities, and not only offer personal advice and but ways to practice in preparation for those interviews. InterviewStream is an online video practice interviewing system that offers simulated interviews for job seekers to practice both verbal and non-verbal communication skills. Our Mock Interview Program is offered twice a year, and provides the opportunity to conduct a practice interview with volunteers from industry. Receive immediate and valuable feedback that will help you prepare for future interviews.
Online Resources

- **Job Zone** Access job postings, on interview opportunities and career fair information through this section of our site. Set up a search agent that will email you opportunities that match your search criteria. Upload a resume so that potential employers can find you. Network with industry representatives through the Professional Network feature. Job Zone is a resource that you should definitely be tapping into.

- **Other Sites** Visit the Web-based Tools and Resources page of our site for a complete list of sites that we subscribe to so that you have access to them. Be sure to check out CareerSearch, Vault’s Career Insider, InterviewStream, Going Global, and Interfolio. You will also find a list of recommended sites by major, for additional sources of jobs and career information.

- **RIT’s Alumni Online Community** A site maintained by Alumni Relations, primarily for alumni to keep informed of campus events and news, network with other alumni. Students have access to it within four quarters of graduation. It’s a great resource for identifying alumni that are working at a company, or in a particular city—because this information can help you make valuable contacts that will help you advance your career goals.

Communications and Social Media

Not only do we connect and communicate directly with you via e-mail, but also through a variety of social media: Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn, YouTube.

Set your sights on a healthier world.

Impacting people’s lives is your passion. Not only do you dream of a healthier world, you aspire to make it a reality. And at MSD, you can achieve this vision by helping deliver products that prevent and treat disease worldwide.

Join a diverse team that truly values your unique skills and insights. You’ll work alongside incredible professionals in an environment that’s focused on your success and satisfaction. Whatever your career path, you’ll play an essential role in helping us become the world’s most trusted supplier of pharmaceuticals, vaccines, biologics, animal health products and consumer healthcare products.

Right now, we have numerous opportunities available for professionals in a wide range of areas, including Science, Manufacturing, HR, IT, Consulting and more. If you’re ready to set your sights on a healthier world, explore a position with us today at merckcareers.jobs/5772.

Merck is an equal opportunity employer, M/F/D/V—proudly embracing diversity in all of its manifestations.
Many people use the classified ads as their sole job search technique. Unfortunately, statistics show that only 10% to 20% of jobs are ever published—which means that 80% to 90% of jobs remain hidden in the job market. For this reason, networking remains the number one job search strategy.

A NETWORK IS an interconnected group of supporters who serve as resources for your job search and ultimately for your career. Some great network contacts might include people you meet at business and social meetings who provide you with career information and advice.

Students often hesitate to network because they feel awkward asking for help, but it should be an integral part of any job search. Though you might feel nervous when approaching a potential contact, networking is a skill that develops with practice, so don’t give up. Most people love to talk about themselves and their jobs and are willing to give realistic—and free—advice.
Eight Keys to Networking

BE PREPARED First, define what information you need and what you are trying to accomplish by networking. Remember, your purpose in networking is to get to know people who can provide information regarding careers and leads. Some of the many benefits of networking include increased visibility within your field, propelling your professional development, finding suitable mentors, increasing your chances of promotion and perhaps finding your next job.

Second, know yourself—your education, experience and skills. Practice a concise, one-minute presentation of yourself so that people will know the kinds of areas in which you are interested. Your networking meeting should include the following elements: introduction, self-overview, Q&A, obtaining referrals and closing.

BE TARGETED Identify your network. For some, “I don’t have a network. I don’t know anyone,” may be your first reaction. You can start by listing everyone you know who are potential prospects: family members, friends, faculty, neighbors, classmates, alumni, bosses, co-workers and community associates. Attend meetings of organizations in your field of interest and get involved. You never know where you are going to meet someone who could lead you to your next job.

Social Networking Websites

Career professionals—and parents—are warning young job seekers that using social networking sites such as Facebook and Twitter, may be hazardous to your career. After all, do you want your potential employer to see photos of you at last weekend’s party? Certainly, those photos could diminish your prospects of landing a job. However, more job seekers are using social networking to enhance their preparation for interviews, garner an advantage over less-wired peers, and even gain an edge with recruiters.

One example of a constructive use of social networking websites is gathering background information about the recruiters with whom you will interview. By finding out about topics that will interest the recruiter, you may gain an upper hand in the interview process. In addition, stronger connections with a potential employer can be made by talking about the clubs he or she belongs to and even friends you have in common—information that can be discovered on Facebook.

Research on professional sites like LinkedIn can also be used to prepare for site visits. By using the alumni connections available through LinkedIn, you can gain added insight into potential employers. If you are interviewing with a company, search for alumni who are working there. You can have conversations with alumni via LinkedIn that you wouldn’t have in an interview, such as, “do you like it at the company” or “can you negotiate salary?”

Networking Rules

When you seek and maintain professional connections via social networking sites, follow the same etiquette you would if you were networking by phone and in person. Remember that every contact is creating an impression. Online, you might tend to be less formal because you are communicating in a space that you typically share with friends. Just as you would not let your guard down if you were having dinner with a potential employer, you must maintain a positive and professional approach when conversing with networking contacts online. Ask good questions, pay attention...
to the answers, and be polite—this includes sending at least a brief thank-you note anytime someone gives you advice or assistance.

If It’s OK for Mom, It’s OK for Facebook

The more controversial aspect of the interplay between social networking and job searching is the privacy debate. Some observers, including career counselors, deans, and parents, worry that students put themselves at a disadvantage in the job search by making personal information available on Facebook and Twitter pages. More and more companies are using such websites as a screening tool.

Concern about privacy focuses on two areas: social life and identity/affiliations. Parents and career counselors argue that job-seekers would never show photos of themselves at a party in the middle of an interview, so why would they allow employers to see party photos on a Facebook page? Students often respond that most employers do not even use social networking sites and that employers already know that college students drink.

While it may be true that senior managers are less likely to be on Facebook, young recruiters may be active, and in many cases, employers ask younger employees to conduct online searches of candidates. Why risk losing a career opportunity because of a photo with two drinks in your hand?

It’s easy to deduce that if an employer is comparing two candidates who are closely matched in terms of GPA and experience, and one has questionable photos and text on his or her online profile and the second does not, that the second student will get the job offer.

Identity—Public or Private?

Identity and affiliations are the second area where social networking and privacy issues may affect your job search and employment prospects. Historically, job-seekers have fought for increased protection from being asked questions about their identity, including religious affiliation and sexual orientation, because this information could be used by biased employers to discriminate. Via social networking sites, employers can now find information that they are not allowed to ask you.

Employers can no longer legally ask these questions in most states, however, some students make matters like religion, political involvement, and sexual orientation public on their Web pages.

BE PROFESSIONAL

Ask your networking prospects for advice—not for a job. Your networking meetings should be a source of career information, advice and contacts. Start off the encounter with a firm handshake, eye contact and a warm smile. Focus on asking for one thing at a time. Your contacts expect you to represent yourself with your best foot forward.

BE PATIENT

Heena Noorani, research analyst with New York-based Thomson Financial, recommends avoiding the feeling of discouragement if networking does not provide immediate results or instant answers. She advises, “Be prepared for a slow down after you get started. Stay politely persistent with your leads and build momentum. Networking is like gardening: You do not plant the seed, then quickly harvest. Networking requires cultivation that takes time and effort for the process to pay off.”

Questions to Ask During Networking Meetings

- What do you like most (least) about your work?
- Can you describe a typical workday or week?
- What type of education and experience do you need to remain successful in this field?
- What are the future career opportunities in this field?
- What are the challenges in balancing work and personal life?
- Why do people enter/leave this field or company?
- Which companies have the best track record for promoting minorities?
- What advice would you give to someone trying to break into this field?
- With whom would you recommend I speak? When I call, may I use your name?
You would never include religious and political affiliations as well as sexual orientation or transgender identity (GLBT) on your resume, so do you want this information to be available via social networking sites? There are two strategies to consider. One approach is that if you wish to only work for an employer with whom you can be openly religious, political, or GLBT then making that information available on your Web page will screen out discriminating employers and make it more likely that you will land with an employer open to your identity and expression.

A second approach though, is to maintain your privacy and keep more options open. Investigate potential employers thoroughly and pay special attention at site visits to evaluate whether the company would be welcoming. This strategy is based on two perspectives shared by many career professionals. First, as a job-seeker, you want to present only your relevant skills and experience throughout the job search; all other information is irrelevant. Second, if you provide information about your identity and affiliations, you may be discriminated against by one person in the process even though the company overall is a good match.

Strategies for Safe and Strategic Social Networking

1. Be aware of what other people can see on your page. Recruiters use these sites or ask their colleagues to do searches on candidates.
2. Determine access intentionally. Some career counselors advocate deactivating your Facebook or Twitter accounts while job searching.
3. Set a standard. If anything appears on your page that you wouldn’t want an interviewer to see, remove the offending content.
4. Use social networking to your advantage. Use these sites to find alumni in the companies that interest you and contact them before you interview in your career center or before a site visit. In addition, use social networking sites and Internet searches to learn more about the recruiters who will interview you before the interview.

Do’s & Don’ts of Networking

- Do keep one hand free from a briefcase or purse so you can shake hands when necessary.
- Do bring copies of your resume.
- Don’t tell them your life story; you are dealing with busy people, so get right to the point.
- Don’t be shy or afraid to ask for what you need.
- Don’t pass up opportunities to network.

“Social Networking Websites” written by Harriet L. Schwartz.
Transferable Skills

If you’re wondering what skills you have that would interest a potential employer, you are not alone. Many college seniors feel that four (or more) years of college haven’t sufficiently prepared them to begin work after graduation. And like these students, you may have carefully reviewed your work history (along with your campus and civic involvement) and you may still have a difficult time seeing how the skills you learned in college will transfer to the workplace.

But keep in mind that you’ve been acquiring skills since childhood. Whether learning the value of teamwork by playing sports, developing editing skills working on your high school newspaper or developing countless skills while completing your coursework, each of your experiences has laid the groundwork for building additional skills.

What Are Transferable Skills?
A transferable skill is a “portable skill” that you deliberately (or inadvertently, if you haven’t identified them yet) take with you to other life experiences.

Your transferable skills are often:
• acquired through a class (e.g., an English major who is taught technical writing)
• acquired through experience (e.g., the student government representative who develops strong motivation and consensus building skills)

Transferable skills supplement your degree. They provide an employer concrete evidence of your readiness and qualifications for a position. Identifying your transferable skills and communicating them to potential employers will greatly increase your success during the job search.

Remember that it is impossible to complete college without acquiring transferable skills. Campus and community activities, class projects and assignments, athletic activities, internships and summer/part-time jobs have provided you with countless experiences where you’ve acquired a range of skills—many that you may take for granted.

Identifying Transferable Skills
While very closely related (and with some overlap), transferable skills can be divided into three subsets:
• Working With People
• Working With Things
• Working With Data/Information

For example, some transferable skills can be used in every workplace setting (e.g., organizing or public speaking) while some are more applicable to specific settings (e.g., drafting or accounting).

The following are examples of skills often acquired through the classroom, jobs, athletics and other activities. Use these examples to help you develop your own list of the transferable skills you’ve acquired.

Working With People
• Selling
• Training
• Teaching
• Supervising
• Organizing
• Soliciting
• Motivating
• Mediating
• Advising
• Delegating
• Entertaining
• Representing
• Negotiating
• Translating

Working With Things
• Repairing
• Assembling parts
• Designing
• Operating machinery
• Driving
• Maintaining equipment
• Constructing
• Building
• Sketching
• Working with CAD
• Keyboarding
• Drafting
• Surveying
• Troubleshooting

Working With Data/Information
• Calculating
• Developing databases
• Working with spreadsheets
• Accounting
• Writing
• Researching
• Computing
• Testing
• Filing
• Sorting
• Editing
• Gathering data
• Analyzing
• Budgeting

Easy Steps to Identify Your Transferable Skills
Now that you know what transferable skills are, let’s put together a list of your transferable skills. You may want to work with someone in your career services office to help you identify as many transferable skills as possible.

Step 1. Make a list of every job title you’ve held (part-time, full-time and internships), along with volunteer, sports and other affiliations since starting college. (Be sure to record officer positions and other leadership roles.)

Step 2. Using your transcript, list the classes in your major field of study along with foundation courses. Include electives that may be related to your employment interests.

Step 3. For each job title, campus activity and class you’ve just recorded, write a sentence and then underline the action taken. (Avoid stating that you learned or gained experience in any skill. Instead, present your skill more directly as a verifiable qualification.)

“While working for Jones Engineering, I performed 3D modeling and drafting.”

NOT “While working for Jones Engineering, I gained experience in 3D modeling and drafting.”

“As a member of the Caribbean Students Association, I developed and coordinated the marketing of club events.”

NOT “As a member of the Caribbean Students Association, I learned how to market events.”

Step 4. Make a list of the skills/experiences you’ve identified for future reference during your job search.

Using Transferable Skills in the Job Search
Your success in finding the position right for you will depend on your ability to showcase your innate talents and skills. You will also need to demonstrate how you can apply these skills at an employer’s place of business. Consult the staff at your career services office to help you further identify relevant transferable skills and incorporate them on your resume and during your interviews. During each interview, be sure to emphasize only those skills that would be of particular interest to a specific employer.

Transferable skills are the foundation upon which you will build additional, more complex skills as your career unfolds. Start making your list of skills and you’ll discover that you have more to offer than you realized!

Additional Tips to Help Identify Your Transferable Skills
1. Review your list of transferable skills with someone in your field(s) of interest to help you identify any additional skills that you may want to include.
2. Using a major job posting website, print out descriptions of jobs that interest you to help you identify skills being sought. (Also use these postings as guides for terminology on your resume.)
3. Attend career fairs and company information sessions to learn about the skills valued by specific companies and industries.

Written by Rosita Smith.
Qualities Desired in New College Graduates
By Businesses, Industries and Government Agencies

Energy, Drive, Enthusiasm and Initiative
Hard-working, disciplined and dependable
Eager, professional and positive attitude
Strong self-motivation and high self-esteem
Confident and assertive, yet diplomatic and flexible
Sincere and preserves integrity
Ambitious and takes risks
Uses common sense

Adapts Textbook Learning to the Working World
Quick learner
Asks questions
Analytical; independent thinker
Willing to continue education and growth

Committed to excellence
Open-minded, willing to try new things

Knowledge of Computers
Established word processing, spreadsheet, database and presentation software skills
Excellent computer literacy

Communications Skills
Good writing skills
Excellent oral communication skills
Listens well; compassionate and empathetic
Excellent problem-solving and analytical skills
Creative and innovative

Leadership Skills
Organizational skills and attention to detail
Accepts and handles responsibilities
Action-oriented and results-driven
Loyal to employers
Customer-focused
Team-spirited; understands group dynamics
Always willing to help others
Mature, poised and personable
Diversity aware; treats others with respect and dignity

Oriented to Growth
Acceptance of an entry-level position; doesn’t view required tasks as “menial”
Academic excellence in field of study
Views the organization’s total picture, not just one area of specialization
Willing to accomplish more than required


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ITT is a global engineering and manufacturing company with $11 billion in sales. In addition to being a Fortune 300 company, ITT is a top 10 defense contractor providing innovative technologies and operational services to meet the emerging requirements of the military, government and commercial customers.

ITT Electronic Systems is seeking qualified candidates for the design, development, production and support of Electronic Warfare protection systems. We develop technology critical to our soldiers, and you have the potential to become part of a talented team, work on rewarding projects, thrive in a dynamic environment and excel in your career.

Join our team at http://es.itt.com

ITT is an Equal Opportunity / Affirmative Action Employer. M/F/D/V.
We emphasize building a diverse workforce which is inclusive of different perspectives and varied business, academic, cultural and social backgrounds.
U.S. citizenship required.

www.rit.edu/co-op/careers
Resume Preparation

Hot Tips:

1. Make sure your objective fits the type of job you want.
2. Choose the resume format that most effectively markets your skills and experiences.
3. When developing the employment history section on your resume, strike a balance between job duties, skills you possess and accomplishments.
4. Use action words to attract attention to your skills and accomplishments.
5. Use specific examples in your skills or experience section to support and strengthen your objective.
6. Your resume should be concise, neat and well organized, not overcrowded; it should be attractive to the eye.
7. Make sure your resume is faxable and able to be scanned.
8. It must be 100% free of errors and be printed/copied on high-quality paper.
9. Don’t sell yourself short; make sure you describe your experience and transferable skills effectively; emphasize your areas of professional growth.
10. Consistency in dates, punctuation, indentation, style and tense is very important.
11. Do not put the following information in your resume: your photo, sex, age, race, or health.
12. If a second page is needed, repeat your name at the top.

What Is a Resume?
A resume is a synopsis of what you have to offer an employer for a particular type of job. Its purpose is to organize the relevant facts about you in a written presentation which will serve as your personal advertisement. Your resume must indicate WHO you are, WHAT kind of work you can do, and HOW you are qualified. It must sell as well as tell!

Contents of a Resume
The following items are found in one form or another in most resumes. You are encouraged to consider them as you prepare yours.

- **Identifying Information**—your name, address, and telephone number. Usually both local and permanent data should be indicated. Consider including your email address, plus a personal URL (if you have one).
- **Job Objective**—a brief statement indicating the type of opportunity (title and/or functions) you are seeking and possibly mentioning your preferred geographical location(s) and/or employment sector. If you are applying for more than one type of job, it is a good practice to vary the Objective and prepare a resume styled specifically for each one, or, you may use the cover letter accompanying your resume to state your objective. Bear in mind an Objective can strengthen a resume by providing focus, but including one is not “required.” Rather than being too narrow or too vague/general, you may choose to omit the Objective.
- **Educational Background**—list of colleges and universities attended, dates, degrees, diplomas, and certificates with emphasis on highest level achieved and special training pertinent to your job objective. You may also include your GPA and any academic honors received at each school.
- **Experience or Work History**—a summary of your work experience. Indicate dates of employment, name of employer, city and state, title of each position. Also describe your major duties and responsibilities and relate any notable achievements (e.g., promotion) and/or skills developed. You may want to have one section for related work experience and a separate section for other experience. Employment which is relevant to your stated job objective should be elaborated on; that which is unrelated, including part-time, should be mentioned at least briefly.
- **Skill Section**—a list of specific skills and abilities most useful in your career field. For example: computer, technical, laboratory, foreign languages, or certifications.
- **Activities or Interests**—at least a brief mention of extracurricular activities, professional memberships and affiliations, community activities, and hobbies or pastimes. Be sure to mention any offices held.
- **Optional Categories**—military record, licenses/certifications, publications, major projects (e.g., research), other experiences (e.g., volunteer, travel).

Format of a Resume
There are basically three types of resume formats—reverse chronological, functional and combined.

Reverse Chronological Format
This format typifies 80% of all resumes. Education and job history are described in descending order, with the most recent events first. It tends to emphasize job titles and organizations.

This has **advantages** for people who:
- Wish to emphasize the most recent employer.
- Have prior job titles that are impressive.
- Have job history related to field of study.

The **disadvantages** exist for those who:
- Have a spotty work history.
- Are changing career goals.
- Have changed employers frequently.

Functional Format
This format goes beyond simply outlining experience and education. The focus is on what is termed “transferable skills.” The key element of this type of resume is the section on skills. The skill clusters chosen should support the stated job objective. Group your work accomplishments, responsibilities, and duties according to functional skill areas such as “Project Planning Skills,” “Managerial Skills,” “Sales,” and “Communication.” Choose your skill headings according to your job objective and briefly describe, using action statements, the work you did in each of the broad categories you identify. For example, if you did financial analysis and planning in previous positions, describe these responsibilities.
under the heading “Financial Planning” and treat your experience in this area as one complete unit. Work history and job titles take a subordinate position in this format. In fact, you may draw upon volunteer positions, education and other life experiences for many of the skills you wish to note.

This type of format has advantages for those who:
- Are changing careers.
- Have had a variety of relatively unconnected work experiences.
- Want to emphasize capabilities developed in non-paid experiences or those of a freelance nature.
- Want to work in fields not directly related to their education.

The disadvantages in using this format exist for those who:
- Want to highlight specific employers, especially prestigious ones.
- Have performed only a limited number of functions in past jobs or other experiences.
- Wish to emphasize a growth pattern in past jobs.

It is possible to develop a combined approach to resume preparation using elements of both formats.

**Combined Resume Format**

This style combines the “best” elements of the chronological and functional resume. Accomplishments/skills are presented in a section or sections as is a brief work history. This format is designed to highlight the qualifications of the applicant with much less emphasis on specific work titles and dates. Therefore, this format is suggested for those who have a diverse work history or who are making a career change.

The strong points of this resume format are:
- Allows you to highlight skills that are relevant to your job objective.
- Minimizes gaps in time.
- Can be varied to emphasize or de-emphasize work history and job titles, as appropriate.

The limitations of this resume are:
- Takes longer to prepare.
- Can be difficult to read unless it is well written.

**Resume Review**

Before you finalize your decision on which format to use, you may wish to consult with your Program Coordinator to determine which style is appropriate for your particular circumstances. We strongly encourage you to utilize on-campus computer systems and laser printers when developing and printing your resume. Not only is it more cost-effective, but it allows for easy updates and changes. Alternatively, you may have your resume printed or duplicated on campus at the Copy Center located in Bldg. #99.

**Scannable Resume**

Many large employers have been investing in scanning technologies as a productivity aid in human resources. Resume images are entered into a system using an optical scanner, thereby building a database of applicant information. As needed, the employer then accesses candidates by searching this database for those with desired qualifications. You may choose to develop a separate version of your resume in scannable format.

These new systems search by using “keywords” (particularly nouns) or phrases. So, in order for your resume to have appeal to those in your chosen field, explicitly and extensively use the jargon of that field! Caution: when including acronyms alone be sure they are widely recognized; otherwise spell the words out.

Also, the format you use can have a critical impact on your resume’s “scannability.”

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**Action Words**

The following list of action words should be used to succinctly accentuate tasks, functions and achievements when describing work and other experiences:

- accomplished
- achieved
- adapted
- administered
- alleviated
- analyzed
- appraised
- assisted
- audited
- chaired
- completed
- communicated
- computed
- conceptualized
- conducted
- corrected
- created
- designed
- demonstrated
- developed
- devised
- diagnosed
- directed
- edited
- employed
- enabled
- enforced
- enhanced
- enlarged
- equipped
- established
- estimated
- evaluated
- expanded
- facilitated
- forecasted
- formulated
- guided
- implemented
- improved
- increased
- initiated
- insured
- integrated
- invented
- investigated
- led
- managed
- modeled
- modified
- motivated
- performed
- persuaded
- planned
- produced
- projected
- promoted
- proliferated
- qualified
- rated
- recommended
- reported
- researched
- resolved
- revised
- selected
- solved
- strengthened
- supervised
- trained
- translated
- updated
- wrote

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**Tips for Making Your Resume “Scanner-Friendly”**

- **Font size** is also important; sizes between 10 - 14 pt. work best.
- **Italics and underlining** may cause problems for the scanner, especially if combined. Avoid reverse type. Use **boldface** for emphasis.
- **Vertical or horizontal lines** should be used sparingly. When used, leave at least a quarter of an inch of space around the line.
- **Avoid graphics, shading, shadowing,** and boxes.
- **Do not compress or expand the space** between letters or lines. Do not double space within sections.
- The resume you submit should be an original, printed with a laser printer on white or light-colored 8.5” x 11” paper.
Emailing Your Resume—Do's and Don'ts

Increasingly employers are requesting, sometimes requiring, that resumes be sent by email. Again, the format choices you make can have an important impact on your ability to do so effectively. Follow these guidelines for an email version of your resume:

- Do prepare several different file format versions of your resume. For example, save one in plain text (ASCII) format, save another in Rich Text Format and another as a Word document. Employers may request that resumes be submitted in a certain file format for email purposes. Adobe PDF format resumes are also widely used and readily accessible by employers.

- Do not use postscript files—they do not email well.

- Do not include your resume as an attachment only. Instead, include your resume as part of your email message, perhaps separated by something like the following: [begin resume] and [end resume] AND indicate that it is attached to the email as a Rich Text Format document, also. RTF formatted documents are easily interpreted by most modern word processors and support bold characters, underlining, italics and other formatting.

- Don't use boldface, underlining, or bullets in your resume when it is included as part of the email text. You can use asterisks (*) or plus signs (+) instead of bullets and do consider using CAPITAL letters as a highlighting technique.

- Do email your resume to yourself or a friend, as a test, before emailing it to employers, to be sure the format transfers as desired.

- Do mail, if possible, an original resume to the employer as a follow up to your email.

- Always include a cover letter as part of your email message text. Follow the same guidelines for cover letter development as you would if you were mailing a cover letter to an employer by U.S. mail. See section on Correspondence.

Concluding Notes

The resumes that you use should be well-planned, distinctive, and professional in appearance. Good format, high-quality paper, and well-written text will greatly improve your readership. Above all, the contents of your resume must be factual. Each statement needs to be accurate and not overly inflated. On the other hand, avoid either revealing potentially negative information unnecessarily, or selling short your accomplishments. Refer to the sample resumes which follow as springboards to develop effective ideas and approaches for your own.
Job Search Correspondence

Hot Tips:

- A cover letter should accompany each resume.
- Cover letters should highlight your experiences and stress previous accomplishments.
- Cover letters should not just repeat information verbatim from your resume!
- Always personalize your correspondence by sending it to a specific person within the organization. Do research to get a name—call the company, look in trade journals, etc.
- Pay attention to spelling, grammar, accuracy and neatness!
- Be decisive—use active rather than passive verbs.
- Send a networking letter to generate an informational interview with an individual in the field in which you are interested.
- Research the organization before writing the cover or networking letter—target every letter to a specific position or type of work.
- Don’t overuse the word “I” in your letters.
- Close your cover and networking letters by indicating when you will call to set up an interview. If you say you’re going to call, make sure you do call.
- Use professional, high quality paper for your resume and cover letter.
- A thank-you letter should be sent to all interviewers within 48 hours of the interview.
- Use an acceptance letter to formally accept a job offer and confirm the terms of your employment.
- If you accept a job offer, send all other prospective employers a withdrawal letter to notify them you’ve accepted another position.
- Send a rejection letter to decline a job offer that does not fit your career objectives and interests.
- Keep a record and copy of each letter you send.

Cover Letters

A cover letter should always be included when mailing your resume to an employer. An effective cover letter makes the employer want to talk to you in person. Your purpose in writing the letter is to attract the attention of the employer in a positive way. Certain information, such as that following, should be included in cover letters. Remember, however, that your letters represent you. BE ORIGINAL!

- **First Paragraph**—explains why you are writing the letter. State your purpose; identify the position you are applying for (if known) or the type of position you are seeking, and how you learned of the opening. If you are responding to an advertisement, state the name and date of the publication where you found the ad. If a well-respected person referred you to the organization, mention the person’s name and connection.

- **Middle Paragraph(s)**—describe your interest in the position. Here you should tell the employer why you are a strong candidate. Highlight relevant achievements, skills and/or experience, mentioning the most interesting points on your resume, and supporting them with examples. Explain how you intend to help the employer and contribute to the organization. Refer the reader to the enclosed resume.

- **Closing Paragraph**—should be an action-oriented paragraph. You should state how and when you will contact the employer to arrange a mutually convenient time to interview. Also be sure to state how and when they may best contact you. Do not assume an employer will contact you once you have sent your cover letter and resume. It is your responsibility to follow up. Finally, thank the individual and mention that you are looking forward to meeting them.

Some additional cover letter hints:
- Each cover letter should be typed individually on 8.5” x 11” good quality paper.
- The letter should conform to good business letter style.
- Address the letter to a specific person.
- Personally sign each cover letter.
- The letter should contain absolutely no errors in spelling or grammar.

Follow-Up Letter/Thank-You Note

A follow-up letter is written to thank the person who interviewed you. The letter also serves to remind the interviewer of who you are and in what position you are interested.

- Thank the interviewer for the opportunity to be interviewed.
- Mention the date and place of your interview.
- Refer to details of your conversation.
- Restate your interest in, and strongest qualifications for the position.

Letter to Accept an Offer

This letter is written to confirm your acceptance of an offer.

- Accept offer in first sentence.
- Restate the position, starting salary, and starting date.
- Express gratitude and enthusiasm.
- Indicate arrangements you will be making.

Letter to Decline an Offer

This letter is written when you have decided to turn down an offer.

- Decline the offer; be truthful, but tactful.
- Leave a good impression.

If you would like additional help with any of your job search correspondence, make an appointment to see your Program Coordinator at the Office of Cooperative Education and Career Services.

Following are samples of the letters outlined above. Use these as guides, but REMEMBER YOUR LETTERS MUST REFLECT YOU—BE ORIGINAL!
Sample Cover Letter—Letter of Application

8 Central Park Street
Sometown, NY 14788
(585) 555-1111
November 5, 20xx

Emily Smith
ABC Corporation
1 Industry Plaza
Anytown, NY 12096

Dear Ms. Smith:

Please accept this letter as application for the Cost Accounting Supervisor position currently available with your company, as advertised in the Democrat & Chronicle (Sunday, November 4th). My resume follows for your review and consideration.

I offer a solid financial background and database management systems education, as well as extensive practical experience in financial applications of automated systems. My experience also includes monthly cost analysis/reporting and interface with accounting and administrative management. I am confident that with my abilities/strengths I can make an immediate and valued contribution to ABC Corporation.

I look forward to hearing from you in the near future to schedule an interview at your convenience. I hope to learn more about your company's plans and goals and how I might contribute to its continued success.

Best regards,

James Sharpe
JSharpe@hotmail.com
JS
enclosure

Sample Letter of Inquiry

123 Ascot Lane
Blacksburg, NY 14606
(540) 555-2556
abcd@rit.edu
December 22, 20xx

Mr. Robert Burns
Vice President, Template Division
MEGATEK Corporation
9845 Technical Way
Bigtown, NY 14596

Dear Mr. Burns:

Recently I learned of your company through RIT's Office of Co-op & Career Services and I visited your web site to learn more about your business and projects. In May 20xx I will graduate with a Master of Science degree in Mechanical Engineering and would be particularly interested in a software engineering position with MEGATEK.

As a graduate student, I am one of six members on a software development team where we are writing a computer aided aircraft design program for NASA. My responsibilities include designing, coding, and testing of a graphical portion of the program which requires the use of GIARO for graphics input and output. I have a strong background in computer aided design, software development, and engineering, and believe that these skills would benefit the designing and manufacturing aspects of Template software. Enclosed is my resume which further outlines my qualifications.

I am very interested in working for MEGATEK, and would appreciate an opportunity to discuss possible position(s) with you. I will call you in a week to answer any questions you may have and to see if you would like to schedule an interview. Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

William Stevens
William Stevens
Enclosure

Sample Thank-You Letter

Box 163
Brick City Road
Rochester, NY 14623
May 3, 20xx

Ms. Susan Smith
Personnel Director
Fashion Specialties
100 Main St
Syracuse, NY 13600

Dear Ms. Smith:

I enjoyed meeting you yesterday and appreciate all the time you set aside for me. I remain very interested in a marketing and sales position with Fashion Specialties.

Thank you for the tour of your flagship Syracuse store. I appreciated the chance to meet with your enthusiastic management team. They provided valuable information regarding the operation of Fashion Specialties, increasing my desire to work for your corporation. You need someone who can take the initiative to generate new accounts and become an immediate contributor to your Sales and Marketing Division. I believe my experience with XYZ Corporation has provided me with the customer service background necessary to achieve these goals.

If I can supply any further information, please feel free to contact me at (315) 555-1218 or kgc111@gmail.com.

Sincerely,

Kevin G. Casper
Kevin G. Casper

Sample Letter to Accept Offer

25 Andrews Memorial Drive
Rochester, NY 14623
May 3, 20xx

Mr. George W. Taylor
Director of Personnel
New York Health Association
3216 Main St
Rochester, NY 14900

Dear Mr. Taylor:

I am very pleased to accept your offer to become a Lab Technician II at New York Health Association. Thank you for your letter of April 23, 20xx, extending this offer.

It is my understanding that the position will begin on June 1, 20xx, with a starting annual salary of $37,500. I also understand that I have been scheduled to attend an orientation session on May 29, 20xx, at 3:00 p.m. I will be able to attend this session.

I am very excited about the opportunities for growth from working at New York Health Association and look forward to meeting with you again on May 29, 20xx.

Yours truly,

Nancy A. Cross
Nancy A. Cross
Email Correspondence

For most of us, sending and receiving email is simple and fun. We use it to communicate with friends and family and to converse with our contemporaries in an informal manner. But while we may be unguarded in our tone when we email friends, a professional tone should be maintained when communicating with prospective employers.

Email is a powerful tool in the hands of a knowledgeable job-seeker. Use it wisely and you will shine. Use it improperly, however, and you’ll brand yourself as immature and unprofessional. It’s irritating when a professional email doesn’t stay on topic or the writer just rambles. Try to succinctly get your point across—then end the email.

Be aware that electronic mail is often the preferred method of communication between job-seeker and employer. There are general guidelines that should be followed when emailing cover letters, thank-you notes and replies to various requests for information. Apply the following advice to every email you write:

• Use a meaningful subject header for your email—one that is appropriate to the topic.
• Always be professional and businesslike in your correspondence. Address the recipient as Mr., Ms. or Mrs., and always verify the correct spelling of the recipient’s name.
• Be brief in your communications. Don’t overload the employer with lots of questions in your email.
• Ditch the emoticons. While a ☺ or an LOL (laughing out loud) may go over well with friends and family, do not use such symbols in your email communications with business people.
• Do not use strange fonts, wallpapers or multicolored backgrounds.
• Sign your email with your full name.
• Avoid using slang.
• Be sure to proofread and spell-check your email before sending it.

Neal Murray, former director of the career services center at the University of California, San Diego, sees a lot of email from job-seekers. “You’d be amazed at the number of emails I receive that have spelling errors, grammatical errors, formatting errors—emails that are too informal in tone or just poorly written,” says Murray. Such emails can send the employer a sense of your strengths and talents. This is where you request the next step, such as an appointment or a phone conversation. Be polite but sincere in your desire for further action.

Thank-You Notes

If you’ve had an interview with a prospective employer, a thank-you note is a good way to express your appreciation. The note can be emailed a day or two after your interview and only needs to be a few sentences long, as in the following:

Dear Ms. Jones:

I just wanted to send a quick note to thank you for yesterday’s interview. The position we discussed is exactly what I’ve been looking for, and I feel that I will be able to make a positive contribution to your organization. I appreciate the opportunity to be considered for employment at XYZ Corporation. Please don’t hesitate to contact me if you need further information.

Sincerely,

John Doe

Remember, a thank-you note is just that—a simple way to say thank you. In the business world, even these brief notes need to be handled with care.

Cover Letters

A well-crafted cover letter can help “sell” you to an employer. It should accomplish three main things:

1. Introduce yourself to the employer. If you are a recent college graduate, mention your major and how it would apply to the job you are seeking. Discuss the organizations/extracurricular activities you were involved in and the part-time jobs you held while a student, even if they might seem trivial to you. Chances are, you probably picked up some transferable skills that you will be able to use in the work world.

2. Sell yourself. Briefly state your education and the skills that will benefit the employer. Don’t go into a lot of detail here—that’s what your resume is for—but give the employer a sense of your strengths and talents.

3. Request further action. This is where you request the next step, such as an appointment or a phone conversation. Be polite but sincere in your desire for further action.

Tips

In addition to the guidelines stated above, here are a few tips to keep in mind:

• Make sure you spell the recipient’s name correctly. If the person uses initials such as J.A. Smith and you are not certain of the individual’s gender, then begin the email: “Dear J.A. Smith.”
• Stick to a standard font like Times New Roman, 12-point.
• Keep your email brief and businesslike.
• Proofread everything you write before sending it.

While a well-crafted email may not be solely responsible for getting you your dream job, rest assured that an email full of errors will result in your being overlooked. Use these email guidelines and you will give yourself an advantage over other job-seekers who are unaware of how to professionally converse through email.

Written by John Martalo, a freelance writer based in San Diego.
Letters of Recommendation

Candidates for employment, graduate school, scholarships or any activity for which others will evaluate their talents and abilities will need to request letters of recommendation. The content and quality of these letters, as well as the caliber of the people who write them, are critical to the selection process.

Selecting People to Serve as References

Select individuals whom you feel are knowledgeable of your skills, work ethic, talents and future capacity. The selection of your references is critical, as a reference that is ill-informed could sabotage all the great work you have done in a matter of minutes. Choose people who have known you for a minimum of six months. The longer they have known you the better, but they must have had regular contact with you to observe your growth and development. A reference from someone who may have known you several years ago but you have not spoken to in a year or more is not in a position to critique your skills.

If you must choose between several people, select those who know you the best but who also hold a higher rank in their profession. A department head is a better candidate than a graduate assistant or an instructor. Never choose someone on status alone, continue to choose people based on how well they know you and how much they want to assist you in your job search. Do not choose people who are not committed to you or who are not very familiar with your background.

Try to Meet Face-to-Face

Never assume someone will want the responsibility to serve as your reference. Make an appointment to discuss your career goals and purpose of the letter of recommendation. Determine if the person would want the responsibility of serving as your reference, which involves not only writing a letter supporting your skills, but also handling any phone inquiries and responding to other questions which may be posed by a selection committee. Persons who serve as a reference have responsibilities that go beyond the words they put on paper. They should feel strongly about your success and desire to do whatever they can to assist you in reaching your goals. You have come too far to let someone jeopardize your future.

A personal meeting is always best because you can observe your potential reference’s body language to see how interested he or she is in assisting you. A slow response to a question or a neutral facial expression may be this person’s way of trying to show you that he/she does feel comfortable serving as your reference. Trust your instincts. If you don’t feel that you want to pursue this person as a reference you are not required to inform them of your decision. At any rate, always thank the person and end the meeting on a positive note.

Help Them Help You

You must assist your reference-givers so they can do the best job possible. Provide them with a copy of your current resume, transcript, job descriptions for the type of employment you desire or other detailed information related to the purpose of the letter. Provide a one-page summary of any achievements or skills exhibited with the person who will be writing the letter. They may not remember everything you did under their supervision or time spent with you. Finally, provide them with a statement of future goals outlining what you want to accomplish in the next few years.

An employer will interview you and then contact your references to determine consistency in your answers. You should not inflate what you are able to do or what you may have completed in work or school assignments. A reference is looked upon as someone who can confirm your skill and ability level. Any inconsistencies between what you said in your interview and a reference’s response could eliminate you from further consideration. The key is to keep your references informed of what you are going to be discussing with employers so there is a clear understanding of what is valued by the employer.

What’s the Magic Number?

Each situation will dictate the appropriate number of references that will be required. The average would be three to five letters of recommendation. Generally, references are people whom you have known professionally; they should not be family or friends. When selecting people as references, choose people who know you well and have the most to say pertaining to the purpose of the letter. One person may be very appropriate for a reference for employment, while another would be best for use in admission to graduate or professional school or a scholarship application.

Encourage your reference to use strong, descriptive words that provide the evidence of your interpersonal skills initiative, leadership, flexibility, conflict resolution, decision-making, judgment, oral and written communication skills, and grasp of your field of study. Education Majors are encouraged to request a letter from the cooperating teacher, supervising teacher, professor(s) in your major, and a current or former employer.

Maintain Professional Courtesy

Give your reference writers ample time to complete their letters and provide a self-addressed stamped envelope. Make it as easy for them as possible so they don’t have to spend valuable time searching for the proper return address and a stamp. Follow up with your letter writers and let them know the status of your plans and search. They will want to know how you are doing and whether there is anything else they may do to increase your candidacy. You never know when you will need their assistance again, and it is just good manners to keep those who care about you informed of your progress. Finally, many times when two or more candidates are considered equally qualified, a strong letter of reference can play an important role in determining who is selected for the position.

Maintaining a good list of references is part of any professional’s success. Continue to nurture valuable relationships with people who will want to do whatever they can to aid in your success. Your personal success is based on surrounding yourself with positive people who all believe in you. No one makes it alone; we all need a little help from our friends.

Written by Roseanne R. Bensley, Career Services, New Mexico State University.
Employment Interviews

Employment interviews are screening devices for both the employer and you, the candidate. When you are granted an interview, it normally means that the employer has decided that you have the qualifications for the position. The interview will provide him/her with additional input on your personality, professional skills, motivation, ability to communicate, experience, and growth potential with his/her organization. Your primary motivation for accepting the interview is to convince the employer that you are, in fact, the best candidate and to further evaluate what the organization can offer you in terms of career potential and growth.

Focus on what you can do for an employer—be the solution to an employer’s problems. Clearly demonstrate how you will do the work they need to have done. “Act” like you’re already a member of their team!

Interview Styles

There are three basic types of interview styles used by employers:

• **The directed interview**, through which the employer works from an outline and asks specific questions within a certain time frame.

• **The non-directed interview**, which follows a loosely structured format; employers will use broad or general questions which will allow you to talk about what you wish.

• **The stress interview**, which generally consists of long periods of silence, the challenging of opinions, seeming to be unfriendly or brusque, and other attitudes directed toward making you feel uncomfortable.

Analyzing Your Potential Employer

There are many important areas of preparation to deal with prior to the interview. By thoroughly preparing, you increase your chances of making a positive first impression. One of the most important steps involves researching the company.

It is annoying for a recruiter to talk with a candidate who doesn’t have any knowledge about the company. A favorite question asked is, “Why are you interested in our organization?” If you don’t know anything about the employer, you won’t be able to answer the question intelligently.

Researching the organization also helps determine whether your goals will fit the promotional structures defined by that employer. For example, there are some employers who have a reputation for being conservative and if you cannot fit in with this type of work environment, you know that talking to the recruiter would be a waste of time.

Organization Is the Key to Success

It’s wise to begin researching weeks before your interview. You may find reams of information and you must be able to sort out the pertinent information and retain the key facts. Additionally, it may be difficult to find some information and some digging will be required.

If you are interviewing with a number of different employers, it’s smart to keep a file on each one. As you do more research, the file will help you keep facts organized, making the preparation easier.

Do:

- Know the time and place, and travel directions, for the interview.
- Arrive at least 10 minutes early.
- Bring a pen, notepad, and extra copies of your resume; also samples of your work, if applicable.
- Research the company—know products, services, competition, etc.
- Practice, practice, practice: set up a mock interview with your Program Coordinator, or practice with a friend, in front of a mirror, or into a tape recorder.
- Look and act professionally—grooming, physical appearance, attitude, and non-verbal cues all influence the interviewer.
- Be prepared to articulate your strengths, weaknesses, skills, etc. and to explain how they relate to the company’s needs and goals.
- Be enthusiastic and sincere, courteous and friendly.
- Maintain good eye contact and posture.
- Have a firm handshake and smile; bear in mind the first impression you give may be the most important!
- Be prepared with well thought-out questions for the interviewer.
- Think before responding so you can keep your answers concise and to the point, not long and rambling.
- Use personal success stories, or experiences to illustrate your skills and assets, in your answers.
- Immediately afterwards take time to self-analyze/appraise the interview, to determine any need for improvement prior to the next interview.
- Follow up after the interview—send thank-you notes.

Don’t:

- Smoke, eat, or chew gum.
- Ask questions that could have been easily answered from basic company research on your part.
- Be dishonest—lie about any aspect of your experience or education.
- Give a simple “yes” or “no” answer—give responses with descriptive examples.
- Talk in generalities—include measurable information and details on specific accomplishments.
- Speak negatively of your past employers or college(s).
- Leave the interview without a clear understanding of what and when the next step will be and do make a note of it.
The information in each file should include information from company websites and articles from periodicals or newspapers, tips and comments from others and annual reports. When it is time to prepare for the interview, you can organize the information in a way that will impress the recruiter during the interview.

It’s a mistake to assume you know enough about the organization without doing any research. For example, you may know that Ralston Purina makes pet food, but are you aware the company also makes breakfast cereal, owns a major tuna fish company, and owns and operates restaurants? You may be talking with a subsidiary of a much larger company and not realize it if you don’t do your research.

**Recommended Facts to Know About the Organization**

- Size of organization (local and parent)
- Recent growth rates and potential growth
- Product line or services; business divisions
- Anticipated new products or services
- Chief competitors; competitive rank
- Location of corporate headquarters
- Number of plants or other facilities, and geographical locations
- Type of entry-level professional training program
- Recent developments via news stories, press releases
- Recruiter’s name and the correct spelling and pronunciation; also his/her title and department
- History of organization

**Information Sources Available**

Researching an organization can be done through a variety of sources. Two primary sources include annual reports and/or employment brochures and company websites. While this information is prepared by the organization and includes predominantly positive information, it is a good starting place. All publicly held companies are required to report to their stockholders via annual reports. If the library does not have the necessary information, you can contact the organization directly. Company home pages on the Internet may have this type of resource information, as well. Also, be sure to check out the Job Search Info - Company Research section of our website.

The library and the Internet will also have different business periodicals and newspapers. Robert G. Traxel, author of *Manager's Guide to Successful Job Hunting*, suggests using the following publications. These are listed below and should be perused for articles, both about the company in question and also its competition.

1. *The Wall Street Journal*
2. *Barron's*
3. *Dun's Review*
4. *BusinessWeek*
5. *Forbes*
6. *Fortune*
7. Trade publications
8. Finance and business section of local newspaper
9. News weeklies

There are also directories available which can be useful sources. If these directories are not available at the library or online, check with local stock brokerage firms. The important thing is not to give up if you can’t find the information at the library. Check with the reference department and ask for advice. If the library doesn’t have the information you need, they can often refer you to an alternative source. Useful directories include:

1. Standard and Poor's corporation records
2. Dun and Bradstreet reference library
3. Moody’s manuals
4. *Thomas’ Register of American Manufacturers*
5. Million Dollar Directory
7. Specialized single-industry directories

**Is It Really Necessary?**

This may seem like a lot of trouble to go through just to be prepared for the interview. Finding the right job is hard work and should be approached in such a manner as to stack the odds in your favor.

There is keen competition and you’re trying to market a product—you yourself—successfully! There is rarely a professional position open that does not draw at least five qualified applicants.

Remember, you are trying to create a positive impression by appearing informed and goal-directed. One way to demonstrate your goals is to indicate during the interview what interested you in that specific organization and how your goals, qualifications, and personality fit that employer’s opportunities.

You only get one chance to leave the right impression; so take the time to do your homework and research the organization, and you will increase your chances of leaving a positive impression.

**Preparing for an Interview**

The secret to successful employment interviews is a sound presentation, which requires preparation. Self-assessment is a critical part of your preparation.

- Analyze your strengths and weaknesses.
- Make some decisions about what you want to do, why you want to do it, and where you want to do it.
- Prepare yourself to discuss those work experiences, academic projects, or extracurricular activities that are related to the position you are seeking.
- Determine whether or not there are aspects of the work environment that are very important to you.
- Prepare intelligent questions to ask the recruiter about the job and the company. These questions should be based on your in-depth research of the organization, and should demonstrate your interest in the job and confirm your knowledge of the company. For additional information, see the section “Turning the Tables in the Interview.”

**The Routine of an Interview**

Most interviews can be divided into four major sections: the introduction, the employer sell, the candidate sell, and the closing. Both the employer and you should use the introduction, or first few minutes of the interview, to create a comfortable, friendly environment so that a meaningful conversation can follow. A mutual topic of discussion such as the weather, sports, or a major news story, etc., will normally be pursued. The “employer sell” will cover organizational structure, products or services, geographical location(s), specifics on the position under consideration, salary (usually not discussed during an initial interview), benefits, etc. The “candidate sell” is the time spent elaborating on your goals and qualifications and demonstrating your poise and communication skills. During the “closing,” both parties should indicate their level of interest in the other and understand what the next steps to be taken, if any, will be. It should also
be pointed out that the employer will usually control the flow of the interview while you should be trying to control the content.

**Interview Follow-Up**

- If you are interested in working for the organization after the interview, write to the employer representative stating this fact and thank him/her for the time spent together.
- If the employer requests additional materials, such as a completed application, transcript, or references, see that they are sent as soon as possible.
- If something will be delayed, inform the employer of the reason.
- If an employer indicated an interest in pursuing things further with you, but you are no longer interested in the opportunity, inform him/her of that fact as soon as possible.
- If you do not hear from an employer within a reasonable time after your last contact, feel free to call inquiring about the status of your application.

**Second Interview/On-Site Visits**

These interviews are offered to the most promising candidates and usually involve a good portion, if not all, of the day. Keep in mind that an invitation to an on-site interview is NOT a guarantee of a job offer, but it is a chance to see whether you will be a good match for the job and the organization. During such a visit, you may meet with representatives of the personnel department, those who are doing the job that you are being considered for, supervisory staff, and officers of the organization. You will have the opportunity to discuss, in detail, job responsibilities, your qualifications and interest, salary, and benefits. A tour of the facilities will allow you to observe typical operations. Some organizations also administer tests of various types at this time.

Travel arrangements for second interviews are handled in one of the following ways:

- The employer representative will take care of everything, including expenses.
- You will be expected to make all or part of the arrangements, and the employer will reimburse you for all or part of the expenses later.
- You will be expected to take care of everything, including expenses.

If travel is involved in a second interview/on-site visit, be sure that you have a clear understanding of the situation before accepting the invitation.

When you travel to an on-site interview, make sure you are prepared.

- Bring extra copies of your resume, reference sheets, and any other paperwork the employer has requested.
- Bring extra money and a change or changes of clothes for planned activities.
- Have the names and phone numbers of those meeting you, in case your plans change unexpectedly.
- On-site visits often include meals. Don’t forget your table manners, and when ordering food at a restaurant, follow the lead of the employer host. Don’t order the most expensive dish on the menu, or the sloppiest.

- The issue of salary could be brought up at the on-site interview. Many employers have a set salary range for entry-level positions and others are more negotiable. Regardless, you should do some research in advance, and be knowledgeable on what you’re worth. Remember, an on-site interview is a two-way street. You are there not only to answer questions, but also to evaluate the employer, to determine if your expectations are met for job content, company culture and values, organizational structure, and lifestyles.

When the interview is over, make sure you reiterate your interest in the job and the company, and find out what the next step is in the employment process. Send a thank-you letter to each person likely to be involved in the hiring decision, and stay in contact with the company!

**How Candidates Are Evaluated**

When asked what they look for in potential employees, many employers respond by mentioning all or most of the following eight traits:

1. An ability to communicate effectively, both orally and in writing.
2. A sense of responsibility for carrying out assignments.
3. An ability to follow directions.
4. An ability and willingness to work with others.
5. An interest in continuing to learn through both formal programs and informal opportunities.
6. An ability to deal with change.
7. A comprehension of the technology of the specific field.
8. An ability to solve problems.

In determining the level to which you have developed these traits, employers will use interviews and the documents that you submit during the application process to take a hard look at what you have done with your life to date (your successes and failures); how you are presenting yourself now; and your goals or the direction your career seems to be headed. You will then be evaluated against the criteria established for the job and the other candidates under consideration. The ironic aspect of this whole process is that, according to research findings, no matter how much logic is used, no matter how reasonable the person making the decision, the deciding factor will almost invariably be based upon emotion, a feeling.

It is extremely important, therefore, that you make a good first impression. How successful you are in this regard will be determined by your appearance, manners, general bearing, speech, and knowledge of the type of work for which you are applying. Keep in mind that employers are not interested in individuals who look and act like students, but instead those who look and act like professionals.

**Job Offers and Acceptances**

You should acknowledge receipt of all job offers and promptly inform the employer of your plans to accept the position, reject the offer, or specify a decision date. If an employer extends you an offer and asks you to respond before you have heard from other companies, write or call asking for more time. Carefully weigh all the important factors in considering the offer and don’t hesitate to discuss any questions or concerns you may have with your Program Coordinator.

Promptly inform the employer of your decision and, if you are accepting the offer, notify all other companies whose offers are being rejected. Remember, you have an obligation to the employer whose offer you have accepted. It is unprofessional and unethical to renege on an acceptance.
Are You Ready for a Behavioral Interview?

“Tell me about a time when you were on a team, and one of the members wasn’t carrying his or her weight.” If this is one of the leading questions in your job interview, you could be in for a behavioral interview. Based on the premise that the best way to predict future behavior is to determine past behavior, this style of interviewing is popular among recruiters.

Today, more than ever, each hiring decision is critical. Behavioral interviewing is designed to minimize personal impressions that might cloud the hiring decision. By focusing on the applicant’s actions and behaviors, rather than subjective impressions that can sometimes be misleading, interviewers can make more accurate hiring decisions.

A manager of staff planning and college relations for a major chemical company believes, “Although we have not conducted any formal studies to determine whether retention or success on the job has been affected, I feel our move to behavioral interviewing has been successful. It helps concentrate recruiters’ questions on areas important to our candidates’ success within [our company].” The company introduced behavioral interviewing in the mid-1980s at several sites and has since implemented it companywide.

**Behavioral vs. Traditional Interviews**

If you have training or experience with traditional interviewing techniques, you may find the behavioral interview quite different in several ways:

- Instead of asking how you would behave in a particular situation, the interviewer will ask you to describe how you did behave.
- Expect the interviewer to question and probe (think of “peeling the layers from an onion”).
- The interviewer will ask you to provide details and will not allow you to theorize or generalize about events.
- The interview will be a more structured process that will concentrate on areas that are important to the interviewer, rather than allowing you to concentrate on areas that you may feel are important.
- You may not get a chance to deliver any prepared stories.
- Most interviewers will be taking notes throughout the interview.

The behavioral interviewer has been trained to objectively collect and evaluate information and works from a profile of desired behaviors that are needed for success on the job. Because the behaviors a candidate has demonstrated in previous positions are likely to be repeated, you will be asked to share situations in which you may or may not have exhibited these behaviors. Your answers will be tested for accuracy and consistency.

If you are an entry-level candidate with no previous related experience, the interviewer will look for behaviors in situations similar to those of the target position:

- “Describe a major problem you have faced and how you dealt with it.”
- “Give an example of when you had to work with your hands to accomplish a task or project.”
- “What class did you like the most? What did you like about it?”

Follow-up questions will test for consistency and determine if you exhibited the desired behavior in that situation:

- “Can you give me an example?”
- “What did you do?”
- “What did you say?”
- “What were you thinking?”
- “How did you feel?”
- “What was your role?”
- “What was the result?”

You will notice an absence of such questions as, “Tell me about your strengths and weaknesses.”

**How to Prepare For a Behavioral Interview**

- Recall recent situations that show favorable behaviors or actions, especially those involving coursework, work experience, leadership, teamwork, initiative, planning and customer service.
- Prepare short descriptions of each situation; be ready to give details if asked.
- Be sure each story has a beginning, a middle and an end; i.e., be ready to describe the situation, your action and the outcome or result.
- Be sure the outcome or result reflects positively on you (even if the result itself was not favorable).
- Be honest. Don’t embellish or omit any part of the story. The interviewer will find out if your story is built on a weak foundation.
- Be specific. Don’t generalize about several events; give a detailed accounting of one event.

A possible response to the question, “Tell me about a time when you were on a team and a member wasn’t pulling his or her weight” might go as follows: “I had been assigned to a team to build a canoe out of concrete. One of our team members wasn’t showing up for our lab sessions or doing his assignments. I finally met with him in private, explained the frustration of the rest of the team and asked if there was anything I could do to help. He told me he was preoccupied with another class that he wasn’t passing, so I found someone to help him with the other course. He not only was able to spend more time on our project, but he was also grateful to me for helping him out. We finished our project on time and got a ‘B’ on it.”

The interviewer might then probe: “How did you feel when you confronted this person?” “Exactly what was the nature of the project?” “What was his responsibility as a team member?” “What was your role?” “At what point did you take it upon yourself to confront him?” You can see it is important that you not make up or “shade” information and why you should have a clear memory of the entire incident.

**Don’t Forget the Basics**

Instead of feeling anxious or threatened by the prospect of a behavioral interview, remember the essential difference between the traditional interview and the behavioral interview: The traditional interviewer may allow you to project what you might or should do in a given situation, whereas the behavioral interviewer is looking for past actions only. It will always be important to put your best foot forward and make a good impression on the interviewer with appropriate attire, good grooming, a firm handshake and direct eye contact. There is no substitute for promptness, courtesy, preparation, enthusiasm and a positive attitude.
Sample Behavioral Interview Questions
Asked by Employers

Below are questions designed to learn about an applicant’s behavior in the following categories:

Leadership
- Give an example of your ability to build motivation in your co-workers, classmates, and even if on a volunteer committee.
- What is the toughest group that you have had to get cooperation from? Describe how you handled it. What was the outcome?
- Have you ever been a member of a group where two of the members did not work well together? What did you do to get them to do so?

Motivation
- Give an example of a time when you went above and beyond the call of duty.
- Tell me about an important goal that you set in the past. Were you successful? Why?
- Describe a situation when you were able to have a positive influence on the actions of others.
- How would you define “success” for someone in your chosen career?

Planning and Organization
- What have you done in order to be effective with your organization and planning?
- How do you schedule your time? Set priorities? How do you handle doing twenty things at once?
- What do you do when your time schedule or project plan is upset by unforeseen circumstances? Give an example.
- Describe how you develop a project team’s goals and project plan?

Decision-Making
- Give an example of a time when you had to be relatively quick in coming to a decision.
- What was your most difficult decision in the last 6 months? What made it difficult?
- What kind of decisions do you make rapidly? What kind takes more time? Give examples.

Communication
- Tell me about a situation when you had to speak up (be assertive) in order to get a point across that was important to you.
- Describe the most significant written document, report or presentation which you had to complete.
- Give me an example of a time when you were able to successfully communicate with another person, even when that individual may not have personally liked you.
- Have you had to “sell” an idea to your co-workers, classmates or group? How did you do it? Did they “buy” it?

Interpersonal Skills
- Describe a situation in which you were able to effectively “read” another person and guide your actions by your understanding of their needs and values.
- What have you done in past situations to contribute toward a teamwork environment?
- Describe a recent unpopular decision you made and what the result was.
- Tell me about the most difficult or frustrating individual that you’ve ever had to work with, and how you managed to work with them.

Initiative
- Give me an example of when you had to go above and beyond the call of duty in order to get a job done.
- Give me examples of projects/tasks you started on your own.
- Give some instances in which you anticipated problems and were able to influence a new direction.

Teamwork
- Describe the types of teams you’ve been involved with. What were your roles?
- Describe a team experience you found rewarding.
- Describe a team experience you found disappointing. What would you have done to prevent this?
Turning the Tables in the Interview

You’ve sat through most of the interview and have answered all the recruiter’s questions. You know you’ve made a good impression because you prepared for the interview and your answers were articulate and decisive. You’ve come across as a very bright, capable candidate when the recruiter asks something you didn’t anticipate: “Do you have any questions?”

If you don’t have any questions prepared and you try to cover your mistake by asking a spur-of-the-moment question, chances are you will damage your chances for a successful interview. Some recruiters refuse to hire people who don’t ask intelligent questions. Don’t ask questions just for the sake of asking questions—make sure it is information that you need.

Prepare Questions in Advance

You should have a list of questions prepared for this crucial part of the interview. Every question you ask should demonstrate your interest and confirm your knowledge of the organization.

You should read publications in the field. You can get information about new products or policies by surfing the employer’s website or by reading general magazines or trade publications. It is appropriate to address some of your questions to what you have read. Ask about new products, how research and development is structured at the company, management strategies at the company, how the company has changed, and potential product growth.

Some of the publications providing a wealth of information are Fortune, Forbes, BusinessWeek and The Wall Street Journal.

Questions Not to Ask

Not only should you know what questions to ask during the interview, but it is important to know what questions not to ask. You don’t want to alienate the recruiter by putting him or her on the defensive.

The following areas should generally be avoided:

1. Avoid asking questions that are answered in the company’s annual report or employment brochure. Recruiters are familiar enough with their own information to recognize when you haven’t done your homework. If some information in the annual report isn’t clear to you, by all means ask for clarification.
2. Don’t bring up salary or benefits in the initial interview. The majority of companies recruiting are very competitive and will offer approximately similar salaries and benefits. The recruiter may choose to bring up the information, but you should not initiate the topic.
3. Avoid asking any personal questions or questions that will put the recruiter on the defensive. This includes questions such as the interviewer’s educational background, marital status, past work experience and so on.
4. Don’t ask questions that have already been answered during the interview. If you have prepared a list of questions and some of them have been addressed during the interview, do not repeat them unless you need clarification.

Questions You Should Ask

Now that you know what you shouldn’t ask during the interview, determine what questions you should ask.

1. Ask specific questions about the position. You need to know what duties will be required of the person in the position to see if there is a fit between your interests and qualifications and the job you seek.
2. Try to find out as much as possible about qualities and skills the recruiter is looking for in job candidates. Once you determine the necessary qualities, you can then explain to the recruiter how your background and capabilities relate to those qualities.
3. Ask questions concerning advancement and promotion paths available. Every company is different and most advancement policies are unique. Try to find out what the possible promotion path is to see if it fits your career goals. You may also want to ask about periodic performance evaluations.
4. It is appropriate to ask specific questions about the company’s training program if this information is not covered in company literature.
5. Ask questions about location and travel required. If you have limitations, this is the time to find out what is expected in the position.

Some Final Advice

The key to a successful interview is good communication and rapport with the recruiter. One of the fastest ways to damage this kind of relationship is by exhibiting ignorance about the company and asking inappropriate questions.

Listed below are questions you might ask during the interview. (Used with permission from Career Planning Today, C. Randall Powell.)

• How much travel is normally expected?
• Can I progress at my own pace or is it structured?
• How much contact and exposure to management is there?
• Is it possible to move through the training program faster?
• About how many individuals go through your training program each year?
• How much freedom is given and discipline required of new people?
• How often are performance reviews given?
• How much decision-making authority is given after one year?
• How much input does the new person have on geographical location?
• What is the average age of top management?
• What is the average time it takes to get to _________ level in the career path?

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Students With Disabilities: Acing the Interview

The traditional face-to-face interview can be particularly stressful when you have a disability—especially a visible disability. Hiring managers and employers may have had little prior experience with persons with disabilities and may react with discomfort or even shock to the appearance of a wheelchair, cane or an unusual physical trait. When this happens, the interviewer is often so uncomfortable that he or she just wants to “get it over with” and conducts the interview in a hurried manner. But this scenario robs you of the opportunity to present your credentials and could prevent the employer from identifying a suitable, qualified candidate for employment.

It is essential that you understand that interviewing is not a passive process where the interviewer asks all the questions and you simply provide the answers. You, even more than applicants without disabilities, must be skilled in handling each interview in order to put the employer representative at ease. You must also be able to demonstrate your ability to manage your disability and be prepared to provide relevant information about your skills, experiences and educational background. In addition, you may have to inform the employer of the equipment, tools and related resources that you will need to perform the job tasks.

To Disclose or Not to Disclose

To disclose or not to disclose, and when and how to disclose, are decisions that persons with disabilities must make for themselves during the job search process. Under the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), you are not legally obligated to disclose your disability unless it is likely to directly affect your job performance. On the other hand, if your disability is visible, it will be evident at the time of the interview so it may be more prudent to acknowledge your disability during the application process to avoid catching the employer representative off guard.

Reasons for Disclosing

You take a risk when you decide to disclose your disability. Some employers may reject your application based on negative, preconceived ideas about persons with disabilities. In addition, you may feel that the issue is too personal to be publicized among strangers. On the other hand, if you provide false answers about your health or disability on an application and the truth is uncovered later, you risk losing your job. You may even be held legally responsible if you failed to inform your employer and an accident occurs that is related to your disability.

Timing the Disclosure

The employer’s first contact with you will typically be through your cover letter and resume, especially if you initially contacted the organization. There are many differing opinions on whether one should mention the disability on the resume or in the cover letter. If you are comfortable revealing your disability early in the process, then give careful consideration to where the information is placed and how it is stated. The cover letter and resume should primarily outline relevant skills, experiences and education for the position for which you are applying. The reader should have a clear understanding of your suitability for the position. Therefore, if you choose to disclose your disability, the disclosure should be brief and placed near the end of the cover letter and resume. It should never be the first piece of information that the employer sees about you. The information should also reveal your ability to manage your disability while performing required job functions.

When You Get the Interview

As stated earlier, it may not be wise to hide the disability (especially a visible disability) until the time of the interview. The employer representative may be surprised, uncomfortable or assume that you intentionally hid critical information. As a result, more time may be spent asking irrelevant and trivial questions because of nervousness, rather than focusing on your suitability for the position. Get assistance from contacts in human resources, your career center or workers with disabilities about the different ways to prepare the interviewer for your arrival. Take the time to rehearse what you will say before making initial contact. If oral communication is difficult for you, have a career services staff person (or another professional) place the call for you and explain how you plan to handle the interview. If you require support for your interview (such as a sign language interpreter), contact human resources in advance to arrange for this assistance. Advance preparation puts everyone at ease and shows that you can manage your affairs.

Tips on Managing the Interview

Prior to the Interview

1. Identify a career services staff person to help you prepare employers for their interview with you.
2. Arrange for several taped, mock interview sessions to become more confident in discussing your work-related skills and in putting the employer representative at ease; rehearse ahead of time to prepare how you will handle inappropriate, personal or possibly illegal questions.
3. If your disability makes oral communication difficult, create a written narrative to supplement your resume that details your abilities.
4. Determine any technical support, resources and costs that might be necessary for your employment so that you can respond to questions related to this topic.
5. Be sure that your career center has information for employers on interviewing persons with disabilities.
6. Seek advice from other workers with disabilities who have been successful in finding employment.
7. Review the general advice about interviewing outlined in this career guide.

During the Interview

1. Put the interviewer at ease before starting the interview by addressing any visible disability (if you have not done so already).
2. Plan to participate fully in the discussion (not just answer questions); maintain the appropriate control of the interview by tactfully keeping the interview focused on your abilities—not the disability.
3. Inform the employer of any accommodations needed and how they can be achieved, thereby demonstrating your ability to manage your disability.
4. Conclude the interview by reiterating your qualifications and giving the interviewer the opportunity to ask any further questions.

Written by Rosita Smith.
Your academic knowledge and skills may be spectacular, but do you have the social skills needed to be successful in the workplace? Good professional etiquette indicates to potential employers that you are a mature, responsible adult who can aptly represent their company. Not knowing proper etiquette could damage your image, prevent you from getting a job and jeopardize personal and business relationships.

Meeting and Greeting

Etiquette begins with meeting and greeting. Terry Cobb, human resource director at Wachovia Corporation in South Carolina’s Palmetto region, emphasizes the importance of making a good first impression—beginning with the handshake. A firm shake, he says, indicates to employers that you’re confident and assertive. A limp handshake, on the other hand, sends the message that you’re not interested or qualified for the job. Dave Owenby, human resources manager for North and South Carolina at Sherwin Williams, believes, “Good social skills include having a firm handshake, smiling, making eye contact and closing the meeting with a handshake.”

The following basic rules will help you get ahead in the workplace:

- Always rise when introducing or being introduced to someone.
- Provide information in making introductions—you are responsible for keeping the conversation going. “Joe, please meet Ms. Crawford, CEO at American Enterprise, Inc., in Cleveland.” “Mr. Jones, this is Kate Smith, a senior majoring in computer information systems at Northwestern University.”
- Unless given permission, always address someone by his or her title and last name.
- Practice a firm handshake. Make eye contact while shaking hands.

Dining

Shirley Willey, owner of Etiquette & Company, reports that roughly 80% of second interviews involve a business meal. Cobb remembers one candidate who had passed his initial interview with flying colors. Because the second interview was scheduled close to noon, Cobb decided to conduct the interview over lunch. Initially, the candidate was still in “interview” mode and maintained his professionalism. After a while, however, he became more relaxed—and that’s when the candidate’s real personality began to show. He had terrible table manners, made several off-color remarks and spoke negatively about previous employers. Needless to say, Cobb was unimpressed, and the candidate did not get the job.

Remember that an interview is always an interview, regardless of how relaxed or informal the setting. Anything that is said or done will be considered by the interviewer, cautions Cobb.

In order to make a good impression during a lunch or dinner interview, make sure you:

- Arrive on time.
- Wait to sit until the host/hostess indicates the seating arrangement.

- Place napkin in lap before eating or drinking anything.
- When ordering, keep in mind that this is a talking business lunch. Order something easy to eat, such as boneless chicken or fish.
- Do not hold the order up because you cannot make a decision. Feel free to ask for suggestions from others at the table.
- Wait to eat until everyone has been served.
- Keep hands in lap unless you are using them to eat.
- Practice proper posture; sit up straight with your arms close to your body.
- Bring food to your mouth—not your head to the plate.
- Try to eat at the same pace as everyone else.
- Take responsibility for keeping up the conversation.
- Place napkin on chair seat if excusing yourself for any reason.
- Place napkin beside plate at the end of the meal.
- Push chair under table when excusing yourself.

Eating

Follow these simple rules for eating and drinking:

- Start eating with the implement that is farthest away from your plate. You may have two spoons and two forks. The spoon farthest away from your plate is a soup spoon. The fork farthest away is a salad fork unless you have three forks, one being much smaller, which would be a seafood fork for an appetizer.
- The dessert fork/spoon is usually above the plate. Remember to work from the outside in.
- Dip soup away from you; sip from the side of the spoon.
- Season food only after you have tasted it.
- Place napkin in lap before eating or drinking anything.
- When ordering, keep in mind that this is a talking business lunch. Order something easy to eat, such as boneless chicken or fish.
- Do not hold the order up because you cannot make a decision. Feel free to ask for suggestions from others at the table.
- Wait to eat until everyone has been served.
- Keep hands in lap unless you are using them to eat.
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- Place napkin on chair seat if excusing yourself for any reason.
- Place napkin beside plate at the end of the meal.
- Push chair under table when excusing yourself.

- While you are speaking during a meal, utensils should be resting on plate (fork and knife crossed on the plate with tines down).
- Don’t chew with your mouth open or blow on your food.

The interviewer will usually take care of the bill and the tip. Be prepared, however, if this doesn’t happen and have small bills ready to take care of your part, including the tip. Never make an issue of the check.

Social skills can make or break a career. Employees have to exhibit a certain level of professionalism and etiquette in their regular work day, and particularly in positions where they come in contact with clients. Be one step ahead—practice the social skills necessary to help you make a great first impression and stand out in a competitive job market.

Written by Jennie Hunter, a professor at Western Carolina University.
Tapping the Hidden Job Market

Your off-campus job search should neither begin nor end with the help wanted ads. Studies have shown that only 15 percent of available jobs are ever advertised. It takes much more than merely perusing the classifieds. By employing a number of methods, you constantly increase your chances of landing a job. Some techniques you might use:

Networking. Probably the most effective way to meet potential employers and learn about possible jobs is to tap into your personal network of contacts. You might think it’s too early to have professional contacts, but think about everyone you know—family members and their friends/co-workers, professors, past employers, neighbors and even your dentist. Don’t be afraid to inform them of your career interests and let them know that you are looking for work. They will likely be happy to help you and refer you to any professionals they think can be of assistance.

Informational interviewing. This approach allows you to learn more about your field by setting up interviews with professionals. The purpose of these interviews is to meet professionals, gather career information and investigate career options, get advice on job search techniques and get referrals to other professionals. When setting up these interviews, either by phone or letter, make it clear to the employer that you have no job expectations and are seeking information only. Interviewing also familiarizes you to employers, and you may be remembered when a company has a vacant position.

Temporary work. As more companies employ the services of temporary or contract workers, new graduates are discovering that such work is a good opportunity to gain experience in their fields. Temporary workers can explore various jobs and get an inside look at different companies without the commitment of a permanent job. Also, if a company decides to make a position permanent, these “temps” already have made good impressions and often are given first consideration.

Electronic job search. One source of jobs may be as close as a personal computer. Various online resume services let you input your resume into a database, which then can be accessed by companies searching for applicants who meet their criteria. Companies also post job listings on websites to which students can directly respond by sending their resumes and cover letters.

Persistence is the key to cracking the hidden job market. Attend meetings of professional associations and become an active member. After you begin the above processes, and your network base expands, your search will be made easier. Employers will appreciate your resourcefulness—and view you as a viable candidate.

Dealing With Rejection in the Job Search

After meticulously preparing your cover letters and resumes, you send them to carefully selected companies that you are sure would like to hire you. You even get a few job interviews. But all of your return correspondence is the same: “Thanks, but no thanks.” Your self-confidence melts and you begin to question your value to an employer.

Sometimes, we begin to dread the BIG NO so much that we stop pursuing additional interviews, thereby shutting off our pipeline to the future. We confirm that we couldn’t even get a few job interviews. But all of your return correspondence is the same: “Thanks, but no thanks.” Your self-confidence melts and you begin to question your value to an employer.

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Eight Guidelines to Ward Off Rejection

1. Depersonalize the interview.

   Employers may get as many as 500 resumes for one job opening. How can you, I and the other 498 of us be no good?

2. Don’t make it all or nothing.

   Don’t set yourself up for a letdown: “If I don’t get this job, I’m a failure.” Tell yourself, “It could be mine. It’s a good possibility. It’s certainly not an impossibility.”

3. Don’t blame the interviewer.

   Realize interviewers aren’t in a hurry to think and behave our way. Blame your turndown on a stone-hearted interviewer who didn’t flatter you with beautiful compliments, and you will learn nothing.

4. Don’t live in the past.

   When you dredge up past failures, your nervous system kicks in and you experience all the feelings that go with failure. Unwittingly, you overestimate the dangers facing you and underestimate yourself.

5. Don’t get mad at the system.

   Does anything less pleasurable exist than hunting for a job? Still, you must adjust to the world rather than make the world adjust to you. The easiest thing is to conform, to do what 400,000 other people are doing. When you sit down to play bridge or poker or drive a car, do you complain about the rules?

6. Take the spotlight off yourself.

   Sell your skills, not yourself. Concentrate on what you’re there for: to find out the interviewer’s problems and to show how you can work together to solve them.

7. See yourself in the new role.

   Form a mental picture of the positive self you’d like to become in job interviews, rather than focusing on what scares you. All therapists agree on this: Before a person can effect changes, he must really “see” himself in the new role. Just for fun, play with the idea.

8. Keep up your sense of humor.

   Nobody yet has contracted an incurable disease from a job interview.

Written by Roseanne R. Bensley, Career Services, New Mexico State University.
Don’t Forget the Small Companies

Most students concentrate their job search on Fortune 500 corporations or other large, well-known companies with defined and approachable personnel departments. And in an economic climate that has proved challenging for small business, it would be easy to follow the path of “most students.”

But don’t count out the small companies just yet. Small businesses have been at the forefront of innovation, economic growth and job creation, and there’s no reason to doubt they’ll continue to find themselves in this position in the future.

Generally, any business with 200 or fewer employees is considered a small company. Whether the business has 20 employees or 20,000, the research you do in preparation for an interview opportunity will be the best gauge of the company’s outlook. As we’ve seen, large companies can be just as shaky as small ones, so the questions really come down to: “Is a small company right for you?” and “Are you right for a small company?” There are several things to consider when deciding between working in a large versus a small company.

Is a Small Company Right for You?

Small companies tend to offer an informal atmosphere, an all-for-one camaraderie and require more versatility and dedication on the part of the company and workers. Small companies are usually growing so they are constantly redefining themselves and the positions within them. Look at the following list of small company traits and consider which are advantages and which are disadvantages for you.

• You are given more responsibility and are not limited by job titles or descriptions.
• Your ideas and suggestions will be heard and given more attention.
• Career advancement and salary increases may be rapid in a growing company.
• You have less job security due to the high rate of failure for a small business.
• You have the opportunity to be involved in the creation or growth of something great.
• You may be involved in the entire organization rather than in a narrow department.
• You may be eligible for stock options and profit sharing.
• The environment is less bureaucratic; there are fewer rules and regulations and thus fewer guidelines to help you determine what to do and whether you’re succeeding or failing.
• Successes and faults are more visible.
• Starting salaries and benefits may be more variable.
• A dominant leader can control the entire organization. This can lead either to more “political games” or a healthy, happy atmosphere.
• You must be able to work with everyone in the organization.

Are You Right for a Small Company?

Because most small companies do not have extensive training programs, they look for certain traits in potential employees. You will do well in a small company if you are:

• Self-motivated
• A generalist with many complementary skills
• A good communicator, both oral and written

• Enthusiastic • A risk-taker • A quick learner
• Responsible enough to get things done on your own

There are fewer limitations, and it’s up to you to make the best or worst of that freedom. A small business often has a strong company culture. Learn that company’s culture; it will help you on your way up the corporate ladder.

Finding a Job in a Small Company

One of the biggest hurdles to finding a job in a small business is contacting a hiring manager. Good timing is critical. The sporadic growth of many small companies can mean sporadic job openings, so you need to network. A small business tends to fill its labor needs informally through personal contacts and recommendations from employees. Job hunters must find their way into the organization and approach someone with hiring authority. This means you must take the initiative. Once you have someone’s attention, you must convince him or her that you can do something for the company. How do you find information on small companies? Try these techniques:

• Contact the chamber of commerce in the area you would like to work. Get the names of growing companies in the industry of your choice. Peruse the membership directory.
• Participate in the local chapter of professional trade associations related to your career. Send prospective employers a cover letter and resume, then follow up with a phone call.
• Read trade publications, business journals, and area newspapers for leads. Again, follow up.
• Speak with small business lenders such as bankers, venture capitalists, and small business investment companies listed in directories at local libraries.

Keep the following differences between large and small companies in mind as you conduct your job search:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Large Company</th>
<th>Small Company</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Centralized Human Resources</td>
<td>No HR</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Formal recruiting program</td>
<td>No full-time recruiters</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Standardized</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>hiring procedures</td>
<td>No standard hiring procedures</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Keep resumes on file</td>
<td>Usually won’t keep resumes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interview held</td>
<td>Interview often held with</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>recruiters and managers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Career section</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>on website</td>
<td>Little/no career section on</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>website</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hiring done months in advance</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>of starting date</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Hired to begin immediately</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Formal training programs</td>
<td>On-the-job training</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Predetermined job categories</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Jobs emerge to fit needs</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Always do your homework on the company, and persuade them to hire you through your initiative and original thinking. If you haven’t graduated yet, offer to work for them as an intern. This will give you experience, and if you do well, there’s a good chance that a job will be waiting for you on graduation day.

Adapted with permission from the Career Resource Manual of the University of California, Davis.

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Federal Jobs: Working for Uncle Sam

So you want to work for the federal government? You are not alone. Uncle Sam employs approximately 1.8 million civilian workers worldwide. Federal employees receive a generous benefits package, and as of 2009 they earned an average salary of $72,572. As the largest employer in the U.S., the federal government offers a variety of career opportunities unparalleled in the private sector. Federal employees work with (and create) cutting-edge technology. They create policy, programs and services that impact the health, safety and welfare of millions of people worldwide.

But with these benefits come bureaucracy. If you do not like working within a system and following a defined chain of command, a federal job might not be for you. This bureaucracy is evident in the hiring process as well. Federal agencies follow strict hiring procedures, and applicants who do not conform to these procedures are left by the wayside. Typically, the federal hiring process can stretch on for months. In fact, many career professionals recommend that students applying for federal jobs begin the process at least two semesters before their graduation date.

Types of Federal Jobs
Federal jobs are separated into two classes: competitive service and excepted service positions. Competitive service jobs, which include the majority of federal positions, are subject to civil service laws passed by Congress. Job applications for competitive service positions are rated on a numerical system in which applications are awarded points based on education, experience and other predetermined job qualification standards. Hiring managers then fill the position from a pool of candidates with the highest point totals.

Hiring managers for excepted service agencies are not required to follow civil service hiring procedures or pick from a pool of candidates who have been rated on a points system. Instead, these agencies set their own qualifications requirements, as occurs in private industry. However, both competitive service and excepted service positions must give preference to veterans who were either disabled or who served in combat areas during certain periods of time. The Federal Reserve, the Central Intelligence Agency and the National Security Agency are examples of some excepted service agencies. (For a complete list, visit usajobs.gov.) It’s important to note that even agencies that are not strictly excepted service agencies can have excepted service positions available within them.

OPM and USAJOBS
The U.S. Office of Personnel Management (OPM) acts as the federal government’s human resources agency. OPM’s website (opm.gov) is expansive and contains a wealth of information for anyone interested in federal jobs, including federal employment trends, salary ranges, benefits, retirement statistics and enough links to publications and resources to keep a research librarian busy for days. Linked to the OPM site is the USAJOBS site (usajobs.gov), which has its own set of tools and resources that will be familiar to any standard job site user. USAJOBS acts as a portal for federal employment with thousands of job listings at any one time.

Searching for Federal Jobs
Federal agencies now fill their jobs like private industry by allowing applicants to contact the agency directly for job information and applications. However, most of these positions can be accessed through the USAJOBS site. All competitive service positions must be posted on the USAJOBS site, and although agencies are not required to post their excepted service positions on USAJOBS, many do.

Registered visitors to USAJOBS can create and post up to five resumes, which can be made searchable, allowing recruiters from federal agencies to find resumes during applicant searches. Applicants can also use these resumes to apply directly to jobs that have an online application option. In addition, job applicants can create as many as ten “search agents,” which search for job openings using certain criteria (such as location, job type, agency, salary requirements), and email matching postings directly to their inbox. Applicants can also search for jobs directly using the “search jobs” button on the USAJOBS homepage.

Remember, excepted service positions are not required to be posted on the USAJOBS site. If you are interested in employment with an excepted service agency, be sure to visit the recruitment section of its website for postings that may not have made it onto the USAJOBS site. It is often worthwhile to look at the sites of agencies that you do not associate with your field of study. If you are interested in the environment, you should definitely visit the EPA’s website. But you should also make sure to visit the websites of other agencies that you don’t associate with your major. It’s not unusual for a biology major, for example, to find a job with Homeland Security or the Department of Defense.

How to Apply
There is no general way to submit an application to OPM or to individual federal agencies. Instead, students should refer to each job posting for specific directions. Whether for competitive service or excepted service positions, federal job postings can be intimidating. A typical posting can run over 2,000 words and include sections on eligibility requirements, educational requirements, necessary experience, salary range, job duties and even a description of how applicants are evaluated.

Most importantly, all federal job postings include a section titled “How to Apply.” Instead of letting this avalanche of information overwhelm you, use it as a resource to help you put together the best application possible, paying particularly close attention to the “How to Apply” section. If you do not follow the instructions and procedures closely, your application may not be processed. “I would emphasize that applicants should carefully read the ‘fine print’ of all printed and online materials and applications,” says Dr. Richard White, Director of Career Services at Rutgers University. “Applicants who dot all their i’s and cross all their t’s gain a competitive advantage and rise to the top of the application pool.”

Federal agencies require specific information on your resume before it can be processed. The OPM created the USAJOBS Resume Builder in an effort to help applicants create a resume which can be used for most government agencies—go to my.usajobs.gov to get started. Agencies may also request that you submit additional forms for application (many of which are available on USAJOBS). Strictly following the “How to Apply” instructions will ensure that your application has all the information necessary.

Written by Chris Enstrom, a freelance writer from Nashville, Ind.
Getting the Most Out of a Career Fair

Many employers use career fairs—both on and off campus—to promote their opportunities and to pre-screen applicants. Career fairs come in all shapes and sizes, from small community-sponsored events to giant regional career expositions held at major convention centers.

Most career fairs consist of booths and/or tables manned by recruiters and other representatives from each organization. For on-campus events, some employers also send alumni representatives. Large corporations and some government agencies have staffs who work the career fair “circuit” nationwide.

An employer’s display area is also subject to wide variance. It could be a simple table with a stack of brochures and business cards and a lone representative or an elaborate multimedia extravaganza with interactive displays, videos, posters and a team of recruiters.

Fashions and Accessories

Generally, the appropriate attire for career fair attendees is more relaxed than what you’d wear to an actual job interview. In most cases, “business casual” is the norm. If you’re unsure of the dress code (particularly for off-campus events), it would be wise to err on the overdressed side—you’ll make a better impression if you appear professional. Think of it as a dress rehearsal for your real interviews!

Remember to bring copies of your resume (or resumes, if you have several versions tailored to different career choices), a few pens and pencils (have backups—they have a way of disappearing), a folder or portfolio and some sort of note-taking device (paper or electronic pad). Keep track of recruiters with whom you speak and send follow-up notes to the ones who interest you. Don’t bring your backpack; it’s cumbersome for you, it gets in the way of others and it screams “student!” instead of “candidate!”

Stop, Look and Listen

Keep your eyes and ears open—there’s nothing wrong with subtly eavesdropping on the questions asked and answers received by your fellow career fair attendees. You might pick up some valuable information, in addition to witnessing some real-life career search “dos and don’ts.”

In order to maximize your career fair experience, you must be an active participant and not just a browser. If all you do is stroll around, take company literature and load up on the ubiquitous freebies, you really haven’t accomplished anything worthwhile (unless you’re a collector of key chains, mouse pads and pocket flashlights). It is essential to chat with the company representatives and ask meaningful questions.

Here’s a great bit of career fair advice from Stanford University’s Career Fair guide:

“Create a one-minute ‘commercial’ as a way to sell yourself to an employer. This is a great way to introduce yourself. The goal is to connect your background to the organization’s need. In one minute or less, you need to introduce yourself, demonstrate your knowledge of the company, express enthusiasm and interest and relate your background to the company’s need.”

You’re a Prospector—Start Digging

The questions you ask at a career fair depend upon your goals. Are you interested in finding out about a particular career field? Then ask generalized questions about working within the industry. If you’re seeking career opportunities with a specific employer, focus your questions on the application and interview process, and ask for specific information about that employer.

Fair Thee Well

By all means, try to attend at least one career fair before beginning your formal job interviewing process. For new entrants into the professional career marketplace, this is a good way to make the transition into “self-marketing mode” without the formality and possible intimidation of a one-on-one job interview. It’s an opportunity that’s too valuable to miss.

A Few Words About Career Fair Etiquette

1. Don’t interrupt the employer reps or your fellow job-seekers. If someone else is monopolizing the employer’s time, try to make eye contact with the rep to let him or her know that you’re interested in speaking. You may be doing a favor by giving the recruiter an out. If all else fails, move to the next exhibit and plan to come back later.

2. If you have a real interest in an employer, find out the procedures required to secure an interview. At some career fairs, initial screening interviews may be done on the spot. Other times, the career fair is used to pre-screen applicants for interviews to be conducted later (either on campus or at the employer’s site).

3. Sincerity always wins. Don’t lay it on too thick, but don’t be too blasé either. Virtually all employers are looking for candidates with good communication skills.

4. Don’t just drop your resume on employers’ display tables. Try to get it into a person’s hands and at least say a few words. If the scene is too busy and you can’t get a word in edgewise, jot a note on your resume to the effect of, “You were so busy that we didn’t get a chance to meet. I’m very interested in talking to you.” Look around the display for the recruiter’s business card (or at the very least, write down his or her name and get some literature with the company’s address) and send a follow-up note and another copy of your resume.

5. If you know ahead of time that one of your “dream companies” is a career fair participant, do some prior research (at minimum, visit their website and, if available, view their company DVD). A little advance preparation goes a long way and can make you stand out among the masses of other attendees.
Choosing Between Job Offers

Congratulations! You’ve successfully managed your second interviews and have been offered a job! Perhaps you’ve even received offers from more than one employer. Whether it’s one offer or more, your euphoria is sometimes quickly replaced by anxiety about the decisions which lie ahead. You may be wondering, “Is this the ‘right’ job for me?” or “Am I going to be happy in this job, or should I just take it because I need a job, period?” Careful evaluation of your job offer and some serious thought as to how well the position and organization meet your needs can enable you to make the best choice for yourself. One of our staff members can help you sort out your options.

In evaluating your job offer, there are three critical questions you should address:

1. **How closely does the offer match your career goal?**
   Think back to when you started your job search. What was important to you? What factors regarding a job, organization and work environment were on your “wish list”? Have they changed? How well does this position fit these factors? Below are some factors you may want to consider in evaluating your offer. Some of these may not be important to you, and there may be other factors not listed which are extremely important to your decision.

2. **Do you need additional information about the offer (or anything) in order to make a decision?** It is not unusual to discover, as you’re weighing different factors about the offer, that you have additional questions, lack some factual data, or simply need a better sense of what the job and organization are like. If this is the case, STOP! Don’t go any further in your deliberations until you address these issues. You may need to call one of your interviewers and ask additional questions, or contact an alum who works for the organization. If you need a better understanding of what it would be like during a day on the job, call the employer (if they are local) and ask to spend an afternoon observing an entry-level employee in the job you’re considering. Most employers will be willing to accommodate you. If you have other questions or concerns which impact your decision, you should discuss them with a representative from our office.

3. **Are there issues you may want to negotiate, which would bring the offer closer to your goal?** Perhaps the issues which concern you about the offer can be changed. If the job seems ideal except for location, then you might want to raise the issue with the employer. Some start dates are non-negotiable because training classes must begin together. In some instances, however, the start date can be adjusted.

Written by Virginia Lacy. Adapted with permission from Northwestern University’s Career Services Guide; © 1998 Virginia Lacy.

**Factors for Consideration**

- Nature of the work
- Organizational culture
- Level of autonomy
- Travel
- Salary
- Mentoring
- Lifestyles of employees
- Stability of organization
- Quality of higher management
- Support for continuing education/advanced degree
- Level of responsibility
- Location
- Work hours
- Benefits
- Variety of work
- Stability of industry
- Advancement opportunities
- Training and development opportunities
- Opportunities to learn and grow in job/ company
- Transferability of skills/experience from job
- Prestige of job or organization
The Art of Negotiating

An area of the job search that often receives little attention is the art of negotiating. Once you have been offered a job, you have the opportunity to discuss the terms of your employment. Negotiations may be uncomfortable or unsatisfying because we tend to approach them with a winner-take-all attitude that is counterproductive to the concept of negotiations.

Negotiating with your potential employer can make your job one that best meets your own needs as well as those of your employer. To ensure successful negotiations, it is important to understand the basic components. The definition of negotiation as it relates to employment is: a series of communications (either oral or in writing) that reach a satisfying conclusion for all concerned parties, most often between the new employee and the hiring organization.

Negotiation is a planned series of events that requires strategy, presentation and patience. Preparation is probably the single most important part of successful negotiations. Any good trial attorney will tell you the key to presenting a good case in the courtroom is the hours of preparation that happen beforehand. The same is true for negotiating. A good case will literally present itself. What follows are some suggestions that will help you prepare for successful negotiating.

Research

Gather as much factual information as you can to back up the case you want to make. For example, if most entering employees cannot negotiate salary, you may be jeopardizing the offer by focusing on that aspect of the package. Turn your attention to other parts of the offer such as their health plan, dental plan, retirement package, the type of schedule you prefer, etc.

Psychological Preparation

Chances are that you will not know the person with whom you will be negotiating. If you are lucky enough to be acquainted, spend some time reviewing what you know about this person’s communication style and decision-making behavior.

In most cases, however, this person will be a stranger. Since most people find the unknown a bit scary, you’ll want to ask yourself what approach to negotiating you find most comfortable. How will you psyche yourself up to feel confident enough to ask for what you want? How will you respond to counteroffers? What are your alternatives? What’s your bottom line? In short, plan your strategy.

Be sure you know exactly what you want. This does not mean you will get exactly that, but having the information clear in your head will help you determine what you are willing to concede. Unless you know what you want, you won’t be able to tell somebody else. Clarity improves communication, which is the conduit for effective negotiations.

Practice

Rehearse the presentation in advance using another person as the employer. If you make mistakes in rehearsal, chances are that you will not repeat them during the actual negotiations. A friend can critique your reasoning and help you prepare for questions. If this all seems like a lot of work, remember that if something is worth negotiating for, it is worth preparing for.

Dollars and Sense

Always begin by expressing genuine interest in the position and the organization, emphasizing the areas of agreement but allowing “wiggle room” to compromise on other areas. Be prepared to support your points of disagreement, outlining the parts you would like to alter, your suggestions on how this can be done and why it would serve the company’s best interests to accommodate your request.

Be prepared to defend your proposal. Back up your reasons for wanting to change the offer with meaningful, work-related skills and positive benefits to the employer. Requesting a salary increase because you are a fast learner or have a high GPA are usually not justifiable reasons in the eyes of the employer. Meaningful work experience or internships that have demonstrated or tested your professional skills are things that will make an employer stop and take notice.

It is sometimes more comfortable for job-seekers to make this initial request in writing and plan to meet later to hash out the differences. You will need to be fairly direct and assertive at this point even though you may feel extremely vulnerable. Keep in mind that the employer has chosen you from a pool of qualified applicants, so you are not as powerless as you think.

Sometimes the employer will bristle at the suggestion that there is room to negotiate. Stand firm, but encourage the employer to think about it for a day or two at which time you will discuss the details of your proposal with him/her. Do not rush the process because you are uncomfortable. The employer may be counting on this discomfort and use it to derail the negotiations. Remember, this is a series of volleys and lobs, trade-offs and compromises that occur over a period of time. It is a process—not a singular event!

Once you have reached a conclusion with which you are both relatively comfortable, present in writing your interpretation of the agreement so that if there is any question, it will be addressed immediately. Negotiation, by definition, implies that each side will give. Do not perceive it as an ultimatum.

If the employer chooses not to grant any of your requests—and realistically, he or she can do that—you will still have the option of accepting the original offer provided you have maintained a positive, productive and friendly atmosphere during your exchanges. You can always re-enter negotiations after you have demonstrated your worth to the organization.

Money Isn’t Everything

There are many things you can negotiate besides salary. For example, benefits can add thousands of dollars to the compensation package. Benefits can range from paid personal leave to discounts on the company’s products and services. They constitute more than just icing on the cake; they may be better than the cake itself. Traditional benefits packages include health insurance, paid vacation and personal/sick days. Companies may offer such benefits as child care, elder care or use of the company jet for family emergencies. Other lucrative benefits could include disability and life insurance and a variety of retirement plans. Some organizations offer investment and stock options as well as relocation reimbursement and tuition credits for continued education.

Written by Lily Maestas, Counseling and Career Services, University of California, Santa Barbara.
Graduation day is fast approaching and you and your classmates are competing for the best jobs! You may feel at a disadvantage if you are neither a U.S. citizen nor a permanent resident. The following is an overview of practical issues related to employment in the U.S., as well as tips to help you in your job search.

Immigration Issues

Practical training authorization permits foreign students completing bachelor’s, master’s or doctorate degrees in F-1 student status to be employed for a period of one year in order to gain practical work experience related to their field of study. (Exception: STEM Extension. Students with certain majors in Science, Technology, Engineering or Math may be able to obtain an additional 17 months of OPT in addition to the initial 12 months. Contact RIT’s International Student Services to confirm your eligibility.)

In order to receive Optional Practical Training permission, you must apply to the U.S. Citizenship & Immigration Services through the international student advisors. You should apply during the 120 days before you complete your degree requirements. (It is now possible to apply for OPT during the 60 day grace period following graduation, but it is still recommended that you apply before graduation.)

You must complete your application for an Employment Authorization Document (EAD) and submit your application to RIT International Student Services. It can take two or three months for the card to be issued. It is important to apply well in advance of the time that you will need the card, as you cannot begin employment until you actually have the card.

Please see one of the international student advisors if you have any questions regarding your eligibility for optional Practical Training.

If, after graduation, you plan to reside in the U.S. on either a temporary or permanent basis, you will want to obtain a temporary working permit (H-1B). Immigration law refers to H-1B workers as workers in “specialty occupations.” Specialty occupations include most jobs for which a bachelor’s degree in a specific field is a prerequisite for employment. In order to obtain H-1B status, you must first have an offer of employment. There are then specific steps, which the employer must take. You may be in H-1B status for up to six years.

Students who wish to continue their studies and obtain a higher degree may do so by gaining admission to another program or university and notifying the “new” international student advisor who will process the proper forms. For further information, contact the International Student Advisors by phone at 475-6943 or on the mezzanine level of the Student Alumni Union. Their website is: www.rit.edu/studentaffairs/iss.

Tips for the International Student’s Job Search

- Research the demand for your degree and skills-set. Your job search will be easier if you have highly marketable skills or extensive experience. Be flexible—you may need to relocate in order to find the job you want. Learn all you can about your targeted career field.
- Use all available resources in your job search. These include: college on-campus recruiting, campus or community job fairs, job postings on national job posting Internet sites, company website postings, job postings in newspapers and trade publications, professional associations, resume searches on national on-line services, employee referrals, regional and national conferences, employment agencies, networking through your own contacts.
- Develop strong communication skills. Provide a well-prepared resume that includes desirable skills and relevant work experiences. Clearly convey your interests and ability to do the job in an interview. Be sensitive to interviewer’s verbal and non-verbal cues—make sure you are being understood. Make sure you express proper non-verbal communication—always look directly at the employer in order to portray confidence and honesty. If your English language skills need some work, get involved with campus and community activities, to allow you to practice speaking English.
- Interact with other international students who have successfully found employment in the U.S., and get advice from them.
- Work with the Co-op and Career Services Office here at RIT. Attend sessions on job search strategies and related topics. Work with your Program Coordinator to develop your job search strategy. Attend campus career fairs and company information sessions to inquire about employment opportunities and to practice your networking skills.
- Target multi-national companies because they may value your versatile language skills and may have facilities in your home country.
- Start your job search early, and create and follow a detailed plan of action that will lead you to a great job!
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- Communications Systems
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- Computer Systems Engineering
- Digital Image Processing
- Electronic Systems Design
- Failure Analysis Engineering
- Flight Mechanics Engineering
- Mass Properties
- Product Assurance Engineering
- Product Engineering
- Radar Systems Engineering
- Reliability Analysis Engineering
- Satellite Integration & Test
- Satellite Propulsion Systems
- Signal Processing
- Software Engineering/System Test
- Spacecraft Development
- Survivability/Vulnerability
- System Analysis
- System Safety Engineering
- Technical Cost/Schedule Analysis
- Upper State Flight Operations

www.aero.org/careers

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