

Getting a Job – Resumes, Networking, and Interviews

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Introduction

Sooner or later, we all will need to get jobs and most of those jobs will be in industry rather than academia. This paper focuses on important aspects of the job search, resumes, networking to find potential jobs, and interviewing. But first, you must answer two questions.

- What type(s) of job would you like to have? (What is your passion?)
- Where would you like to work?

The answers to these questions will be personal and may be specific or broad. Flexibility allows casting of a wider job-search net but there may be good reasons for specificity in either or both job and location. Related issues include:

- your ability and willingness to travel away from your home base, perhaps for an extended period of time
- your obligations to your family or other significant personal relationships
- your commitments to other personal interests (all manner of things; if something is important, you'll know about it) that could be affected by your job choice
- the type of work you may wish to engage in, that may be geographically restricted

Once you've decided on the type(s) and location(s) of jobs you'd like to pursue, you'll need to start working on your resume. All manner of resume advice and suggestions are available and so this paper will focus on some important points. A potential employer is interested in your knowledge (education), skills (all sorts), experience and how the knowledge, skills, and experience you have fit with those needed for a particular position. If the fit is good, you may get a job. If they are not, then you won't. So before you apply for a job, find out whether you fit the requirements. This is where networking comes in, which

will be addressed later. In addition to the information in this article, you are urged to download and read *Reflections on a Geological Career*, <http://aipg.org/publications>, which has good advice for those who have already begun their geoscience careers and are thinking about advancement or a new position.

Your Resume

A resume should be a concise, well-composed summary of your knowledge, skills, and experience. It will also include your contact information and a short statement of the type of position sought; it should also be tailored to the specific opportunity or company of interest. The resume of someone entering the geoscience profession will be longer on knowledge and skills due to the lack of experience while the resume of someone with lots of experience will emphasize that experience.

Things to Include in Your Resume:

- state the type of job you're seeking—avoid cliché-type statements; be genuine
- your knowledge—the subjects you've taken that will be of interest to the employer including field camp, related sciences (math, chemistry, physics, business), computer modeling and languages, familiarity with procedures relevant to the job sought, etc., such as mapping, field skills, database management, microscope use, etc.
- internships held—demonstrates real-world experience even if the type of internship is not directly related to the position sought
- knowledge of finance—did you fund all or part of your education through scholarships, work-study, cooperative employment, summer work, or other

part-time work during while pursuing your degree

- military service—describe duties, promotions, decorations, etc.
- successful passage of the ASBOG fundamentals test in anticipation of state licensure, if you have taken and passed it
- foreign language facility, if any
- geoscience computer software with which you are familiar—everyone knows or should know MS Office, although exceptional database skills may be worth noting; for example, GIS or ore deposit modeling
- publications and presentations—papers presented, senior-MS-PhD thesis, etc.
- awards from professional societies or industry groups
- past employment including teaching assistantships, research assistantships and internships
- professional society memberships
- certificates for specialized training such as OSHA hazardous waste training or MSHA mine safety training
- hobbies or skills that may be helpful in your job (for example, one student was hired to work at a remote drilling site for a summer because he noted in his resume that he liked to tell jokes. Another got a job because his resume included the fact that he'd worked for a time as an auto mechanic).
- carefully selected references for the job for which you are applying—sometimes these may be supplied later
- a personal photograph of yourself—this one is debated, some experts advise this and some don't. For someone whom you have met it will help them remember you. Many of us are better remembering faces than names. Use a good, professional-looking head shot photo; something neither too informal but not too formal either.

Those against photos in part base their opinion on the fact that photo shows gender and race but these are not the issues they once were.

Things that lead to immediate disposal of your resume in the trash can:

- misspellings—don't depend on spell check; remember *form* and *from* are both correct spellings
- incomplete sentences—except when grammatically correct as in bullet points
- bad grammar
- poor formatting and presentation
- political or community activism
- cute abbreviations, etc.: LOL, OMG, etc.
- overuse of buzz words
- bottom line—have at least one if not more people proofread your resume

Appended to the end of this article are two resumes, one for a student graduating with a Bachelor's degree in May and another from a geologist with more experience. The differences between the two resumes in experience and publications mean that one resume is a single page and the other is two pages. These are not necessarily the best resume presentations but are typical of resumes received by employers. They don't necessarily follow all the foregoing recommendations. Prepare your resume to reflect you using the guidance above and the two sample resumes.

Thoughts from a Recruiter: in today's world, there's no reason to "mass produce" resumes, sending the same resume to everyone. When a company advertises an opening or is known for doing a certain type of work, the candidate should produce a resume specifically for that position or that company, emphasizing aspects of his/her background and education that are specific to the job advertised or the prospective firm's focus (and eliminating all inessential information). Each resume should be targeted—do your homework! In addition, it should be addressed to the correct individual by name, not "H/R Department" or "To Whom it may concern." We have the Internet and telephones and that information is available.

Cover letters: when sending out a resume, include a cover letter or message that should specifically address a particular position being sought and how your skills meet the job requirements, where applicable. You can also state in the cover letter or message how this posi-

tion fits in with your long-term career goals. Ask respectfully for the reviewer to consider you for the position. Remember the resume "do not's"—once again, have someone proofread the cover letter before sending it.

Networking

Networking is using your relationships with people and organizations to your advantage. Speaking with the right person at the right time leads to a job more often than any other single action. Networking at its best is when your references are people that know both you and your potential employer. Providing a personal connection takes some of the risk out of the hiring process for the employer and enables you to move up the preferred employee list. Talk to the folks who graduated ahead of you who are working in positions that might interest you. Alumni organizations, professional society meetings, people you know who are in the type of business you're interested in, and all sorts of interpersonal connections can lead you to job leads by being in the right place at the right time and by being attuned to the possibility of finding a job. David Abbott learned of the open position for a geologist at the SEC from an SEC attorney with whom he volunteered as a Boy Scout leader. When he left the SEC, he became associated with Behre Dolbear & Company because he had worked with Behre Dolbear's President on the SME Resources and Reserves Committee. Networking is important not only in obtaining your first position but also throughout your career. This is the main reason for being involved in professional and other organizations, including volunteer activities, throughout your career. Because Stephanie Jarvis, SA-1495, has been writing the Student Voice column in the *TPG* since the Mar/Apr 2010 issue, and she has achieved recognition throughout AIPG that will be of tremendous help for her in her job search.

Many employers, particularly small to medium-sized companies, prefer to find candidates through networking rather than advertising. Often job opportunities are not advertised, so the wider your network, the more opportunities you are likely to discover.

Follow up

A follow up contact with a prospective employer after an initial contact or

submission of an application or resume can be very important, but requires sensitivity to the philosophy of the employer. Some prospective employers, particularly in smaller firms, often consider follow up contact to be a positive sign of motivation and initiative. These contacts can be tricky and require listening to the cues being provided by the prospective employer. Repeated contacts will be considered a nuisance if the applicant does not listen to suggestions. Large firms often indicate that attempted contacts outside of specified channels will be rejected outright. There is no easy path around these prohibitions unless the applicant has a trusted contact in the company.

Other Thoughts

Where are the Job Openings Listed? In our experience, the larger firms post their job openings on their own websites but those jobs are usually "old or existing" postings. Most large firms commit to hiring a few entry level candidates every year and they cultivate them—as interns, or by going to specific schools every year and seeing them at job fairs. They also advertise in publications and to a much lesser extent, newspapers. Some may post with on-line job search sites, but not so much the technical entry-level positions because they'd receive an overwhelming number of replies, mostly not relevant. To overcome or be a part of that "cultivation" is why it is so important to network. Basically, if you have to respond to a job solicitation, you probably are late in the selection process. The very best is if someone calls you to tell you that you should apply for a position because it would suit you. Calling on firms of interest in the area you want to work is one way of finding out if positions are open and where. The websites of the various professional organizations may have job postings. Pick an organization that lists the type of job you are interested in. But networking, discussed below, should not be ignored.

Emphasis—Networking: maybe we ought to expand the definition of what we mean by "networking." The purpose of this activity is to motivate people to help you in your search. They may provide names of firms; names of individuals in positions able to issue an invitation to interview; names of someone they know who may be somewhere (geographically, technically or department-wise) that are one way to meet these people, job fairs

are another, technical organizations are a third.

Contacting HR: but what if you live in Michigan and want a job in Texas and have no local contacts? A successful way to focus on the best position for you within certain parameters is to narrow your search scientifically. Identify the companies who hire geologists or the types of position you are looking for either nationwide or locally. Find out more about the firms, find out about their hiring process (from their website), and then contact the Human Resources Director or hiring manager personally (this is where networking comes in—to at least get the name). Contact should preferably be by phone, then email, then letter only if you cannot obtain more direct information. They will want to know if you have a geographic preference, and want you to send in a resume (via email is best). They will say they will send your resume on to technically specific or local hiring managers. Ask if you can be cc'd when they send your resume on (and follow up). Ask about how long they think the process will take and if they mind if you call back periodically to check. People get busy. Your life and future is urgent to you but not necessarily so much to them, even if they have good intentions. A well placed reminder is usually welcomed.

Where Else Might Jobs Be Advertised? Some firms place job ads in trade and organization magazines—*Groundwater* (NGWA publication) is an example, or *World Oil*. The firm ads in these magazines (most are also available on-line) will also provide the names of firms that offer the type of services you might want.

Some Other Random Thoughts: Most success in a job search comes from personal leads. Everyone wants to help young folks get started in their first position, so you just need to find the helpful people in the right position to hire you.

To get “cultivated,” students can get a job in a large or smaller firm as an intern, while still a student. A former intern for one of us calls regularly every year or so, with a career update, or needing a contact name or a reference, and she's a great networker! I do not know how she initially made the contact, but she kept following up and asking for people to get her to the right person. Eventually her resume was forwarded by an engineer who barely knew what hydrogeology was, and she was hired for about eight weeks. She was outstanding

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RESUMES FOR
FREE ON THE AIPG
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as a student intern—a hard worker and accurate with spreadsheets, asked lots of questions, etc. If she had wanted to come back the following year or wanted a job in our geographic area, she would have been hired in a heartbeat and still would. Something to keep in mind is if you have a good work ethic and can get someone you know to provide that kind of reference, most employers are willing to teach the other skills, if you are willing to learn, and have the right level of qualifications needed for their hiring process (BS in Geology, MS, PhD, etc).

I think of a resume as a second step after an initial contact, or to document that it is worth spending time on this person because they have the basic skills I need.

The person who is the “decision-maker” on a hire, especially in technical positions, is usually the end user. Most HR people do not make the actual hiring decisions; they are there to fill in the paperwork and make sure legal requirements are met, and also to filter out folks that the busy technical folks do not have the time to interview.

Comments from a Recruiter

Jeff Ram of JRam Consultants provided the following comments to Helen Madeksho-Hickman. “In my experience, recruiters do not generally source new grads. But some recruiters do have positions for temporary jobs.” If you use a recruiter, discuss the types of positions they commonly fill to see if you and the recruiter are a good fit.

The environmental consultants I've worked with through the years have specific programs for college recruiting and usually have one or more H/R people

responsible. In recent years, they've become more focused, spending their time and resources at a more targeted group of colleges. For example, a national engineering consulting firm with a large office in Gainesville might concentrate their efforts at only 3 or 4 Florida schools. Other offices of the same firm will concentrate on schools in their area.

In addition to on-campus interviews, we would recommend that a new grad scour job sites such as CareerBuilder.com, Monster.com and some of the targeted job boards such as getenvironmentalengineeringjobs.com. It seems like there's a new one springing up every week.

Regarding interviews, two documents that Jeff Ram uses to help prepare candidates for telephone and face-to-face interviews follow the appended resumes.

AIPG Section Websites

AIPG Section Website links are on the AIPG National Website at www.aipg.org. Click on the top right drop down menu and click on Section Websites. If your section does not have a website contact AIPG Headquarters to get one setup (wjd@aipg.org). AIPG Headquarters will maintain a website for your section. Several sections (AZ, CA, CO, FL, GA, HI, IL, Chapter, MI, MO, NM, OK, PA, and TN) are examples of websites hosted by AIPG National.

Cover Photos Needed for TPG

We are looking for high resolution photos to place on the cover of future TPG publications.

The photo must be of high resolution and geology related.

Please email your photo, with caption to aipg@aipg.org for consideration. You will be notified, if your photo is selected.

Paul X. Smith
PXS@yahoo.com

555 Main Street
Atlantic City, NJ 11111
(212) 555-1243

College, Box 2222
111 College Road
Anywhere, NY 23232

Education College, Anywhere, NY
Candidate for Bachelor of Arts Degree, May 2013
Concentration: Geosciences
Overall GPA: 3.4 GPA in Concentration: 3.47
Senior Thesis: Modeling the Impacts of Development on Groundwater Discharge to a Stream

Related Coursework - Hydrogeology - Petrology
- Advanced-Hydro and the Environment - Paleontology
- Sedimentary Geology - Mineralogy
- GIS for Geoscientists - Biology, Genetics and Evolution
- GIS Remote Sensing - Biology, Cells and Ecosystems
- Structural Geology - Calculus I

Work Experience **Montgomery County Park System**, Baltimore, MD (June - August 2012)
Acquisition and Design Intern

- Created wetland cover maps for each park in the system.
- Conducted water quality and bathymetric studies on park lakes.
- Used GPS and ArcGIS to calculate volumes for park lakes and created bottom contour maps.

College, Anywhere, NY (May - Aug 2011)
Geosciences Summer Researcher

- Used ArcGIS, a soil-water balance model, and a recharge model to simulate how land cover changes affect baseflow to creek in central Wisconsin.
- Presented research at the Geological Society of America 2011 Annual Meeting.

National Park Service, GeoCorps, Virginia Beach, VA (May - August 2010)
Coastal Geologist / GIS Specialist

- Participated in the ongoing development of the Northeast Coastal and Barrier Network geomorphological monitoring protocols and data collection.
- Trained in field data collection using the NCBN protocols and evaluated existing data as well as imported and processed new data.
- Used ArcGIS to process and report Trimble GPS and Nikon Total Station data.
- Work was published in reports used for coastal management decisions.

Freedom Boat Club, Virginia Beach, VA (May 2008 – August 2009)
Dock Manager

- Oversaw the maintenance and rental of several vessels and aided club members in docking, boat handling, and navigation.
- worked closely with members to organize outings.

Computer ArcGIS 9.3 and 10, ArcPad 8, ForeSight DXM, Microsoft Office Suite, Final Cut Pro, Adobe Photoshop, Adobe Illustrator, and Microsoft Visual Basic.

Activities **College Varsity Football**: Letter winner Fall 2010-2012. Team Co-Captain Fall 2012
Virginia Beach High School Football: Varsity letter winner 2006-2008
- Captain of the 2008 State Champion team.
- 2008 "All Shore" team member

Interests Fishing, fly-fishing, boating, sports.

HOPEFUL GEOLOGIST

OBJECTIVE

Develop and apply Ground Water models to be used for Water Supply Planning and Consumptive Use permitting and compliance. Provide expedient responses to requests from the public. Manage outside contractors when needed.

SUMMARY OF QUALIFICATIONS

GW Modeling Tools: Modflow, GWVISTAS, Viewlog, MIKE SHE

Extensive Knowledge of the SFWMD Databases: Dbhydro, DCVP, Wilma. USGS –ADAPS database, some work with GENP

Advanced user of Excel: Including – Pivot tables, Macros, Filtering, Lookup tables, Charts, Queries to Dbhydro and Regulations database, Regression Tools. GIS; ARCGIS8 user, Arcview, RegGSS, Spatial Analyst, GRID, Arcedit, AML's
Managed five peer-reviews of ground water models with out side reviewers. Ongoing management of public data requests. Orange County Water Shortage reports
Used SAS to reformat large data sets.

EMPLOYMENT

1997 - 2005 SFWMD West Palm Beach FL

Hydrogeologist, Water Supply Planning and Development, Model Application

- Ground Models using Modflow – Revision and calibration of Lower Kissimmee basin groundwater model (Glades, Okeechobee, Highlands model, Input Data Sets for KissEcfModel, Collier (Included gathering data from outside sources (USGS, SJRWMD, SWFWMD). Data needed for Soils, Rain, Landuse, Water Levels, Surface water features and Well Data etc. Added Surficial Aquifer System to model.
- Team Leader on QA/QC of USGS GW Data for Office of Modeling.
- Team Member on the GW Monitoring Network Taskforce
- Team Leader on Potentimetric Water Level Maps for the LWC of Florida (Some Maps made with SURFER).
- Project Manager for peer-review of Ground Water Models.
- Section Contact for Public Requests.
- Created Excel Macro to run Weekly Water Shortage Reports.
- Wrote Groundwater and Water Quality Sections of LWC Water Supply Plan and Formatted draft North Palm Beach Ground Water Model
- Wrote SOW for Data Collection in the LWC.

1996 - 1997 SFWMD West Palm Beach FL

Staff Engineering Associate, Data Management

- QA/QC Data from DCVP using GVA.
- Completed Backlog of 30 years of Data for S-49.

1995 Geology Department, University of Florida. Gainesville, Florida

Research Assistant

- Organized study of the tidal influence on the hydrogeology at a fuel terminal.
- Actively assisted team in water and soil sampling.
- Analyzed data, using Excel and Surfer.
- Created cross-sections with data from well logs.
- Coordinated meetings

1993 -1995 Geology Department, University of Florida. Gainesville. Florida

Teaching Assistant – Geology and Oceanography

1992- 1993 Weismann Institute of Science, Rechovat, Israel

Research Assistant.

- Created Well Database in Excel.

EDUCATION

1993 - 1995 University of Florida, Gainesville, Florida

M.S. Major: Geology. Minor: Environmental Engineering.

- Emphasis in Hydrologic Sciences. Thesis: *The Impact of local hydrogeology on the feasibility of using insitu intrinsic remediation at a fuel terminal in Jacksonville.*

1989 - 1992 Hebrew University, Jerusalem, Israel

B.Sc. Major: Geology and Atmospheric Sciences.

1997 – Present Toastmasters International ATM-S, CL

- Served as Treasurer, V.P. of Education and Secretary.

Additional classes in Florida Water Law, GIS and Project Management

MEMBERSHIPS

- Geological Society of America
- American Water Resources Association

Five Ways to Do Better in Phone Interviews¹

From conducting many phone interviews—on both sides of the hiring equation—here are five tips on how to do well in a phone interview.

1. Take note of your surroundings.

- If you have an interview scheduled, take precautions beforehand to get in a good spot physically. Don't take the interview in the office where you can't talk freely.
- Don't use your cell when there is too much noise in the background. And don't be walking from one place to another because the breathlessness that comes from walking and talking at the same time subconsciously conveys lack of authority to someone who doesn't know you.
- If you did not schedule it beforehand, feel free to ask the interviewer if you may call back at a better time. You will not sound disinterested, but rather, you will sound concerned for managing your life organizing your commitments.

2. Stand up. No kidding. You will sound more self-confident and dynamic if you stand while you speak rather than if you sit.

- Walking around a bit, but not too much, also keeps the call going smoothly. If your body is confined, your speech sounds different than if you have run of the room. It's one reason that the best speakers walk around instead of standing in one place at the podium.
- Using hand gestures is very natural for talking, so allow yourself to use them, even though you are on the phone. You don't have to force it. They will just come, as long as your hands are free. And you want to sound natural on the phone because authentic is more likeable than stilted. So walking around a room with a headset will actually give you the freedom to be more of yourself on the call.

3. Dress appropriately for the interview—even though no one will see you.

- The emails you write to a hiring manager are different than emails to your friends, you should not talk

to an interviewer the same way you talk with your friends. You know this, but the shift is difficult without practice.

4. Prepare for the most obvious questions.

- A resume is to get someone to pay attention to you. An in-person interview is to see if people like you. Somewhere in between those two events, people need to make sure you are qualified and you don't have any huge red flags. So in a phone interview you can expect people to focus on those two areas.
- You will probably get questions asking you to **show that you actually have the skills** to accomplish the goals for the open position. Be prepared to give organized, rehearsed examples of how you have performed at work in the past in order to show your skill set.
- Also, be ready for a question about the most obvious problem on your resume—often frequent job changes or big gaps in work. These are answers you should practice. Even if your answer isn't great, a good delivery can make the difference between getting through a phone screen or not.

5. Don't forget to close.

- Your goal for a phone interview is to get an in-person interview.
- So don't get off the phone until you have made some efforts to get to that step
- Here are a few suggestions
 1. "I feel comfortable with you and with the position we've discussed. How do you feel?"
 2. "Do you have any concerns about my ability to do the job and fit in?" This gives you both the opportunity to address and eliminate a potential problem.
 3. "It has been an interesting discussion. I would very much like to pursue it further."

4. "Can you extend an offer at this time? Or would you rather set up another meeting?"
5. "How do I compare to other candidates you have interviewed?"
6. (if this is the final interview) "I'm ready to make a decision based on the information I have. Is there anything else you need to make an offer?"
7. "What's the next step?"
8. "When should I follow up with you? Would it be appropriate to call next week?"
9. "I am very impressed with what I've seen. And I look forward to accepting an offer from you."
10. "Is there anything else that I can elaborate on so that you would have a better understanding of my qualifications and suitability for this position?"

And remember a key component of any successful interview—even for a phone interview: **A thank you note** sent within a few days of the interview to show you are interested.

Interview Preparation for Candidates

Preparation is the key to a successful interview. Thorough preparation enhances your chances of accomplishing the two main objectives of an interview.

- As the candidate your objective is to have the interviewer believe that you are the best person and the right person for the job. To do that implies no commitment to take an offer if you get one but it is nice to get the offer. You also want to learn those things you need to know about the position and the company so that you may make an intelligent decision about the job.
- The interviewer's objective is to decide whether or not you are an appropriate person to fill the position. Your job history and educational background as well as qualitative issues such as your strengths and accomplishments, level of motivation, attitude and personality will all be "under the microscope". In other words, to find out if you are the right person for the job, the interviewer wants to know about your potential for promotion

1. These tips for interviews come from Jeff Ram of JRam Consultants and have been edited for this article.

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and whether or not you will fit into the company environment.

Know Yourself

Honestly assess your employment background and develop explanations for any weak points. Prepare a list of tough questions that may be asked, then develop answers to those questions.

- Why would you consider a career change at this time?
- What are your strengths? What are your weaknesses?
- What do you like the most/least about your current job?
- Why should we hire you?

Research the Company

Researching the company is necessary to learn as much as possible to ensure the prospective job is a good fit for you—and, equally important, to impress the people with whom you will interview. Utilize the Internet to review annual reports. The Internet offers a wealth of company information and industry statistics. You can also learn from your industry's trade journals.

- Find their homepage.
- Follow the company's stock price, if it's publicly traded.
- Know the company's products and services.
- Be prepared to tell the interviewer why their company is attractive to you.
- Talk with company employees.
- Talk to customers of the company.

Your account executive, if you are using a recruiter, will provide an interview timetable, including names and titles of persons with whom you will be talking. Solid company research will enable you to confidently say at the end of your interview "I'm interested in pursuing this opportunity, what's the next step?" Your goal is to get an offer or a date for the next interview appointment.

The Interview

Appearance: Men

- A dark suit is appropriate for most positions.
- Wear a white or pale shirt, freshly laundered and well pressed.
- Wear a quiet tie with a subtle design and a hint of color.
- If you work in a "business casual" environment, have a matching sport

jacket in the car to wear during the interview.

- Shined shoes, over the calf-length dark socks.
- Do not show any tattoos or piercing or have an extreme hair style or color.
- Wear minimal jewelry, and mild, light fragrances only.

Appearance: Women

- Wear a suit or tailored dress in basic navy or gray.
- Blouses should be tailored and color coordinated.
- A closed-toe pump, flats, and natural colored nylons.
- Light colognes or avoid fragrances.
- For good posture cross legs at the ankles, not at the knees.
- Do not show any tattoos or piercing or have an extreme hair style or color.
- Wear minimal, tasteful jewelry, and mild, light fragrances only.

Interviewing can be a stressful situation, you want to be yourself and really show your capabilities. Here are some simple suggestions that we've developed that will make interviewing easier.

A Typical Sequence of Events is:

- Arrive no earlier than fifteen minutes before the set time, but no later than five minutes prior to the interview.
- Interview with personnel office representative (general questions, review of the company and their benefits).
- You may be asked to fill out an application. Complete the form in full and leave no blanks.
 - o Do not write "see resume" as a response to any application question.
 - o Respond to "expected salary" questions as "open" and answer "currently salary" questions truthfully.
 - o List references, if requested (you should have this prepared on a separate sheet and should be taken to all interviews).
 - o Your recruiter's name, if you are using one, should be your response to any "referred by" questions.
- Interview with immediate supervisor and peers.
- Interview with the hiring authority (manager, etc.)
- Shake hands firmly and maintain eye contact with all interviewers.

- Be yourself. Poise, confidence and self-respect are of great importance.
- Plan to be an active participant. Ask questions, show interest and interact! (use a pad of paper for pre-written questions and notes you've taken during the interview.)

More Basics

The interview should be a two-way conversation. Ask questions of the interviewers. This shows your interest in the company and the position, and enables you to gather the right information to make an intelligent decision afterwards. Personnel will usually provide company and benefits information. The interviewers are trying to see how you can contribute to the company. Conduct yourself with confidence and determination to get the job. Sell yourself. You must present a positive attitude to the prospective employer. You must **NOT** seem disinterested or appear to be job shopping.

Typical Interview Questions and Responses

- You should give complete but brief and relaxed answers to questions. When possible use questions as a basis for developing information that you want to make sure is presented. Continue to sell yourself in a positive way.
- Describe current/past jobs in terms of duties and give indicators of good performance such as raises, sales volume, promotions, money saving ideas/projects.
 - Include short stories involving problems or challenges and how you were able to solve or overcome them.
 - Describe the results you achieved.
 - Remember to keep your answers brief and focused while exploring opportunities to convey all relevant qualifications.

Background Questions

- "Tell me about yourself."
- Answer these questions in terms of the qualifications required of the position.
 - Keep responses concise and brief and avoid being negative about previous jobs and bosses.
 - The "Tell Me" question means, "tell me your qualifications." Start with your education and discuss your employment experiences.
 - Gear the response to the duties and responsibilities of the position for which you are interviewing.
- "What are your greatest strengths?"

- Keep this as job related as possible by relating to a job task/skill that you know to be an asset of yours.
- “I like people” is not a good answer.

Salary Questions

- Do not state a starting figure. The correct way to answer that question is to set a floor and put the ball back in the interviewer’s court. Say: “Last year (in my last job) I earned \$X.xx (be accurate here, as the company may require a W-2 or a tax form from last year.) Then add..., “**but** I am interested in the **opportunity**. If the opportunity is right for me, and you think I’m right for the job and the company, I’m sure you’ll make a good and fair offer.”
- State your current salary truthfully. If you are due to a raise in the next three months, state the approximate percentage you expect. Be sure to explain that you have included bonuses, commissions, and overtime pay, if applicable.

Motive Questions

- What can you contribute to this company?
- Where do you hope to be in five years?
- What interests you most about this position?

This type of question should be answered enthusiastically. Show the interviewer you are interested in the position and relate the answers to the duties and responsibilities of the job.

Personality Questions

- What do you do in your spare time?
- Present yourself as a **well-rounded person**. Your answer gives you dimension.
- Name some hobbies.

Job Satisfaction Questions

- Why are you looking for another job?
- What do you like most/least about your previous job/jobs?
- Why did you leave your previous employer/employers?

Never speak poorly about former employers. Be positive. You are providing clues about the environment you seek.

Other Questions to be Prepared to Answer

- Are you willing to relocate?
- May we check your references?
- May we verify your income?

Questions to Ask Employers During the Interview

To complete the two-way conversation as mentioned earlier, you must ask questions and take an active role in the interview. This demonstrates the importance you place on your work and career. Remember your questions can help you determine if this is the right job for you. The research you did earlier on the company should form a basis for some of your questions. Here are some guidelines and examples:

- Ask job related questions. Focus on the job, the company, products, services and people.
- Ask about your potential peers, subordinates and superiors.
- Before you interview, write your list of Interest Questions - take them with you.
- Do not cross examine the employer.

Interest Questions

- Why do you want someone for this job?
- How many people have held this job in the past five years?
- Were they promoted or did they leave the company?
- Why isn’t this position being filled from within the company?
- What are examples of the best results produced by people in this job?

Qualification Questions

- What would my responsibilities and duties be?
- Describe a typical day on the job.
- What are the most difficult aspects of this position?
- Describe the department’s/company’s growth in the next two years?
- What is the philosophy on training and development in the company?
- How do you think I’d fit into this job/on your team/into your organization?
- What types of projects would I be involved in now? Within the first year?

Ask for the Job. If you like what you see, make a positive statement about the position. If you are sincerely interested in the position and are satisfied with the answers given, you should ask the interviewer if he/she feels that you are qualified for the position. A typical conclusion might be “I’m interested in **being a part of your team**, what’s the next step?” Many times the difference in getting “**An Offer**” and “**Not Getting an Offer**” is your failure to **ask for the job. Ask for the job!**

Here are 14 Effective Ways to Close an Interview:

(Multiple choice. Pick one or two that are comfortable.)

1. “I feel comfortable with you and with the position we’ve discussed. How do you feel?”
2. “Do you have any concerns about my ability to do the job and fit in?” This is an important question because it shows humility and gives you both the opportunity to address and eliminate a potential problem.
3. “Can you extend an offer at this time? Or would you rather set up another meeting?”
4. “How do I compare to other candidates you have interviewed?”
5. “I have a lot of information, and everything I need to proceed to the next step. Is there anything else you need from me?”
6. “I’m ready to make a decision based on the information I have. Is there anything else you need to make an offer?”
7. “What’s the next step?”
8. “When should I follow up with you? Would it be appropriate to call next week?” This ensures closure, if not that day, in the near future.
9. “Is there anything personally or professionally that you believe would prevent my being a solid contributor in this role?” If “no”, you can assume that the next step is working out the hiring details. If “yes”, then you are positioned to address the interviewer’s skepticism and quell it.
10. “I am very impressed with what I’ve seen here. And I really look forward to accepting an offer from you.”
11. “It has been an interesting discussion. I would very much like to pursue it further.”
12. “I’m sure that when I think about today’s conversation, additional questions will come to mind. Is there a convenient time during the next several days when I can call you to pose these questions?”
13. “Is there anything else that I can elaborate on so that you would have a better understanding of my qualifications and suitability for this position?”
14. “Mr. Employer, your search is over. You will not find anyone else who will do this job as well as I can. If I were you, I would cancel all of the other interviews and make me an offer.”

Each of these 14 comments is a proactive close. Each has been field-tested and works. So pick one or two you like and go for it.

Ten Reasons Employers Reject Candidates

- **Lack of Research.** It is obvious when candidates have not learned about the job, company or industry prior to the interview. Visit the library or use the Internet to research the company, and then talk with friends, peers and other professionals about the opportunity before each meeting.
- **Not having questions to ask.** Asking questions shows your interest in the company and the position. Prepare a list of questions in advance.
- **Not readily knowing the answers to interviewers' questions.** Anticipate and rehearse answers to tough questions about your background, such as a recent termination or an employment gap. Practicing with your spouse or friend before the interview will help you to frame intelligent questions.
- **Lack of Career Direction.** Job hunters who are not clear about their career goals often can't spot or commit to appropriate opportunities. Not knowing what you want wastes everyone's time.
- **Appearance.** Many candidates do not consider their appearance as much as they should. First impressions are quickly made in the first three (3) to five (5) minutes. Dress based on the company's culture.
- **Too much Humility.** Being conditioned not to brag, candidates are sometimes reluctant to describe their accomplishments. Explaining how you reach difficult or impressive goals helps employers understand what you can do for them.
- **Not relating skills to employers' needs.** A list of sterling accomplishments means little if you can't relate them to a company's requirements. Reiterate your skills and convince the employer that you can "do the same for them".
- **Poor Attitude.** Many candidates come across as arrogant. While employers can afford to be self-centered, candidates cannot.
- **Handling salary issues ineptly.** Candidates often ask about salary and benefit packages too early. If they

believe an employer is interested, they may demand inappropriate amounts and price themselves out of the jobs. Candidates who ask for too little undervalue themselves or appear desperate.

- **Job Shopping.** Some applicants, particularly those in certain high-tech, sales, and marketing fields will admit they're just "shopping" for opportunities and have little intention of changing jobs. This wastes time and leaves a bad impression with employers they may need to contact in the future.

Final Wrap-Up Questions

Your final objective should be to find out one of the following three things. Does the interviewer have enough information regarding your abilities as a candidate to:

- extend you a job offer
- require one further interview/meeting prior to making a decision
- decide that you are not the candidate that they are looking for

In order to attain the final objective above you must ask questions so that you can determine these answers. While you do not want to back the prospective employer in a corner, keep in mind that employers want to see initiative and high interest on the part of the candidate. In order to maintain your value as a candidate while in front of the employer ask the following:

You Are Not Finished Yet

The interview is done but there is still more you can do to make a good impression. Always follow-up an interview with a thank-you letter in a few days. Refer back to the interview and emphasize how your skills fit the position, and be appreciative of having the opportunity for the interview and your positive impressions of the employer. If you decide you are no longer interested in a particular company or position, let the prospective employer know your decision.

Now comes the hardest part: waiting for an offer or another interview. Call the interviewer for an update, if you haven't heard anything in a week. Persistence counts when looking for a job.

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