**Job Search and Interviewing Techniques**

The job search involves at least two people – the applicant and the individual making the hiring decision. Usually more than two people are involved, however, because companies typically hire based on a committee’s decision. Company needs to hire the best people because it hopes that those employees will stay with the company a long time. Hiring well is a good corporate investment. A job search is a demanding task. You will have to know how to look for a job, write a resume and letter of application, interview for the job, and write a follow-up letter.

**How to find job openings:**

When it’s time for you to look for a job, how will you begin your search? You know you can’t just wander up and down the street, knocking on doors randomly. That would be time consuming, exhausting, and counterproductive. Instead, you must approach the job search more systematically. Following are some of the ways:

**1). Visit Your University Job Placement Center:**

This is an excellent place to begin a job search, for several reasons. First, your university job placement service might have job counselors who will counsel you regarding your skills and job options. Second, your job placement center can give you helpful hints on preparing resumes, letters of application, and follow-up letters. Third, the center will post job openings within your community and possibly in other cities. Fourth, the center will be able to tell you when companies will visit campus for job recruiting. Finally, the service can keep on file your letters of recommendation and will send these out to interested companies upon your request.

**2). Talk To Your Instructors:**

Whether in your major field or not, instructors can be excellent job sources. They will have contact in business, industry, and education. They may know of job openings or people who might be helpful in your job search. Furthermore, because your instructor s obviously know a great deal about you (having spent a semester or more working closely with you), they will know which types of jobs or work environments might best suit you.

**3). Network with Friends and Past Employers:**

The latest studies tell us that networking is the best way to find jobs. Over 60 percent of jobs are found by talking to people you know. A July 2003 Smart Money magazine article reports that 62 percent of job searchers find employment through “face-to-face networking” (Bloch 2003,12).

Why is networking so important? It is simple math. Your friends and past employers know people. Those people know people. By visiting acquaintances, you can network with numerous individual. The more people you talk to about your job quest, the more job opportunities you will discover.

**4). Get Involved in Your Community:**

There are many ways to network. In addition to talking to your family or past employers, you can network by getting involved in your community. Consider volunteering for a community committee, pursuing religious affiliations, joining committee clubs, or participating in fund raising events. Join classes enhancing your technical skills at your local community college. Each instance not only teaches you a new skill but also provides an opportunity to meet new people. Then, “when a job comes open, you’ll be on their radar screen.

**5). Check Your Professional Affiliations and Publications:**

If you belong to a professional organization, this could be a source of employment in three ways. First, your organization’s sponsors or board members might be aware of job openings. Second, your organization might publish a list of job openings. Finally, your organization’s publications might list job opportunities.

**6). Read the Want Ads:**

Check the classified section of your local newspapers or in newspapers in cities you might like to live and work in. Every city will publish its job ads in its respective newspaper. You can’t have a job opening for Lahore in Karachi’s newspaper.

These want ads list job openings, requirements, and salary ranges.

7). Read Newspapers or Business Journals to Find Growing Business and Business Sector:

Which companies are receiving grants, building new sites, winning awards, or creating new service or product lines? Which companies have just gained new clients or received expanded contracts? Newspapers and journals report this kind of news, and a growing company or business sector might be good news for you. If a company is expanding, they’ll most likely be hiring resources next. This means more job opportunities for you to pursue.

**8). Take a ‘Temp” job:**

Temporary (“temp”) jobs, accessed through staffing agencies, are great for several reasons. First, you are getting paid while you look for a job. Second, you are acquiring new skills. Third, temp jobs help you network. Finally, many staffing agencies provide “temp-to-perm job opportunities” (permanent).

**9). Get an Internship:**

Some internships are paid, but most are unpaid. That is the bad news. However, the good news is that an internship will provide you outstanding job preparedness skills, help you meet new people for networking, and improve your resume. Meanwhile, an unpaid internship in your preferred area might lead to full-time employment. An internship “gives you the opportunity to show your skills, work ethic, positive attitude, and passion for your work.” By interning, you can prove that you should be “the next employee the company hires.”

**10). Research the Internet:**

In the mid-to-late 1990s, the Internet was the preferred means by which job seekers found employment. That has changed drastically. Newsweek magazine calls the Internet “a time waster.” Quoting that some of the Internet’s popular job sites are “big black holes” - your resume goes in, but you never hear from anyone again.

Others are equally pessimistic about the Internet’s value as a source for jobs. Only 10 percent of technical or computer –related jobs are found from electronic job searches, about 13 percent of interviews for managerial-level jobs result from responding to an online posting, and a mere 4 percent of jobs overall found through the Internet.

Nonetheless, you should make the Internet part of your job search strategy. If it is not the best place to find a job, the Internet still provides numerous benefits and Internet job search engines provide excellent job search resources.

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Once you have found a job that interests you, it’s time to apply. Your job application will start when you send the perspective employer your resume. Resumes are usually the first impression you make on a perspective employer. If your resume is effective, you have opened the door to possible employment- you have given yourself the opportunity to sell your skills during an interview. If, in contrast, you write an ineffective resume, you have closed the door to opportunity.

Your resume should present an objective, easily accessible, detailed bio-graphical sketch. However, do not try to include your entire history. Because the primary goal of your resume, together with your letter of application, is to get an interview, you can use your interview to explain in more detail any pertinent information that does not appear on your resume.

**Techniques for Interviewing Effectively**

The goal of writing an effective resume and letter of application is to get an interview. The resume and letter of application open the door; only a successful interview will win you the job. In fact, some sources suggest that the interview is the most important stage of your job search. The Society for Human Resources Management states that 95 percent of respondents to a survey ranked “interview performance” as a “very influential” factor when deciding to hire an employee. Interview performance is more influential than 17 other criteria, including years of relevant work experience, resume quality, educational levels, test scores or references.

Here is how to interview successfully:

**1). Dress for success.**

Although this adage has become a cliché, it’s still valid. The key to successful dressing is to wear clean, conservative clothing. No one expects you to spend money on high-fashion, stylish clothes, but everyone expects you to look neat and acceptable. Men and women’s suits are still best.

**2). Be on time.**

In fact, plan to arrive at your interview at least 20 to 30 minutes ahead of schedule. This will help you stay on time if you get lost or having difficulty finding a parking place. Also, being early will allow you to stop off in the restroom for a final hair brushing or tie straightening. Finally, being 5 or 10 minutes early makes a good impression on your perspective employer, who will recognize your enthusiasm.

**3). Don’t chew gum, smoke, or drink too much caffeine (coffee, cola etc).**

The gum will distort your speech, the cigarette could be offensive, and the caffeine might make you jittery. Cola or soft drinks can make you burp during conversation, leaving a bad impression on your perspective employer.

**4). Watch your body language.**

To make the best impression, don’t slouch. Instead, sit straight in your chair, even leaning forward a little. Look your interviewer in the eye.

**5). Control your speaking.**

Speak slowly and don’t ramble on and on. Once you have answered the question satisfactorily, stop. Don’t monopolize the interview.

**6). Come prepared.**

This entails three things. First, you can bring to the interview a few supporting documents, including letters of recommendation, articles you have published or papers you have written, employer performance appraisals, transcripts, extra copies of your resume, schematics and so on. Don’t go overboard, however. Just two or three items will do.

Second, search the company so you can ask a few informed questions about its organization. These will show the interviewer that you are sincerely interested in the company. This is essential when preparing for your interview. The most successful job candidates show interviewers that they “know the company inside and out.” Researching a company differentiates you from other candidates. These will give you an understanding of the company’s culture, mission statement, product line, and services offered. Research will tell you if the company does business internationally, which companies represent the primary competition, where corporate offices are located, and who is on the board of directors. Then, with this knowledge, you can interview “like an insider,” showing that you are thorough and have come prepared.

Of equal importance, your research will help you decide if the company is right for you. After all, an interview answers two questions: do they want to hire you, and do you want to work for them?

Finally, know the types of questions you will be asked and be ready with answers. Some typical questions include the following:

**What are your strengths?**

**What are your weaknesses?**

**Why do you want to work for this company?**

**Why are you leaving your present employment?**

**How will you benefit this company?**

**What computer hardware you are familiar with?**

**What special techniques do you know, or what special skills do you have?**

**How do you get along with colleagues and with management?**

**What starting salary would you expect?**

**7). When answering questions, focus on the company’s specific needs.**

For example, if the interviewer asks if you have experience using Front Page, explain your expertise in that area, focusing on recent experiences or achievements. Be specific. In fact, you might want to tell a brief story to explain your knowledge. This is called “behavioral description interviewing.” It allows an interviewer to learn about your speaking abilities, organization, and relevant job skills.

If, however, you do not have the knowledge required, then “explain how you can apply the experience you do have.” You could say, “Although I’ve never used Front Page, I have built Web sites using Netscape Composer and HTML coding. Plus I’m a quick learner. I was able to learn Robo Help well enough to create online help screens in only a week. Our customer was very happy with the result.” This will show that you understand the job and can adapt to any task you might be given.

**Kinds of Interviews:**

There are many types of interviews serving diverse purposes. Knowing what to expect can help you achieve your goals.

**1. Informational Interview**

The objective of this interview is to ask for advice and learn more about a particular career field, employer or particular job. Interviewing experts in their field is one more way to become more occupationally literate. The knowledge that you gain here will make you a sharper and more informed. You will also make a contact and further develop your network.

**2. Screening or Telephone Interview**

A phone interview is a very cost effective way to screen candidates. These can last anywhere from 10 to 30 minutes. You should prepare for it like an open book exam. It is recommended that you have in front of you your resume, the job description, a list of references, some prepared answers to challenging questions and perhaps something about the company. The vast majority of communication is non-verbal. Because they can’t see your body language, it is critically important to have positive and polished answers with energetic tone and inflection. Be careful about your language and be sure to ask what the next step is.

**3. Personal/Individual Interview**

This is the most common type and often called a “personal interview.” It is typically a one-on-one exchange at the organizations offices. In order to best prepare you will want to know the length of the interview which can usually range from 30 to 90 minutes. If the interview is 30 minutes you have to be concise and have a high impact with your answers. If it is 60 or 90 minutes you will want to go into much more depth and use specific examples to support your generalizations.

**4. Small Group or Committee Interview**

This is where you will be meeting with several decision-makers at once. This can be an intimidating experience if you are not prepared. It’s an efficient way to interview candidates and allows for different interpretations or perceptions of the same answer. Be sure to make eye contact with everyone, no matter who asked the question. It’s important to establish rapport with each member of the interview team. Try to find out the names and job titles of the participants.

**5. The Second or On-Site Interview**

After your first interview, you may be asked back again for a “second date.” They like you enough that you made the first round of cuts, but they would like to know more about you before making their final decision. Second Interviews can last either a half or full-day so it is best to check again and get an agenda. You may be meeting with three to five individuals. This may include a representative from Human Resources, the department head, the office staff and the department head’s supervisor. Be alert and enthusiastic at all times! The more you know about the structure of the process, the less anxious you are going to feel and the better you will perform. This is the last step before an offer is made.

**6. Behavioral-Based Interview**

The theory behind Critical Behavioral Interviewing (CBI) is that past performance in a similar situation is the best predictor of future performance. CBI probes much deeper than traditional interviewing techniques. You should prepare by thinking of specific examples that demonstrate your competence in core behaviors such as teamwork, problem-solving, communication, creativity, flexibility and organizational skills. You will want to tell your story and structure it by stating your answers in terms of the situation, the task, what action you took, and what was the result or outcome.

**7. Task Oriented or Testing Interview**

This is a problem-solving interview where you will be given some exercises to demonstrate your creative and analytical abilities. A company may ask you to take a short test to evaluate your technical knowledge and skills. Sometimes a presentation to a group is necessary to determine your communication skills.

**8. Stress Interview**

During this rare type, the interviewer tries to bait you, to see how you will respond. The objective is to find your weaknesses and test how you hold up to pressure. Such tactics as weird silences, constant interruptions and challenging interrogation with antagonistic questions are designed to push your boundaries. The question you have to ask yourself is: Do I want to work for a company that treats me this way even before the offer is made?

**Do’s and Do not of Interview:**

**Do:**

* Upon meeting the interviewer, greet them with a firm handshake, while at the same time looking them in the eyes, smiling and introduction yourself with a, "hello, my name is \_\_\_\_. Nice to meet you.” A firm handshake and looking them in the eyes displays self-confidence.
* Sit up straight in the chair. This is a sign of confidence, engagement and admiration. You can even lean in towards the interviewer a bit to show an increased level of interest. Don’t rock in your chair, cross your arms or legs, tap your fingers, slouch or lean towards the door. These are distracting gestures and are signs that you are disengaged and uncomfortable. You are saying that you want the interview to be over as soon as possible. This is not the message you want to convey if you want this job.
* Keep eye contact throughout the interview (without staring) with a smile. Show your continued enthusiasm by occasionally nodding in agreement with what is being said or asked.

**Do Not:**

* Rub the back of your head or neck. It shows disinterest in what is going on around you. Even if you have an itch or cramp, do your best to avoid reaching for them until the interview is over and you are off the interview premises.
* Touching or rubbing your nose is even worse than the previous statement. It is a sign to the interviewer that you are not being completely honest with them. Misrepresenting yourself should be avoided in any interview at all costs, no matter how great the job is.
* Invade the interviewer’s personal space. Keep a safe distance between you and the interviewer (at least 2 ft.). Sitting too close can make the interviewer feel uncomfortable and take the focus off your conversation.
* Do not stare off into space. This is a sign that you are trying to distance yourself.