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Perfecting the Interview Process Making Yourself Employable

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Perfecting the Interview Process
Making Yourself Employable
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PROJECT

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Introduction

In December 2009, the Bureau of Labor Statistics reported a record high unemployment rate of 9.8% with a total unemployment count of 15.1 million people (Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2009, para 2). News headlines and various commentators have reported that the economy is slowly gaining strength. Recent household survey data accessed from the employment situation summary shows a slow declining unemployment rate. As of this writing, February, 2010, the unemployment rate has decreased by 0.9% since December 2009, with a total unemployment count of 14.0 million people (Employment Situation Summary, 2009, para 2). To show a comparison from the United States Census Bureau (2009), this would mean that the entire state of Illinois (12,910,409 pop) and Rhode Island (1,053,209 pop) would be unemployed.

One can ascertain that people are looking for employment, but one particular population of people who are finding the employment search difficult is middle-aged workers. With 14 million people unemployed, the stakes have increased with finding employment, especially for individuals over the age of 40 (Newman, 2011). Newman goes on to write,

> The overall job market is clearly healing, but middle-aged workers aren't part of the
> revival. Workers between the ages of 45 and 54 are still losing jobs on net, with decline
> of about 364,000 jobs in this age group so far this year (Newman, 2011, para 6).

The need to provide interviewing skills seems to be in high demand, especially with middle-aged individuals currently looking to rejoin the workforce.

The purpose of this project is to provide tips that will assist any individual looking for employment. My topic is Perfecting the Interview Process: *Making Yourself Employable*. Research and statistics show high unemployment rates, and individuals looking for employment can increase their chances with tips that will help them attain a job. These tips will benefit

unemployed as well as underemployed[1] individuals, as well as anyone looking to switch careers. According to the 2010 report from Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS), "In November 2009, there were almost 8.9 million workers who were categorized as underemployed" (BLS, 2010, Pg. 4). To show a comparison from the United States Census Bureau (2009), this would mean that the entire state of South Carolina (4,561,242 pop) and Kentucky (4,314,113 pop) would be underemployed.

There is always an opportunity to critique interviewing skills, especially since individuals typically complete the interviewing process[2] in order rejoin the work force. The tips that will be shared include (1) How to search for a job; (2) How to write a quality cover letter and resume; (3) What to wear versus what not to wear on an interview; and (4) How to effectively communicate during an interview, including: how to answer questions, what questions to ask, and additional verbal and nonverbal cues that will assist individuals as they "sell" themselves in hopes of landing a job. No matter if the individual is unemployed, underemployed, or looking for a different working environment, this project will provide helpful tips that will assist them in their search and interviewing process.

The Literature Review

The Job Search

Before the introduction of the World Wide Web, finding a job consisted of methods like reading the classifieds, visiting companies that were hiring, or by word of mouth—it is not what you know, it's who you know—making employment searches less stressful and somewhat meaningful. With the current economic woes, the process of searching for employment has become a lot easier, but at the same time a little more difficult.

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[1] See Appendix A.
[2] See Appendix B.

It is common knowledge that online employment websites (Monster.com; YAHOO! Jobs; Career Builder, etc.) can be seen by anyone with Internet access. If there are 14.0 million people unemployed, one can ascertain that at least the same number, if not more, are not only looking at the online job postings, but it can be predicted that hundreds, if not thousands are applying for the same position, and individuals who are searching for jobs with better pay and benefits have not been taken into consideration. Companies are scaling back with spending and utilizing the free services available to them to hire individuals. "Research shows that the average company hires one person for every 1470 resumes" (Beeson, 1997, para 3). Beeson also concluded that these numbers could not have been tabulated from searching the want ads— people obviously searched online and submitted online applications, which is even more of a reason to craft a well-written document to attract the eye of the hiring official.

Networking. As mentioned above, "It's not what you know, it's who you know." This saying has been in existence for decades, and it serves true when pursuing employment. Networking[3] can be useful and beneficial to jobseekers, as it helps build strong relationships (Muir, 2009). "Egodigwe (2005) advises readers that networking is a reciprocal process where they should expect to help others as they are being helped professionally and personally" (Muir, 2009, p. 307). Seeing that companies have shifted to using online services to cost effectively advertise positions, having a personal or professional relationship with someone who can assist in your job employment efforts is always a plus. Remember the saying above about whom you know and build strong relationships that can lead to meaningful professional opportunities. These relationships should not only include prominent and influential people; the mailman, the butcher, or even the person on the bus stop can be a prime opportunity to network. Muir recommends networking with any and every one (Muir, 2009). "In addition, she (being

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[3] See Appendix C.

Egodigwe) recommends that networking be conducted at all levels of an organization (from the

CEO to the janitors) and with individuals outside of a particular organization or profession"

(Muir, 2009, p. 307).

In an article written by Ann Navarro, she shares her experiences with networking, both

good and bad, and she provides useful tips on what can be done and what to avoid (Navarro,

2001). Navarro encountered two different people who wanted to network with her. One

gentleman talked too much and was too upfront with his inquiries regarding referrals,

organizations he should contact, and people he should reach out to. The other gentleman asked

all the right questions—which included how long she had worked for her current employer, how

did she like her job and the duties she performed, and then he asked Navarro for her input with

his resume. This gentleman took time to research the organization she worked for as well as

listen to her experiences with the hope of attaining employment (Navarro, 2011). It is clear that

the latter example was more appealing to Navarro, leading her into the direction to provide

assistance with helping the gentleman attain employment. The former example originally made

Navarro rethink her decision to network with people.

There are pros and cons when it comes to networking. Many people communicate via the

Internet, which means that the information posted to various professional and social media sites

can easily be seen and accessed. What does this mean? This means if you do not want it seen,

do not post it, because companies are reverting to using the same social media services to check

references and acquire information to determine a candidate's character (Roach & Roberts,

2009). "Social Networking Web sites (SNWs) are now being used as reference checks by human

resource (HR) personnel" (Roach & Roberts, 2009, p. 111). The pro in this context would be to

omit posting things online that could hinder your career.   The con is once this information is out

in cyber space, it can be seen by others, and thus detrimental to your career.

The Cover Letter

In this context, a cover letter is typically sent with a resume or professional

curriculum/career vitae, with the intent of finding employment (Myers, 2004). The cover letter

should be well written to capture the attention of the reader, which in this case, the reader could

be a hiring official or a hiring committee. "Cover letters are extremely important documents

which must be carefully crafted, well-organized, appeal to the audience, and reflect an

appropriate tone" (Myers, 2004, p. 142).

Crafting a well-written cover letter is very important, after all, it is typically the first

document reviewed by the hiring official/committee. Beeson (1997) found three main focal

points of the cover letter—why the candidate is interested in the position; why the organization

should be interested in the candidate; and how together, the candidate and the organization can

discuss common desires. These key points tell a story about the jobseeker, a story that can

capture the reader and make them interested in reviewing the resume. Hattersley provides

suggestions for crafting a good cover letter. His structure encompasses the "Me-You-We"

concept, established by Socrates: Given—Since—Therefore. The '*Me-You-We'* concept, which

is similar to Beeson's focal points, tells a story about the job and how the applicant's (*Me*) skills,

education and experience are a good fit for the job. Next, the applicant can bring value to your

organization (*You*) and last, together, we (*We*) can achieve and produce excellent results

(Hattersley, 1999). Keeping in line with "selling" yourself, the candidate should make every

effort to intrigue the reader to learn more about them. In addition to the Me-You-We concept,

Hattersley also shares information that expounds upon networking, dialects during the interview,

and cautions to be mindful of, as they could hinder your chances of getting the job. Remember,

the cover letter should be brief yet detailed, giving the reader the impression that you are the

correct person for the job. Fisher (2006) found that proper grammar and spelling is essential in a

good cover letter. Results concluded that spelling errors and poor grammar are ways for hiring

staff to eliminate potential applicants. Fisher (2006) also found that cover letters should be

addressed to the correct person and the names should be spelled correctly. "Misspelling a name

will guarantee your resume lands in the trash" (Fisher, 2006, p. 45). The cover letter may not be

valued as highly as the resume, but when it comes down to making a decision, the cover letter

can win the match, advancing the applicant to the next round. Hattersley states, "Let's say half a

dozen candidates survive, and the boss has time to interview three people. This is the point at

which the cover letter becomes crucial. If it's done right, it can get you that interview"

(Hattersley, 1999, p. 4). Taylor (1999) found that the resume is a document that speaks to the

applicants' expertise; however, the cover letter is the selling point too. Taylor also agrees with

the Hattersley and writes, "A well-written cover letter can often make the difference between

getting called for an interview and getting passed over" (Taylor, 1999, p. 13).

   In a study done by Sam H. DeKay, it was determined that all the resumes that were sent

with a cover letter were invited to an interview versus the resumes that were sent without the

cover letter (Dekay, 2006).

   How to write your cover letter. Research suggests writing a one-page document

consisting of three focal points—why the applicant is writing the letter, the qualifications and

experiences the applicant possess, and a response/follow-up, which can include reviewing the

attached resume, following-up with the organization or a need for more information or questions

pertaining to the enclosed documents (Keeling, 2002).

Scholars seem to share the same findings when it comes to writing a cover letter. Those findings include one primary focal point and that is for the applicant to briefly highlight their experience and qualifications (Taylor, 1999; Keeling, 2002; Besson, 1997; Bates-Parker, 1999). Keeling (2002) and Myers (2004) found that the cover letter should not be written as a rushed document; however, much thought should be put into the document to avoid results that would prove unfavorable to the applicant.

The Resume

The resume is commonly known as a document used to highlight a persons' professional and/or educational experience (Conn, 2008; Wright, Domagalski, & Collins, 2011). Udechuku & Manyak (2009) found that the resume serves a purpose—it should be written with the intent to capture the reader's attention in hopes of getting an interview. Research shows that the resume typically speaks to the candidate's character and expected behavior patterns (Wright et al., 2011). Wright and colleagues writes that the resume is a personal document highlighting the candidate's experience, as well as their personal attributes, which will give the reader a preconceived notion of how the candidate will behave and respond in various situations (Wright et al., 2011, p. 141). Similar to the research found on cover letters and the number of pages the document should be, scholars also suggest a set number of pages for resumes. Blackburn-Brockman & Belanger (2001) found that resumes should be one to two pages in length, unless the applicant has a great deal of work experience to share. Blackburn-Brockman and Belanger writes,

> Authors of most recent business and technical communication textbooks, journal articles, and trade periodicals agree that traditional resumes for most job applicants should not exceed two pages, with a second page used only when the applicant has extensive work experience or accomplishments (Blackburn-Brockman & Belanger, 2001, p. 30).

With this in mind, Culwell-Block and Sellers (1994) found that the average resume can be read

in less than 60 seconds, which means the information included in the resume must be an

important factor to the reader. From a chart listing written by Culwell-Block and Sellers, the

following information ranked the highest to be included in the resume: Identification (name and

other contact information); Education (this will include the degree earned, completion date, and

possibly the GPA); Experiences (work related information that includes duties and positions

held); and Omissions (things to definitely omit from the resume [religion, race, and gender];

Culwell-Block & Sellers, 1994, p. 27-29). Another thing mentioned under omissions was the

objective. Although omitting the objective seems a bit odd, it made sense because objectives

may not necessarily be the primary focus of the resume.

    With companies using modern technology, many prefer to receive electronic resumes

rather than printed ones (Schullery, Ickes, & Schullery, 2009), and since identification,

education, and experience rank the highest for things to include on a resume, the applicant will

want to provide pertinent information to capture the reader's (or computer's) attention. Amare

and Manning (2009) found that the applicant must write a cover letter and resume that will

capture the computer's eye instead of a human's. The economy has taken a toll on everyone.

Companies were forced to decrease their workforce and replace them with computer generated

tools that not only save money, but increase productivity. Companies are now using resume

software to select candidates. A resume is uploaded and the computer software searches for key

words to select the candidate.

    How to write your resume. Research suggests several things to consider before writing

your resume—the order in which experience, skills, and education are listed; the consequences

of embellishing the details of your experience; the length of the resume, the appearance of the

resume (does it appeal to the eye), and how well-written the resume is (Conn, 2008; Crosby & Liming, 2009; O'Rourke, 1995; Penrose, 1973; Udechukwu & Manyak, 2009; Wright et al, 2011).

Penrose did a study looking at the various ways to list information on a resume. Within his journal article "Does Order Make a Difference in Resumes?" he looked at primacy (items listed in rank or order) and recency (items listed in order of when they occurred). Penrose' study showed that interviewers were level pegging when it came to preference. This tells us that half of the interviewers preferred to view items listed in order, which could be defined as education, skills, and professional experience verses professional experience, skills, then education. Wright and colleagues writes, "The relative importance of three content dimensions of resumes: the order of content, its favorability, and alignment with stereotypes." (Wright et al, 2011, p. 274). They also add that resumes should be kept brief, which agrees with other scholars, Blackburn-Brockman & Belanger (2001), regarding the length of resumes.

In an article titled "The Ethics of Resumes and Recommendations: When Do Filler and Fluff Become Deception and Lies?" O'Rourke provides examples of resumes and cover letters and how small instances of embellishment can have these important documents tossed. To support O'Rourke's finding, Conn states, "Although the notorious cases of resume falsification have thrust this issue into the public purview and garnered the most attention, it is a serious employment problem that can occur at any organizational level" (Conn, 2008, p. 138). Conn later introduces two goals that include helping students critique their writing and business skills and instilling values to ward off fabrications that could lead to padding the resume.

In an article written by Crosby and Liming, they share three main formats for writing resumes—chronological, combination, and functional (Crosby & Liming, 2009). "Chronological

resumes are good to use when a person has had steady work histories; combination resumes

combines chronological and function format; and functional resumes organizes experience

around skills than job titles" (Crosby & Liming, 2009, p. 5-7).

What to Wear vs. What Not to Wear

No matter how intelligent, sweet, or professional a person may act, their dress attire can

cause people to think less of them (Burgess-Wilkerson & Thomas, 2009). In a article written by

Burgess-Wilkerson and Thomas, they expound upon an episode of *Ugly Betty* and explain how

Betty's stylish and outlandishly different dress styles made her stick out at the magazine

company she worked at. In the episode, Betty, who was very intelligent and a quick thinker was

viewed as weird because of the way she dressed. She did not conform to the dress code,

therefore leaving her with false friends who talked about her dress attire behind her back. Betty

was not unattractive; however, her clothing turned off all of her co-workers, which branded the

title for the sitcom, *Ugly Betty*. What does this tell us about dressing for job interviews? No

matter how intelligent a person may be or how good their work ethic is, they are expected to

dress appropriately in the work place.

There is a difference between business attire, business casual attire, and casual attire. To

play it safe, job seekers going on job interviews in a professional and corporate setting should

always dress in business attire, unless otherwise instructed. One author wrote, "Emphasis is

usually placed on appropriate interview wear, and job seekers are frequently admonished to

"dress for success" when presenting themselves for the employment interview" (DeKay, 2009, p.

349). Another author shared the different perceptions of business and casual dress. "Some

companies claimed that they saw an increase in productivity after allowing their employees to

dress more casually (Jones, 1996); however, many were arguing that 'relaxed attire promotes a certain laxness in workplace behavior'" (Kiddie, 2009. p. 352).

One scholar provides detailed information on how both males and females should dress. William Carson (2008) found that the males should wear a nice business suit displaying a conservative look—the suit color should be dark with a white shirt and complementing tie. He also found that the females should be conservative with a professional business suit with a nice lengthy skirt, accented with tasteful jewelry. Michele Compton (2007) found that the best way to prepare for the interview is not to "dress to conform" but instead to "dress to inform!" First impressions are long lasting and the applicant should dress for the job they want. Compton states, "A person's choice of clothing provides a critical first glimpse into who we are and what we believe is important or not important" (Compton, 2007, p. 14). Research concludes that dress attire plays an intricate part in obtaining an offer of employment.

DeKay summed things up when she said "dress for success." She also shares dress tips that are crucial when going on a job interview. "Readers are often informed that the successful interviewee will select a conservative suit (dark blue or gray is preferred), and women are advised to keep jewelry to a tasteful minimum" (DeKay, 2009, p. 349). Sylvia White states, "The way we dress influences the way others respond to us in a variety of social and professional setting" (White, 1995, p. 178). The same applies to interviews. Betty, from *Ugly Betty*, should have conformed to the dress code, or what society considers the "norm" and maybe her colleagues would have taken her more seriously.

Job Interviews

Preparing for the interview: do's, don'ts, and processes. Colleges and companies are training their employees on how to properly conduct an interview (Kleiman & Benek-Rivera,

2010) and how to decipher between the information received during the interview and the body language and other nonverbal communication (Barrick & Shaffer, 2009, p. 1394). Some studies have examined the more important factors of the interviewing process, like attire, and professional attitudes which help gain more insight to the applicant (Buzzanell, 1999, p. 141). Some scholars believe the meat of the interview revolves around thought provoking questions, which lead to effective conversation that can produce more defined results (Beatty & Willis, 2007, p. 289).

It is common knowledge that a crucial and common part of the hiring process includes the interview (Chen, Tsai, & Hu, 2008, p. 1056). The interview is normally the next step in the process after the hiring official/company has reviewed the candidate's cover letter and/or resume. The interview is very important—the results can determine if the candidate is the "right" person for the job (Joyce, 2008), and it can provide additional information that goes towards the candidate's character with non-verbal cues (Penrose, 1984, p. 6). Penrose goes on to quote Springbett, who states, "An interviewer reaches a final decision four minutes from the time the interview starts" (Penrose, 1984, p. 6). This supports the importance of the interviewing process, but more importantly, the interviewee should make each moment count with selling themselves.

Some authors suggest that the first interview does not provide enough insight to make a hiring decision (Ralston & Kirkwood, 1995, p. 152). This strategy can be very helpful. As stated earlier, first impressions are long lasting; well this gives the candidate the opportunity to "sell" themselves to the degree that they are asked to come back for a second or final interview. The purpose of this project is to provide tips that will assist any individual looking for employment.

What to say and what not to say during the interview. Typically, the interviewer asks

a series of questions that will engage a dialogue between themselves and the interviewee (Meyer,

1981). "The essence of the interview is "talk" and "talk" is essentially the asking and answering

of questions" (Meyer, 1981, p. 106). The dialogue should provide the interviewer with

information that leads them to narrow down the finalists for the position they are conducting

interviews for.   The dialogue during the interview should never include personal or private

questions. If the interviewer includes questions that the interviewee feels may be inappropriate,

the interviewee has the right to ask, in a professional and courteous manner, for the conversation

to stay within the scope of the interview, which is considered to be alignment talk (Ragan &

Hopper, 1981). Ragan and Hopper summarize alignment talk as, "When problems occur in

conversations such that interaction fails to go smoothly according to plans and intentions,

communicators frequently resort to alignment talk." (Ragan & Hopper, 1981, p. 85). Seeing that

several million people are unemployed, interviews may include a series of questions that are not

"politically correct" which may leave the interviewee feeling somewhat uncomfortable. As the

interviewee, there is always an alternate route to travel in case you are detoured, and alignment

talk is one of many ways to maintain your professionalism while interviewing for a position.

Another important thing to be mindful of during the interview is how the interviewee answers

questions. Providing one word responses may cause the interviewer to think the answer

provided is fictional or not exact (Meyer, 1981 & Ragan & Hopper, 1981).

Technology tools used to conduct job interviews. With the rising cost of travel and

transportation, companies have incorporated several tools to help them recruit new employees.

Companies are scaling back with spending and they are taking advantage of free online services

to assist them with quickly hiring individuals (Baker & Demps, 2009). In an article written by

Dan Hanover, he states, that organizations are now considering how much money can be saved

by using technology like videoconferencing to hold interviews (Hanover, 2000, p. 87) which is

cost effective and it is still some form of face-to-face communication. The World Wide Web

allows anyone with Internet access to view open positions. If someone lives in California and

they are interested in relocating, they can easily access open positions via the Internet.

Companies can no longer afford to bring candidates in from out-of-state to host first or second

interviews; as a result they have conformed to technology to help relieve some of the expenses

related with hiring employees (Straus, Miles, & Levesque, 2001). "In today's increasingly

global economy, job applicants and interviews are often geographically dispersed, necessitating

either travel or technology to facilitate the interview" (Chapman, Uggerslev & Webster, 2003, p.

944). Using technology as a means of conducting interviews is more than an initiative to save

organizations money; it gives them more of an interviewing pool of candidates to choose from.

"In addition to reducing costs, videoconferencing gives companies access to a more diverse set

of applicants and decreases the time required to fill positions" (Straus, et al., 2001, p. 364).

With different methods come pros and cons. The pro in this instance could be the overall

savings to the company with respect to decreasing the amount of money vested into bringing in

qualified applicants. The con with videoconferencing is both the interviewer and the interviewee

cannot see body language and other nonverbal cues, which plays an intricate part in the hiring

process, specifically the hiring official and the person interviewing for the position (Chapman, et

al., 2003). Chapman and colleagues share key factors where teleconferencing may not

necessarily capture the fullness of the interviewee's character and personality as well as

additional information that may be pertinent to the interview.

Applicants are motivated to communicate their message to a potential employer in such a

way that the interviewer will be motivated to hire them. Thus, one might expect a

medium that degrades the quality or accuracy of an applicant's intended message to be

viewed negatively. (Chapman, et al., 2003, p. 945).

Nonverbal communication is very important as it helps both the interviewer and the interviewee

gain insight to questions and answers. Gestures and eye contact can provide an answer before

the spoken word, hence making nonverbal communication very important.

Interviewing. Typically, job seekers, who meet the qualifications of the job description,

are invited to participate in a telephone, web, or a face-to-face interview. Keep in mind that you

have one opportunity to capture the attention of the interviewer; an opportunity that will make

them remember who you are and what you are all about. Employers are no longer looking at

what is on paper; they are looking at your behavior in previous employment (Ralston, Kirkwood

& Burant, 2003). Ralston and colleagues titled it best with "Helping Interviewees Tell Their

Stories." This article shed lights on what employers are moving towards as they hire employees.

Your interview is an opportunity to tell your story of how you are most qualified for that

particular position. "Behavioral description interviewing is a form of structured interviewing in

which employers hope to learn what applicants will do based on past performance" (Ralston, et

al., 2003, p. 9).

As an interviewee, being asked to come in for a second interview is hopeful. The

candidate feels that their education, experience, and/or strong interviewing skills qualified them

to move to the next level in the interviewing process. Being asked to come in for a second

interview typically means the company (or the interviewer representing the company) thought

you were a good fit for the position. This interview is more personable and it usually gives the

interviewee more information on the structure and vision of the company. "Second interviews are formal, in-depth, on-site interactions following a screening interview. Second interviews are also referred to as the "selection" or "determinate" interviews because of their impact on the recruit's and the organization's employment decision-making" (Miller & Buzzanell, 1996, p. 166).

What employers are looking for… Job seekers looking for employment is equivalent to employers looking for employees. It can be said that both interested parties are looking to fill a position that will be most beneficial; beneficial for the job seeker because they attain employment, and equally beneficial for the employer because they are looking to hire the best person for the job. Attaining employment is not an easy process, especially in this job market, so job seekers should prepare themselves for not only the job they seek, but for what the hiring organization is looking for. "The employment interview addresses important needs of employers and coworkers of new employees" (Kirkwood & Ralston, 1999, p. 55).

Tips on "Selling" Yourself during the Interview

"Job candidates engage in 'self-presentation' tactics or attempts to influence self-relevant images with the goal of selling themselves to the interviewer and gaining employment" (Barrick, Shaffr, & DeGrassi, 2009, p. 139). There are several things taken into consideration during an interview—nonverbal cues, body gestures, and voice tones (Barrick, et al., 2009; DeGroot & Gooty, 2009). "An interviewee who holds eye contact with the interviewer, while responding to questions might be seen as more direct, honest, and conscientious than one who looks away" (DeGroot & Gooty, 2009, p. 181). DeGroot and Gooty go on to share how nonverbal cues could cause the interviewer to be favorable or not towards the interviewee.

Visual cues like dress attire, facial expressions, and body language play a significant role

in interviewing. Also, the tone and pitch of responses can cause the interviewer to label

the interviewee as honest or skeptical. The interviewees' speech speed as well as the

number of speech pauses can have a positive or negative effect during the interview.

(DeGroot & Gooty, 2009, p. 182).

In a brief article written by Mr. George Linney, Vice President of Tyler & Company, he shared

information he has heard from companies regarding interviews they had with candidates that

included poor eye contact, unattractive appearance, and a lack of knowledge about the

organization for which they were interviewing with (Linney, 2001, p. 96). Some of Mr. Linney's

detailed list, which highlights the complaints he has heard from other organizations conducting

interviews, will be used as a starting point to introduce some of the things an interviewee should

avoid. Remember, a successful interview will lead to a second interview. "If successful in first

or screening interview(s), applicants may be invited on-site for second interviews in which

person-organization fit, socialization, and placement concerns become prominent" (Buzzanell,

1999, p. 142).

Questions for the Organization

Before leaving the interview, the jobseeker should be asking questions that will give them

additional information on the organization. Gregg Stocker provides 10 key questions that should

be asked during the interview; however only 3 will be discussed in this section. (1) What is your

company's mission statement? Although this is a good question to ask, the jobseeker should also

take the initiative and find this information. The question can therefore turn into a brief

conversation about the company, which will lead them into a more thought-provoking

conversation. (2) Can I have a tour of your facility? Excellent question! You want to know how

the organization is set-up, how offices appear, how the plant operates, and where you may be

working. This gives you a quick glimpse at the structure of the company, and even a sneak peek

at the people you may be working with. (3) What is the process for developing new products?

This shows initiative. The interviewer will either expound on the topic, or they could inform you

that they do not know the process. Either way, the interviewer will make a mental note to either

mention this information to the person who the candidate will work for, or they will make sure to

have the answer in case the jobseeker asks (Stocker, 2006).

References

No matter what job is being sought, there is a reality in "sealing the deal" and this can

easily be done with providing good-strong character references to your potential employer. Job

seekers want to make certain that what they have experienced during the interview and what

your resume states of your education and skill set are confirmed with great character references.

The person you list as a reference should be able to speak to your professionalism and your

ability to do the job (Muir, 2009). Providing a reference in the form of a recommendation letter

is acceptable, but it should be written with truthfulness of the candidate's experience (Ryan &

Martinson, 2000). "References should know a job candidate well enough to speak confidently

about the candidate's skills and abilities" (Muir, 2009, p. 307). The people selected to provide

character references must be credible, or they will decrease your chances of getting the position

(Ryan & Martinson, 2000). There are several things to consider when providing references, but

the most important thing to remember is that you provide accurate contact information for your

references (Muir, 2009).

Targeted Audience and Summary

In a competitive job market, job seekers need to make themselves stand out in order to obtain employment. My target audience is anyone looking for employment. Candidates looking for employment need to be aware of the competition and added tips that will increase their chances of attaining employment. (1) We know that interviews are most commonly used to hire people; (2) We know that employers are looking for in-depth information which will assist them in selecting the right candidate for the job; and (3) We know that employers are paying close attention to verbal and nonverbal cues as well as the candidate's reaction to questions and their experiences. So, how can my project be of assistance to those getting ready to go on job interviews?

My project will include tips and an information guide highlighting three topics: Appearance, Communication, and Writing. Appearance will cover sub topics that include dress attire (what to wear versus what not to wear), cosmetics, health and beauty, accessories, and hygiene (touching on hair, nails, and make-up; jewelry, tattoos and piercings; and fragrances and personal hygiene). Communication will cover questions (what to ask the interviewer versus what things to avoid), responses (how to deliver thought-provoking answers versus using one word responses), and nonverbal cues (maintaining good eye contact). In a quote used earlier from Morin and Denis, "Rather than using the traditional interview, however, Pettersen and Durivage recommend that employers consider a structured job-related interview in order to assess candidates' behavior, aptitudes, skills, knowledge, and competencies." The writing sub topics will cover how to craft a well-written cover letter and resume, with additional tips on what to write and what things to avoid in your written document(s). Remembering that organizations are looking at more than good answers, they need a good strong delivery that speaks to their

skills and knowledge. Along with my tips, I will share and demonstrate some tips and pointers

other scholars have suggested staying away from.

Conclusion

The literature has identified the importance of interviews along with useful tips and

guides to assist the interviewer with conducting an efficient interview with the intent of hiring;

however, I found very little literature that provided useful tips and guides for the interviewee. I

want to take a closer look at various interviewing methods in order to provide a guide to assist

unemployed individuals. Scholars have shared some important tips to assist the interviewer with

conducting a good interview. Some tips include creating a friendly atmosphere with opening

questions that lead to a professional conversation covering the topic of the open position (Yate,

2006, p. 54-56).

Remember, the main purpose of an interview is to choose the best candidate for the

position (Jackson, Rowe, Hall, & Daniels, 2009, p. 974). On page 975, Jackson and colleagues

goes on to state, "The process of gaining employment—more specifically, the job interview

process—is an important, competitive, and achievement-related contact in which individuals are

likely to experience outcomes that foster casual search." It can be said that the interviewee has

one opportunity of 'sealing the deal,' so they would want to make their first impression, long

lasting, especially when it comes to getting the job.

One may wonder why the interview process is so important. Well, as data reflected,

millions of people remain unemployed. High unemployment rates means that landing a job can

be more difficult. Companies are being more thorough with their process of hiring (Joyce, 2008,

p. 376). Unemployed individuals should be proactive with their job search and identify with the

job posting they are applying for. In other words, candidates should treat each employment

opportunity as they would a major exam. Research the position, the company, and the

company's employment history. The candidate is on the interview to attain employment, but

seeing that companies are being more particular with their hiring processes, the candidate should

know as much information about the company, and equally be prepared to demonstrate their

knowledge if asked.

Question guiding the handbook

What major interviewing tips can be used to assist individuals in perfecting the interview

process?

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Appendix A

Underemployed in this context is defined as individuals who are employed (mostly part-time but are willing to work full-time) but their salary is not in line with their experience and or education. E.g., a young man working part-time as a credit associate at an organization making $25,000 annually; he earned a B.Sc. degree from IIT in Chicago, Illinois, and has worked for his current employer for 5 years. The young main is employed, but his salary does is not in line with his education and experience.

Appendix B

Interviewing Process is defined as a method used by employers to hire a candidate for a position in their business. The thesis/project will focus on 3 stages: (1) Submitting the application and/or resume that will grab the attention of the hiring manager/committee; (2) Tips on how to "sell" yourself during the interview; and (3) What is needed to "seal" the deal.

Appendix C

Networking is defined as a method for creating and building relationships personally and

professionally.

Perfecting the Interview Process
Making Yourself Employable
By
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PROJECT-HANDBOOK

Submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements

For the Degree of Master of Arts

Governors State University
University Park, IL 60484
2011

Table of Contents

Preface

This handbook was written to provide useful tips for individuals looking for employment. Your employment search may relate to unemployment, underemployment, relocation, or a change of scenery; no matter what the reason, you are looking to gain employment.

For reasons explained as "a horrible economy," I was laid-off in 2008. I was a young, motivated, and educated woman, who had to compete with millions of people who were looking for employment. I knew I had to do something different to find a job. I devised a plan that would increase my chances of getting hired. In less than 3 months, I had been on several job interviews, and before I knew it, I soon found myself making a decision about which job I wanted versus accepting the only job I was offered. Soon, I began thinking that if these tips helped me find employment, they could certainly help others.

A Special Note of Thanks

First, I would like to thank God for all of my many blessings. It is in Him that I live, move, and have my being. All praise and honor goes to God, my creator.

Second, I would like to thank my family for their love and continued support. I could not have made it this far without them. Not once did I hear a complaint; instead I heard "you can do it" and "keep up the good work!" To my mother, I appreciate your prayers and unconditional love and support. You have taught me so much, but I could not appreciate my blessings without "**I Have Never**! seen the righteous forsaken…" Last but not least, to the person who was the "push" in my "tush" fussing and bossing me around until I made something happen…I love you Sista and I appreciate everything you do.

Introduction

  Are you looking for employment? Is your cover letter and resume updated? If you were called in to be interviewed, do you think you possess the skills to get the job? Allow me to introduce myself. I am a full-time employee at an organization, who was once laid off due to a plummeting economy. I did not have a back-up plan; neither did I have an updated resume to begin the process. I was forced to make things happen, and quickly, too.

  This handbook will provide you with the necessary tips that will assist you in obtaining employment. These tips worked for me and I am now employed full-time at a non-for-profit organization. After weeks of planning, I was able to map out a plan that would increase my chances at obtaining a job. Successfully, I was able to find a job within 3 months.

  My experience is but a testimony of what can happen if you set your mind in motion. There are many tips I could share, but this handbook will center around 4 focal points—(1) The job search; (2) The cover letter and resume; (3) The job interview; and (4) Dress attire for the job interview. These 4 tips are crucial to gaining employment. Before you enjoy reading this handbook, keep in mind that these tips are based on academic research in the field of communication. My advice may not necessarily be the best advice; it is simply a different approach to achieving the goal. If you follow the tips in this handbook, you can increase your chances of attaining a job. Good luck and happy reading!

The Job Search

From the Newspaper to the World Wide Web

Finding available jobs has gotten easier, but not necessarily easier to attain. You are competing with anyone with Internet access, which means that companies receive thousands if not millions of applications for one job posting. When I first started looking for employment, approximately 20 years ago, I would get the Chicago Tribune or the Sun-Times newspaper and read the classifieds, which during that time use to be at least 10 pages front and back. If I was interested in a job in the state of Indiana, I would have to drive to Indiana and purchase a newspaper. Today, the use of modern technology has made the job search process simple, and someone can search for employment in any city, state, and even country. There are 4 major online job search websites: Career Builder (www.careerbuilder.com), Monster (www.monster.com), Jobs (www.jobs.com), and Indeed (www.indeed.com). These major job search sites will allow you to search for open positions and post a resume. Below is an example of the Career Builder homepage.

Example A – Career builder.com

Career builder is an online job search site that allows you peruse available job postings. The jobseeker can also upload a cover letter and resume, which can be reviewed by employers looking for interested candidates. The other online job search sites mentioned above serve the

same purpose as Career Builder—they are vehicles for employers to find interested and qualified candidates.

These major online job search sites are a great place to start, but you should not put all your eggs in one basket, as your cover letter and resume are probably being reviewed by a computer system programmed to select resumes by focusing on key words embedded in your documents. One thing to remember…if Career Builder has a position posted, 9 times out of 10 Monster.com may have it posted too. Remember, companies are looking for the inexpensive method to spend their buck. At the same time, they are trying to hire the best person for the job. Remember, everyone with access to the Internet is looking at this information, so it is important that your information is flawless.

You can narrow your search by selecting fields of interest (E.g., accounting, management, non-profit, consultant, retail, etc.). People sometimes make the mistake of searching for multiple jobs in multiple industries. This can work; however, I do not suggest it. You want to target positions that not only meet your qualifications, but also match your level of experience. If you have 20 years of management experience and you hold a bachelor's degree in management, apply for positions that match your level of expertise. Be mindful of the job description—you may want to tweak your resume a little, which means you will have to upload another one. This sounds tedious, but believe me, when I was searching for a job, I uploaded approximately 8 different resumes for various fields. Once again, your level of expertise and years of experience goes a long way. You have to tailor your resume for the job you want.

In tailoring your resume, you can add those "key words" that computers typically search for. Now, that does not mean fabricate any information, but you can add finesse to your resume, giving it a more polished and attractive appearance.

Online Job Applications

Using the online job search sites will allow you to not only view available jobs, but you can also upload your resume and cover letter. First, you will have to set-up an account. This is a very simple and easy process. They will ask you for a username (which typically matches your e-mail address) and they will ask you for a password (this is a series of mixed character and numbers that only you should remember). Once you have created a username and password, you

are ready to browse available positions. The next step is uploading your cover letter and resume. Once you have uploaded these documents, you will be ready to apply for positions with the hope of receiving a hit[1] from an organization.

Once you have applied for a position, you should receive a confirmation e-mail advising that your submission has been received. Check your e-mail daily, because companies will communicate with you (send you a hit) via e-mail unless they feel your resume is worthy enough to warrant a telephone call. Receiving a hit is good news, but it is still early. Remember, companies are using computer software to review your job applications, and they are still in the early stages of weeding through submissions. The computer is programmed to select resumes based upon key words and phrases built into the resume. An example of an online job posting is provided:

Example

Job Number: 123456789
Hiring Official: Shawn Smith

Company Description:
A Fortune 500 company is seeking a talented project management assistant. The company's annual sales were over $1.2 million last year, with a projected sales increase of 25% by next May. We are professional with a friendly-family feel.

Position Description:
Individual will be responsible for creating and coordinating events within the allocated budget, and he or she will have direct contact with both vendors and customers. The work hours are from 8:30-5:00, M-F; some weekends may be required (depending on the nature of the event).

Special Comments:
This individual must be detail-oriented, professional, trainable, open-minded, and friendly. The company has been in business for over 50 years, with our oldest worker just celebrating their 48 year anniversary with the company. A pleasant attitude is a plus!

The online job posting typically contains a job number, description of the company and the position, and sometimes the name or department of the contact person. As I mentioned

---

[1] Hit is defined as a response from an online job search site. Meaning you submitted your cover letter and resume and you received an e-mail response from someone at that organization that feels your resume has met the qualifications.

earlier, the online job search site is a good place to start, but the jobseeker must be proactive if they want to obtain employment. I strongly recommend you visiting the company's Website before submitting an application.

The Cover Letter

&

The Resume

The Cover Letter

It would be reasonable to presume that any employer looking to hire an employee would rather have someone they can depend on. That person should have five important qualities: (1) Dependable; (2) Trustworthy; (3) Problem-solver; (4) Quick-learner; and (5) Trainable. These key qualities will cause an employer to pick you over any average person that is interviewed. Why one might ask, is because the dependable person usually earned that quality by showing they can take care of business. With a dependable quality comes a trustworthy individual who is not afraid to take things to the next level to ensure the job is done. By taking things to the next level, they show their problem-solving skills as they quickly learn the necessary techniques to accomplish the goal. The first time may have been a challenge, but don't count them out, because they are willing to learn how to do things better the next time around, which makes them trainable. These five qualities along with education and skill-set will make you rise to the top of the list of candidates; however, having these skills are great, but putting them on paper makes it count.

I am reminded of a Mazda commercial and their trademark "zoom-zoom" depicting a sleek and fast vehicle made by caring and quality people, at a low cost that is reasonable to the average consumer. People do not associate the hard work put into building the car, they associate that trendy looking and affordable vehicle with zoom-zoom. The cover letter is your zoom-zoom. In a nutshell, millions are looking for a job—unemployed individuals, underemployed individuals, individuals sick of working for their current employer, and people looking to relocate to another city or state—so you want to stand out from the other millions looking to gain employment. This brings me to the cover letter.

A cover letter is a document that speaks to the jobseekers' skills, education, and character. The cover letter is an important, well-written document used to capture the attention of the reader (Myers, 2004). It is typically a one page, well written document addressed to the hiring official that includes five key components and two sub-components, which are illustrated in the example below: (1) Header—this includes your name, address, contact number, and an e-mail address; (1a) Addressee-header—this includes the date and the name and address of recipient for which you are writing to; (2) Opening Salutation—If you know the name of the person you are writing to, you would complete this information with Dear Mr. Davis or Mrs.

Davis (if the person is married); however, if you are not certain, "Dear Hiring Official" or "To Whom It May Concern" works like a charm (see Example 2); (3) Introduction—This is your shining moment to capture your audience. That means you must sell yourself within the first three sentences of your introduction; (4) The Body—this should speak to three important factors, adopted after Hattersley's (1999) *'Me-You-We'* concept: 1.) Your skill-set and experience—in Hattersley's model, the job seeker should inform the reader about his or her skill-set and experience and how they will be the right person for the job—this focuses on the *'Me'* concept; 2.) Your accomplishments—in Hattersley's model, the job seeker should showcase how their accomplishments will bring value to the organization—this focuses on the *'You'* concept; and 3.) Your education—this is the selling point that backs up your skill-set, experience, and accomplishments, informing the reader that you have successfully completed training in the specified field—this would focus on Hattersley's *'We'* concept, making the case that collectively as the jobseeker and the organization, *'We'* can produce strong results; (5) The Closing—Will seal the deal and leave the reader wanting to learn more about the person who wrote this letter. Make sure you include a follow-up in the letter so the reader is aware that you are going to contact them, which shows that you are proactive; (5a) Closing Salutation—A well written letter should include an appropriate salutation like Sincerely, Regards, Best, etc., along with your name and title or field of expertise (e.g. Project Manager or Project Management Specialist, Accounting Specialist or Accounts Manager). The cover letter should be professional—nick names and unprofessional e-mail addresses should be omitted. Also, if you have a long name, you can abbreviate your name on the cover letter and the resume. Your full name can be saved for the application.

Hattersley, author of "Writing the Perfect Cover Letter" shares 7 helpful tips that will increase results when crafting the cover letter: (1) *open avenues of conversation*. A strong opening can not only grasp the attention of the reader, but it gives them something to look forward to—which brings me to the next tip; (2) m*ake the hirer want to find out more about you*. No one wants to hire a person who is boring, meaning, you have to sell yourself in your correspondence; (3) s*how you're familiar with the organization you're applying to*. The hiring official wants to hire the best qualified and informed person for the job. This means they will be interested in someone who is interested in the company they will work for; (4) *emphasize how your education and training especially qualifies you*. This is your time to shine. The reader is

looking to weed out the bad apples, so make your education and experience count for something; (5) *be crisp and punchy*. The reader has probably reviewed several if not hundreds of cover letters and/or resumes. They are looking for the person who gets straight to the point; (6) *don't make mistakes*. Consider you have one time to make an impression—one that is good enough to get you an interview; and (7) *make use of personal contacts*. If you have a strong personal contact, it can be wise to use them. Make sure they have a good rapport with the company before using them. This can be beneficial, but it can also burn you in the end. Remember, the cover letter should be brief yet detailed, giving the reader the impression that you are the correct person for the job.

A well-written cover letter and resume can get your information reviewed and even placed at the top of the list. Put some thought into these documents before sending them potential employers. A poorly written document can decrease your chances at getting your information reviewed. These tips may seem trivial to some, but trust me, in the long run, your well-written documents can help the decision maker.

Below you will see three examples of cover letters. Figure 1 shows an example of a standard cover letter as well as the major components of the letter. Figure 2 shows an example of two similar, although different cover letters, and Figure 3 shows how to address a cover letter for people with unisex names.

Figure 1

Addressee Header

Header

P. M. (Monica) Miller-Jones

12345 Make Believe Lane
University Park, IL 60484-0975
(P) 708-708-7080
(E) pmiller-jones123@gmail.com

1

1a

September 26, 2011

Mrs. Bella Davis
Governors State University
1 University Parkway
University Park, IL 60484-0975

Opening Salutation

2

Introduction

3

Dear Mrs. Davis,

Introduction / The Body

You can see that #3 and #4 overlap a little. In the introduction, the writer can capture the reader's attention by mentioning the skill-set and other pertinent facts.

While perusing the available job postings on your institution's website, I noticed a Senior Project Management position that would be a perfect fit for my skill-set and experience. I have over 7-years of experience as a senior project management analyst working for a 4-year institution. Within this role, I currently supervise a staff of 15 who are independently responsible for their respective divisions, overseeing projects totaling $1.2m. My team and I have completed 12 of the college's 16 million-dollar projects within a 3-year timeline, and with the current projections at hand, the remaining 4 projects will be completed before the end of 2012.

4

The Body

Highlighting skill-set, accomplishments/ experience, and education.

I obtained a B.Sc. degree from IIT in Chicago, Illinois, a M.S. degree from the University of Illinois, Urbana-Champaign, and I hold a Project Management Certificate from DePaul University, Chicago, Illinois. I serve on a national math and science council and I was recently elected Chair of the council this past August.

Your company advertisement states, "We are looking for a detail-oriented individual who can manage a team of 20 and oversee all PM related projects" and I believe I possess the skills and experience to meet your demand and create an environment of continuous learning with met objectives.

I have attached my resume for review and I will contact you sometime next week to discuss this position and any other position that you feel I would be a good fit for. If you have any questions or would like to set-up an appointment, please feel free to contact me at 708-708-7080 or pmiller-jones123@gmail.com.

5

The Closing

Kindest Regards,
Monica Miller-Jones
Senior Project Manager Analyst

5a

Closing Salutation

Can you tell the difference???

Figure 2

Ponequisha Monique' Sharonique Miller-Jones
12345 Make Believe Lane
University Park, IL 60484-0975
(P) 708-708-7080
(E) PMS123@gmail.com

September 26, 2011

Mrs. Bella Davis
Governors State University
1 University Parkway
University Park, IL 60484-0975

Dear Mrs. Davis,

While perusing the available job postings on your institution's website, I noticed a Senior Project Management position that would be a perfect fit for my skill-set and experience. I have over 7-years of experience as a senior project management analyst working for a 4-year institution. Within this role, I currently supervise a staff of 15 who are independently responsible for their respective divisions, overseeing projects totaling $1.2m. My team and I have completed 12 of the college's 16 million-dollar projects within a 3-year timeline, and with the current projections at hand, the remaining 4 projects will be completed before the end of 2012.

I obtained a B.Sc. degree from IIT in Chicago, Illinois, a M.S. degree from the University of Illinois, Urbana-Champaign, and I hold a Project Management Certificate from DePaul University, Chicago, Illinois. I serve on the Council of African American Women in Math and Science and I was recently elected Chair of the council this past August.

Your company advertisement states, "We are looking for a detail-oriented individual who can manage a team of 20 and oversee all PM related projects" and I believe I possess the skills and experience to meet your demand and create an environment of continuous learning with met objectives.

I have attached my resume for review and I will contact you sometime next week to discuss this position and any other position that you feel I would be a good fit for. If you have any questions or would like to set-up an appointment, please feel free to contact me at 708-708-7080 or pms123@gmail.com.

Kindest Regards,
Ponequisha Monique' Sharonique Miller-Jones
Senior Project Manager Analyst

P. M. (Monica) Miller-Jones
12345 Make Believe Lane
University Park, IL 60484-0975
(P) 708-708-7080
(E) pmiller-jones123@gmail.com

September 26, 2011

Mrs. Bella Davis
Governors State University
1 University Parkway
University Park, IL 60484-0975

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While perusing the available job postings on your institution's website, I noticed a Senior Project Management position that would be a perfect fit for my skill-set and experience. I have over 7-years of experience as a senior project management analyst working for a 4-year institution. Within this role, I currently supervise a staff of 15 who are independently responsible for their respective divisions, overseeing projects totaling $1.2m. My team and I have completed 12 of the college's 16 million-dollar projects within a 3-year timeline, and with the current projections at hand, the remaining 4 projects will be completed before the end of 2012.

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Kindest Regards,
Monica Miller-Jones
Senior Project Manager Analyst

Is the reader male or female?

Job Number: 123456789
Hiring Official: Shawn Smith

Company Description:
A Fortune 500 company is seeking a talented project management assistant. The company's annual sales were over $1.2 million last year, with a projected sales increase of 25% by next May. We are professional with a friendly-family feel.

Position Description:
Individual will be responsible for creating and coordinating events within the allocated budget, and he or she will have direct contact with both vendors and customers. The work hours are from 8:30-5:00, M-F; some weekends may be required (depending on the nature of the event).

Special Comments:
This individual must be detail-oriented, professional, trainable, open-minded, and friendly. The company has been in business for over 50 years, with our oldest worker just celebrating their 48 year anniversary with the company. A pleasant attitude is a plus!

Let the hiring official know that you are confident and that you will contact them to follow-up. This does two things: **(1)** reminds them that you will be in touch; **(2)** you are confident in your credentials.

Jane E. Jones
999 Lane Boulevard
Chicago, Illinois 60000
jejones@gmail.com
(773) 123-4567

October 10, 2011

Job Number: 123456789
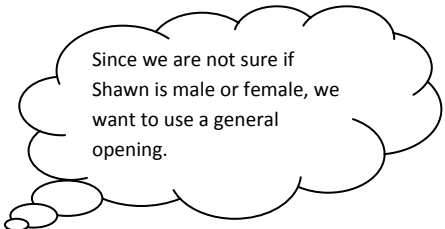Attention: Shawn Smith

Since we are not sure if Shawn is male or female, we want to use a general opening.

Dear Hiring Official Smith:

While perusing the available jobs on your company's Website, I noticed a job that matched my experience. I have over 10 years of experience as a project management assistant, coordinating multi-cultural events for a fortune 500 company. Each event which I coordinated was not only successful, but I can report that my overall cost came in 3% to 5% under budget.

I earned a B.S degree in Mathematics from the University of Chicago, and a M.B.A. degree from Keller University, Chicago. I have attached for your review a copy of my resume and my references. If you think my experience and education might be of interest to the company, please contact me at 773-123-4567 or via e-mail at jejones@gmail.com. I would like to sit down with you and share future contributions that will be beneficial to your organization. I will follow-up with you sometime next week.

Warm Regards,
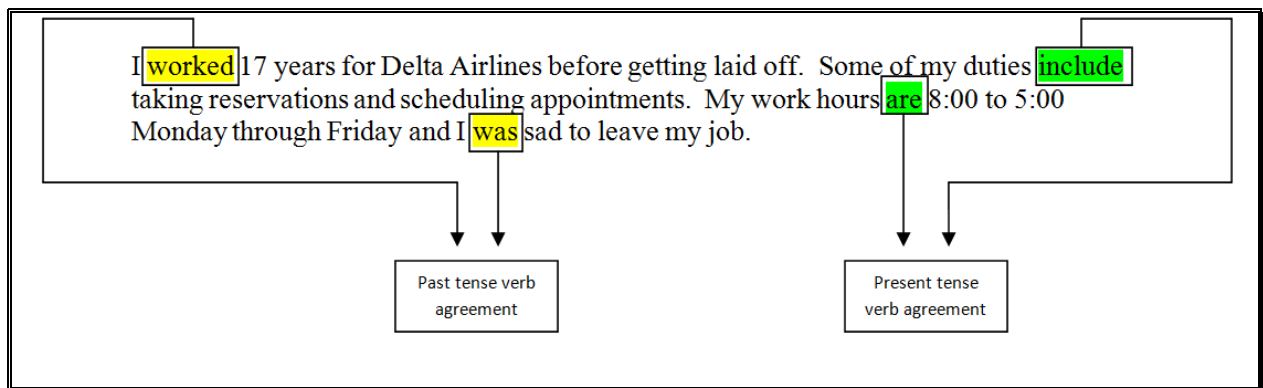Jane E. Jones
Project Management Assistant

Addressing the cover letter is very important. It is always best to have the correct information listed on your document. If you are unsure about the gender of the hiring official, that's quite alright. Some of the best general phrases have been created for this use. I cannot say this enough…it is better to play it safe than sorry. Remember, you have one opportunity to capture the reader's attention. If you misspell a name or refer to a female as a male, you can almost guarantee you have killed your chances of receiving an interview. Competition is at its highest peak—you have very little or no room for error.

Writing a quality cover letter is easy…proofing what you have written can be difficult. Why do I say proofing is difficult? Once a person has written something, they assume it is good to go because it sounds good to them. Well, I hate to be the bearer of bad news, but most simple and common errors could be corrected by a quick once-look over. Proof reading will catch simple errors like missed periods and/or commas, fragment sentences, run-ons, and verb tense errors. Even the most educated have made simple mistakes on letters, but the key important thing to do is to proof whatever has been written in an effort to produce a quality document.

Periods come at the end of complete sentences, whereas commas indicate something next is following. Compound sentences also require a comma, showing a break in thought. Run-ons can be dangerous as they go on and on and on and on and on with no punctuation markers leaving the reader confused and bewildered as he or she tries to understand what has been written even though you the writer think the finished product is satisfactory (do you see what I'm saying here?). Another simple mistake would be the infamous verb-tense agreements. An example is provided below.

Example B

I worked 17 years for Delta Airlines before getting laid off. Some of my duties include taking reservations and scheduling appointments. My work hours are 8:00 to 5:00 Monday through Friday and I was sad to leave my job.

Past tense verb agreement

Present tense verb agreement

The reader has to review several cover letters and resumes. A simple mistake like this will cause your information to be tossed in the trash. Have someone review your documents before submitting them. A second pair of eyes is always best.

Networking

When people often hear the word networking, they associate that word with social events or social media. Well, you are correct with both definitions, but limited. Networking is basically a way to build relationships. Those relationships can be social or professional. No matter how you network, you are hoping to create relationships with people in a means of connecting. Networking can be something as simple as meeting someone in a Starbucks or your local Wal-Mart, and it can be done with anyone from the CEO of an organization to the janitor (Muir, 2009). Building relations and meeting people is what networking is all about. If your newly found associate has some professional connections that can help you get a job, you have received a bonus!

I have held positions as administrative and executive support to managers, vice president's, and even CEO's of major corporations. No matter who my boss met with, I dressed professionally and made certain everything was in place for the meeting. I would greet the customer/guest with a firm handshake, a smile on my face, and even ask if I could take their coat, or offer them a beverage before walking them to their meeting. At the end of the visit, I would ask how the meeting went, and give them my business card in case they needed to follow-up on anything. I followed this same routine each day, and I can happily report that it paid off. At first, I would receive an invite to a global meeting, with the intent to help their team with set-up, but before I knew it, I was being contracted to plan their event. My hospitality and professional attitude paid me well. Just a couple of weeks ago, I received an e-mail from an IT analyst, once executive director of an information technology department. Due to the economy and layoffs, she was forced to find another job. She is now in a new role at another organization and they need assistance planning a holiday event. They do not have the manpower to handle the logistics in-house, so she contact me and advised that I needed to submit an RFP (request for proposal) in hopes of winning the bid for the holiday event. If I win the bid, great! If not, the

paths I have crossed in life are continuously opening other avenues for me. That is what networking is all about.

Remember it is not what you know; sometimes it is who you know. Networking can be another method of learning how to navigate online. There are plenty of groups out here for people to join, all with the hopes of advancing in the world of technology.

The Resume

Similar to the cover letter, the resume is also a well-written document that highlights your professional and educational experience(s). There are many ways to write a resume, but in this context, we will focus on the three suggested recommendations which are chronological, combination, and functional. Crosby and Liming (2009) suggests a chronological format for jobseekers' that have had steady work history. A combination resume combines chronological and functional format; the functional format organizes experience around skill rather than the job. No matter the format is chosen, a well-written document will carry the weight.

A well-written and carefully formatted resume is impressive, but the most essential piece to writing a resume is sharing truthful information about the jobseeker. Fluffing a resume to get hired can cause a person more harm than good. I used to work with a young lady who applied for a production assistant position. The primary duties included updating and maintaining updated production reports using Microsoft Excel. She was the only candidate who referred to themselves as an "expert" so you can imagine how impressed the human resources associate was. She passed the young lady to the final interview, which was with the production manager. The production manager assumed the HR department did a thorough job in selecting candidates, so she asked her simple questions regarding her work ethic and ability to train as well as be trained in various aspects of the job. The young lady was hired and began working immediately. The first couple of weeks appeared great, but shortly thereafter, the shipping and receiving departments started complaining because their production reports were incorrect. Pretty soon, the production manager started questioning the young lady's experience. The young lady asked me to help her out with the report because her computer had been infected by a virus. Well, I worked in a different department, so I did not know what was going on. It was soon time for me to go on vacation and the young lady was not aware I would be gone. The truth finally came out

and the young lady resigned before she was terminated. Padding your resume can read well, but can you deliver on the work you say you can do? The truth trumps exaggeration; besides, some fabrications, if not all, can be proven with various computer generated tests. Provide a well-written resume highlighting your true experiences, and you should be good to go.

When writing your resume, you should take into consideration a few drafts. Draft number one can be done with a pen and paper. You want to write down every duty performed from every job you held, starting with the most current or last position held. This will help you create your resume, which will be draft number two. Please note that all resumes should be typed, not hand written. After you have created your resume, you should proof the document, checking for spelling and grammar errors. Once you have done this, take a break and walk away from the draft resume. This will give your eyes time to rest-up for the editing step. After you have taken a break, you want to begin on draft number three. This is the editing stage. You want to remove any information that is not relevant to your resume or the position you are applying for. You also want to be mindful of common errors like verb-tense agreement errors, grammar and spelling mistakes, and most of all, punctuation errors. Draft number three should undergo one more round of editing and proofing, leaving you with a well-written eye-catching document. Below you will find samples of resumes. The examples include what resumes should not look like, suggested formatting and language changes, as well as examples of chronological, combination, and functional resumes. Remember, it is important to write down a detailed list that will help you construct your resume. No matter the education level, your performance must tell your story. Culwell-Block and Sellers (1994) found that the average resume can be read on 60 seconds. Your resume should be strong enough to receive a meeting invite to interview with the hiring official.

The Resume
"The Don'ts"

Annette Smith

999 East 99th Street
Chicago, Illinois 60606
(708) 555-1212
asmith@gmail.com

999 East 99th Street
Chicago, Illinois 60606
(708) 555-1212
Asmith@gmail.com

DO   **DON'T**

Objective:

To obtain employment in a growing organization.

Experience:

Customer Service Manager
Solo Cup Company   May 1984 to December 2010
- 15 + employees reported to me
- Attended monthly Board meetings.
- Created and passed out production reports.
- Processed weekly time sheets.
- Ran monthly department meetings.
- Conducted appraisals for employees

Strengthen the language!
Use strong verbs like managed, produced, reorganized, and revamped.

Lead Teller
First National Bank   August 1980 to April 1984
- Counted drawer
- Assisted customers with bank accounts
- Answered telephones
- Was back-up personal banker (when busy)
- Assisted tax accounted during tax season

Part-time Teacher's Aid/Stay at home mother
John Goodman School of Learning   July 1974 to December 1978
- Watched students
- Helped prepare meals for students
- Helped the children with their activities

Education and Skills:
- Typing Certificate   1982
- Short-hand Certificate   1983
- High School Diploma   1970
  - Our Lady of Divine Hearts Catholic School
    Chicago, Illinois

Think of additional duties performed and strengthen this section.

Stay at home mothers do a lot, but this is not for the resume.

References:

Available upon request

Target customer service and administrative assistant positions!

The Resume

"Changing the Don'ts"

Annette Smith

999 East 99ᵗʰ Street
Chicago, Illinois 60606
(708) 555-1212
Asmith@gmail.com

Objective:

To obtain a customer service position in a growing organization.

Deleted: employment

Experience:

Customer Service Manager
Solo Cup Company   May 1984 to December 2010

- Supervised (or managed) over 15 employees
- Represented division at monthly Board meetings
- Created and disseminated production reports
- Managed payroll and maintained employee files
- Chaired monthly department meetings
- Evaluated employees and completed annual performance appraisals

Deleted: 15 + employees reported to me

Deleted: Attended monthly Board meetings.

Deleted: Created and passed out production reports.

Deleted: Processed weekly time sheets.

Deleted: Ran monthly department meetings.

Deleted: Conducted appraisals for employees

Lead Teller
First National Bank   August 1980 to April 1984

- Counted drawer
- Managed customers accounts
- Provided communication assistance to banking customers
- Provided temporary assistance as a personal banker
- Assisted tax accountant with annual tax returns
- Maintained confidential files

Deleted: Assisted customers with bank accounts

Deleted: Answered telephones

Deleted: Was back-up personal banker (when busy)

Deleted: Assisted tax accounted during tax season

Part-time Teacher's Aid/Stay at home mother
John Goodman School of Learning   July 1974 to December 1978

- Monitored students
- Prepared student meals
- Assisted students with assignments and activities

Deleted: Watched students

Deleted: Helped prepare meals for students

Deleted: Helped the children with their activities

Education and Skills:

- Typing Certificate   1982
- Short-hand Certificate   1983
- High School Diploma   1970
    - Our Lady of Divine Hearts Catholic School
      Chicago, Illinois

References:

Available upon request

Strengthen the language!
You can see most language has been changed, giving the job seeker a stronger resume.

Chronological Resume

Annette Smith

999 East 99th Street
Chicago, Illinois 60606

(708) 555-1212
Asmith@gmail.com

Objective:

To obtain a customer service position in a growing organization.

Experience:

Customer Service Manager

Solo Cup Company   May 1984 to December 2010

- Managed over 15 employees
- Chaired monthly department meetings
- Managed payroll and maintained employee files
- Represented division at monthly Board meetings
- Created and disseminated production reports
- Evaluated employees and completed annual performance appraisals

Lead Teller

First National Bank   August 1980 to April 1984

- Managed cash handling functions
- Reviewed and assisted customers with various banking accounts
- Provided communication assistance to banking customers
- Provided temporary assistance as a personal banker
- Assisted tax accountant with annual tax returns
- Maintained confidential files

Teacher's Assistant

John Goodman School of Learning   July 1974 to December 1978

- Monitored students
- Assisted with the preparation of snacks and lunches
- Assisted children with assignments and activities

Education and Skills:

Bachelor of Arts Degree, Liberal Arts

- Chicago State University, Chicago Illinois
  - Minor in Business and Communications

1975

References:

Mr. John Doe	jdoe@gmail.com	708-708-7080
Dr. Jane Kelly	drjkelly@gmail.com	708-807-8070
Maj. Joshua Smith	joshuas@army.gov	708-777-8888

Martin C. Blanchett

---

111 East 16th Street   (708) 555-1212
Chicago, Illinois 60660   mblanchett@gmail.com

Objective: Information Technology/Desktop Support

Experience: 32+ years experience in information technology specializing in web development, program development, server and desktop maintenance, desktop support, software training, and web hosting.

Certifications:

Microsoft (MS)	C++	e-FAB	Cisco infrastructure
Rockwell networking	Fiber Optics e-gen+3	IBM desktop support	Desktop publishing
A+2 3ccrp encrypt 5+	Oracle Sr. Admin 9+e	Oracle UI web	TPX mainframe 1.1c+

Professional Vitae (32 years of experience):
- VP, Information Systems, Global Manager
- VP. Information Systems, Domestic
- Executive Director, Information Systems
- Director, Information Technology
- Global Manager, Information Technology
- Global Analyst, Information Systems
- Manager, Desktop Support
- Technician, Computer Systems, Desktop Publishing, Web Browser, and E-mail

Target IT/IS positions
(Senior management or senior analyst)

- Different look; fits on one page.

Management and Supervisory:
- Managed as many as 125 employees as executive director
- Created databases for corporation (still being used)
- Migrated company from Mainframe to Web application (from TPX to Oracle)

Skills and Development:
- Led implementation of web hosting servers (13 main servers, each holding 255 employees) to prevent global crash
- Managed back-up system generation performance data-belt (C+/5.1 UI 3silver /9+e26c) max core
- Rolled out implementation from TPX mainframe to Oracle within 24 months (globally)

Education: B.S. degree in Computer Science, DeVry, Tinley Park, Illinois   1999

<div align="center">

Functional Resume

Adam R. Smith

</div>

999 East 99th Street	(708) 555-1212
Chicago, Illinois 60606	Asmith@gmail.com

Profile: Alum of DePaul University, Chicago, I possess a myriad of skills that will be beneficial to your organization. My organizational and project management expertise along with my ability to handle multiple projects concurrently will be a valued asset in your business and development department.

Knowledge: I have over 7 years of project management experience. My work spans through departments such as business, marketing, and information technology. In addition, I have focused on research and development, assessing data and compiling reports that assist the chief executive officer in making decisions.

Professional Development and Goals: My education has opened avenues for more training and development. I have received extensive training from product line managers and also the vice president of the sales and marketing division to assist me in developing comprehensive and strategic goals for the organization. I am trainable and also willing to train others.

Education:

Bachelor of Arts Degree, Business, *Cum Laude*
- DePaul University, Chicago Illinois   2000

Expertise and Skills:

Project Management (PM)
- Managed PM projects in conjunction with the office of the President of the organization
- Organized a global PM conference with over 250 attendees – certificates were awarded at the end of the conference
- Revamped project needs based on organization's strategic goals/themes

Business and Marketing
- Held temporary-full-time position as Director of Business and Global Markets (16-month term)
- Played intricate part in restructuring of business department
- Managed staff of 8 full-time employees and 6 temporary assistants.

Communications
- Created global markets pamphlets in conjunction with communications department
- Headed marketing team for the global markets campaign and global PM conference
- Wrote press releases and provided interviews to local newspaper

References are available upon request

Target PM and Business Manager positions.

- Different look; fits on one page.

After you have crafted your resume, check for misspelled words, grammar mistakes, and verb-tense errors. You cannot take a chance on your resume being tossed aside because of a spelling error. You want to capture the reader's attention enough to contact you for an interview. Once you interview, you can sale yourself, but remember, you have to get there to make that initial sales pitch.

What to Say

vs

What Not to Say

What to Say During the Interview

There are several things you can say during the interview; however, be mindful that you want to stay on point as you give clear and concise answers. If you are asked a direct question, make certain you answer it. Feel free to elaborate a little, but do not over do it. You need to stay on topic. Keep the conversation professional. The interviewer does not want to hear about your personal business, neither is he or she interested in what activities you do in your spare time. The interviewer should ask questions that pertain to the position, but be careful; they may throw a personal question in there to throw you off. Remember, personal questions do not have to be answered—you can decline to answer a personal question, but make certain you do it appropriately. Questions relating to race, religion, marital status, and extracurricular activities should never be mentioned during an interview. If someone asks a question similar to the ones I mentioned, you can nicely respond, "That is a question that I would like to answer at a later time" or "Is my "religion" contingent upon me getting the position?" When you ask this question instead of answering the question that was presented to you, the interviewer may shift in their seat because they now realize they were out of line.

Mention that you are interested in taking notes and ask the interviewer if it is okay to take notes. Ask follow-up questions after an in-depth discussion on a particular topic. The questions you ask should lead into the next topic or series of questions. I know you are thinking how you can ask a question that can lead into the next question the interviewer may ask. If you are confident and pay attention to the questions and the conversation, the discussion will flow into the direction you want it to.

Personal References

Once you have completed the job interview, you may be asked for references. Well, you can beat them to the punch. Having a written list—minimum of three, maximum of five—of references will increase your chances of getting the job. These references should be tight and right—meaning the person you have selected can speak to your character. They can discuss your work ethic, you dedication, and even your education. Companies are looking for honest answers, so tell them not to make you sound like an angel, but you will settle for prince or princess. Typical questions that might be asked include, how long have you know the candidate? Are they trustworthy? Can they be trained? Do they work well with others? This will give them some

idea about your personality. In other words, if they hired you, will you do the job well, and can they count on you to follow through on assignments. Only use professional references. Your good buddy that you grew up with should not be listed, unless they are professional and they can speak to your experience. If they cannot, damage can be done and you will no longer be considered for the position. I have been on several hiring committees, and when it came down to checking the references, we were not able to make the initial candidate an offer. We were forced to go with the candidate with the glowing references. This may sound cruel, but many people have been hired in key positions and when they fall, the first thing they mention are the references.

Nonverbal Cues during the Interview

No matter what mood you are in prior to the interview, always maintain your composure, and make certain you look cool and collected showing a smile. Don't overdo it; instead be firm in your approach. Give a firm handshake and maintain eye contact, as you nod when meeting the interviewer. Sit up straight in your seat—avoid slouching and poor posture. Take notes during the interview, especially when the topic seems important to the interviewer. Listening is key, so make sure you maintain good eye contact and nod your head as the interviewer expounds on various topics. It is okay to give a thumb up or the okay symbol.

Avoid head tilts and lip curls. This will send a negative message to the interviewer.

A mean scowl can cause your interviewer to quickly end the meeting.

Be careful with emotions!!! Avoid angry faces and signs of frustration. It will cause more harm than good.

What to Wear

vs

What Not to Wear

What should I wear to a job interview???

There are many theories about what is socially accepted when it comes to dress attire. Some companies believe in casual dress in the workplace while others believe that a business suit is always appropriate. No matter what position or what the company's dress policy might be, the job seeker should always dress for the position they want. If you are interviewing for a professional job—office setting of similar—you want to dress in business professional attire. The interviewer should expect to interview a clean and professional individual, whether they are male or female.

One scholar provides detailed information on how both males and females should dress. William Carson (2008) found that the males should wear a nice business suit displaying a conservative look—the suit color should be dark with a white shirt and nice tie. He also found that the females should be conservative with a nice business suit with a nice lengthy skirt, accented with tasteful jewelry.

For the Males

The male gender should wear a nice tailored suit (black, navy, or dark grey). Dark colored suits are socially accepted and it lets the interviewer know that you have a business professional approach. Avoid wearing colors, especially bright colors, as the interviewer may perceive you to be someone who does not take their position as serious as they had hoped. The suit should fit nicely and be pressed. The shirt (white or blue) should be pressed and always accompanied with a neck tie (simple design complementing the suit color). Wearing a tie with a business suit makes a statement of professionalism, and it also says that you will take your job serious and you can be considered for a future position in management. Men, don't be afraid to accessorize with a watch and cuff links (nothing too flashy). Wearing a watch can also be perceived that you are on time for appointments. Shoes should be polished and black. The suggested colors of black, navy, and dark grey are nicely accented with black shoes. Last but certainly not least, do not wear cologne! The interviewer may have allergies or they can have a strong dislike for scents. It would be awful if your interviewer sneezed throughout your interview. This will not make you a final candidate for the position, as they will not want to see or work with you ever again.

Hygiene plays an important part in acquiring a job. The male gender should be clean cut (this means a nice haircut and a fresh shave). You do not want to come to the job interview looking unshaven. The nails should be well manicured and please do not forget to add a little lotion to those hands, because the first thing the interviewer will do is shake your hand. The brut smell is attractive to some, but not to the interviewer, so please make sure you enjoy a fresh shower before coming to the interview. One more thing, men, please remember, your chest hair may look good to your partner, but it should not be shown during the interview. This should not be forgotten because you will wear a neck tie. Michele Compton (2007) found that the best way to prepare for the interview is not to "dress to conform" but instead to "dress to inform!"

For the Females

The female gender should also wear a nice tailored suit (black, navy, dark grey, or brown). Dark colored suits are socially accepted and it reminds the interviewer that females also have a business professional approach. Ladies, even though we are creative and we think we are the best outfit creators, please try to avoid bright colors. That yellow suit may have looked good on the New York summer runway, but believe me, this will send a negative signal to the interviewer. Just like the males, the females should wear a nice tailored and pressed suit, accompanied with a nice white blouse. Those black and green shoes may accent your suit, but they should not be worn to the interview. Please wear a closed-toe dark colored shoe with a slight heel. Your toes may look pretty, but no one should see them. Feel free to accessorize, ladies, but remember your jewelry should be tasteful. A nice watch and dainty pair of earrings are acceptable. Broaches are also nice, but keep them on the smaller scale. No lady should arrive at a job interview without pantyhose, so either a nice pair of black or nude will work (depending on your skin complexion). Last but not least, do not wear perfume. Just as I advised the men, I advise you ladies…avoid spraying yourself with your favorite fragrance, because it could be the death of your interview. Sylvia White states, "The way we dress influences the way others respond to us in a variety of social and professional setting" (White, 1995, p. 178).

Hygiene plays an intricate part for both genders. The female gender should have a nice hairdo. No matter how much you like the spray color and accented jewelry in your hair, avoid it! Remember the "less is more" concept. This applies to almost everything, especially make-up.

Mac and L'Oreal may be your favorite, but it is better to look more conservative than Bozo the Clown. Your fingernails should be well manicured and don't forget to apply lotion, because the first point of contact is the handshake. Please enjoy a nice shower before coming to the interview. Last but certainly not least, remember to leave your cleavage under wraps. It is unprofessional to show your assets during a job interview. You have earned the interview, so show them you are qualified by your experience and education, not because of your attributing assets. Below are examples of professional attire:

Males   **Females**

Image one   Image Two   Image Three   Image Four

Things to remember…

Employers are looking for little things to weed out the bad candidates. Chewing gum can be a habit, but it is not professional during the interview. If you are self conscience about your breath, put a mint or gum in your mouth before entering the building, but make sure to discard it. Pet peeves include the noisy and disrespectful gum popping or the crunch of candy. The

interviewer may stop talking until you have finished your treat. If you wear or use reading glasses, remember to bring them. You may be asked to take a written exam while you are there. If so, this is wonderful news; nut not so wonderful if you have to reschedule to take the exam because you left your readers. We all love to look and smell good, but if it is overpowering, it will send a red flag to the interviewer. Always think before you answer a question and never tell jokes. The interviewer may have a dry or no sense of humor, leaving you out on the fence to laugh at your own jokes. This can also be a sign to the interviewer that you do not take things seriously. Remember to ask for the pronunciation of someone's name, if it is not common. It is okay and appropriate to ask the interviewer if they could pronounce their name for you. Repeat it once to ensure you have it. Carry some tissues or a handkerchief with you. You never know when it may come in handy. Always ask for a business card. This will give you a contact person to send a formal thank you letter to. You always want to send a thank you letter. If the decision is between you and another candidate, the hiring official may select you, all because they remembered they received a nice note of thanks, which showed signs that you are a go-getter. The other candidate will receive a nice denial letter, and the decision to send it could relate solely on your thank you letter. Last but not least, if you are offered a beverage, please accept it. It can be used to moisten your pallet and also help you stall if you are not certain how to answer the question. Taking a sip has saved many people from making a crucial mistake. As you sip you should be thinking of the best way to answer the question. Remain focused during the interview. No matter how boring or long the interview is, pay attention because a question may resurface later in the conversation.

Food for thought…

As I mentioned earlier, online search sites are a good place to start, but I would proceed to the next level. If the company is posting open positions with these online search sites, it's quite possible they have a company Website. Take your "good place to start" and end up at the company's Website and apply for the position through their Human Resources (HR) Department. If they do not have an HR department, contact the company directly and ask for the name of the hiring official. Once you have received the name, address your cover letter to this contact and attach your resume. Some organizations may trash your fax, but if they have seen an abundance

of cover letters and resumes that are not promising, they will be delighted to review a fresh, well-written document, with the hope of asking this person to come in for an interview.

       For those who still think they cannot do all this stuff on the Internet because I am too old, think again. Believe me, online job search sites are here to stay, but that does not count you out. The online tool is considered the starting point for the job seeker, getting the job is mostly done the old fashioned way. Employers are looking to hire the best person for the job. Not knowing how to do something is wonderful, because you are open to learning and training. Pace yourself and remember that Rome was not built overnight. You can accomplish whatever you want to accomplish.

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