

JOB SEARCH SKILLS

Introduction

The current job market is challenging for everyone, but perhaps more so for entry-level job seekers. Increasing workplace competition is making it increasingly difficult for new graduates to find jobs.

Now that you have finally graduated, you might be uncertain, confused or even scared about taking the next step! You might be wondering how you can make a seamless transition into the world of work. As an entry-level job seeker, you probably have numerous questions about different aspects of the job search process.

Your current job search should be a part of a lifelong career planning process. There are some traits that will help you to be successful in your job search. They include:

- *Adaptability*
- *Boldness*
- *Perseverance*
- *Authenticity*

This guide aims to assist you with developing an awareness of your self, including your goals, interests, aptitudes, skills and values. A thorough self-assessment along with in-depth research will help you to create outstanding resumes and cover letters. You then need to plan and execute various job search strategies.

Throughout the entire guide, you will be provided with tips, guidelines and strategies that you can use to help you get your desired job. In addition, you will also receive tips for on-the-job success once you have accepted the job offer.

In order to get hired, you need to make the job search your number one priority! Be very organized and work at it continuously! The more time you spend carrying out an efficient job search, the greater the chance that you will be successful!

SECTION 1

GOAL SETTING

What are goals?

Goals are specific, measurable accomplishments that you would like to achieve in the future. They may be related to:

- Education and training
- Career development
- Time management and organization
- Personal finance
- Personal growth and interest

A goal is not a mere dream or wish. A dream or wish only becomes an attainable goal when it involves formulating concrete action plans and taking specific steps. Career goals are goals that you set for your career path. They could relate to anything from career choice to where you want to be in your career within a specific time period.

Remember: Goals require action, dedication and effort!

Goal setting process

Goal setting involves establishing specific, measurable and time-bound objectives. It is an important process for thinking about your future and for motivating yourself to turn this vision of the future into reality. The process of setting goals helps you to choose the job or career that you want to pursue. When you know exactly what you want to achieve, you will know where you have to concentrate your efforts.

Key Point!

Goal setting is an important method of:

- Deciding what is important for you to achieve in your life
- Motivating yourself
- Helping you to accomplish more
- Providing a clear direction and purpose in life
- Helping you to make better decisions

SMART goals

When setting goals, you should remember the acronym 'SMART.'

Specific – A specific goal has a much greater chance of being accomplished than a general goal. In order to set a specific goal, you must answer the following questions:

- Who: Who is involved?
- What: What do I want to accomplish?
- Where: Identify a location
- When: Establish a time frame
- Which: Identify requirements and constraints
- Why – Specific reasons, purpose or benefits of accomplishing the goal

A general goal would be, "Find a good sales job." However, a specific goal would be, "Find a job as a pharmaceutical sales representative within 3 months."

Measurable – Establish criteria for measuring progress toward attaining each goal that you set. When you measure your progress, you will:

Tip!

In order to determine if your goal is measurable, you should ask questions such as:

- How much?
- How many?
- How will I know when it is accomplished?

- Stay on track
- Reach your target date
- Feel a sense of achievement for each step of the process

Attainable – When you identify goals that are most important to you, you begin to figure out ways to make them come true. You develop the attitudes, abilities, skills and financial capacity to reach them. You can attain almost any goal you set, when you plan your steps wisely and establish a time frame that allows you to carry out those steps.

Realistic – In order to be realistic, a goal must represent an objective toward which you are both willing and able to work. One way to know if your goal is realistic is to determine if you have accomplished anything similar in the past. If you set unrealistic goals, you risk becoming frustrated if you do not accomplish any of them!

Point to Consider!

How do you know if a goal is realistic?

A goal is realistic if you stand a fairly good chance of accomplishing it, given enough time and effort.

Timely – A goal should have a set time frame. Without a time frame, there is no sense of urgency. If you want to find a job, when do you want it by? It is not adequate to say ‘someday’ or ‘this year.’ Setting a time frame will help you to organize a more efficient job search.

Remember to be flexible when setting goals. If you encounter barriers that impede your progress, do not give up on your goals. Instead, you should consider modifying them to meet your current situation.

ACTIVITY

Think about where you want to be in the next year. What kind of work do you see yourself doing? Is it related to what you are currently studying?

If you do not know what you would like to do, ask yourself what you would like to do if money was not an issue. Examine your answer to that question. Is there some part of that passion that you could develop into a career?

- Identify two or three short-term career goals that you hope to accomplish in the next year or two. Remember the ‘SMART’ acronym when identifying these goals.
- Outline the specific steps required to achieve each of these goals. Break down each step into small manageable tasks that you are able to accomplish
- Consider potential problems in achieving your goals and state how you will deal with each issue
- Set a time deadline for achieving these goals

As you go through the job search process, review your goals and check on your progress!

SECTION 2

SELF-ASSESSMENT

In order to find a career path that you will find both challenging and satisfying, you must first learn about yourself. Here are some questions to reflect on:

- What do you like to do?
- What skills do you have?
- What is your personality type?
- What kind of work setting fits best with your personality type?

There are many ways in which you can assess yourself, including self-reflection or completing a range of self-assessment questionnaires. However, if you would like a more in-depth self-understanding, it is recommended that you meet with a career counsellor who can provide you with 'standardized career assessments.'

Identify Skills, Strengths, Talents

A strength can be defined as a combination of talent, behaviour, skills and knowledge that you apply consistently to produce a successful result. Self-assessment helps you to determine what types of jobs might best match your strengths. Here are some criteria to examine in order to identify your strengths. Ask yourself the following questions:

- ***What activities make me feel involved and engaged?***
 - When I am busy with this activity am I totally focused on the task at hand?
 - Do I look forward to doing this activity again?
- ***What are my spontaneous reactions to the situation and activity?***
 - When do I feel a sense of 'rightness' and enjoyment?
 - What activities give me a sense of satisfaction?
- ***What activities consistently produce the desired results?***
 - Where do I perform at a high level?
 - What provides a consistent pattern of successful results?
 - What seems to be done well and effortlessly?
- ***Where and when do I experience rapid learning?***
 - What activities and tasks have I been able to learn quickly?
 - In what areas and activities have I experienced quick insight and understanding?

Your strengths are things that come naturally and relatively easily to you. Once you have identified your strengths, it is important to understand what they mean on a practical, work-related level. You should then relate your strengths to the tasks and activities involved in the job in which you are interested.

Aptitude – is the natural tendency you have to do something well. List five things that you can do well.

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____
5. _____

Interests – are the things that you like to do. List five activities that you are interested in doing. Focus on things you have done in the past where you succeeded.

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____
5. _____

Skills – This is the ability that you possess to perform a certain task. Skills are usually acquired through training, experience or knowledge. They may be divided into two groups: transferable skills and non-transferable skills.

Transferable skills – those skills that can be used in one job or another
Non-transferable skills – those skills that are specific to a certain job or type of work

List three skills that you have acquired through formal or informal training. You should also list three ‘soft skills,’ which refer to how well you relate to and communicate with others. They include personal attributes such as integrity, time management skills and conflict resolution skills.

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____
5. _____
6. _____

If it is difficult for you to compile a list, visit the website entitled ‘*Job Skills Checklist*’ at <http://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/resource/626/01/> for a list of both technical and soft skills.

Identify personal characteristics

Many persons make important career decisions without careful consideration of their personal characteristics. As a result, they may end up in jobs that do not match with their personal characteristics. These characteristics include:

- Personality
- Values

Personality attributes or traits are qualities which help to distinguish one individual from another. These qualities are displayed in daily interaction with others in your environment. Personality traits tell you how you will react to new situations or new experiences. They include:

- Honesty
- Courtesy
- Responsibility
- Loyalty
- Initiative
- Adaptability
- Industriousness
- Decisiveness
- Enthusiasm
- Perseverance

ACTIVITY

Visit the website located at <http://www.csun.edu/~sp20558/dis/discover.html> which has a personality inventory with a list of personality traits and their meanings. Use the scale to rate your personality traits.

Values relate to your attitudes and beliefs about things that are important to you. Identifying your values is one of the most important factors in considering your career choices. Important questions that you will need to explore include:

- Do my values match my interests?
- Do my values match the work involved in a particular career?

Values may be further divided into work and personal values. Work values relate to those factors that you consider important on the job such as helping others, public contact, security, good salary or independence. Personal values, on the other hand, are what you consider important to you as a person.

N.B. The closer your values match the characteristics of a given career area, the more likely it is that this career path will satisfy your needs.

ACTIVITY

Visit the website located at <http://www.csun.edu/~sp20558/dis/discover.html> which has following:

- Work related values survey
- Personal values survey

Choose ten values in each category that are most important to you and write them on a sheet of paper or in your journal.

Career success is based on a knowledge of self. Little or no self-assessment contributes to a mismatch between strengths, personal characteristics and career choices. This often results in poor career decisions. It is very important that you take the time to do a thorough self-assessment before you begin your job search. The more you understand and accept your uniqueness, the better you will be able to make appropriate career choices.

ACTIVITY

Create a summary sheet based on the findings of the different self-assessment exercises. This sheet should include:

- 5 main strengths/aptitudes
- 5 top interests
- 6 top skills (technical and soft)
- 5 strongest personality traits
- 5 top work values
- 5 strongest personal values

Place this sheet in your portfolio. You will need to refer to as you organize and carry out your job search.

SECTION THREE

LABOUR MARKET INFORMATION

Labour Markets

The labour market is an arena where those who are in need of labour (employers) and those who can supply labour (job seekers) come together. Labour markets may be local, national or international in their scope. These markets are constantly changing due to:

- Economic climate (including local and global recessions)
- Globalization of trade
- Restructuring of business organizations
- Technological innovations
- Newly emerging occupations

Labour markets depend on the exchange of information between employers and job seekers. Labour Market Information (LMI) refers to information relating to conditions in the operation of the labour market, including:

- Data on employment and unemployment
- Conditions of employment
- Job vacancies
- Salary levels/wage rates

Tip!

The key to the successful use of labour market information is to identify and focus on information that is most relevant to your unique situation!

By now, you have completed your self-assessment and you have a good idea of your strengths, skills and personal characteristics and what career(s) best matches those aptitudes and interests. When you utilize labour market information in your job search process, it encourages you to ask an additional set of questions, such as:

- How many workers are already in this field?
- How many new workers will be needed?
- How will technology change the industry?
- From which training programmes do employers prefer to hire?
- What are the paths that seem possible from this position?

Labour Market Trends

It is important to gather information on job outlooks and labour market trends both nationally and internationally. This research will help you to determine:

- The jobs that are in great demand (for the next ten years)
- The jobs that have too many employees or are being phased out
- The areas (locally and internationally) that are considered as growth areas

You will need to consider the implications of labour market trends and how these will impact your ability to make informed career decisions. For example, data prepared by the Career Services Department of the HEART Trust/NTA indicate the following:

- Jamaica – Job opportunities exist primarily in areas such as education and finance.
- Caribbean – Job opportunities exist in finance, education and legal fields
- United States and Canada - The fastest growing jobs are in the areas of healthcare, education, personal finance and information systems

Reviewing this information will help you to draw conclusions about job prospects in certain fields over a given time period. Be sure to follow labour market trends and to take the initiative to maintain skills that match changing employer requirements.

ACTIVITY

Visit the websites located at:

- http://www.lmis-ele.org.jm/aboutlabour_exchange.asp
- <http://www.bls.gov/OCO/>
- <http://caribbeanjobs.com/>

These websites contain information on:

- Labour force data
- Employment and unemployment
- Local and international labour market trends

Review the data and try to determine if you are equipped for the jobs that are currently in high demand. If not, try to determine what action you will need to take to ensure that your skills are marketable. Pay special attention to the jobs that are considered to be ‘recession-proof’ as these jobs will provide security in both good and bad economic times.

Job Market Research

The use of LMI is only one part of the process of collecting important information that will help you to make informed career decisions. Another aspect is gathering current information about your career field and prospective employers. This research helps you to emphasize your related strengths and suitability for a particular job and it gives you a major advantage over other candidates who do not conduct research.

Key Point!

You can gain a greater awareness of the job market by researching career paths in a specific:

- Industry
- Occupation
- Organization

The advantages of researching your career field and employers include:

- ***Competitive edge*** – Employers view candidates who do not have an extensive knowledge of the employer’s business and industry as poor choices
- ***Better career decisions*** – This knowledge helps you to make informed decisions about employers and to assess your interest in and qualifications for specific jobs
- ***Improved ability to market your skills*** – Researching employers improves your ability to discuss how your qualifications match the employer’s purpose, goals and needs.
- ***Increased Confidence*** – Being well-informed helps you to communicate more clearly, feel more confident and project greater competence.

Now that you have a clearer idea of the jobs that best suit your skills, interests, personality and values, it is necessary to research the actual requirements of the job. The main ways of obtaining job information include:

- Searching through written and computerized materials such as:
 - Government listings and publications
 - Newspapers

- Trade journals
 - Career websites
 - Professional associations
 - Career/job fairs
 - Companies and private employers
- Contacting people who already work in your area of interest:
 - Interviews with professionals in the field
 - Direct observations via field trips or job shadowing

Here are some aspects of the information that you may need to research:

Occupational field information	Prospective employer information	Specific job information
Current and predicted industry trends General educational requirements Job descriptions Growth outlook Salary ranges	Ownership Company products and/or services History, culture, reputation Performance Competitors, customers	Job description Required education Experience Working conditions Salary and fringe benefits

Career Information Survey

It is a good idea to meet with professionals in your field who can provide valuable information and advice. Meeting with people who hold jobs similar to your job target can help you to learn about their jobs and the hiring procedures used by their employers. You can prepare for these meetings by making a list of questions related to:

- Job scope and career development
- Application, interview and hiring procedures
- The work environment

You should contact at least two organizations employing people in your occupational field in order to make appointments for the ‘career information survey.’ It is best if you make the appointment for this meeting in person. Be sure to emphasize that you are carrying out career planning research. ***Do not say that you are looking for a job!*** Persons are more likely to help you with career planning research than with getting a job.

You should note that some organizations are not very accessible for career survey meetings. In such cases, you may consider using the Internet to research company profiles, job descriptions and hiring information.

ACTIVITY

By now you should have selected one or more occupational areas in which you are interested. Prepare a career information survey worksheet for researching information on this career.

- Prepare career information questions related to the job, career development and hiring procedures that may be used during a career information survey meeting
- Prepare work environment questions that you want to answer for yourself through observation

The questions should aim to clarify your understanding of the particular job, the occupational field and the typical work environment. Place these questions in a folder and if possible, try to have a suitable person such as a teacher or career counsellor review them before arranging the meeting.

ACTIVITY

Identify at least two major company or organizational websites for the career field in which you are interested. Research information related to:

- Company history/profile
- Work environment
- Job scope and career development
- Application and/or hiring processes
- Any other relevant issues

Prepare a brief report on your findings and place it in your portfolio.

SECTION FOUR

THE JOB SEARCH

Organize an effective job search

The level of energy and time management that you put into organizing your job search will have a direct impact on the speed and success of the search. The following tips will help you to manage your job search time effectively:

- Set up an organized job search ‘work area’ so you can easily access anything you need. Use a good filing system such as labeled file folders.
- Prepare a weekly job search schedule
- Prepare a daily job search plan
- Begin your job search the moment you know you need to get a job. If you plan to graduate in May, begin your job search in January, or before.
- Work on your job search as you would on any regular job. Avoid procrastinating!
- Follow up all job leads immediately! Delays can cause you to lose the job you are seeking.

Tip!

View your job search as a full-time job! Create a job search schedule to improve your level of organization!

You should establish a routine that will help you to stay focused and efficient. Here are some guidelines to follow when developing a daily job search schedule:

- Organize your job search work area daily – including files, references and related forms and materials. Try to have a telephone and computer in your work area.
- Make regular telephone contacts – to arrange appointments and to communicate with your network
- Work on new leads – Research, make telephone and written contacts and arrange appointments
- Follow-up – Write thank-you letters, review leads and take appropriate actions
- Arrange appointments – to network and to gather information and for interviews

ACTIVITY

Review the 'Daily Job Search Organizer' on page 88 of the reference text entitled *Your Career – How to Make it Happen*. Design a similar form to assist you in organising your daily job search. Be sure to include the following:

- Name of employer, contact person and job target
- Form of contact (personal visit, phone call, letter, Internet contact)
- Purpose of contact
- Note whether purpose achieved
- Other job search goals for the day
- Summary of progress
- List of new job leads
- Any necessary follow-up

Use this form as a guide to carry out your daily job search activities.

Job Search Strategies

Finding and getting the job you want can be a challenging process, but knowing about a range of job search methods and strategies can increase your chance of success. Some of the more successful methods include:

- **Networking** – Many jobs are never advertised and so in many cases personal contacts may be able to assist with finding jobs. These contacts include:
 - Friends
 - Family members
 - Neighbours
 - Teachers, trainers, coaches, counselors
 - Former employers
 - Colleagues or co-workers
 - People from your place of worship

Be sure to inform these people that you are looking for a job because they are often some of the most effective resources for your search. In order to develop new contacts, you should join student, community and/or professional organizations.

The goals of networking are:

- To make as many people as possible aware of your job search
 - To make a good impression
 - To seek job leads and job referrals
 - To seek career and networking suggestions
- **Referral** – A personal referral from a friend, relative or an acquaintance is highly influential with prospective employers if the employers know and respect the person referring you. Employers tend to trust recommendations from people they know.
 - **Career planning and placement offices** – These offices help their students and past students to find jobs. Some invite recruiters to use their facilities for interviews or career fairs. They offer several services such as career counseling, career testing and job search advice. In addition, they host career-related workshops and sponsor job fairs.
 - **Attending Career/Job Fairs** – It would take a very long time to reach the number of companies that you can access in one day at a career fair. Use fairs to gather company literature to find out what job skills and knowledge are required and to schedule interviews.
 - **Checking advertisements** – Employment advertisements in the newspapers and Internet list numerous jobs and many people find work by responding to these ads. However, you should remember to:
 - Answer ads promptly because the vacancies may be filled quickly
 - Read the ads every day, especially the Sunday edition, which usually includes the most listings
 - Use other job search strategies and do not rely solely on ads
 - **On-line/Internet postings** – You should check job listings on the Internet, as it allows quick, convenient access to a wide range of sources. You may search on large job listing sites and small niche sites that focus on your specific career field.
 - **Direct Employer Contact** – Contacting employers directly is one of the most successful means of finding a job. You can develop a list of potential employers in your selected career field through library and Internet research. You can then call these employers and check their websites for job openings.
 - **Private employment agencies** – These agencies can be useful sources for finding prospective employers. However, you should note that these agencies charge for their services, so you should check the policy regarding who pays for these fees – whether the applicant or the employer. Be sure to check the firm’s reputation as well as expertise in placing people in your field.

ACTIVITY

Create a 'Networking Organizer,' which uses a tabular format and lists the names of everyone you can think of for your job search network. Record the following information for each contact:

- Mailing address
- E-mail address
- Telephone number
- Dates of contact
- Notes for follow-up

Communicate with your network members regularly to update them on your job search progress. Ask them to recommend additional job search strategies or job leads.

Update your network list periodically and eliminate people who are reluctant to assist you.

CHECKLIST

Check each of the strategies that you are currently using in your job search:

- Focusing job search primarily on networking
- Concentrating on direct telephone or face-to-face contacts with employers
- Including the Internet as a job search tool
- Not limiting the search to published advertisements
- Using other job search strategies
- Planning and organizing the job search to gain an advantage over other applicants
- Spending time on the job search every day

Develop career portfolio

A portfolio is a collection of documents and other items that demonstrate your skills, abilities, achievements, experience and training. Developing and using a career portfolio provides tangible proof of your qualifications and it also demonstrates important skills such as planning and preparation.

Examples of appropriate portfolio items include:

- Examination certificates
- Official copy of your transcript(s)
- Resume
- Samples of your work e.g. business writing, graphic artwork etc.
- Evidence of specialized computer usage e.g. web site creation
- Awards
- Work performance evaluations
- Letters of reference

You should begin to reflect on what you have done or accomplished that best demonstrates your qualifications for the job you want.

Managing stress during the job search

It is easy to feel frustrated and overwhelmed during the job search process. These feelings occur when:

- There are few openings in your field
- Your application is not accepted
- There are personal fears
- There are perceived barriers

When you employ a systematic job search strategy such as the one outlined above, it will help to minimize negative feelings. You should note that the job seekers who get hired are not necessarily the most qualified, but the ones who are persistent and take the time to plan the job search carefully.

N.B. Be sure to plan your job search thoroughly and to execute it in a systematic and organized manner!

ACTIVITY

- Search the Internet for career portfolio information by using two or more search engines.
- Identify and collect appropriate portfolio items for your selected career field.
- Assemble a portfolio of items that demonstrate your abilities and accomplishments.

SECTION 5

RESUME AND COVER LETTER PREPARATION

Resume Preparation

A resume is a short document which outlines your qualifications for a particular job or job target. As a job seeker, you will need at least two resume versions which include:

- A paper resume – this is a word processed document which is delivered by mail, hand or fax
- An electronic resume – this document is designed to be delivered via e-mail or via an online e-form

There are three basic types/formats of resumes:

- ***Chronological*** – This is the most popular format. It places information in reverse chronological order, that is, from the most to least recent. Some employers prefer this format; as it places the focus on time, job continuity, growth and achievements.
- ***Functional*** – A functional resume focuses on skills, credentials and accomplishments over the course of all the jobs you have held. The emphasis is on what you have done, not on when or where you did it. Accomplishments, qualifications and experience are grouped together to emphasize your experience in specialty areas.
- ***Combination*** – A combination resume uses a career profile, which is a functional style listing of relevant skills and accomplishments and then describes employment and education histories in reverse chronological order.

N.B. A well-written resume is critical in getting you a job interview!

Here are some important resume writing tips that you may find useful when preparing your resume:

- ***Write it yourself*** – Although it is a good idea to look at resume samples, it is recommended that you avoid using professional resume-writing services. The resume writing process forces you to examine yourself, organize your thoughts and prepare for the interview.
- ***Tell the truth*** – Do not exaggerate or misrepresent your abilities, education, work history or credentials. This will come back to haunt you later!
- ***Make it professional*** – Poor copy quality; cheap paper or anything that creates a poor appearance will be a turn off for employers.
- ***Make it reader-friendly*** – You can accomplish this by:

- Writing clearly and concisely
 - Writing in a positive way
 - Being specific
 - Targeting resume to employer's needs
 - Including only the necessary and appropriate data
 - Using strong active verbs and precise nouns
 - Writing short paragraphs and sentences
- **Field-testing your resume** – Try out your resume on person who will give you an objective and honest opinion. If these readers have issues with your resume, you need to go back and revise it until it is clear and concise.

Key Point!

The appearance of your resume is very important! It should be:

- Typed clearly
- Well-spaced
- Visually attractive

The Resume Writing Process

Before you begin writing your resume, you should complete a thorough inventory of your education and skills and consider the type of work environment in which you will excel. You should also research the career field, industry and companies that interest you. These topics have been discussed in detail in the previous sections. If you have not completed all the activities and exercises, you should do so now.

Writing a resume requires completing the following steps:

Step 1 – Decide on your job objective. Decide on a concise job objective that describes the job/position you are seeking. A clear objective helps to focus your job search and indicates to the employer that you have given serious thought to your career goals.

Step 2 – Choose the most appropriate resume layout. Choose the layout that best supports your job objective.

Step 3 – Organize carefully and write forcefully – Note the guidelines mentioned above for making the document reader-friendly. You should also use numbers, percentages and action verbs to describe your actions. For example, “reduced costs by 20 per cent” or “increases sales by 15 per cent.”

Step 4 – Fine-tune each section of your resume

- Contact information – Provide your name, mailing address, telephone number, e-mail address. Place all your contact details at the top of the resume.

Tip!

Ensure that your e-mail address is concise and sounds professional. Consider using your name or some variation thereof!

Janedoe@yahoo.com would be more appropriate than sexygirl@hotmail.com

- Job objective – This should be stated as a job title or type of work desired and should reflect the needs of the employer
- Qualifications – This section should highlight why you are the ideal candidate for the job. Be sure to emphasize specific, relevant skills and capabilities and related accomplishments.
- Work experience – For each job, list the dates of employment, the employers name, the job title and a brief results-oriented description of the job.

Key Point!

If you have limited relevant work experience, consider listing the following:

- Internships
- Part-time and summer jobs
- School projects
- Volunteer work
- Community involvement

- Other/Related Experience – Use this section to bring out other experience relevant to your job objective. Be sure to include activities such as membership, leadership and awards earned in professional associations, social, service and school organizations. These activities show that you are well rounded and are able to work well with others.
- Education – List your education in reverse chronological order. List the names of technical schools, colleges and universities that you have attended, the years of attendance, and the degree(s) or certificates earned. You should also include specialized training and seminars.
- Special skills – If you have specific computer, foreign language, typing or other technical skills, consider highlighting them by giving them their own category.

After you have drafted your resume, review it giving careful attention to every detail and marking areas that could be improved. Make the necessary corrections and then proofread and edit the content until the resume is perfect!

ACTIVITY

Now that you have reviewed the resume-writing tips and guidelines, you are ready to develop your own resume. Visit the following websites to review sample resumes, which utilize different formats:

- <http://jobstar.org/tools/resume/samples.php>
- <http://www.rileyguide.com/letters.html>
- <http://www.quintcareers.com/resres.html>

Prepare a written draft of your resume, making sure to follow the guidelines discussed above. Review, proofread and edit the resume and then rewrite it.

Visit the website located at http://www.quintcareers.com/resume_critique_worksheet.html which has a resume critique worksheet. Use this worksheet/checklist to evaluate your resume. Make corrections and improvements as needed.

Recruit help from one or two objective persons who have good writing and proofreading skills. Ask these persons to review and critique your resume carefully.

Preparing the cover letter

When sending a resume, most people include a cover letter to introduce themselves to the prospective employer. A well-written letter should capture the employer's attention and provide information that convinces the reader to interview you and consider you for employment.

Cover letters should be written in standard business format and should include the following information:

- Your address and contact information
- Name and address of the specific person to whom the letter is addressed
- Reason for interest in the company or position
- Four parts: salutation, opening, body, conclusion
- Statement that your resume is enclosed
- Single spacing
- Professional language
- Signature above typed name at the bottom

Parts of the cover letter

- **Salutation** – Send your letter to a specific person rather than an office. Check that the name you use is spelled correctly and the title is accurate.
- **Opening** – This section should indicate which job you are applying for and how you heard about the position. For example, if a contact suggested you apply or if you are responding to an advertisement.
- **Body** – This portion of the letter is a brief explanation of your qualifications. Refer to the resume, highlighting relevant experiences and accomplishments that match the employer's stated needs and that demonstrate your suitability for the job. Try to avoid duplicating information exactly from your resume.
- **Closing** – In your final paragraph, thank the reader, request an interview and repeat your contact information.

Tip!

Customize every cover letter! Tailor the content of your letter to fit each employer's needs!

Guidelines for writing effective cover letters

- Create a positive first impression
- Use effective writing techniques and project a professional image
- Address your letter to the appropriate person (Note correct titles and spelling)
- Emphasize what you can do for the organization
- Use specific, measurable terms to describe your abilities
- Show interest and enthusiasm for the job
- Incorporate specialized terminology from your industry where appropriate
- Format your letter in an acceptable business format
- Print your letter on high quality paper
- Hand sign each letter
- Proofread and edit the letter until it is perfect!

ACTIVITY

Now that you have reviewed the cover letter writing tips and guidelines, you are ready to create a draft cover letter. Visit the following websites to review sample cover letters:

- <http://jobsearch.about.com/od/coverlettersamples/a/coverformat.htm>
- <http://www.rileyguide.com/letters.html>
- <http://www.quintcareers.com/resres.html>
- <http://www.bls.gov/opub/ooq/1999/summer/art01.pdf>

Review and edit your cover letter draft. Use a dictionary and thesaurus to assist you with spelling and with selecting appropriate words. Ensure that the content is clear and concise.

Ask a member of your network who has good communication skills to critique your letter. Make the necessary revisions and corrections until the letter is perfect!

SECTION 6

THE APPLICATION FORM

Filling out application forms

Employers use the application form to obtain standard information from all applicants. This form is used along with the resume and cover letter as an essential screening tool for potential candidates. Here are some guidelines for filling out an application form that you should follow:

- Read and follow the instructions on the application form!
- Answer every question that applies to you. If a question does not apply, you may write N/A which means not applicable, or draw a line through the space to show that you did not overlook the question. Some employers suggest writing, “will discuss in interview” if asked for information that might disqualify you.
- Assemble information on your employment history, education and certification in advance, as this will make it easier to complete applications
- Be prepared to list several good references. These may include a former employer or teacher, a recognized community leader or well-established business people.
- Make sure all information is accurate
- Use correct spelling, grammar and punctuation
- Use the correct lines or spaces for your answers
- Be as neat as possible
- Be honest
- Date and sign the application

Whenever possible, get an application form ahead of time so that you can take the time to fill it out accurately and completely. When you pick up an application, do not miss an opportunity to make a good first impression. Dress as you would for the job and politely request two copies of the form. You should then:

- Make your own copies of the original before you start filling it out
- Use one copy as a rough draft and the other as the final product
- Use a typewriter or write neatly with black ink
- Make a copy of your completed application. If you go back for an interview, take this record with you.

Computer applications

If you are filling out an application for a computer database, you should:

- Use keywords

- Use simple formatting—no boldface or bullets
- Include as much information as you can for each question without becoming wordy or repetitive. The more relevant details you provide, the better your chances of using a keyword that matches an employer’s requirements.
- Before submitting the form, copy and paste your answers into a word-processing program so you can check the spelling.

The way in which you fill out an application form indicates your level of neatness, thoroughness and accuracy. Be sure to fill out the form carefully, completely and accurately. When you have filled out the form, you should review it to ensure that you have provided all information requested.

ACTIVITY

Visit the following websites, which have information on completing job application forms:

- <http://jobsearch.about.com/od/jobappsamples/a/sampleapp.htm>
- <http://jobsearch.about.com/od/jobappsamples/a/employmentapp.htm>
- http://www.ehow.com/video_4985218_fill-out-job-application-form.html

Print the sample application forms and practise filling them out. Remember the guidelines discussed above.

SECTION 7

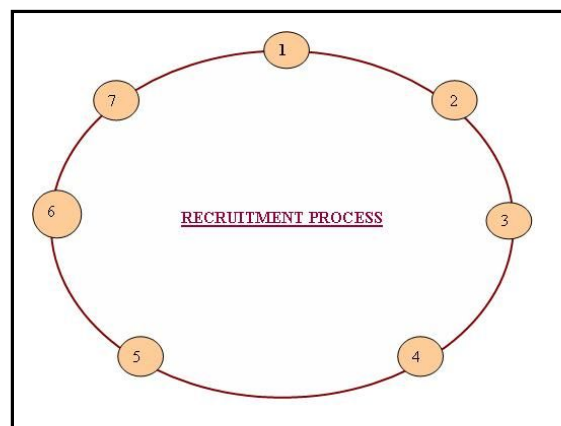
THE RECRUITMENT PROCESS

Recruitment

Recruitment refers to the process of attracting; screening and selecting qualified people for a job at an organization or firm. It is one of the major functions of the Human Resources department of an organization and it requires many resources as well as time. Sometimes, organizations utilize professional recruiters such as employment agencies, recruitment websites, job search engines and ‘headhunters.’

A general recruitment process is as follows:

1. Identifying the vacancy
2. Preparing the job description
3. Sourcing the employees / Advertising the vacancy
 - Newspapers
 - Internet job listings
 - Company websites
 - Employee referrals
 - Professional associations
 - Trade groups
 - Job fairs
 - Job placement services
4. Managing the response
5. Short-listing and identifying the prospective employee with required characteristics
6. Arranging the interviews with the selected candidates
7. Conducting the interview and decision making



Source: <http://recruitment.naukrihub.com/recruitment-process.html>

The selection process

The selection process immediately follows the recruitment process. Employers have the difficult task of choosing one of many qualified candidates. They are required to evaluate the most critical factors needed for the person in the position to be successful. These include:

- **Potential** – Can the applicant perform the essential duties of the job?
- **Motivation** – Has the applicant indicated that the position is one that they would be interested in pursuing?
- **Fit** – Does the applicant have the judgment, personality, interpersonal skills, work ethic and attitude to be successful in the organization?
- **Technical skill** – Does the applicant have the necessary skill set to perform the functions or major duties of the position?

The next step in the process is to check the references. This is critical in making a final decision, as credentials and work experience must be verified before making the job offer. When this has been successfully completed, it is now time to make the job offer.

SECTION 8

THE INTERVIEW PROCESS

Types of interviews

An interview is a formal meeting arranged for the assessment of the qualifications of a job applicant. There are several types/styles of interviews with which you need to familiarize yourself. They include:

- ***The One-on-one interview*** – This type of interview features just you and the interviewer. The interviewer may be the hiring decision maker or a preliminary screener. This type of interview includes screening interviews, behavioural interviews, campus interviews and stress interviews.
- ***Group interview*** – The group may consist of two or more people. They may be informally seated or they may be arranged in a panel. Focus on the person asking the question at the time, but try to make eye contact with all group members, if possible.
- ***Serial/Multi-level interview*** – This interview may include people from all levels and departments within the organization. The interviews often get more detailed and specific and it allows the company to have a broader analysis of your abilities.
- ***Telephone interview*** – This is a cost effective and time saving screening device that is often used for preliminary screening. Employers try to probe the information you give in order to eliminate you from a person-to-person interview.

In addition to these structured types of interviews, you may also be required to do interviews with people who are not professionally trained in interviewing. This type of interview tends to be more informal than the structured interview. In unstructured interviews, the most important point is to be sure to present your qualifications thoroughly.

Preparing for the interview

Some people view interviewing as the most stressful part of the job search. However, an interview gives you the opportunity to showcase your qualifications to an employer and to show that you are an enthusiastic worker who will do the job well. You can make the most of that opportunity by being well prepared. The following information provides some helpful tips and guidelines:

- **Research** - Gather information on the prospective employer and the position for which you are being interviewed. Use a range of data sources to get information on:
 - What the company does
 - Its goals and values
 - How large it is
 - Recent changes
 - The role you can play in the organization

- **Practice describing yourself** – Another important step in preparing for a job interview is to practise describing your professional characteristics. Think of examples from past jobs, schoolwork and activities to illustrate important skills. Recalling accomplishments beforehand, when you are not under interview pressure, will help to strengthen your answers during the actual interview.

- **Rehearse** – Role-play an interview setting with a career counselor or friend to gain confidence and poise.

Sample Interview Questions

The following questions are typical of the types of questions commonly asked in an interview. Review them and be prepared beforehand to answer these questions:

- Tell me about yourself
- What are your greatest strengths/weaknesses
- Why did you choose this company over our competitors?
- Why should I select you over other applicants?
- Describe a work or school-related problem and how you solved it.
- Tell me about a time you worked as part of a team
- Why do you want to work in this occupation and for this company?
- Why did you leave your last job?
- Describe how you handle stress.
- How do you react to criticism?
- What is your philosophy of life?
- What are your career goals?
- What are the things that motivate you?
- How would you describe yourself as an employee?
- Are you a team player?

Tip!

Prepare and rehearse responses to typical interview questions. This can influence your interview success!

Draft an interview script or a question-and-answer planning sheet to guide you through the interview. Write out positive, honest answers to each question. Always be prepared to support your general answers to questions with specific examples from your experience. Review this script prior to each interview. You should not memorize the answers, but it is important to know what you plan to say.

ACTIVITY

Prepare a question-and-answer planning sheet in which you list typical interview questions and write appropriate answers. Use the Internet to search for interview question-and-answer tips. You should divide your questions into the following groups:

- General information questions
- Behavioural and character questions
- Stress questions

You should also prepare appropriate questions that you can ask the interviewer as well as questions and topics to avoid. Review this sheet/script prior to each interview.

Evaluate each answer and the accompanying reaction of the interviewer(s) after each interview. If you received a negative response, review and amend your answer.

Guidelines for Interviewing

A good interview is a dialogue, an exchange of information. Here are some useful tips and guidelines:

- Prepare beforehand by taking extra copies of your resume
- Arrive early
- Observe your surroundings while you wait
- Be friendly, courteous and enthusiastic
- Project an air of confidence and pride

- Use positive body language (Maintain eye contact and smile)
- Dress professionally and conservatively (Base your clothing choice on employer and career field research)
- Speak positively
- Speak correctly (Use correct grammar, word choice and a business like vocabulary)
- Pay attention to the first few minutes of the interview. Sell yourself and get the interviewer interested in you.
- Use active listening skills
- Supply the necessary information, while keeping answers brief. Try to relate your answers to the interviewer and his/her company. Focus on achievements relevant to the position.
- Encourage the interviewer to share information about his/her company by asking appropriate questions
- Close the interview skillfully (Pay attention to the interviewer's signals for closure and point out why you are the ideal candidate for the position. Find out how you should follow up and when a hiring decision will be made).

Key Point!

Research has shown that employers consider the following areas during the interview:

- Attitude – 40%
- Image and appearance – 25%
- Verbal and nonverbal communication – 25%
- Job qualification – 10%

Interview blunders to avoid

The following is a list of blunders to avoid during your job interview:

- Don't make negative comments about previous employers or other persons
- Don't falsify application materials or answers to interview questions
- Don't give the impression that you are only interested in salary and benefits
- Don't act as though you are desperate for employment
- Don't be unprepared for typical interview questions
- Don't chew gum or smoke

- Don't allow your cell phone to ring during the interview. Under no circumstances should you take a cell phone call
- Don't bring anyone else to the interview. It makes you appear immature and insecure.

ACTIVITY

Visit the following websites to view videos on appropriate dress for job interviews:

- <http://www.5min.com/Video/How-to-Dress-for-an-Interview-149439980>
- <http://www.monkeysee.com/play/2816-dress-for-an-interview-the-golden-rules-of-grooming>
- <http://www.monkeysee.com/play/2817-dress-for-an-interview-do-s-and-don-ts>
- <http://video.about.com/fashion/What-to-Wear-to-an-Interview.htm>
- <http://www.howcast.com/videos/929-How-To-Dress-For-a-Job-Interview>

Review the information and be sure to plan your interview attire and appearance carefully. Remember, you never get a second chance to make a first impression!

Handling Illegal Questions

From time to time you may encounter inappropriate or even illegal questions in an interview. Questions that focus on the following topics/issues are considered to be inappropriate:

- Age
- Race
- National origin
- Religion
- Marital status
- Children
- Housing/finances

The most effective approach is to answer the question in a polite, honest manner. Try to anticipate the concerns that a potential employer might have about hiring you and discuss them in a manner that is comfortable for you.

Key Point!

Your goal in an interview is to get a job offer, not to offend or educate an employer on the legality of interview questions!

The Interview Follow-up process

It is important for you to review and evaluate every interview. Write down your thoughts on the interview and then complete an interview self-evaluation form. Consider the answers to questions such as:

- What did you do well?
- In what areas can you improve?
- What points did the employer emphasize?

Select the aspects of your performance that require the greatest improvement and then suggest steps that you can take to make the improvement.

Check back periodically

Before you leave the interview, ask when you will hear from the employer next or if you should call back. If the employer fails to call as arranged, you may make a follow-up call to provide additional information or to update the employer on new developments. However, be sure to follow these guidelines:

- Never become a nuisance
- Respect the employer's time frame
- Know why you are calling
- Keep your conversation businesslike and short

Write a thank-you letter

Writing a thank-you letter after each interview helps to create a positive impression on the employer. It is a reminder of who you are, what you have to offer and how you conduct yourself, even after the interview. Consider the following points:

- Thank the interviewer for their time and consideration
- Express thanks for the interview in your opening paragraph
- State your continued interest
- Reinforce your image
- Repeat your key qualifications

- Ensure accurate spelling, grammar and punctuation
- Sign and date your letter

Remember, you may have several interviews before receiving a good job offer. Although it is natural to have negative feelings when the interview is unsuccessful, you can turn the negative energy from rejections into positive energy, which will increase your determination to continue the job search until you get the right job!

Responding to Rejection

It can be very discouraging to receive a rejection letter following a job interview. However, you should try to view it as a learning experience and continue with your job search activities. The way in which you choose to respond to rejection can turn a potential negative into a positive for your job search. Here are some points to consider:

- Describe the shortcomings and/or misunderstandings that may have resulted in your rejection
- Summarize important information you omitted during the application or interview process
- Maintain a positive attitude
- Connect with your network for support
- Plan your next job search steps and follow through in a timely manner

Key Point!

After a job rejection, use positive thinking, visualization and goal setting to:

- Motivate yourself
- Continue with the job search
- Improve your performance

ACTIVITY

Visit the website located at http://www.ehow.com/video_4985219_properly-follow-up-after-job.html?cp=1&pid=1 to view the video series on interviewing.

Pay special attention to the following:

- How to ask for an interview
- How to prepare for a job interview
- How to answer basic job interview questions
- How to properly follow up after a job interview
- How to compose a thank you letter after a job interview

Make a note of the tips and guidelines outlined in these videos. Apply the pointers while preparing for the interview, during the interview itself and also for the follow-up after the interview.

ACTIVITY

The best way to prepare for interviewing is to rehearse your answers in a mock interview. Ask a friend or family member (preferably someone who has experience in interviewing) to assist you with your mock interview.

- Provide the interviewer with a copy of your resume and a list of interview questions. The interviewer may add questions as appropriate.
- Have the interviewer read each question and answer the question according to the interview script that you prepared in a previous activity. Try to answer spontaneously and confidently. Note all the interview guidelines relating to verbal and non-verbal communication.
- Videotape the interview (use a video camera and tripod)
- After the mock interview, watch the recording with your interviewer and make notes on responses that are unsatisfactory. Ask for the interviewer's opinions and feedback.
- Revise the answers to the questions that you had difficulty with and arrange for another practice interview.

Continue to practice until you are satisfied that you are completely ready to excel in the interview.

Evaluate Job Offers

Job offers can be made by telephone, by letter, or in person. A genuine job offer is one that has the following elements:

- A clear statement that says, “We are offering you the job of (actual job title).
- A date, time and place to begin work
- A definite starting salary
- A description of the job
- A description of the working conditions

Once you receive a job offer, you must decide if you want the job. Here are some steps to follow:

- Verbally review the offer – Listen carefully and ask for clarification if necessary
- Request time to think over the offer – A request of twenty-four hours is reasonable but a request of more than forty-eight hours is inconsiderate. There are many issues to consider when assessing a job offer. These include:
 - ***The job itself*** – Does the work match your interests and make good use of your skills? Is the work interesting to you? What will the hours be? Consider the effect that the work hours will have on your personal life.
 - ***The organization and the personnel*** – Do you feel comfortable with the organizational structure? Consider the organization’s business/activity, financial condition, age, size and location.
 - ***The salary*** – Does the salary match your education and abilities? Is it comparable with the competition? Is there potential for increase?
 - ***Benefits*** – Medical, dental, life insurance, pensions, vacations etc.
 - ***Career development opportunities*** – Will you have adequate opportunities for professional growth through training and continuing education?
 - ***The values and philosophies of management*** – Are they compatible with your own?

- *How the job meets your goals?* – Consider how this job fits into your long-range career goals.
- *The job market* – Are jobs in this field plentiful or in short supply?
- Accept the offer – If you have absolutely no doubts concerning the job offer, accept it on the spot with enthusiasm. If you accept the offer after careful consideration, write a letter of acceptance. It is an opportunity to say thanks and to verify the employment terms.
- Reject the offer – If you reject the offer, write a letter of rejection. Make it clear that you are unable to work for the organization but ensure that the tone of the letter is very polite.

Negotiate Job Offers

Ideally you should postpone discussion of compensation until you receive a job offer. You should not accept a job offer without discussing salary and benefits. Review and apply the following strategies:

- Aim for a salary that equals the peak of your qualifications
- State your requirements in a range and make it broad enough to negotiate
- Ensure that this salary range is based on research for similar job positions or for the industry based on education, training and experience
- If the interviewer asks what salary you want, a good response is, “What figure or range is the company planning to pay.”
- While discussing salary, review all the benefits and qualifications that you have to offer the company
- Be realistic, but do not undersell yourself
- Discuss fringe benefits such as insurance coverage, pension plans and vacation
- If the starting salary is low, ask about the frequency of salary reviews
- If the salary is absolutely unacceptable, state the salary you would accept, and reaffirm your interest in the company and the job. You should be aware that this might cost you the job, as the company may be unable to give a higher salary.

Sometimes your decision to accept a job offer may be influenced by economics. If the offer meets most of your requirements, but is not a logical career step, you could still accept the job. Plan to excel in this job and establish your reputation and view it as preparation for the next step in your career development.

Regardless of whether you decide to accept or reject the offer, you should do so professionally. If you accept the job, remember to inform other companies with which

you have interviewed and contact your references and other support persons to update them and to thank them for their assistance.

ACTIVITY

Visit the website located at http://www.ehow.com/video_4985219_properly-follow-up-after-job.html?cp=1&pid=1 to view the video series on interviews and job offers.

Pay special attention to the following:

- How to acknowledge a job offer
- How to respond to a job offer
- How to decline a job offer

Make notes on the tips and guidelines outlined in these videos.

SECTION 10

SUCCEEDING IN YOUR NEW POSITION

Organizational structure / Chain of command

The organisational structure of a company looks at the way in which a company is put together, for example, its formal lines of communication and the pattern of relations between individuals and the roles they perform.

Organizations have various structures. These structures indicate:

- How an organization functions and is managed
- How information flows and is processed within an organization
- How flexible or responsive the organization is

The main types of organisational structure that are found within companies include:

- Functional structure – Activities clustered by common purpose or function
- Divisional structure – Organisation split into a number of self-contained units
- Organisation by product or service – Each group responsible for a particular part of the organisation's output.

When you work in large organizations, you will find 'tall' organizational structures in which there are many levels between junior staff and the top executives. The structure is quite formal because there are many rules, policies and procedures, which regulate the behaviour of staff. As a new employee, you should review the handbook for information on the roles and responsibilities of workers.

The chain of command in an organization refers to a line of reporting relationships within an organization that defines the formal decision-making structure. When you learn and understand the chain of command, it will help you to know to whom you are accountable.

The Job Orientation

Your employer is responsible for providing an orientation to the organization as well as work procedures. An effective orientation will help you to:

- Foster an understanding of the organization's culture
- Make a successful adjustment to the new job

- Understand your role and how you fit into the organization
- Develop a positive working relationship

You will be given information relating to the following:

- Assigned work space
- Job description
- Organizational structure
- Work hours
- Office organization
- Office resources

Key Point!

During your orientation, it is important for you to be:

- Observant
- Aware
- Alert
- An active listener

Remember to ask questions to clarify anything that you might not understand!

Adjusting to your New Job

When you start a new job you will have the challenge of adjusting to the job. This includes:

- Learning to perform specific job functions
- Learning how the job relates to the business as a whole
- Learning to work with others
- Understanding the formal and informal chain of command

The following guidelines will help you to adjust to your job and to the organization:

- Project a positive attitude – Approach new tasks, colleagues and supervisors/managers with a positive, enthusiastic attitude.

- Project a positive, professional and competent image – The image that you project comes from three sources: your inner confidence, your outward appearance and your verbal and non-verbal communication.
- Develop and practice good interpersonal skills – You can achieve this by being a team player.

In order to become an outstanding employee, it is important that you focus on:

- Maintaining an excellent attendance record
- Being punctual – for work and all meetings
- Demonstrating initiative
- Being courteous and helpful
- Producing top-quality work
- Seeking feedback on your performance

In addition to quality performance, you should be willing to take on new challenges and broaden your skills and knowledge. It is important that you manage your career development and seek growth or advancement opportunities.

ACTIVITY

Arrange meetings with knowledgeable people in your workplace or field to gather information on the following:

- How the job performance of employees is evaluated
- What techniques help ensure success on the job
- How employees can earn a promotion

Reflect on the answers to the following questions:

- What advice would you give a new employee to help him or her to adjust quickly to the job and organization?
- What advice would you give this person to help ensure the highest degree of job success?

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