CAREER SERVICES PREPARATION WORKBOOK

Introduction

Welcome to the Career Services Preparation Workbook!

On the following pages you will find an array of information that will help you to conduct a proper job search. Everything that you will need to know from creating and developing your resumes and cover letters through interviewing and negotiating for the job is all right here in this preparation workbook.

Please use this resource to help guide you through the many aspects of your job search. If you have any additional questions or require further advice on your job search strategy, career planning, or professional development, please contact the South College Career Services office.

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GETTING STARTED

It's Your Career: Start Exploring!

Job searching can be time consuming and emotionally draining to many students and recent graduates. Now that you are in full pursuit of furthering your education, do not let this be the case for you! Regardless of your prior experiences with job searching, South College's Career Services staff is ready to help you succeed in your search. You will find that throughout your time at South College, whether with a Director of Career Services or a Director of Student Affairs/Success, we are here to help prepare you for the job search adventure. Working with you individually, we can assist you with developing your resume and cover letters, teach you about navigating through various job searching websites and tools, help you with practicing for upcoming interviews, guide you on how to negotiate and accept job offers, and more!

Before Getting Started

Although you might be eager to start searching for your next job, there are a couple of items that you will want to take care of and secure first. Some important points to consider are:

- Creating and preparing a professional E-Mail account
- Setting up a professional sounding voicemail/answering machine on the phone number that you plan on using
- Identifying your immediate, mid-term, and long-term career goals
- Meeting with the Career Services staff

Making Your Phone Career Ready

- Do not rely on caller ID
- If you do not recognize the phone number or are too busy to answer:
  - Do not answer the phone or automatically block the phone number
  - Let the phone call go to voicemail (those individuals interested in speaking with you will always leave a message whenever possible)
- Always be prepared to take notes when an unknown number calls
- Set up a professional voicemail and regularly check/clear your messages
  - Example: "Hello, you have reached the phone of John Smith. Unfortunately, I am unable to answer your call at this time. Please leave a detailed message with your name and phone number, and I will return your call as soon as possible. Thank you and have a great day!"
  - When recording your own voicemail, make sure you are in a quiet place
  - You can use the computer generated messages instead of recording your own
  - Avoid religious/political views or information about your family in your message
- Remove any ring back tones
- Prepare others who may answer the phone on the appropriate and professional manner to speak with potential employers and record messages
- If you miss the individual's name and information, it is best to say "I'm sorry, I would like to write down your information, could you repeat it for me?"
- Thank them for calling and be sure to confirm your follow up appointment/ next steps

Activity #1

Call the phone you plan on using during your job search. Does what you hear represent who you want to be seen as a potential employee?

Activity #1 Response:

Activity #2 Response:

Activity #2

Which phone number do you plan on providing for your job searching (mobile or landline)?

Who will be answering this phone?

Are those individuals prepared to interact with potential employers on your behalf?

Activity #3

What steps do you have in place to ensure that you will be ready to record notes during a phone call with a potential employer?

Activity #3 Response:

Exploring Your Profession

Now that you are prepared to start taking phone calls from employers, let's dive deeper into researching specific careers within your desired profession. It is important that you take time to prepare for all aspects of your job search, and define potential avenues for your immediate, mid-term, and long-term career.

As a new or soon to be graduate, to help you get started, first think about the reasons why you wanted to go to school, why you chose your degree/field of study, and what outcomes you hoped that these choices would bring you.

Let's self-reflect!

Activity #4

1. What impacted your decision to study your major?

2. What interests you about your major?

3. What is important to you with finding a job?
   (salary, benefits, the work you do, room for growth/advancement)

4. What are some of the jobs that interest you in your field of study?

Not only is it beneficial to self-reflect on your interests, but it is also helpful to test your knowledge on the industry, field, and potential career/industry outcomes. If you have not done so already, you may find it helpful at this point in time to join a couple of career/professionally focused social networking sites that are relevant to your industry.

Let's complete some research on your industry to ensure that your career goals are attainable.

Activity #5

Researching Your Career

1. What current events have impacted your field? How have these events impacted it?

2. What trends do you see? What might the future of your industry have in store?

3. Looking back on your field of study, what have been some challenges? How were these addressed?

4. What are the "hot topics" in your field right now? Do you feel prepared to discuss these at networking events?

5. Who are the top employers and organizations leading your field?

Exploring Your Skills

Although exploring the industry, field, and potential careers is critical to starting your career search, you also need to determine the ways that your current skills overlap with the skills needed for your desired field/job. Assessing your skills will help you to develop your resume and cover letter in addition to helping you to prepare for the interview process. There are a variety of skills assessments available for free online such as those found on the Career One Stop website. Be sure to reach out to the Career Services staff to locate additional skills assessments.

When you are examining your skills, it is also important that you be 100% honest with yourself. Since the goal will be to include these skills in your job searching documents such as resumes and cover letters and for your interview preparation, if you are misleading, you may hurt your chances of being considered for a specific position or may find yourself quickly out of a job. To help you with staying honest, once you are done with completing your self inventory of skills, be sure to provide it to someone you trust in order to further gain insight on how others see your skills.

Another component to remember when completing this exercise is that regardless of the number of years of experience you possess in the field or in the workforce, there are ample ways to gain a clear understanding of your skills. If you do not possess much experience in the professional world, think back to experiences that you gained throughout your education. These experiences can include class projects/assignments, internships, externships, part-time employment experiences, and volunteer experiences.

Take a moment to complete the Self-Reflection piece of the chart below by completing the inventory checklist on the next page.

Self Reflection

Self Assessment

Outsider Perspective
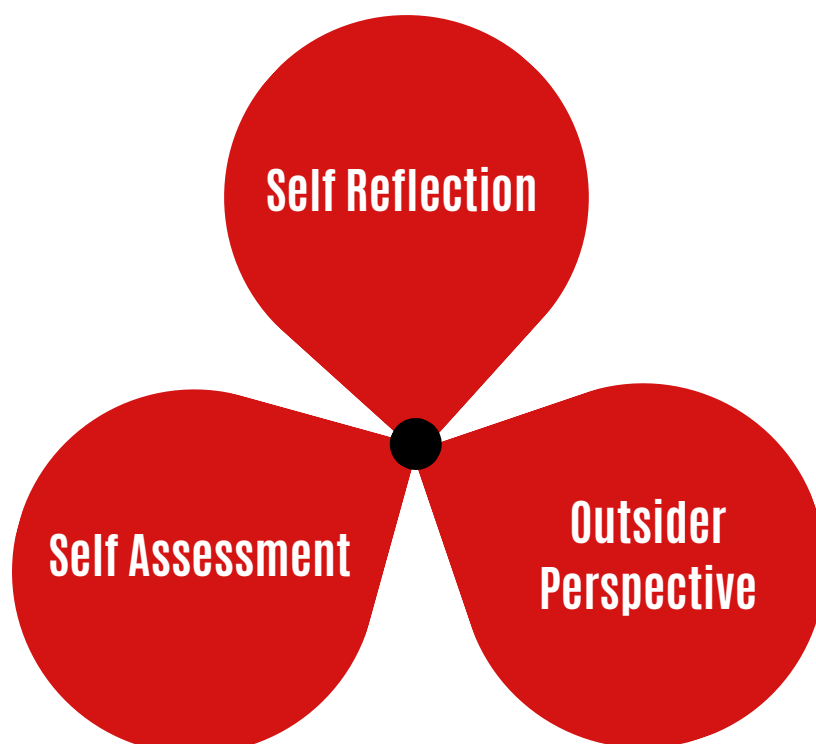
Skills Inventory Worksheet

Use this list of skills to assist you with identifying the skills that you have learned or developed through your experiences. Be sure that you are ready to discuss examples of each skill that you select through prior experiences such as education, professional accomplishments, or personal achievements.

Communication
- ☐ Oral
- ☐ Written
- ☐ Presentation
- ☐ Adaptability
- ☐ Negotiating
- ☐ Public Speaking
- ☐ Conflict Management
- ☐ Facilitating
- ☐ Mediating
- ☐ Rapport Building
- ☐ Correspondence
- ☐ Other: _____

Planning
- ☐ Analyzing
- ☐ Designing
- ☐ Strategy Development
- ☐ Surveying
- ☐ Conceptualizing
- ☐ Policy Development
- ☐ Reviewing
- ☐ Delegation
- ☐ Decision-Making
- ☐ Other: _____

Organization
- ☐ Priority Setting
- ☐ Assigning
- ☐ Work Plan
- ☐ Development
- ☐ Restructuring
- ☐ Projecting
- ☐ Other: _____

Business Management
- ☐ Approving
- ☐ Procedure Development
- ☐ Directing
- ☐ Implementation
- ☐ Policy Interpretation
- ☐ Managing People
- ☐ Managing Tasks
- ☐ System Development
- ☐ Project Management
- ☐ Other: _____

Managing Data
- ☐ Data Analysis
- ☐ Computing
- ☐ Information Management
- ☐ Research
- ☐ Inventory
- ☐ Quality Assessment
- ☐ Measuring
- ☐ Standard Setting
- ☐ Other: _____

Professional Development
- ☐ Performance Assessment
- ☐ Counseling
- ☐ Training
- ☐ Coaching
- ☐ Mentoring
- ☐ Developing
- ☐ Motivating
- ☐ Team Building
- ☐ Other: _____

Financial Management
- ☐ Auditing
- ☐ Controlling
- ☐ Financial Analysis
- ☐ Fundraising
- ☐ Budgeting
- ☐ Cost Accounting
- ☐ Financial Planning
- ☐ Other: _____

Technical/Clinical (List all skills relevant to the desired position)

_____   _____

_____   _____

_____   _____

_____   _____

Transferable Vs. Technical Skills

While you were completing the skills inventory checklist you most likely noticed that some skills appeared as more specific than others, especially once you arrived at the bottom where you were requested to include your technical/clinical skills.

Understanding the difference between transferable skills and technical/clinical skills will be paramount in the success of your job search. Although most employers want to know about your technical skills, depending on your career field, the transferable skills may be just as important, if not more.

A current trend in the job market shows:

57% OF LEADERS SAY THAT TRANSFERABLE SKILLS ARE MORE IMPORTANT THAN TECHNICAL SKILLS

Browne, B. (2018, December 12). LinkedIn's top recruiter says experience doesn't matter if you have these skills. Retrieved from https://www.fastcompany.com/90278549/how-to-hire-for-potential-why-transferable-skills-outrank-experience

So what is the difference between the two types of skills?

Transferable Skills: *The abilities and qualities that can be applied to any job*

Technical Skills: *The abilities and knowledge needed to perform specific tasks*

Doyle, A. (2020, November 02). List of technical skills for resumes, cover letters, and interviews. Retrieved March 10, 2021, from https://www.thebalancecareers.com/technical-skills-list-2063775#:~:text=Technical%20skills%20are%20the%20abilities,%2C%20mechanical%20equipment%2C%20or%20tools.

As you can see, a technical skill is a task/ability that you possess and have mastered that is relevant to the desired position. Although you may not currently possess many technical skills, especially if you are just starting out in the field, you will find that you may have learned some of these throughout your program.

You also want to keep in mind that since technical skills are specific to the job, even if you are applying to a position in the same industry or field, the technical skills necessary will most likely vary from role to role. This will become more evident as you climb the ladder throughout your career. An example of how technical skills may change with your career progression can be seen by looking at the field of nursing. A Certified Nursing Assistant will not have the same technical skills as a Registered Nurse, and the technical skills required for you as a Registered Nurse will not be the same as those required for a Nurse Practitioner.

Creating Your Elevator Speech

A major component to preparing for the job search is to knowing how to market yourself.

Imagine yourself in elevator with the CEO of a company where you want to work. How would you market yourself to this individual within the 30 seconds that it takes for the elevator to arrive at the next floor selected?

An elevator speech is exactly what you need prepared in order to succinctly and knowledgeably talk about yourself to that CEO. Preparing this brief 30 second summary about yourself, your skills, and your interests in the speech could help you in this situation to feel cool, calm, and collected, while marketing yourself as the ideal employee for that company.

Not only is an elevator speech helpful to have prepared for these types of encounters, but it is also a great tool to have on hand for career fairs and other networking events.

At its most basic level, the elevator speech is structured as:

Hi, my name is _____. I'm in the _____ field, and I am looking to do _____.

The last blank is what typically stumps students and recent graduates. This blank should be filled in with your current career aspiration. For some this might be attaining an entry-level position and for others this might be to move up the career ladder.

Depending on your background and your situation, you may also want to consider adding additional information in your elevator speech that draws attention to your degree, specialization, or concentration. An example might look like:

Hi, my name is _____. I will be graduating/I just graduated from South College with a degree in _____ and I am looking to do _____.

For some students, however, this may not be enough. You might want to focus on adding a "hook" or adding another statement that is going to grab the individual's attention. For example, you may want to try:

Hi, my name is _____ and after working for over 5 years in the field of helping people to heal, I am looking to continue to grow these skills and experiences within an underserved population.

<div align="center">

OR

</div>

Hi, my name is _____ and I am extremely passionate about helping innovative entrepreneurs reach their fullest potential. With over 5 years of experience in financial management for small companies and start-up's, I am looking for opportunities to branch out and represent clients of mid-sized organizations as well.

These may seem overwhelming to you, but sometimes they are just enough to make you memorable to the individual. If you are uncomfortable with these at first, test the effect of both approaches on members from your inner circle and monitor their responses.

The final piece of your elevator speech should include an actionable item. Be sure that once the individual has responded to your pitch that you ask for a business card or see if it is possible to leave your resume. You might want to try something to the effect of:

It was great meeting with you! Thank you for the information regarding your company and current openings. I would love to take a business card as well as leave my resume with you if possible.

Activity #6
Create Your Elevator Speech

Get Organized

Spending time determining what to do, what to say, and how to say it are all important pieces of preparation for a job search, however, these are of little benefit to you without a system to stay organized. One of the best steps that you can take before starting your job search is finding and implementing a system that will help you to stay organized. You never know when a potential employer will call or email and you will want to be prepared to respond in a moment's notice.

Here are some ideas to consider with staying organized during your search:
- Create a folder on your computer dedicated to your job search
  - Save the job description for each application
  - Save the resume and cover letter that you use for this application (pay close attention to the naming convention of these documents to ensure specificity and consistency)

- Maintain a Job Search Log (example below) that lists:
  - Company Name
  - Company Location
  - Job Title/Requisition Number (if applicable)
  - Date Applied
  - Contact Name (if this is known)
  - Status of Application
  - Follow-Up Information

- Create a schedule
  - Determine a specific amount of time you can set aside each day for your job search
  - Decide on a time of day with limited distractions from family, hobbies, homework, etc.
  - Plan a week ahead of time
  - Hold yourself accountable to meet your goals

Resume Submissions

Job Title/Requisition #	Company Name	Contact Name/Title	Contact/Company Phone Number	Contact/Company Email Address	Application Date	Source of Application Submission	Status of Application	Additional Comments

What to Expect During the Search

To further assist you with preparing for the job search, it is also important to consider your expectations. Based on the trends and knowledge that you gained from the information you collected in Activity #6, begin setting clear and reasonable expectations for yourself.   Since every field is different, this insight will help you to understand and identify the job market in your geographic area and the supply and demand for your desired career on both a national and local level.   Be sure to use this information to help keep you grounded in your search and to remind you that your experiences will be different from your peers and colleagues. Everyone will receive a varying number of interviews and responses from employers at different times throughout the job search.

You also want to remember that a career is an evolution. This means that you may have to start with an entry-level, part-time, or volunteer opportunity in order to gain the experience necessary for your desired position.

Some additional items to consider with setting your expectations also include:
- Job market in your geographic location
- Average salary for desired position (both on a national and local level)
- Experience required for the desired position
- Training and other qualifications for the desired position

Let's take a moment to document these for a reference point for when we enter the job searching phase.

Activity #7

Based on your research from Activity #5, answer the following questions to help you with setting clear expectations for your job search.

a. How long are job postings of positions of interest typically open in your geographic area?

b. How often are positions of interest typically posted in your geographic area?

c. What is the average salary for positions of interest in your geographic area?

d. Considering your education, training, and work experience, do you meet the minimum qualifications for the positions of interest? If not, what is your plan to obtain and gain these experiences?

The Basics of Job Hunting

Hopefully at this point, you are starting to feel more at ease with the concept of job searching. Throughout the workbook up to this point, you have predominantly focused on the general preparation that is needed in order to find success in starting your search, but there should still be focus on where to go and which resources to use in order to maximize your success. This section will help you to identify various resources to implement when starting your search.

Locating Available Jobs

Technology has helped to make job postings readily available. Although it by no means replaces previous popular methods of job searching, such as going door to door, making phone inquiries, or reviewing the classifieds in a newspaper, it does help to speed up the job search process.

Since you will want to focus on securing a position as quickly as possible, this workbook will narrow in on the technology you can use and other popular resources to aid your search.

Job Boards/Job Search Engines

Job search engines or job boards are one of the most popular places to start your search. These are websites that specifically note and publish employment and career opportunities. Many of these sites offer companies the ability to post for free or for a small fee, which is one of the many reasons why both job seekers and employers tend to turn to these websites first.

Did you know?

41%
of job searching candidates discover job opportunities though job boards
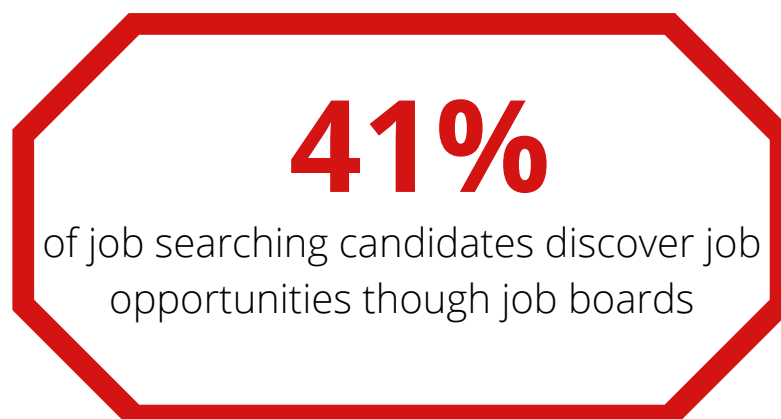
Clutch. (2019, January 9). Nearly 15% of job seekers use social media to land a new job. Retrieved from https://www.prnewswire.com/news-releases/nearly-15-of-job-seekers-use-social-media-to-land-a-new-job-300775324.html

Many individuals have heard of some of the more popular job boards including Indeed.com, CareerBuilder, Glassdoor, LinkedIn, and Zip Recruiter, but there many others that are field and industry specific as well.

Activity # 8
Identify 3-5 job boards that are specific to your industry that you plan on using during your job search.

1.
2.
3.
4.
5.

Company Websites

Although you can use a job board or job search engine to search for openings, you will also want to take the extra initiative to apply and regularly search on specific companies' websites. There are many benefits to applying directly on the organization's web-page including:

1. *Job boards do not always "talk" to the company's Applicant Tracking System/Human Resources Management System*

    Despite that you may have clicked the submit option on the job board, your application may look incomplete, or even worse, may not end up with the company for review. Due to potential communication errors between different software and their coding languages, there is no guarantee that when applying outside of the company's website that your application is submitted per the organization's standards.

2. *Companies may give preference to candidates who apply as a referral or directly on the company's website*

    When you apply directly to the company's website, it shows a genuine interest in working for that specific organization. It is likely that you have researched the organization to better understand their inner-workings and have taken the time to follow their website in search for an opening that fit your skills. This makes you more desirable to the employer.

3. *Companies tend to update openings in a timely manner on their websites*

    Since many companies use Applicant Tracking Systems, once an opening is filled, the opening typically is automatically removed on the company's website. This differs from job boards, where organizations are often responsible for manually monitoring their open requisitions and removing them by hand.

4. *Application directions may vary from the job board to the company's website*

    When there are more application directions on the employer's web-page than a job board, the employer may remove applicants from consideration who do not follow the appropriate steps.

Professional Organizations

Joining a professional organization is another avenue that you should consider within your job search. This will help you with networking as well as staying abreast of industry trends and changes.

Professional organizations are groups of individuals seeking to advance the knowledge of a specific profession and support the interest of those professionals and industry members to serve the public good

Locating Professional Organizations

Professional organizations exist in nearly every field/industry and sometimes even for subsectors of an industry. In order to locate professional organizations of interest, there are many resources you can turn towards. Some of these resources include:

- City's website through the Chamber of Commerce
- Internet search
- Local papers
- Social media, including LinkedIn

Once you have located potential professional organizations, you want to continue to research these in order to find the one that will best fit your situation. Are you looking for one that has both a local and a national presence? Is the cost of joining a factor? Do you plan on attending their conferences or seminars?

Considering what is important to you when joining a professional organization will help you to narrow down the lengthy list.

Activity # 9

Locate 3 professional organizations and rank them in order of your likelihood to join.

1.

| *Organization* | *Resource for Locating the Organization* | *Your Ranking* |

2.

| *Organization* | *Resource for Locating the Organization* | *Your Ranking* |

3.

| *Organization* | *Resource for Locating the Organization* | *Your Ranking* |

Benefits of Professional Organizations

Now that you have spent the time to identify potential professional organizations to join, challenge yourself to commit to joining to at least one of these within the next month. You will discover many benefits when joining a professional organization, including:

- Exclusive online resources
- Professional development
- Continued education
- Civic leadership
- Mentoring opportunities
- Discounted/free subscriptions to industry specific publications
- Attendance to seminars/conferences
- Industry/position specific job boards
- Discounted insurance plans
- Networking

Top Reasons Why Professionals Join Professional Organizations

Certifications
24%

Socializing
30%

Job Opportunities
34%

Myers, A. (2016). Member engagement study: Aligning organization strategy with what matters most to members. Abila. Retrieved from http://www.edgeresearch.com/wp-content/uploads/2016/06/Abila-Member-Engagement-Study.pdf

How to Engage Once You have Joined

Although joining a professional organization is a great start, in order to maximize these groups' benefits, you need to know how to best engage while being a member.

1. Attend events

Attending events held by a professional organization helps to improve your networking efforts. When you are at events, you will find the opportunity to meet individuals with various backgrounds and experiences. When doing so, you can exchange business cards and contact information, which will allow you to stay in communication with one another and share new ideas and information.

Attending events also provides you with the opportunity to learn and share your work and ideas with other professionals. When you are able to grow your knowledge in your field, you are able to help improve your chances of becoming a subject matter expert and prove your worth to potential employers and industry leaders.

2. Take on a leadership role

Adding the extra responsibilities that come along with being in a leadership role within a professional organization is a great way to continue to grow your resume and skill set. Not only will you be challenged in new ways and learn new skills, but you will also have the opportunity to be recognized in your industry and continue to expand your network by meeting and having deeper interactions with influential industry leaders. This will also help to elevate your networking efforts and to demonstrate yourself as a leader within your industry.

3. Volunteer to help with events

As a member of a professional organization you promote networking, build your experience, and gain knowledge as a professional. Although you might not have the time necessary to commit to a leadership role, by volunteering to assist with different events whenever possible, you can still gain many of the same benefits as you would by taking on a leadership role.

Networking

Networking is one of the most popular job searching basics. Most people achieve success in their job search and career development due to their network.

At its most basic form, networking is:

The action or process of interaction with others to exchange information and develop social and professional contacts

This definition of networking demonstrates that you can add anyone to your network regardless of his/her career, experience, or field of study. When trying to build your network, be sure to talk with classmates, colleagues, friends, and family members. You will most likely find that regardless of an individual's background, your network can provide you with advice and insight on specific companies or industries, job openings, or even introduce you to others so that you can continually expand your network.

Did you know?

85% of positions are filled through networking

70% of job seekers found a job through connections in a company

Only **11%** of LinkedIn users have more than 100 people listed in their network

Frost, A. (2017, November 14). 15 Surprising stats on networking and face-to-face communication. Retrieved from https://blog.hubspot.com/sales/face-to-face-networking-stats

Vukova, C. (2019, December 30). 73 Surprising networking statistics to boost your career. Retrieved from https://review42.com/networking-statistics/

Tips for Building a Successful Network

- **Decide how to organize your network**
  - Create a database or spreadsheet where you can enter key information including your: contact's name, company, phone number, address, email address, and dates of communication
  - Maintain an organized collection of business cards, notes, and comments

- **Communicate, communicate, and communicate**
  - Stay in touch with your network
  - Don't hesitate to ask for help
  - Use social media and various Internet websites as a resource to enhance your networking abilities and provide you with ideal times of contact

- **Initiate and schedule informational interviews**
  - Obtain information about the individual, employer, position, or company prior to reaching out-Utilize this information throughout the informational interview
  - Attempt to gain insight and build a strong relationship before explicitly requesting help from your contact

- **Follow up with your network**
  - Remain in constant contact with your network
  - Your network should be informed of your employment status and career goals
  - Never take your network for granted

- **Utilize social media and electronic platforms**
  - LinkedIn is a great way to stay in touch and focus on the professional piece of networking
  - Connecting on social media helps you to stay abreast of your connections' changes and successes

Activity # 10

Write down the name of 5 individuals you plan on contacting and their contact information in order to inform them of your career goals.

1.
2.
3.
4.
5.

Employer Direct Contact

Making direct contact with an employer is another form of networking. When you reach out to employers directly and ask "are you hiring" you are opening the door to build a relationship with either that recruiter, hiring manager, or employee. Although this can feel intimidating, don't be shy!

There are many different tools you can use in order to identify potential employers to visit and make these direct contacts. Be sure to look back on some of the activities you completed earlier. In addition to the employers you already identified, it may help you to be observant when you are driving around town. Some employers will place signs in their windows to let you know when they are hiring. You also may find it helpful to utilize other avenues to search for businesses through:
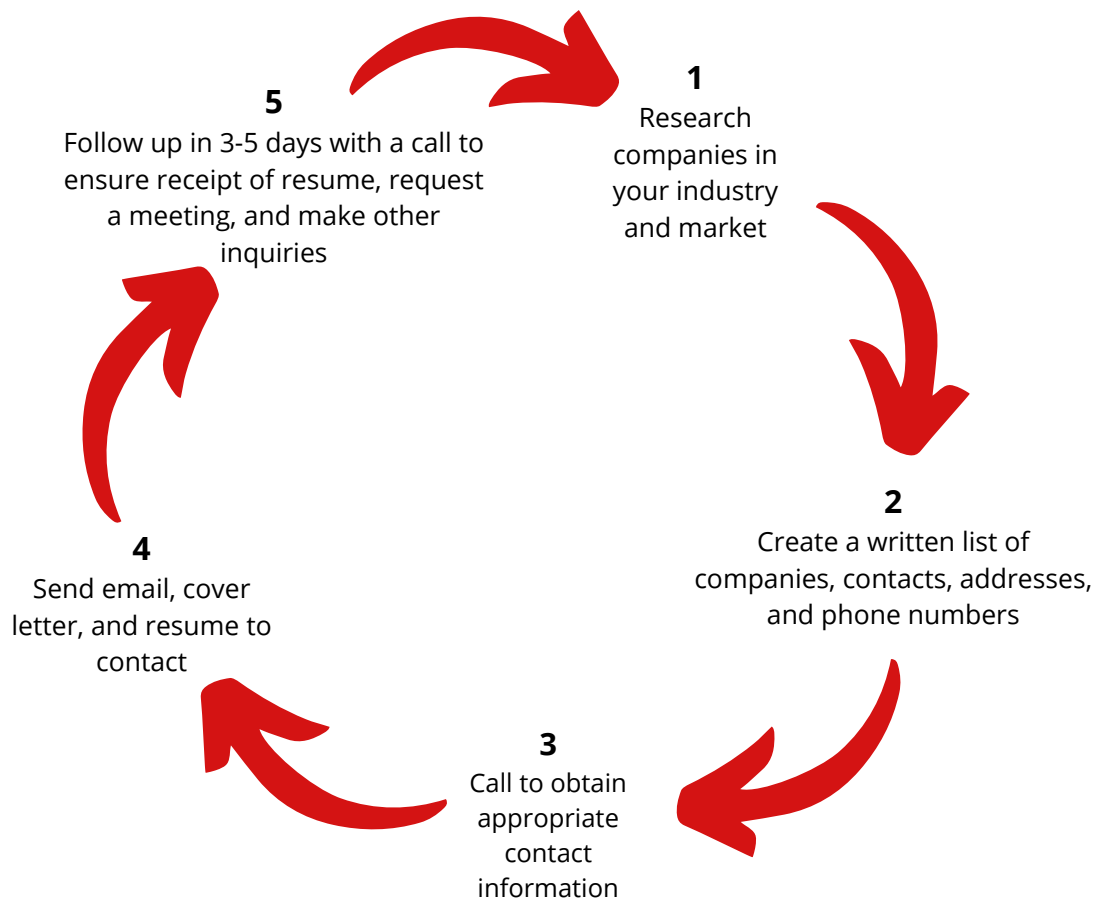
- www.linkedin.com
- www.indeed.com
- www.glassdoor.com
- www.careerbuilder.com

- State, local, and national newspapers
- Local Chamber of Commerce website
- Local Business Journal
- Facebook jobs page

The key to success with utilizing direct contact is to show initiative and meet with key individuals in organizations of your interest. If you can make a connection with a hiring manager before the company advertises an opening, you will be edging out your competition. Although it is not uncommon to receive push-back or negative responses, as many hiring managers and recruiters do not have much time for unannounced appearances, the worst thing that can happen is that they will say "no".

If this happens, be prepared to ask for a contact's name who will be hiring for a specific position or type of role that meets your interest. This can provide you with a starting point for your next outreach attempt.

When making direct contact with an employer, consider using an interactive strategy similar to the graphic below:

5
Follow up in 3-5 days with a call to ensure receipt of resume, request a meeting, and make other inquiries

1
Research companies in your industry and market

2
Create a written list of companies, contacts, addresses, and phone numbers

4
Send email, cover letter, and resume to contact

3
Call to obtain appropriate contact information

Although researching can be time consuming, when you spend the time to discover as much information as possible about the individual, his/her past experiences, the company, and industry trends, you increase the likelihood of a response.

More than 50%

of job searchers who spent an average of two hours researching an individual had success with informational interviews

Kauflin, J. (2017, May 19). How To Get The Great Jobs That Are Never Advertised. Retrieved from https://www.forbes.com/sites/jeffkauflin/2017/05/19/how-to-get-the-great-jobs-that-are-never-advertised/#45f204f74abe

Activity #11

Compose an informational interview request message in this box.

Example Informational Interview Request

Dear Ms. Smith,

I hope this message finds you well! I am hoping that you are able to provide me with advice. I am *(explain your situation here)* and I saw that you (*mention something specific about the individual that you discovered during your research*). I think that you could be a wealth of knowledge and would be grateful if you could answer some questions for me about the industry and what you believe are the top skills for *(insert the position title)*. I can only imagine how busy you must be, however, I feel that we both share a similar passion and I would love to hear more about your success.

Respectfully,
Your Name

Benefits of Networking

Regardless of your preferred networking method, there are many short-term and long-term benefits.

Looking beyond the benefits that have already been mentioned throughout this workbook, networking may give you the upper-hand in a job search, as it can help you to be considered for roles that may not be posted to the public or for roles that have not yet been made available. Since employers are not legally required to post their jobs on their job board, this provides you with an opportunity for consideration regardless of whether or not the position is posted at all or whether it is posted internally versus externally.
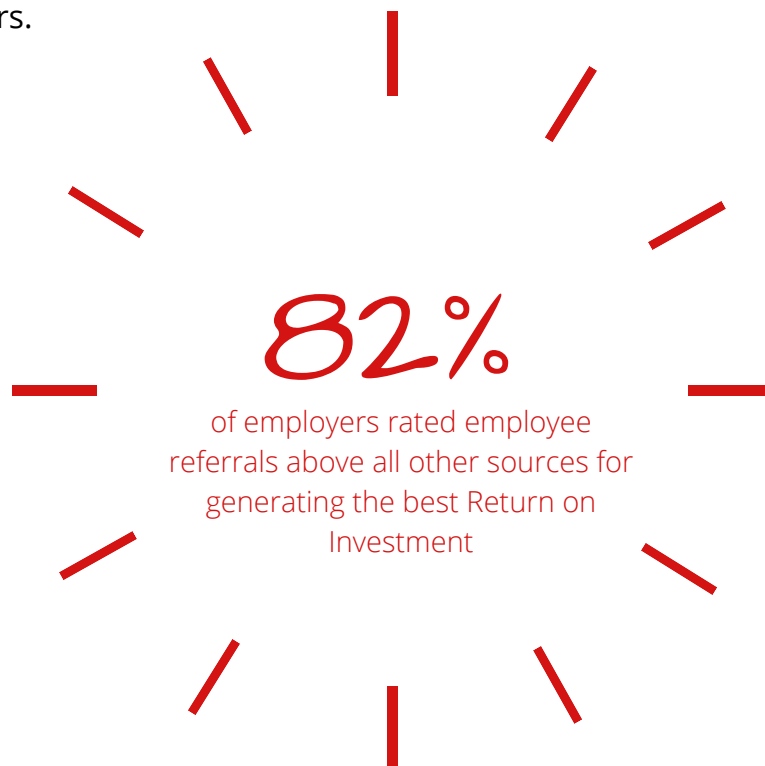
Activity #12

What steps do you plan on taking to regularly access the jobs that are not publicly advertised?

Activity #12 Response:

Similarly, you will also see that networking is a major benefit due to the success that companies experience when hiring new hires from referrals. Employers who tend to fill openings from referrals are able to expedite the hiring process from time of application to onboarding.

Not only does networking and hiring referrals alleviate the costs of filling open positions by decreasing the fulfillment time, but data has suggested that referrals are also more likely to stay with an employer longer than an employee hired from a job board or outside source.

Networking has also been named as the best source to a majority of companies for quality workers.

82%

of employers rated employee referrals above all other sources for generating the best Return on Investment

Stafiej, M. (2020, January 13). Employee referral statistics you need to know for 2020 (Infographic). Retrieved March 10, 2021, from https://www.linkedin.com/pulse/employee-referral-statistics-you-need-know-2020-mike-stafiej/?articleId=6622562177335336961

Social Media Presence

In addition to the significance that networking plays on a job search, you will also find that your social media presence will also impact your search.

70%

OF EMPLOYERS USE SOCIAL MEDIA TO SCREEN CANDIDATES DURING THE HIRING PROCESS

CareerBuilder. (2018, August 9). More than half of employers have found content on social media that caused them not to hire a candidate, according to recent CareerBuilder survey. Retrieved from https://www.prnewswire.com/news-releases/more-than-half-of-employers-have-found-content-on-social-media-that-caused-them-not-to-hire-a-candidate-according-to-recent-careerbuilder-survey-300694437.html

Employers are now reviewing candidates' social media profiles in order to gauge their professionalism and cultural fit. Since many organizations are seeking top talent and are working towards being named as a preferred place of employment by job seekers, ensuring that they are onboarding the highest quality candidates is extremely important in their hiring processes.

57%

OF EMPLOYERS LOCATED CONTENT ON CANDIDATES' SOCIAL MEDIA THAT CAUSED THEM TO NOT HIRE THOSE CANDIDATES

CareerBuilder. (2018, August 9). More than half of employers have found content on social media that caused them not to hire a candidate, according to recent CareerBuilder survey. Retrieved from https://www.prnewswire.com/news-releases/more-than-half-of-employers-have-found-content-on-social-media-that-caused-them-not-to-hire-a-candidate-according-to-recent-careerbuilder-survey-300694437.html

Considering the statistic above, you can see that your technical and transferable skills will only get you so far in the job search. In order to not be a part of the 57% of job candidates who were not selected due to their social media presence, one task to complete prior to applying to positions is to spend time cleaning up your social media pages.

Take a moment to check off each social media platform for which you have accounts so that you can review their appearance and ensure professionalism.
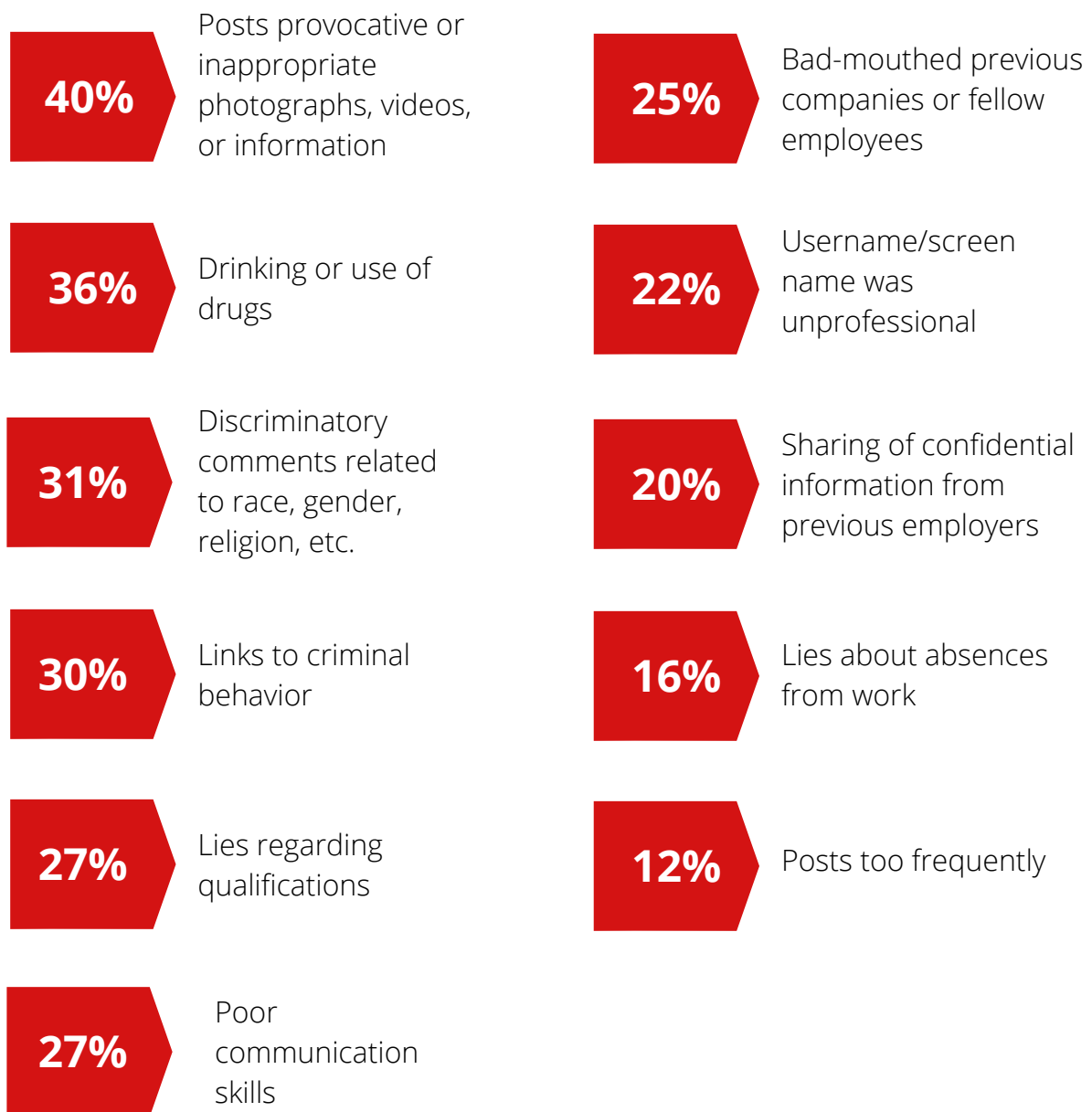
☐ Facebook   ☐ Twitter/X
☐ YouTube   ☐ Pinterest
☐ Instagram   ☐ LinkedIn
☐ TikTok   ☐ Snapchat

When you are tidying up your social media there are certain factors that can have a greater impact on how you are viewed by employers. Although we cannot completely control what others post about us on our pages, the individuals we are surrounded by help to define our identities. Employers will typically search for reasons to not hire you based on both the content you share and what others share about you.

Some of the most common offenders that attract negative attention by employers include profanity, provocative/inappropriate content, and illegal items.

Check out the statistics below to view the primary reasons and types of content that pushed employers to decide not to hire the candidate.

40% Posts provocative or inappropriate photographs, videos, or information

25% Bad-mouthed previous companies or fellow employees

36% Drinking or use of drugs

22% Username/screen name was unprofessional

31% Discriminatory comments related to race, gender, religion, etc.

20% Sharing of confidential information from previous employers

30% Links to criminal behavior

16% Lies about absences from work

27% Lies regarding qualifications

12% Posts too frequently

27% Poor communication skills

CareerBuilder. (2018, August 9). More than half of employers have found content on social media that caused them not to hire a candidate, according to recent CareerBuilder survey. Retrieved from https://www.prnewswire.com/news-releases/more-than-half-of-employers-have-found-content-on-social-media-that-caused-them-not-to-hire-a-candidate-according-to-recent-careerbuilder-survey-300694437.html

With so many factors that could deter a hiring manager from considering you as a candidate, you may be thinking that it is best to disable all of your social media until after you have secured employment. The fact of the matter is that having a social media presence can also aid you in your search. Earlier we discussed how social media can assist you with networking, but the reality is that it can assist you in so many other ways as well.

For instance, did you know that:

47%

of employers say that without an online presence, they would not call a candidate

Driver, S. (2018, October 7). Keep it clean: Social media screenings increase for job seekers. Retrieved from https://www.businessnewsdaily.com/2377-social-media-hiring.html

Regardless of whether or not the lack of an online presence is due to desiring more privacy in your life, not possessing an online presence provides the appearance that you are trying to hide something. In fact:

37%

of hiring managers have found information supporting the candidate's professional qualifications
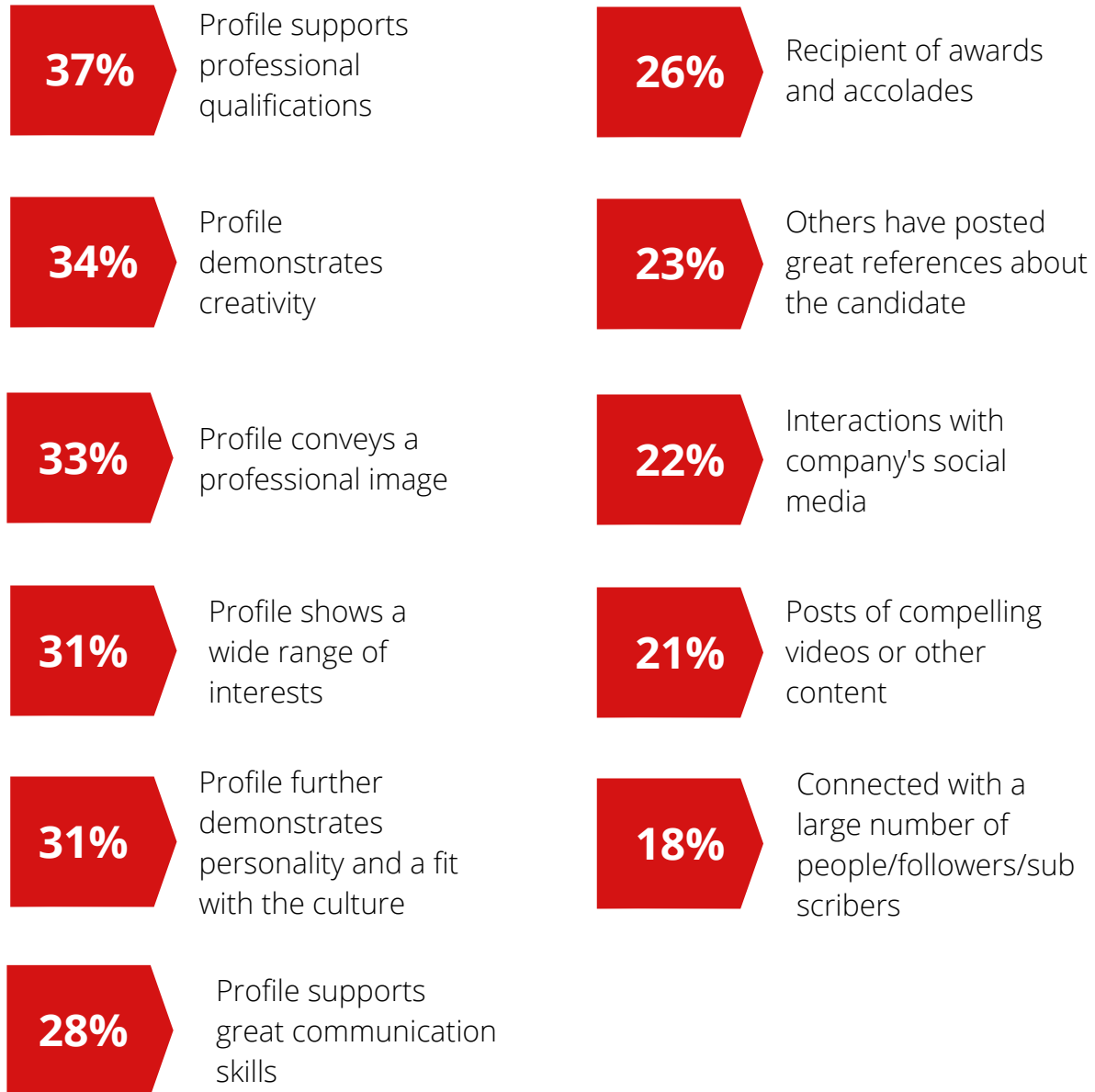
AND

33%

of hiring manages were impressed with the candidate's professional image

Driver, S. (2018, October 7). Keep it clean: Social media screenings increase for job seekers. Retrieved from https://www.businessnewsdaily.com/2377-social-media-hiring.html

Just as there are factors of a social media page that help to dissuade a hiring manager from hiring candidates, there are also factors of a well-polished social media page that help to persuade them. Here are some of the most common reasons why hiring managers have selected to offer a candidate a position based on his/her social media.

37% Profile supports professional qualifications

26% Recipient of awards and accolades

34% Profile demonstrates creativity

23% Others have posted great references about the candidate

33% Profile conveys a professional image

22% Interactions with company's social media

31% Profile shows a wide range of interests

21% Posts of compelling videos or other content

31% Profile further demonstrates personality and a fit with the culture

18% Connected with a large number of people/followers/sub scribers

28% Profile supports great communication skills

CareerBuilder. (2018, August 9). More than half of employers have found content on social media that caused them not to hire a candidate, according to recent CareerBuilder survey. Retrieved from https://www.prnewswire.com/news-releases/more-than-half-of-employers-have-found-content-on-social-media-that-caused-them-not-to-hire-a-candidate-according-to-recent-careerbuilder-survey-300694437.html
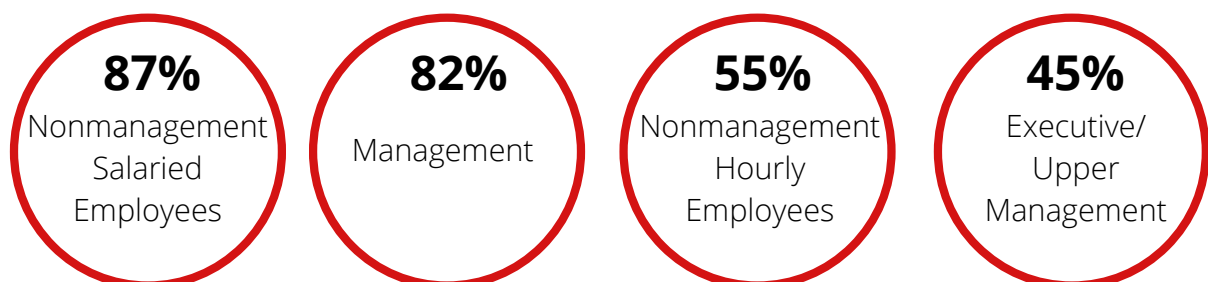
Employers not only are looking at your social media to determine your qualifications and fit for the position, but also for their own benefit. These pages can assist them with reaching out to a higher number of potential job searchers in a shorter time period.

84%

of organizations are currently using social media for recruitment purposes. Another 9% plan on implementing it in the near future.

SHRM. (2018, January 4). Using social media for talent acquisition. Retrieved from https://www.shrm.org/hr-today/trends-and-forecasting/research-and-surveys/pages/social-media-recruiting-screening-2015.aspx

Since unfilled positions cost companies lots of money, it is no surprise that they are looking for ways to speed up the hiring process and reduce those costs. These openings vary from entry level, non-management, hourly employees, all of the way through executive and upper management positions. Here is the breakdown of what the percentage of each type of job is recruited through social media.

87% Nonmanagement Salaried Employees	**82%** Management	**55%** Nonmanagement Hourly Employees	**45%** Executive/ Upper Management

SHRM. (2018, January 4). Using social media for talent acquisition. Retrieved from https://www.shrm.org/hr-today/trends-and-forecasting/research-and-surveys/pages/social-media-recruiting-screening-2015.aspx

Consider Staffing Agencies

When you are beginning your job search, you want to look at all avenues for locating opportunities. One resource that many job seekers overlook is a staffing agency (also known as executive recruiter, employment services, or headhunters). A staffing agency can be an effective job search tool in addition to implementing other methods and resources. Staffing agencies are third party organizations that are hired out by other companies in order to locate qualified talent. Some of the most popular reasons why companies use staffing agencies to fill roles include:

- **New employees are expensive**
  A large cost is associated with filling open positions. Although the cost can vary depending on the organization, role, location, etc., the cost can range from $1,000-$5,000 per opening. When an organization assumes these costs for multiple openings, it can be a sizable amount. Employers who use staffing agencies may be selecting this option to minimize their cost.

- **Trying before "buying" a candidate**
  When an employer hires a candidate directly, they are responsible for the expense of the employee's salary, however, when using a staffing agency to fill the role, the staffing agency assumes that responsibility as well as other costs such as benefits and onboarding. This affords the company time to focus on training and identifying the candidate's abilities. When the candidate's assignment ends, the employer may choose to directly hire the candidate, therefore decreasing the overall recruitment cost and allowing them to "try" the candidate before committing.

- **Industry ebbs and flows**
  Some industries have peak seasons where more staffing is needed. When this happens it can be expensive for companies to go through the trouble of trying to locate a seasonal or part-time employee. Using a staffing agency allows a company to maximize their time and their money, promptly fill a role, and worry less about other potential costs such as paying unemployment claims.

- **Projects requiring a specific skill set**
  Some projects that employers are looking to complete require a specific or specialized skill set. If the project is developing a software or implementing and handling change management, these might only require an employee for a brief amount of time. By working with a staffing agency, the employer can easily secure the employment of a qualified candidate without having to worry about another full-time, permanent employment on the books.

- **No time for the recruitment process**
  Perhaps an employer is looking to grow or is currently understaffed. Since recruitment can take a lot of time and effort, using a staffing company can help to make this process more efficient for the employer, leaving more time for the company to spend focusing on growing rather than hiring.

An important concept to remember when using a staffing agency is that the staffing agency's first responsibility is to the employer, not to you as the candidate. This means that unless you are diligently following up with the staffing agency you can easily slip through the cracks. In order to maximize your efforts with a staffing agency, you will want to always remain professional and persistent while remaining open to any type of position. Some employers that the staffing agency are assisting may only be looking to fill part-time openings, while others may only be looking to fill full-time openings. Regardless of what the employer is seeking, be sure to remain open to anything, in order to maximize your chances of finding full-time, permanent employment down the road.

U.S. STAFFING COMPANIES EMPLOYED AN AVERAGE OF

3.10 MILLION

TEMPORARY AND CONTRACT WORKERS DURING THE FIRST QUARTER OF 2018

O'Donnell, R. (2018, June 14). Staffing agencies report record number of contract, temp workers. Retrieved from https://www.hrdive.com/news/staffing-agencies-report-record-number-of-contract-temp-workers/525569/

You may also want to gather a list of key questions to ask the staffing agency before committing to working with them. Since every staffing agency is different, the ways that each agency works with individuals may differ. For instance some require their clients to pay them a small fee, some only offer temporary positions, while others offer contract to hire, etc. Some of the staffing agencies' answers to your questions may negatively impact your decision to collaborate with that particular agency, while other answers may help you with planning your next step.

Here are some questions to consider asking a staffing agency/headhunter:

- **Is there a fee that the client pays to utilize employment services?**

- **How is the staffing agency compensated/how will I be compensated?**

- **Are there any limitations in your "contract" with the company?**

- **Do you have current job openings in my desired field?**

- **Are the majority of positions offered contract to hire, permanent, or temporary?**

- **What is the likelihood of a position secured through your agency turning to a full-time, permanent position?**

- **What is the timeframe you are required to work with the agency before the employer is permitted to hire you permanently?**

When utilizing a staffing agency, you want to be wary of solely relying on the agency to locate new employment. Although these agencies can help you to locate more openings and may be a great resource to building connections within various organizations and industries, the staffing agencies may have other clients with similar credentials who are open to the same opportunities as you. This means that as long as the agency is able to have one of its candidates placed in the opening, there is no preference for which candidate is chosen.

Here is a list of the top 10 staffing agencies from 2020. You may find it helpful to research each of these so that you can gain a better understanding for the various countries where these agencies help fill roles, the large number of clients that they represent, and the types of roles that they fill.

1 Randstad

2 Adecco

3 Robert Half

4 Kelly Services

5 TrueBlue

6 Manpower Group

7 Express Employment Professionals

8 Integrity Staffing Solutions

9 EmployBridge

10 Aerotek

The SMB Guide. (2020, February 24). Best 75 staffing agencies for fast hiring in 2020 [Updated]. Retrieved from https://www.thesmbguide.com/staffing-agencies

In order to help you with selecting the best staffing agency try looking at industry specific agencies.

Activity #14

Locate 3 industry specific staffing agencies that you can use during your search.
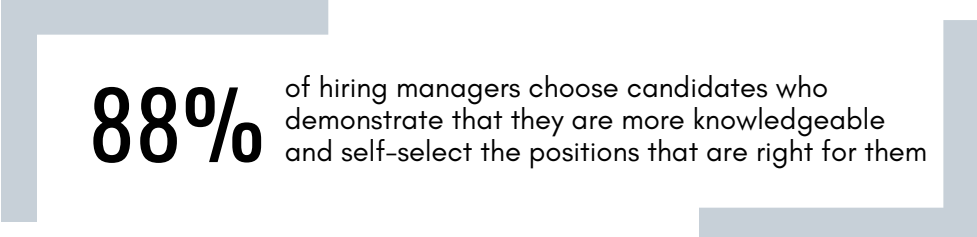
1.
2.
3.

Prepare and Personalize Application Materials

Despite that utilizing various resources throughout your job search will be beneficial, there is one last area that will also require your regular attention and focus. You will want to ensure that every application, resume, and cover letter you submit is personal and speaks directly to the desired position and directly to that organization. This does not mean that you will need to recreate the wheel every time that you apply, however, it means that you will want to make slight adjustments to your job search documents in order to aid your search.

There are many reasons as to why personalizing your application materials will help to increase your success.
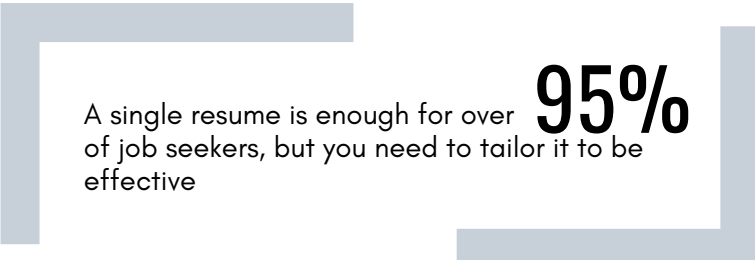
Here are just a few:

- **You increase your chances of clearing the Applicant Tracking System's (ATS) review**

- **You appear genuinely interested in the opportunity**

- **You learn to regularly update your resume, demonstrating your continual professional growth and development for future job searching**

- **Helps you to prepare for an interview**

- **Demonstrates that you are organized and qualified**

88%
of hiring managers choose candidates who demonstrate that they are more knowledgeable and self–select the positions that are right for them

Schwantes, M. (2017, November 4). 90 Percent of hiring managers surveyed say this interview skill makes job candidates irresistible. Retrieved from https://www.inc.com/marcel-schwantes/this-is-no-1-trait-hiring-managers-want-most-according-to-research.html

A single resume is enough for over **95%** of job seekers, but you need to tailor it to be effective

Proctor, C. (2019, November 27). How many versions of your resume do you need? (Examples). Retrieved from https://www.zipjob.com/blog/how-many-resumes-do-you-need/

Spending the time to edit and tweak each of these application materials every time that you apply for a position can feel tedious and extremely time consuming, especially when you are not sure where to start. Here are some areas that you will want to review, edit, and tweak with each application to help expedite this.

COVER LETTER

- Date of submission
- Employer address
- Hiring manager/recruiter's name
- Position title throughout the body
- Company's name throughout the body
- Applicable skills/achievements throughout the body

RESUME

- Professional/Background Summary to include key words from the job description
- Areas of Expertise/Skills
- Achievements listed in work experience should align with the job posting

Once you have made some changes that help to demonstrate a genuine interest in the position and align your skills with those listed in the job posting, you want to ensure that you are remaining organized with your search. In order to accomplish this, be sure to re-save your cover letter and resume as a new file for each position.

Example:

John Smith is applying to a Help Desk Technician position at ABC Compay.

His resume and cover letter should be titled, respectively:
"JohnSmithResumeHelpDeskTech-ABC Company"

"JohnSmithCLHelpDeskTech-ABC Company"

You will notice a couple of key factors with the above examples:

1. John's first and last name are listed in both files' names
You want to include both your first and last names because other applicants may share the same name(s) as you, increasing the hiring manager's chances of confusion. In addition, not all Applicant Tracking Systems pair the resumes with the applicant's application for the hiring manager's review. This means that if the hiring manager receives 15 resumes that are titled "resume," the hiring manager may not be able to connect the resume with the proper candidate.

2. The title of the position for which John is applying and the organization where John is apply are listed in both files' names
You want to include the position title and organization's name in both files because this shows a genuine interest in applying to that specific role.

3. The only difference between the two files' names are the indication of whether it is a resume or cover letter
You want to remain consistent with your formatting and naming convention, as it demonstrates that you are organized and attentive to detail. The only difference between your files' names will be to indicate the type of application material.

Remain Proactive

Regardless of which step you are on in your job search, remember it is important to remain proactive. This means that you will need to apply, apply, and apply.

Dedicate Time to Apply

Consider your job search a full-time job. Although it may not be possible to spend 30-40 hours each week searching for a job, your goal should be a minimum of 25 hours a week.

Here is how you can break apart your time sent searching in a week:

5 Hours per Week

Composing and editing job searching materials such as resumes, cover letters, and follow-up letters/emails for each position of interest

5 Hours per Week

Searching and applying to jobs posted through online sources including job boards and employer websites

3 Hours per Week

Identifying organizations in your industry and location of interest to further inquire on employment prospects

3 Hours per Week

Traveling to and participating in interviews, phone screens, video interviews, etc.

8 Hours per Week

Devoting time to various networking activities including attending career fairs, participating in professional organizations' meetings, reaching out to professionals to complete informational interviews, job shadowing, etc.

In addition to the strategies listed earlier, you should be searching for positions of interest that align with your experiences and qualifications. This means that if you want to work at a hospital, don't waste your time applying at a restaurant during the first week of your search. Hold off on applying to non-industry specific positions until you have exhausted your efforts with ones that align with your desired industry. No matter what, remember, candidates who are currently employed are more likely to locate new employment faster.

IN A STUDY SPANNING 4 WEEKS, ONLY

16%

OF JOB OFFERS WERE GIVEN TO THOSE UNEMPLOYED

Purtill, C. (2017, April 11). The biggest mistake people make when searching for a job is not acting like they already have one. Retrieved from https://qz.com/955079/research-proves-its-easier-to-get-a-job-when-you-already-have-a-job/

Despite that you want to focus on jobs for which you are qualified, remember, that as long as you are keeping your expectations reasonable, there is nothing wrong with applying to a job where you are missing a couple of qualifications. The most important thing to remember when applying to these jobs is to maintain reasonable expectations.

You may also find it helpful to keep in mind that:

23.6 Days

IS THE AVERAGE NUMBER OF DAYS BETWEEN AN INTERVIEW AND A JOB OFFER FOR NEW COLLEGE GRADUATES

NACE Staff. (2018, February 19). Benchmarks: Cycle times, offer and acceptance rates. Retrieved from https://www.naceweb.org/talent-acquisition/trends-and-predictions/benchmarks-cycle-times-offer-and-acceptance-rates/

In addition, remember that throughout your job search, Career Services is here to help you create a strong job searching game-plan that will work for you and your schedule. Keep the Career Services staff in the loop so that he/she can regularly assist you and provide you with additional tips and tricks.

Activity #15

On the business card below, write down the contact information for the Career Services staff.
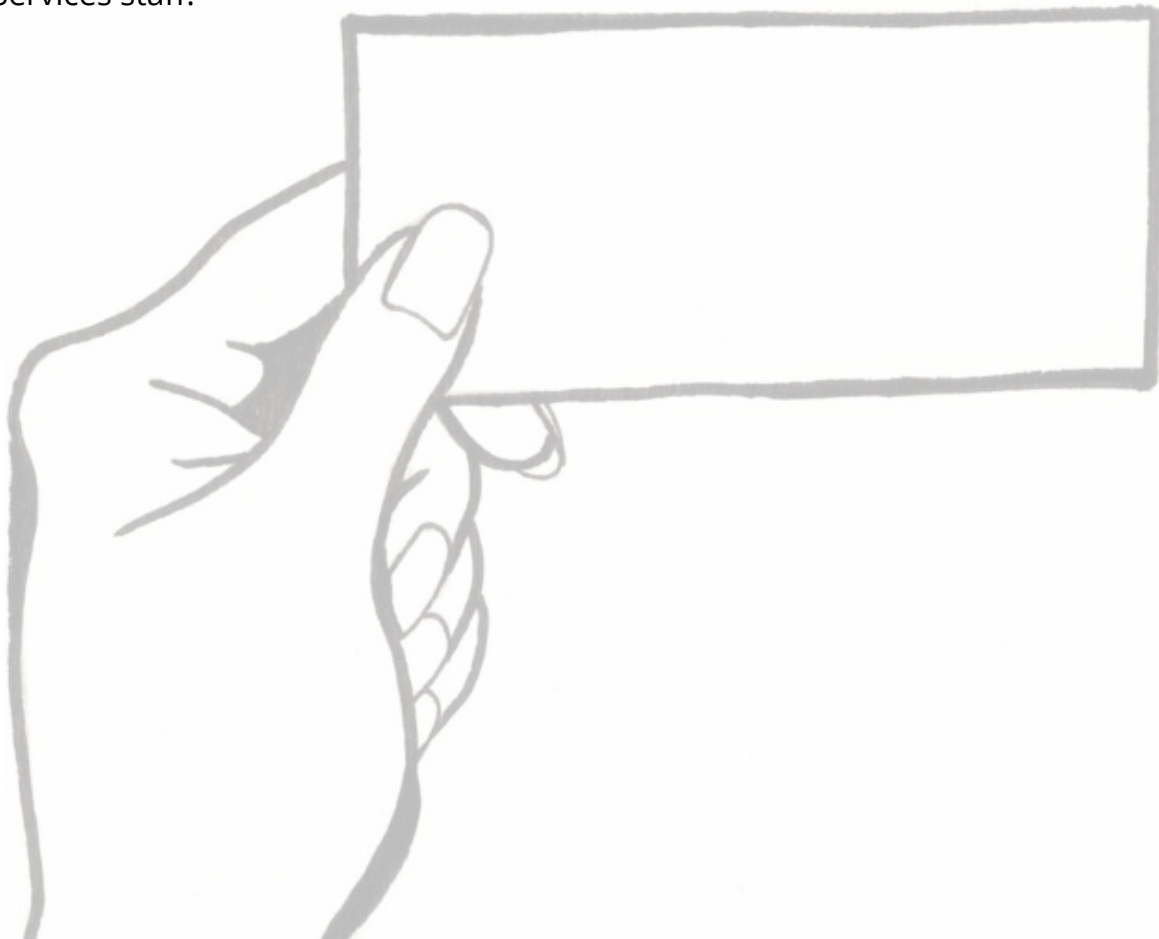
Applying for jobs can be time consuming, but do not forget that it is still important to remain detailed and truthful in the process. Be sure that you are explicitly following the instructions, especially in times when there are additional directives that indicate a specific format for the submission of your resume and cover letter and any requirement of references.

Secure Your References

At this point in your job search preparation, you also want to remember to secure three to five professional references. The individuals you choose are a powerful tool in the job search process because they can positively promote your strengths and experience.

When deciding who to ask there are a couple of questions you should ask yourself first:

- *Does this individual have a professional presence on the phone and in written correspondence?*

- *Can this individual speak towards my work ethic?*

- *Can this individual eloquently discuss my strengths and weaknesses?*

- *Will this individual depict me in a positive light?*

Being able to positively answer these questions will help you with deciding who to ask to act as a reference. Keep in mind that despite that our friends and family may be the first people we think about asking to act as a reference, they may not always be the best choices for a professional setting.

Here are some people who you will want to turn to first, before asking some of your friends and family:

- *Current or former manager/boss*

- *Current or former colleague/coworker*

- *Current or former peer/classmate*

- *Current or former instructor/professor/advisor*

- *Member(s) of a professional networking group*

- *Current employee in the organization of interest*

Once you have identified who you will ask to be a reference, it is important that you begin to ask these individuals right away. You never want to indicate a reference in the job search process without their forewarning and consent. If that person was contacted by a potential employer and does not think as highly of you as you initially believed, the surprise call from an employer may be the tipping factor and your reference may hurt your chances of becoming employed. In addition, if the individual does not know to expect calls from an employer regarding you as a candidate, he/she may not have his/her voicemail and phone ready and may never answer the employer's call, therefore removing your chances of securing the position.

Did you know?

1 IN 3 CANDIDATES ARE REMOVED FROM CONSIDERATION FOLLOWING REFERENCE CHECKS

Accountemps. (2019, March 12). Survey: 1 in 3 candidates removed from consideration following reference checks. Retrieved from http://rh-us.mediaroom.com/2019-03-12-Survey-1-In-3-Job-Candidates-Removed-From-Consideration-Following-Reference-Checks

If you are not sure how to ask someone to be your reference, you may simply want to start with a basic conversation. A basic conversation will typically include updating one another on changes and news in each others' lives. Searching for a job requires you to plan and therefore, will be a part of this conversation. You can mention that you will be finishing up with school shortly or that you recently completed your program and will be planning on looking for a job in your field of study.   A natural conversation will continue to evolve discussing your progress in your job search, where you can mention your need for references.

Activity #16

What are the key topics you plan on discussing when asking someone to be your reference?

Once you have your references secured, it is important that you keep these individuals up to date as to where you are with your job search. Although you do not need to notify them every time you apply to a position, you should be sure to notify them whenever you have completed a strong interview. In addition, if a hiring manager mentions anything to you regarding requiring references during the interview, you may also want to notify your references so that they are prepared.

When you experience a positive interview, you will want to inform your references of a couple of items including:
- The company you interviewed with
- The position you interviewed for
- General job requirements of the position
- Any skills you believe the hiring manager/position requires

Activity #17

Use the area below to write down 3 references, your connection, and their contact information (phone number, email address, mailing address)

Now that you have your references squared away, you can focus on the final pieces to remaining proactive in your search. Remember, you can always show your motivation and professionalism throughout the process by going the extra mile when you apply. This means that you should be using not only your references, but the rest of your network and personalize your application materials to show your passion and desire to work in this field and at that specific company.

THE RESUME

The Resume
Effective Resumes Land Interviews

Setting yourself up for success with landing a job takes more than simply preparing your mindset and learning how to utilize the various resources necessary throughout the job search. You also have to prepare your application materials and submit everything that the company is requesting in order to be considered for an opening.

Composing your resume is the first step to being prepared to apply for these desired positions. A strong resume is often considered the key to successfully landing an interview.

DID YOU KNOW?

The average time that a recruiter spends looking at a resume is 7.4 seconds

Ladders, Inc. (2018, November 6). Ladders updates popular recruiter eye-tracking study with new key insights on how job seekers can improve their resumes. Retrieved from https://www.prnewswire.com/news-releases/ladders-updates-popular-recruiter-eye-tracking-study-with-new-key-insights-on-how-job-seekers-can-improve-their-resumes-300744217.html

When you are building your resume it is important to keep in consideration the amount of time that a recruiter will spend reviewing this document. Despite that your resume may be sent through an Applicant Tracking System before a hiring manager or recruiter is given the opportunity to review it, the fact that less than 10 seconds is being spent reviewing this document means that you need to make it strong right from the beginning.

What is a resume?

A resume is a one to two page summary of your professional qualifications including but not limited to your education, work experiences, professional accomplishments, awards, and recognition.
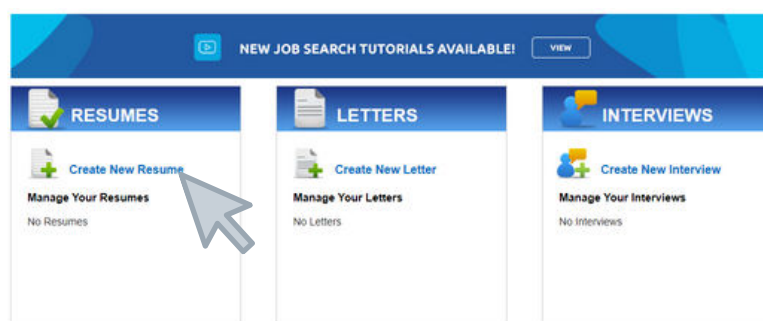
Creating Your Resume

Most of you have probably created a resume at one point in time, but if you have not or if you want to start building a brand new one, there are plenty of resources available for you to use, including the knowledge of the Career Services staff.

Rather than staring at a blank page when building your resume, check out our online resume builder available to all South College students and alumni at https://skillsfirst.com/organizations/south. SkillsFirst was developed to help guide you step by step with creating and formatting a resume while removing some of the anxiety that typically comes with it. SkillsFirst offers many features that you will find to be beneficial when creating your resume, including:

- Built-in content assistance that walks you through each section and step of resume writing
- Instructions and examples for various resume styles and fields/jobs
- Easy to use style templates that you can apply in one click

To get started with SkillsFirst:

- Visit https://skillsfirst.com/organizations/south
- Select "NEW USER" in the top right corner
- Complete the Contact/Login Information and select "I AGREE WITH THE TERMS..."
- Complete the rest of your profile including Education Information, Career Preferences, and Additional Information
- Select the Create New Resume

- View the Getting Started Video and start writing

Once you have familiarized yourself with a couple of different resources, it is important to start building the content of your resume. This guide will walk you through how to create your resume section by section.

Section 1: Header

The first section to any resume is your header. A recruiter and/or hiring manager needs to know who is the owner of the resume and how to contact that individual.

Here are some guidelines to building your header:

- Include your name, address (city, state, and zip code at a minimum), primary phone number, email address, link to your website/social networking site, such as LinkedIn (when appropriate)

- Be sure that the print is large enough to read and that all of the information is correct, including punctuation and capitalization

- Do not list nicknames unless designed to make your name easier to pronounce or if it is a commonly accepted version of your name (example: Jonathan = Jon)

- In order to help your name stand out, you may want to bold-face it or write it in all capitals

- Use the address closest to the job, if you have multiple addresses

- Use the phone number with a professional-sounding voicemail or answering machine

- Provide an email address that is professional
    (example: JohnSmith123@gmail.com)

- If needed, create an email account specifically designated for your job search (Gmail accounts tend to be the most commonly accepted by Applicant Tracking Systems)

- Add all appropriate credentials behind your name in the appropriate order
    - Credentials should be listed in the order of permanent to temporary
    - Example for a graduate with a Bachelor of Science in Nursing who has passed the NCLEX:
        John Smith, BSN, RN
    - Example for a graduate with a Master of Science in Nursing with a Concentration in Family Nurse Practitioner who has passed boards and currently possesses an APRN license from the appropriate Board of Nursing:
        John Smith, MSN, APRN, FNP-C

Section 2:
Objective/Background Summary/Professional Summary

The second section of your resume may look different depending on your experience. The goal of this next section of your resume is to indicate the type of position that you are seeking and why you are applying based off of your experiences. You have three options depending on your number of years and type of work experience:

OBJECTIVE
An Objective should be used when you possess 0-1 years of any experience or relevant experience

BACKGROUND SUMMARY
A Background Summary should be used when you possess 1-5 years of relevant work experience

PROFESSIONAL SUMMARY
A Professional Summary should be used when you possess 5+ years of relevant work experience and could be considered a subject matter expert

Which one will you use?

Once you know which section is the most applicable to your situation, you will want to start creating it. Let's look at each option one at a time to determine the best way to compose the second section of your resume.

OBJECTIVE
An objective is a short, targeted statement that clearly outlines your career goals. In order to make your objective stand out to the manager, you will need to not only state what you are seeking but what types of skills that you are looking to utilize in your next position.

Objective Example:

To obtain an entry-level account representative position with a Fortune 300 company that utilizes strong time management and organization skills, while offering room for growth and advancement through extensive hands-on training

BACKGROUND SUMMARY

When compared to the objective, the background summary is more commonly used and considered a resume standard. Since most job seekers possess transferable skills and can creatively market their strengths in a way that meets the criteria of the desired position, a background summary provides the opportunity to discuss skills, experiences, and successes, while grabbing the attention of the hiring manager.

A background summary should be a string of three to six fragmented statements that include your current profession, your number of years of experience, and general information regarding your largest or most notable accomplishments and skills.

Background Summary Example:

Sales and marketing manager possessing 3 years of experience in retail and real estate environments. Dynamic team leader with proven successes in exceeding annual sale targets by an average of 6% while developing and implementing training for support and entry-level staff. Possesses strengths in building and maintaining rapport with clients of diverse backgrounds to help build positive brand recognition among current and new clients.

When reviewing the background summary example above, you may notice that this section could easily be tweaked to include keywords and key phrases from the job description. As discussed in the first section of this workbook, it is important to remember to personalize your application materials to the desired position. You can easily substitute key words and key phrases where necessary with the use of a background summary rather than editing and reworking your entire resume.

Not only does the background summary provide information necessary for the Applicant Tracking System (ATS) to select your resume as a qualified candidate, but it also provides a strong vision for you as a professional to the hiring manager or recruiter. A well written background summary should be able to demonstrate the desired job based off of the accomplishments that you have achieved.

PROFESSIONAL SUMMARY

The professional summary is developed similarly to the background summary. Although the title will change in order to indicate that your work is that of a professional level, the professional summary will be of a similar length and similar format.

If you are planning on using a Professional Summary, you will create a string of three to six fragmented statements that emphasize your professional background and training, experiences, skills, and accomplishments. Remember that this is a brief overview of the items that are most relevant to the desired position. This means that these fragmented statements should help demonstrate the reasons why you are the best candidate for the position for which you are applying.

If we take the same example from the background summary, you will see that the only piece that changes is the number of years, as a professional summary should be used if you possess over 5 years of relevant experience.

Professional Summary Example:

Sales and marketing manager possessing 6 years of experience in retail and real estate environments. Dynamic team leader with proven successes in exceeding annual sale targets by an average of 6% while developing and implementing training for support and entry-level staff. Possesses strengths in building and maintaining rapport with clients of diverse backgrounds to help build positive brand recognition among current and new clients.

Activity #18

Use the space below to draft your objective, background summary, or professional summary.

Section 3: Education

As a current student or recent graduate, in almost every case your education should be listed near the top of your resume and will be listed as the next major section. Since a resume's main purpose is about drawing attention to your accomplishments and achievements, while a new graduate or current student, this will be one of your most noteworthy accomplishments for the first couple of years of achieving the degree.

Although the education section of a resume can seem pretty straight forward, there are also a couple of standards that you will want to keep in mind:

- In almost every case, the education you received will most likely be listed in reverse chronological order
    - This means that your most recent degree will be listed first
    - If you already possess a terminal (Doctoral) or graduate degree (Master's) and are currently pursuing/recently completed a new undergraduate degree (Bachelor's or Associate's), you may want to list degrees in order of significance to the desired position

- You will always list the full, formal name of your degree/certification/diploma, the school you attended, the city and state of the school (which indicates the campus location), and the graduation date
    - The full formal name of your degree will include the degree level, the focus of the coursework (arts or sciences), and your major
        - *Example: Bachelor of Science in Nursing*
    - If you have not yet completed your degree, you will want to place the word "Anticipated" in front of the graduation date. This will indicate to a recruiter/hiring manager that you are currently enrolled and pursuing a degree with this institution

- High school information should not be included on your resume once you have begun pursuing a college degree

- You may want to consider including your GPA if you have limited relevant experience and/or if your Cumulative GPA is higher than a 3.5

- You might also want to include educational accomplishments and achievements such as Dean's List or President's List

- In order to showcase other key qualifications, you may want to include a list of relevant coursework (coursework that you have completed that has helped you train for the desired position/field)

- If you possess specialized training outside of your field of interest, you may want to consider leaving this off of your resume (i.e. if you are pursuing a Medical Assisting degree, you may want leave off your cosmetology training)

Activity #19

Create a draft of your education section. Determine if you will include your GPA and relevant coursework and how you will incorporate these pieces into your resume.

Section 4: Licensures and Certifications

This section is not one that will appear on every resume. Typically, a "Licensures and Certifications" section will only appear for medical and healthcare professionals as well as some information technology professionals. If you possess a license or certification that is relevant and should be included on our resume, there are a couple of items to keep in mind:

- List the full name of the license/certification, instead of just the acronym
- Only include licensures and certifications that are valid and relevant
- Be sure to list the renewal/expiration date
- Add the license/certification number (if applicable)

Activity #20

Create a list of all certifications/licensures and their expiration/renewal dates that you plan to incorporate on you resume.

Section 5: Clinical/Practicum Experience

A large number of programs at South College include clinical exposure and practicum rotations. These are great experiences to include on your resume, as they demonstrate hands-on relevant experience.

When you add your clinical experience to your resume, there are a couple of key items that you will need to incorporate. These include:

- Name of the rotation/specialty
- Name of the organization where you completed the rotation
- Name of your preceptor
- Start and end dates of the rotation
- Number of supervised hours you completed during the rotation
- 3-5 bullet points reviewing your accomplishments

Although you may feel that you have not necessarily accomplished anything in your clinical rotation, it may help you to create a list of all of the patients you saw and the skills that you gained from handling those cases.

Let's take a look at an example for a nursing student in his/her Obstetric (OB) Nursing Rotation. Here are some of the skills that you may learn in this rotation:

- ☐ **Identifying signs and symptoms of pregnancy**

- ☐ **Predicting and caring for preclampsia**

- ☐ **Initiating an IV**

- ☐ **Knowledge of medications for preterm labor**

- ☐ **Handling fetal monitor strips**

- ☐ **Administering IM (intramuscular) injections to both Mom and baby**

- ☐ **Monitoring respiration, heart rate, and temperature for the baby**

- ☐ **Inserting catheters into female patients**

Once you have identified the skills that you gained throughout your rotation, you will then use them to help develop and create your bullet points.

When you are developing your bullet points you will want to start each one with a verb (action word). Most of the previous examples have already been developed with a verb in the beginning. To make your verbs stand out and to ensure grammatical accuracy, however, you will want your verb to identify whether the experience is a current or previous experience. This means that each verb should be listed in the proper tense of the experience. If the clinical rotation is current, your verb should be listed in the present tense; if the clinical rotation is a past rotation, your verb should be listed in the past tense.

Once you have identified your verb of choice, you then want to expand the bullet point to demonstrate its significance and the ways that it helps to "qualify" you for the desired position. In order to help you successfully build context around this skill, you will want to also consider the skills that you learned that can be measured or the tasks that you completed that are measurable. When you include numbers on your resume, you will find that you build context around your abilities.

The final component to creating a strong bullet point is to ensure that it also lists and identifies the outcome of completing that task or mastering that skill.

Let's take a look at how you can take some of the skills listed above and transition them into a strong bullet point in your clinical experience section.

- [ ] **Identifying signs and symptoms of pregnancy.**
      Identified signs and symptoms of pregnancy for over 10 patients daily to ensure proper education on patient care and health maintenance.

- [ ] **Predicting and caring for preclampsia.**
      Predicted and cared for preclampsia on a 15-bed Labor and Delivery Unit to aid in decreasing neuro-developmental outcomes of exposed infants.

- [ ] **Initiating an IV.**
      Initiated and managed Intravenous (IV) medications to help manage fluids and/or blood products for 15 patients prior to the administration of an epidural to reduce the chance of a drop in blood pressure.

- [ ] **Knowledge of medications for preterm labor.**
      Maintained knowledge on the necessary medications for preterm labor in order to decrease the risks of low birth weight, breathing difficulties, underdeveloped organs, and vision problems.

- [ ] **Monitoring respiration, heart rate, and temperature for the baby.**
      Monitored respiration, heart rates, and temperatures for 5 newborns daily to help detect any changes in patient conditions.

Now that you have had a chance to see how to transform your clinical skills to usable bullet points for a resume, let's give it a try!

Activity #21

Create a list of 3-5 skills that you learned throughout your most recent clinical rotation.

1.
2.
3.
4.
5.

Use the skills listed above and create bullet points to use on your resume. Remember to include numbers where possible and show the outcome and benefits of possessing that skill or completing that task.

Section 6: Professional/Work Experience

The next section of your resume will be the bread and butter of your resume. This is the section where you will list your previous employment experiences. When you are working with this section, it is important that you consider all of the goals that you have accomplished and try to correlate your previous experiences to the requirements of the desired position.

Before jumping into the details of each employment experience, you will want to first identify the naming convention of this section. There are two main ways that you can title this section:

<p align="center"><strong style="color:red">Professional Experience</p>

<p align="center">or</p>

<p align="center"><strong style="color:red">Work Experience</p>

You will want to use the title of "Professional Experience" when the experience that you possess is directly relevant to the desired position. If your past experience is in the same field or industry, you can consider it as a part of your professional development, therefore, allowing you to name the section "Professional Experience".

In the event that your experience is not related to your degree or the desired field, this is when you would should use the title of "Work Experience". As this workbook stated earlier, it is still important to demonstrate your current employment when searching for new employment, as this makes you more marketable and can demonstrate transferrable skills.

<p align="center"><strong style="color:red">What will you title your experience section?</p>

Once you have identified the title of your employment experience section, you will want to begin creating and building it. There are a couple of guidelines to consider when you are composing this section.

Do not list every job that you have held

Although it is tempting to show a hiring manager or recruiter all of the great things that we have accomplished in our lives, employers only care about experiences that are relevant to the desired position. If you currently possess over 10 years of experience or have held more than 5 jobs over the last 10 years, try to limit your resume to only showcase your last 3-5 jobs and/or the last 10 years of experience.

Include basic company information

It is important to remember that employers are seeking specific information in your resume. When you are including your previous employment, you will want to include your formal job title, company name, location of the company (city and state), and dates of employment (months and years).

Create bullet 3-7 bullet points that demonstrate your accomplishments

The bullet points that you create should demonstrate basic tasks that you completed, which are measurable and show some type of result. You will find that the strongest resumes are built with bullet points that are founded on the "SMART" criteria (Specific, Measurable, Action oriented, Results, and Time bound). By using this approach, you can build context around your experiences regarding the successes that you have achieved and can help to demonstrate your strengths and skills. When you are able to add this content, you are showing hiring managers the types of organizations where you have worked, the types of workloads that you are used to handling, and the types of successes and outcomes that you are used to achieving.

Start each bullet point with an action word

It is important to also remember that a strong resume is one that demonstrates to the employer that you are a person of action. See *Appendix B* for a list of strong action words for a resume. Be sure that whatever verbs you incorporate are in the proper tense according to whether the position is a current or previous experience.

> ### Bullet points that begin with action verbs boost your resume for consideration by 140%

Sullivan, J. (2019, February 24). Why you can't get an interview – Explained using job search science data. Retrieved from https://www.tlnt.com/why-you-cant-get-an-interview-explained-using-job-search-science-data/

Let's take a look at how to develop your bullet points. We will be using a sales representative for our example.

1. Create a list of the tasks that you complete(d) at your current/previous employment, placing an action word in the beginning.
   Example:
   - Locate and generate leads
   - Build rapport with clients
   - Create marketing materials
   - Meet territory sales goals
   - Follow regulatory policies and procedures
   - Train new hires

2. Ensure the task demonstrate what you did, why and how you completed it.
   Example:
   - Locate and generate leads to help increase sales each year
   - Build rapport with clients to ensure client needs and expectations are regularly met
   - Meet territory sales goals to work towards increasing revenue annually
   - Follow regulatory policies and procedures when securing sales
   - Train new hires on policies and procedures to help improve compliance

3. Add a measurable facet to the bullet point to help build context, show that you are performance oriented, and that you know what it takes to be successful within your role.
   Example:
   - Locate and generate leads to help increase sales each year by 5%
   - Build rapport with clients to ensure client needs and expectations are regularly met, achieving a 98% client satisfaction rate
   - Meet territory sales goals of 30 new policies sold each month in order to help increase revenue by $1,500 annually
   - Follow regulatory policies and procedures at all times when securing sales
   - Train over 30 new hires on policies and procedures to help improve compliance

Activity #22

Use the space below to develop 3-7 bullet points for your current employment. Use the steps above to help guide you.

Step 1: Create a list of the tasks that you complete in your position, placing an action word in the beginning.

Step 2: Ensure the task demonstrates what you do, why, and how you complete it.

Step 3: Add a measurable facet to the bullet point to help build context and show that you are performance oriented and that you know what it takes to be successful within your role.

Section 7: Awards/Scholarships/Professional Organizations/Memberships

Most recent graduates and current students will end their resumes with the professional/work experience section. There may, however, be another additional section that may benefit your situation. One of the final sections that you can choose to include on your resume is a section regarding other accomplishments and achievements that are relevant to the desired position. The key to this section is to only include information for awards, scholarships, professional organizations, and other memberships if they are in your field of study and are within the last two to three years.

Please note that if you only achieved a handful of awards, it is encouraged for you to include these in other areas on your resume.

In addition, it is typically only encouraged to include organizations and memberships that are in your field of study whenever you hold a more active role in the group. Being in a leadership role or actively participating in the organization helps to provide you with additional discussion points during interviews and provides more content for your resume.

Should you end up including a section dedicated to this type of information, you also want to follow these guidelines:
- Include the organization name
- List your title if you held a position other than a member
- Mention specific contributions you made such as fundraising or event planning

What are the organizations that you plan to list on your resume?

Section 8: Skills/Areas of Expertise

Depending on your experience, field of study, or interests, you may also find it helpful to include a skills section. Although these are generally overlooked by recruiters and hiring managers, with the exception of some healthcare and information technology recruiters, these can typically help you to surmount the Applicant Tracking System. If you feel like a skills section is the right thing for you, these will typically be included after your summary or at the conclusion of your resume and should only include technical and clinical skills.

A skills section should emphasize any skills that help you to stand out from your competition, meaning that you should avoid the inclusion of transferrable skills. You may find it helpful to not only think outside of the box, but to also compare your skills to the requirements of the desired positions. When you see trends or other areas that match your proficiencies and skills, you want to include these items in this section.

Going Beyond the Basics

Although the content is a major and crucial component to developing a strong resume, there are some basic do's and don'ts to consider as well.

Here are some general items to consider when composing your resume.

Length

One page is usually enough space to write a tailored, effective resume, however, those individuals with significant experience or education may need two pages. Since a resume should be a snapshot and brief overview of why you are the ideal candidate for the position, typically there are only two reasons why it will ever be longer than one page. The first common reason why resumes may exceed one page is if the individual possesses 10 or more years of progressive experience in his/her field and has worked his/her way up the ladder. The second common reason why a resume may exceed one page is if the individual is seeking employment with the federal government. Any federal positions typically require more information regarding employers, which will lead a resume to be multiple pages in length. Should you be interested in applying to jobs within the federal government, please contact the Career Services staff for further guidance.

17% of hiring managers say that a resume longer than two pages is a deal breaker

Backman, M. (2018, September 16). 5 resume stats all job seekers should know. Retrieved from https://www.fool.com/careers/2018/09/16/5-resume-stats-all-job-seekers-should-know.aspx

Format

Although there is no singular way to format your resume, you also want to make sure that the formatting that you use is consistent throughout the entire document. This means that however you list dates in one section should be how you list the dates in the others. Whichever font you select, should be used throughout your entire resume; however you decide to space your content, should remain consistent with the spacing throughout every section grouping. The more consistently your resume is formatted, the easier it is for a hiring manager to focus on the content and your qualifications.

Font

Both the font type and the font size make a difference and matter on your resume. The font that you select for your resume should be one that is easy to read and has a professional feel. These will be most of your Serif fonts, which are anything that puts tails on the end of your letters. Consider fonts such as:

- Times New Roman
- Georgia
- Bell MT
- Goudy Old Style
- Garamond

In addition, since it is crucial that your resume can easily be read within a short amount of time, typically the smallest font size that you will want to see is a 10 point font. Keep in mind, however, that you also do not want to exceed a 12 point font anywhere on your resume, with the exception of your name.

The final piece to consider with your font is the color. Many individuals think that using a color on their resumes will help them to stand out. Unfortunately, many hiring managers view the use of colors as unprofessional. If you are trying to make a visual impact, try using a grayscale (range of shades of gray from black to white). This will help you to add dimension while remaining professional.

Bullet Points

Although you want your bullet points to be detailed enough in order to appropriately draw attention to your strengths, abilities, and accomplishments, it is also important to consider their length. Bullet points should never exceed two lines. Since bullet points are brief statements, anything beyond two lines can diminish the impact that your statement may have on a hiring manager.

Sections

Since your resume should be unique to your experiences, the order of your sections may look different from what is listed above and seen on the sample resume in *Appendix C*. Keep in mind that the key to a strong resume is providing the most relevant experience first. If you need additional assistance on how to best highlight your strengths and previous experience, be sure to reach out to the Career Services staff for additional guidance. It is also important to remember that as you gain experience and continue to grow as a professional in your industry, your resume will morph and change.

Spelling/Grammar

Checking the spelling and grammar on your resume is critical to finding success in your search. Your resume is a direct representation of you as a professional. If you want to be taken seriously as a professional, it is important that you spend the time editing and proofreading your resume.

An estimated **77%** of hiring managers immediately disqualify resumes due to grammatical errors or typos

Backman, M. (2018, September 16). 5 resume stats all job seekers should know. Retrieved from
https://www.fool.com/careers/2018/09/16/5-resume-stats-all-job-seekers-should-know.aspx

White Space/Margins

Your resume should also include a strong balance between white space and content. White space provides mental breaks to recruiters and hiring managers, allowing them to process a greater amount of information in a shorter amount of time. Similarly, a resume that includes white space along the margins and in between content, allows the recruiter and/or hiring manager to take notes directly onto your resume. This will help the hiring manager or recruiter to stay organized and directly relate their feelings about you with your accomplishments and experiences.

The best rule of thumb for setting your margins is to set them no smaller than .5 inches, and no larger than 1 inch. You want your resume to be easy to read, and the smaller the margins, the more cluttered your resume appears. This then gives the appearance of a disorganized and messy candidate, a quality that is less desirable to hiring managers.

Plain Text Formatting

Although there is no one singular way to format your resume, there are many incorrect ways. Many fancy formats, including templates, may look appealing to the eye, but often times these will not go beyond the Applicant Tracking System. Keep the content in your resume in plain text (anything that can be created through your keyboard). This means that you want to avoid features such as:

- Charts and Tables
- Graphs
- Pictures (ClipArt and Headshots)
- Lines and Shapes
- Boarders

One of the aforementioned bullet points, photos on your resume, is extremely important and should be further discussed. Including photos of yourself on your resume is an outdated process and one that could lead to discriminatory practices. Many companies have policies that require recruiters to immediately discard resumes with photos to ensure that candidates are being considered based on their abilities and experiences, not their race, ethnicity, gender, religion, etc.

Keep in mind this statistic:

**70%** of employers prefer standard resumes, even for creative jobs

Doyle, A. (2019, November 24). Formatting guidelines for resume margins. Retrieved from https://www.thebalancecareers.com/settings-for-resume-margins-2063126

Key Words & Key Phrases

You have seen this many times throughout this workbook and will continue to see the significance of including key words and key phrases throughout your resume within the remainder of this content. It is important that you take the time to include these pieces so that your resume will surpass the Applicant Tracking System and grab the hiring manager's or recruiter's attention. Without matching your resume to the job description, you are limiting yourself for consideration for the position. Be sure to read the section on Applicant Tracking Systems to understand how they work and how the lack of key words and key phrases may hurt you as a candidate.

Personal Pronouns

Your resume is all about you. Because your resume lists your accomplishments, experiences, and skills, it is already assumed that all of the content and information is about you and is yours. This means that you should avoid using pronouns such as "I," "me," "my," "we," "they," "him," and "her". For some hiring managers and recruiters this is seen in the same light as spelling and grammar errors.
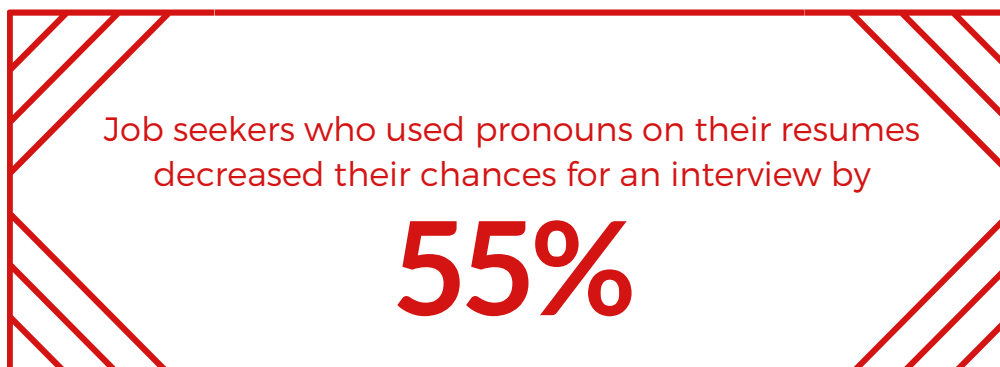
Job seekers who used pronouns on their resumes decreased their chances for an interview by

55%

Sullivan, J. (2019, February 24). Why you can't get an interview – Explained using job-search science data. Retrieved from https://www.tlnt.com/why-you-cant-get-an-interview-explained-using-job-search-science-data/

Avoid Mentioning References

An outdated practice includes mentioning "References Available Upon Request" or including references directly to your resume. Keep in mind that your resume should revolve around your abilities and experience. When you are including information about your references, you are detracting from your qualifications.

Don't forget, many times references will be requested by the employer either at the time of the application or during/after an interview. It is assumed that as a candidate, you will meet the request of the employer and supply references at one of these points in time.

Avoid Including the Personals and Embellishing

You also want to avoid including personal information that draws any extra negative attention. Your resume should revolve around your professional accomplishments. An employer does not care about your hobbies, family, religion, etc. With that being said, stay truthful when discussing your achievements. Fabricating and embellishing experiences makes you appear dishonest.

30% of people have lied or "bent the truth" on their resumes

Morris, K. (2020, March 03). Survey: How many people lie on their resumes? Retrieved March 10, 2021, from https://www.theladders.com/career-advice/survey-how-many-people-lie-on-their-resumes#:~:text=30%25%20of%20people%20have%20lied,lie%20about%20the%20same%20things.

Don't Overlook the Details

It is important to remember that building a resume is two-fold. A strong resume not only is built to successfully make it past an Applicant Tracking System's scan but to also make it past a recruiter/hiring manager's review. The best way to do this is to focus on the appearance of its delivery. You always want to follow the employer's instructions.

Email/Electronic Submission

Electronic submission through an Applicant Tracking System is one of the most common ways that you will be applying to positions. Each Applicant Tracking System is coded and built differently and may require resumes and cover letters to be saved in a special format. Be sure to carefully read the instructions regarding the preferred formatting when you are uploading your application materials for submission.

Although it is not extremely common, some employers have all applications sent through email. If this is the case, they will typically send specific directions for how they would like you to submit all of your application materials, including your resume. If they do not specifically ask for either a Microsoft Word document or a PDF file, you will want to make sure that your application materials are sent in one of those two formats, as they are the most common and most accepted file types.

As a general rule, do not share a link to a cloud service. Many times there are restrictions on shared files that may prohibit the employer from viewing the content, which would remove you from consideration.

Postal/Physical Submission

You may also be asked to submit your application materials through the mail. Although this is less common than electronic delivery methods, it still may be an avenue for you to pursue. When this happens, you will want to remember that how you package your application materials is significant. Do not submit your application in a small envelope where your resume and cover letter would be bent. Place it in a large envelope that has the recipient's information and your return address neatly written/printed on it.

Anytime that you are printing your application materials for a physical copy, you also want to remember to use resume paper. Resume paper is thicker and heavier than regular copy paper, but lighter than card-stock, and helps to demonstrate your professionalism. To help you stand out you can also choose various shades/colors and the texture of your resume paper. Keep in mind that resume paper is different than paper with designs or boarders, which you will want to avoid using.

Try a Different Resume Type

You may also find that your work experience and history does not fit the traditional formatting of a reverse chronological resume. Maybe you have taken some time off of work due to a personal issue, or maybe you have had an unlucky stint and needed to jump from job to job. Regardless of your situation, there is a resume style that will fit your needs and best work to showcase the most important information.

Some of the most common alternatives to a reverse chronological resume include:
- Functional Resume
- Combination/Relevant Resume
- Targeted Resume
- Federal Resume

Be sure to meet with the Career Services staff regarding these other options to help you showcase your skills, abilities, and expertise should you fall into one of these categories.

Activity #23

1. Combine activities numbered 16 through 20 onto one electronic document either in a Microsoft Word document or in an SkillsFirst account.

2. Upload and submit your resume for review by the Career Services staff through the SkillsFirst Platform.

3. Implement the feedback provided from the Career Services staff and make necessary adjustments.

THE COVER LETTER

The Cover Letter

In today's job search, being able to demonstrate your professionalism is more important than ever. As more individuals seek higher education and become equally trained and qualified for positions, more effort must be put forth from job seekers to remain competitive.

The cover letter is an important marketing tool. It serves as another opportunity for you to demonstrate your qualifications. Although some professionals and job seekers believe that many recruiters no longer spend time reading cover letters, there are still plenty who do and plenty who use this to help them make informed decisions regarding candidates and their fit for an opening. In fact,

26%

OF RECRUITERS TAKE THE TIME TO REVIEW A JOB CANDIDATE'S COVER LETTER

Livecareer. (2019, April 24). What does the ideal cover letter look like in 2019? Retrieved from https://www.recruiter.com/i/what-does-the-ideal-cover-letter-look-like-in-2019/

Although there are many reasons as to why only 26% of recruiters may be reviewing your cover letter, cover letters tend to be more significant to hiring managers. Many times a cover letter is important to a hiring manager for different reasons, including:

- Demonstration of your communication skills

- Assessment of your writing skills

- Provision of additional information regarding your work experiences and achievements

- Verifying a genuine interest in the opening and company

- Willingness to take extra initiative

Validate Your Professionalism

A cover letter's main purpose is to validate your professionalism and provide additional context regarding your fit for the position and fit within the company culture. In order to do ensure you are demonstrating your professionalism, keep in mind not just the content of your cover letter but the structure of it as well.

Your cover letter is a formal business letter

Since your cover letter is a formal business letter, by formatting this document in the same manner as you would when composing an official letter within the professional setting, it will give you that formal, polished, professional look.

A formal business letter will always include:

- Header that provides your name and contact information
  Tip: It is best to use the same header as listed on your resume in order to demonstrate professionalism and consistency. This will provide you with a polished look and help the hiring manager or recruiter to stay organized when considering multiple candidates.

- Date of correspondence

- Company's Contact information
  Tip: This information should include the contact name of the hiring manager/recruiter for the position, the company's name, and the company's address. You will find it helpful to reference previous activities from this workbook that helped you to identify key individuals within various companies.

- Salutation/Greeting
  Tip: Just as mentioned above, it is important to spend some time trying to identify the hiring manager or an individual who may be a part of the hiring decision. If you are able to do this, you are demonstrating yourself as a serious candidate for the position. Being able to place a recruiter's or hiring manager's name on your cover letter will demonstrate that you have spent time researching the organization and learning as much about the role and opening as possible.

- Paragraphs with necessary content

- Complimentary close
  Tip: Your complimentary close should acknowledge the viewer's time and consideration.

- Signature

- Site the enclosed documents

Activity #24

List the resources that you plan on using to identify potential names of hiring managers or recruiters for the salutation of your cover letter.

Details Make You Memorable

Although it is important to structure your cover letter following the standard business letter outline, the content in your paragraphs is what will help you to make an impact and demonstrate your interest and skills for the desired position.

Let's take a look at each of the paragraphs and what they should include in order to maximize your efforts.

Opening Paragraph

Your opening paragraph is similar to when you write your introduction paragraph in a paper. You want your opening to include the title of the position for which you are applying, the company's name, as well as the main two to three reasons why you feel like you would be a great fit for the role. Most new graduates and current students utilize their education and training and a specific transferable skill from prior work experiences. These will be used throughout the rest of your cover letter to help you build context around your qualifications for the position.

Activity #25

What are the 3 main reasons that you plan on using in your cover letter to describe why you feel qualified for the desired position?

1.

2.

3.

Middle Paragraphs

Once you have introduced yourself and established your general qualifications and interest in the position, most of your time and focus should be spent with providing specific examples regarding your experiences and qualifications. This section of your cover letter is what will make you memorable. It is important to keep in mind that the details you choose to provide in this section should be what help to set you apart from your competition.

The middle paragraphs should consist of additional details on the two to three overarching areas mentioned in your introduction as to why you feel qualified and the best fit for the opening/company (typically your education, training, and experience). Each paragraph should be specific to each of the areas of discussion.

In order to make yourself memorable, you want to go beyond the bullet points that are discussed on your resume. Here is your chance to tell a narrative regarding your qualifications to the hiring manager.

Be sure to discuss not only your accomplishments but the ways that you have led your organization or yourself to success through tough and challenging times. You will find it helpful to tie your experiences directly to the job description and demonstrate what you have learned about the organization through the research that you completed in Activity #5.

Activity #26

Review a job posting of interest and write down a few key notes of a specific event/task that you completed during your schooling or professional environment to use on your cover letter.

Closing Paragraph

The last major section of your cover letter is your closing paragraph. Again, similar to when you write a paper, you will want to summarize the key points that were discussed throughout your cover letter. These include:

- *Desired job title*
- *Company name*
- *2-3 main reasons why you are the best candidate and qualified for the position*
- *Your contact information*

In addition to summarizing your interest and qualifications for the position, you also want to use the closing paragraph for thanking the hiring manager to take the necessary time and consideration for reviewing your candidacy.

Although it is challenging to use your closing paragraph as a point that will help you to stand out from the competition, you will find it helpful to keep in mind that this paragraph is still a part of a formal business letter. This means that your valediction should avoid casual good-bye phrases such as "Thanks," "Yours Truly," "Warm Regards," '"Cheers," etc. Instead try sticking to one of the following:

- *Respectfully*
- *Respectfully submitted*
- *Regards*
- *Thank you for your consideration*
- *Sincerely*

After your signature, the final piece to include is to site your enclosed documents. Standard business letters will include this reference, as it indicates that there is supporting documentation to be viewed in addition to the letter. Although you do not need to provide specifics as to what the enclosure or the attachment is, you will need to indicate that there is more information to be viewed by the hiring manager. In order to successfully accomplish the conclusion of your cover letter, after your signature, simply include the word, "Enclosure".

Anatomy of a Cover Letter

Your Header/Contact Information

Date

Company Name
Address

Salutation

Try to avoid using generic greetings such as:
"Dear Hiring Manager" or *"To Whom It May Concern"*

Explain yourself: The cover letter should consists of 3 to 5 short paragraphs. State for which job opening you are applying and the top 2 to 3 reasons why you feel like a good fit.

Make a connection: You must clearly and quickly state what you can do for the company in the desired position based off of your previous experience. This section may take 2 or 3 paragraphs, but make sure that you are actively demonstrating your strengths. Reinforce, don't reiterate what is already on your resume.

Take action: Use this final paragraph to make it clear that you are a great fit for the position. Demonstrate why you are qualified and how the hiring manager can reach you to discuss more about your background.

Valediction and Signature

Enclosure

Leveraging Your Skills

Up to this point, you have implemented many skills in order to maximize your chances of success in the job search. Creating your cover letter is just another opportunity for you to continue leveraging these skills. There is much about your professionalism that is communicated through the appearance of your job application materials. Similar to how your resume is built based on general guidelines, there are guidelines that will help you to build a strong cover letter too.

Be consistent

You will want to apply the same attention to detail with your cover letter as you do with your resume. Not only should spacing between the various sections meet the standard spacing on a business letter, which can further be referenced through the [Future Business Leaders of America's format guides](#), but the font and header should match what is used on your resume. It is important to remain consistent with all of your application materials, as this will help the hiring manager to keep your application materials together.

In addition to the formatting remaining the same on all of your application materials, you also want to be consistent for when you print these materials as well. Be sure that all of your materials are printed on the same type of paper. This means that if you are using resume paper for your resume, your cover letter and references should also be printed on resume paper as well.

Proofread

Your cover letter is a formal letter to an organization. Whenever you send something that is of this caliber, whether it is for a job opportunity or not, proofreading is extremely important. Hiring managers can and will dismiss candidates based on poor and/or improper grammar and punctuation. If you are still unsure whether or not your cover letter is flawless, be sure to reach out to the Career Services staff for additional feedback and review.

Length

Although there is no set standard for the length of your cover letter, you want to remember that it should be able to be read within a couple of minutes; it should not be a novel. Most cover letters tend to be approximately one page in length. A strong cover letter will provide a clear and succinct overview of what you can contribute to the organization and details as to why you want that company to be your next employer. Keep in mind, you can always expand upon these items throughout your interview.

Teamwork

You also want to remember that you should always send a cover letter with your resume. These two items work as a team and will help you to market yourself as a candidate. Even if a company does not request a copy of a cover letter, be sure to submit it along with your resume and application. Again, a cover letter helps to show your genuine interest for a position while highlighting your qualifications. If you submit a cover letter, you are more likely to make a positive first impression on a hiring manager. Regardless of whether or not the hiring manager or recruiter reads your cover letter, you have presented yourself as a professional candidate who respects the job search process.

Activity #27

1. Create a general draft of a cover letter

2. Submit your cover letter to your Career Services Representative for feedback

3. Implement the feedback from the Career Services staff and make necessary adjustments

Use the following page as an area to collect your thoughts and draft statements to include in your cover letter.

For additional guidance on composing a Cover Letter, please contact the Career Services staff or visit the SkillsFirst Suite. Inside of the SkillsFirst Suite, you will have access to templates, examples, and video tutorials regarding a Cover Letter's creation as well as create and draft a strong letter and send it for review to the Career Services staff. Appendix D provides a sample cover letter and additional details and information regarding its formatting.

THE INTERVIEW

The Interview

You secured an interview! *Congratulations!*

Did you know?

ONLY AN AVERAGE OF 2%

OF CANDIDATES SECURE AN INTERVIEW

D'Alessandro, C. (2019, March 4). How to actually get an interview after applying for a job. Retrieved from https://www.vice.com/en_ca/article/bjqp75/how-to-actually-get-an-interview-after-applying-for-a-job

All of your hard work on building the perfect resume and cover letter helped to get you to this point. But now that you have an interview scheduled, what comes next?

The first step to being prepared for any interview is to write down all of the information when you are first being invited to participate in it. Once the interview is scheduled, ensure that you can you answer the following:

- Where is the interview (both location and company)?
- What time is the interview?
- Who are you interviewing with (note both the name and the title of the individual)?
- Do you know where to park when you arrive for the interview?
- What type of interview will this be?
- What job are you interviewing for?

If you are able to answer these questions and have the answers to these written down, you will provide yourself with the ability to thoroughly prepare and feel ready the day of the interview.

The second step to being prepared for your interview is showing up. Remember, this is your reputation. If you do not show up for your interview, you may be burning a bridge.

AN ESTIMATED 1 in 10

CANDIDATES DO NOT SHOW FOR INTERVIEWS

Vasel, K. (2018, September 30). Job candidates are bailing on interviews. Retrieved from https://www.cnn.com/2018/09/30/success/job-candidates-no-show-up-interview-labor-market/index.html

Although hiring managers are experiencing "no call, no shows" from job candidates, the reason behind these actions is unknown. It is possible that these candidates experience a family emergency, have transportation issues, become lost on the way, or perhaps even have a change in heart and are no longer interested in the opening. Regardless of the rationale behind candidates choosing to not attend an interview, not informing the employer or hiring manager is inconsiderate and may even cause these individuals to be blacklisted from the company in the future.

Don't let this be you! There are many steps that you can take to avoid these scenarios. The good news is that you already took the first step by taking notes and answering all of the questions regarding the details of the interview when it was being scheduled.

Should you be unable to attend the interview, the first thing that you should do is immediately notify the interviewer. Use the information that you wrote down to help you do this.

There are also two main preparation steps you can take to ensure that you arrive to your interview.

1. Review the company location ahead of time

You do not want getting lost to be the reason for not showing up or showing up late for an interview. If you do not know where a company is located or how long it will take you to travel to the interview, take a test drive prior to your interview around the approximate time of your interview. This will allow you to see the traffic patterns at that time of day, including potential construction and detours. This can impact your decision on your departure time and route to the interview and allow you to better account for potential delays.

2. Have a back up plan

We can be the most prepared individuals on this planet, however, there are other factors outside of our control that could derail the most perfectly thought out plans. It helps to always have an alternative.

What will you do if your car does not start?

What happens if you get into an accident on the way there?

You will find that it is helpful to plan to get to your interview a little early in case one of these situations occurs on your way there. Make sure that even if you leave early, that you do not walk into your interview more than 15 minutes ahead of schedule, unless otherwise instructed. It is perfectly acceptable to arrive at the destination before your interview. If this happens, try sitting in your car for a bit, take a walk around the block, visit a local coffee shop, etc. These can also help you to avoid being seen as over-anxious and help to calm any nerves that you may be experiencing.

Although planning on how to get to the interview is a crucial step in having a successful interview, it is also important that you spend time practicing. Be sure to schedule a mock interview with the Career Services staff or log into the S Suite to practice your interviewing skills virtually prior to your interview. If possible, share information with the Career Services staff about the company and the job posting. This will allow him/her to help you better prepare and guide your mock interview.

Keep in mind,

33%

OF BOSSES CLAIM THEY KNOW IF THEY WILL HIRE A CANDIDATE WITHIN THE FIRST 90 SECONDS OF AN INTERVIEW

Asghar, A., & Patankar, F. (2017, February 11). Statistics behind what happens in a job interview. Retrieved from https://www.careergeekblog.com/what-happens-in-job-interview/

Possible Interview Questions

Now that you feel prepared on how to arrive and have ensured that you are present at your interview, let's jump into the specifics and details about what to expect throughout your interview.

A standard interview consists of three to four types of questions:

- **Traditional/Standard Interview Questions**

- **Behavioral Interview Questions**

- **Technical/Clinical Questions**

- **Reverse Interview Questions**

This section of the workbook will break down each of these types of questions as well as how to prepare and practice your answers. It is important that you take the time to practice and prepare your answers to these questions as they relate to yourself, your skills, experiences, and background, the desired position, and the desired company.

Traditional/Standard Interview Questions

Your traditional and standard interview questions are ones that you can anticipate will be asked of you regardless of your industry and regardless of the type of position. These are questions that help a hiring manager to learn more about your background, skill set, interest, and fit for the position.

Here is a list of some of the most common questions:

- Tell me about yourself.

- Why are you interested in this position?

- Why do you want to work for this company?/What do you know about this company?

- Why are you interested in leaving your current position?/Why did you leave your last position?

- What did you enjoy the most about your last position?

- What did you enjoy the least about your last position?

- Why do you feel you are qualified for this position?

- What are your three greatest strengths and weaknesses?

- What is your greatest accomplishment?

- Where do you see yourself in 5 years?

- Describe your ideal team.

- What would your current boss/teammates say about you?

- Why should I hire you?

- When can you start work?

- What are your salary requirements?

When you are answering these questions, it is important to remember to answer professionally regarding your work/educational background. Be sure that you avoid personal details such as your home life, hobbies, and interests not related to work.

Let's take a look at some key items to include in your answer to the first question of "Tell me about yourself."

A strong answer will be between one to two minutes long. Your answer will discuss the following:

- What sparked your passion and interest in the field
- How you have grown in the field
- Why you are qualified for the position due to your previous experiences

You may find it helpful to develop an answer that talks about how your past, present, and future fits in the desired role within that specific organization.

Let's look at John. John is a recent graduate from the Bachelor of Science in Nursing program with a background as a Certified Nursing Assistant. He is interviewing for a Registered Nursing position in a critical care unit, here is how he answers the question of "tell me about yourself".

I recently graduated from South College with my Bachelor's degree in nursing. I have always had a passion for helping others which is why I have spent the last 7 years working as a CNA. Now that I have finished my education and have had the exposure to many facets of the healthcare field, I want to expand my nursing skills and utilize my compassionate and positive disposition to working with patients in the ICU. Throughout my various clinical rotations, I discovered that I have a knack for stabilizing patients through lots of monitoring and observation, while collaborating with multidisciplinary teams. I think that my observation skills paired with my natural ability to build relationships with patients and motivate them to recovery is why I am most interested in this opening.

Activity #28

Use the area below to draft your answer to the question "Tell me about yourself."

Quick Tip Sheet

- Sell yourself to the desired position
- Sell yourself to the desired company (this is where your research from earlier exercises come into play)
- Discuss and explain your passion for the profession
- Mention relevant skills
- Mention past employment
- Mention education
- Keep it positive
- Create a list of these items, don't memorize your response

Once you have drawn in the interviewer with a strong response to the "Tell me about yourself" question, you need to continue focusing on ways to sell yourself to the hiring manager. Let's take a look at how you might answer the questions regarding your strengths and weaknesses.

There are a couple of key components to answering questions about the tasks you do well and other areas where you struggle. Regardless, the last move that you want to make is to provide the interviewer with a basic list of your strengths and weaknesses. Always remember to tell a story when you are answering a question. This will help you to remain memorable and build context to the hiring manager about who you are as a professional. Some other items to consider include:

- Be honest
- Provide insight about what you have learned and how you have grown
- Be succinct
- Be positive
- Don't panic. These questions are typically used to determine what the manager will have to do in order to help you be successful (these are typically not used to make a hiring decision)

Here is John's answer when speaking about a weakness.

> In my experience as a CNA at a smaller nursing home, I have found my biggest weakness to be focusing and fixating on every detail for one patient at a time. When this happens, I sometimes forget that there are other patients who also deserve my attention and other staff members who can assist me with either monitoring or working to resolve patient issues. In order to help manage my time and focus with each patient I have limited myself to 5 minutes with each patient during check-ins, followed by a subsequent meeting with the physician/nursing staff whenever I notice a drastic change in the patient's conditions.

As you can see, John's response focuses on painting a picture of where he works, what challenges him, and what he has done to improve his weakness. You can also see that he positively answers the question by demonstrating that his weakness comes from a place of compassion. Despite his struggles to focus on every patient equally, a healthcare worker who is passionate, is a fantastic member to have in the workplace.

Activity #29

Use the boxes below to write down your 3 biggest strengths and your 3 biggest weaknesses. Include some bullet points about each for talking points during the interview.

Strengths

1.

2.

3.

Weaknesses

1.

2.

3.

Behavioral Interview Questions

Have you ever had an interviewer ask you to tell them about a time when...? If you have, this is what we call a behavioral interview question. Behavioral questions are open-ended questions that are asking for you to describe and explain a specific situation and discuss the resolution and outcome. When a hiring manager asks these questions, he/she is using your responses to assess your skills. He/she wants to gain a clear picture for what you have done in the past and how you will implement those skills in the future.

Although these are commonplace in interviews, their structure and how you answer behavioral questions should differ from the traditional interview questions. Since these are asking for specific situations, you will find it helpful to use the STAR (Situation, Task, Action, Result) Method to answer these. The trick to correctly using the STAR Method is to focus on the necessary details in order to stay succinct with your answer, while ensuring you are giving enough context.

SITUATION

Provide context and background of the situation

Example:
Our patients complained about...

TASK

Describe the problem and challenge

Example:
We faced a shortage of supplies...

RESULT

State the benefits, positive outcomes, rewards, recognition, etc.

Example:
The impact of the action was...

ACTION

Provide explanation on what you did and how

Example:
We resolved the issue by...

Here is a list of some of the most common behavioral interview questions used.

- Tell me about a time when you worked closely with someone whose personality was very different from yours.

- Give me an example of a time you faced a conflict while working on a team. How did you handle the situation?

- Describe a time when you struggled to build a relationship with someone important. How did you eventually overcome the situation?

- Tell me about a time when you ensured a client was pleased with your service.

- Tell me about a time when you experienced a lot of pressure to complete a project. How did you handle it to ensure timely delivery?

- Give me an example of a time when you had to think on your feet in order to delicately extricate yourself from a difficult or awkward situation.

- Tell me about a time you failed. How did you handle dealing with the situation?

- Tell me about a time when you had competing priorities and had to be strategic to meet all expectations.

- Describe a long-term project that you managed. How did you keep everything moving along in a timely manner?

- Describe a time when you were the resident technical expert. What did you do to make sure everyone was able to understand your directives?

- Tell me about your proudest professional accomplishment.

- Give me an example of a time when you were able to successfully persuade someone at work to see your perspective.

- Tell me about a time you were dissatisfied in your work. What could have been done to make it better?

Activity #30

Use the space below to write down the key components of answering the following behavioral question:

Tell me about a time when you dealt with an unhappy client.

Situation:

Task:

Action:

Result:

Reverse Interview Questions

The last major type of interview questions you will come across in an interview will be a part of the reverse interview. The benefit to this section of the interview is that you will hopefully find this to be less stressful. This is the section where you turn the interview around on the interviewer and you ask the questions. Remember, an interview is just as much to see if you are a good fit for the company and position as it is for you to see if the company and position is a good fit for you.

How do you know when this part of the interview begins? Typically, a hiring manager will ask:

"What questions do you have for me?"

Never go into an interview without preparing some questions for the hiring manager.

44% of hiring managers will not hire a candidate if he/she does not ask questions during the interview

Thibodeaux, W. (2018, May 3). 90 percent of interviewers would disqualify a job candidate for this 1 reason. Retrieved from https://www.inc.com/wanda-thibodeaux/90-percent-of-interviewers-would-disqualify-a-job-candidate-for-this-1-reason.html

Although not asking questions during an interview may not mean that you are removed from consideration, it could severely hurt your chances at securing the position. At this point in the job search you have had the opportunity to research the company, review the job description, and identify your concerns and excitement regarding the opening. Asking questions about the position during the interview helps to show that you have a genuine interest in the position and that you are critically thinking about how you would fit into the position.

If there is anything that you are unsure of regarding the position, company, expectations, etc. or anything that stands out that could be a potential red flag, this is your chance to obtain answers and ensure that you can make a well-informed decision, should the position be offered to you.

When you go to ask your questions during the reverse interview, you want to remain cognizant of the hiring manager's time. This means that you will want to limit the number of questions you plan on asking to between three and five questions.

When asking these questions, you will find that you will leave a lasting impression with the hiring manager if you allow your time to converse with him/her throughout the question. By interacting and commenting on your interviewer's answers, you are continuing to show that you are engaged and you increase your chance of demonstrating that you are knowledgeable regarding that topic, which continues to build your value. In addition, by conversing, you may be able to also ask your sub-questions regarding a topic, without it feeling like an interrogation.

Although the questions you may have for a hiring manager can be more specific to the position, here is a brief list of some of the general questions that you can ask, regardless of the position, company, or industry:

- What makes working here special?

- How do you see this company/industry evolving in the next 5 to 10 years?

- What qualities and attributes would the ideal candidate need to possess in order to experience success?

- How would you describe the company culture?

- What are the most important tasks to be accomplished in the first 30, 60, and 90 days of this role?

- How do you like to manage your team?

- What is the one question you have really wanted to ask me but haven't yet?

- How do you think I could impact the team?

If you are struggling with developing or deciding on questions to ask the hiring manager, one trick that you can implement is to turn around any of the questions you were asked back onto the hiring manager.

Examples:
The hiring manager asked you, "where do you hope to see yourself in five years?" You can ask the hiring manager "where do you hope to see the company or the department in five years?"

The hiring manger asked you, "what are your top three strengths and weaknesses?" You can ask the hiring manager "what are the company's/department's top three strengths and weaknesses?"

You also want to be mindful that although there are no "right" questions to ask the hiring manager during the reverse interview, there are questions that you should avoid at all costs. These include:

- What is the salary?

- What does your company's benefits look like?

- What are the job duties of the position?

- What does your company do?

- Can I work from home?

- Do I get my own office?

- What are the weekly hours/will I be expected to work weekends?

- How long will I have to wait to be promoted?/How long will I have to wait to apply to another position within the company?

Asking questions such as the ones above show either a lack of preparation, a lack of genuine interest, or a sense of entitlement. These can all be big turnoffs to a hiring manager. A hiring manager is asking you to interview for the opening because he/she believes that you would be a great fit for that specific role; if you are focused on items that do not pertain to the work itself, it appears that you are not interested in the work that you would be doing in that specific role and that you would not focus on adding value to the company while in that role.

As the interview is concluding, the hiring manager may tell you the next steps. For some individuals it may be discussing the second or third round of interviews, for others it may be simply providing a timeline as to when you can expect a response. Despite that it is common courtesy for a hiring manager to discuss these pieces with an interviewee, not all will do so. In the event that a hiring manager does not provide this information before the conclusion of the interview, you may also want to ask some of these questions as well. These can include:

- What is the next step in the hiring process?

- When do you hope to have the role filled?

- When do you hope to have made a final decision?

When you know the answers to these questions, you know how, when, and with whom you should be following up.

The final piece to remember, is that regardless of whether you are offered the position on the spot or not, you always must ask for the hiring manager's contact information.

Never leave an interview without asking for a business card or the hiring manager's contact information!

Activity #31
Write down the 3 questions you plan on asking the hiring manager during the reverse interview.

1.

2.

3.

Answering Challenging Questions

Throughout your interview, you may come across some questions that are particularly difficult to answer. Typically, these types of questions involve sensitive subjects and may be asking for details about times when you were not at your best. It is important to answer these questions carefully and with honesty and integrity. Some questions may include:

- Why are you leaving (or have let) your employer?

- Have you ever been fired? If so, why?

- Explain the career change.

- Explain a gap in your employment history.

- Explain why you were laid-off.

- How do you define success? How "successful" have you been?

- What mistakes have you made during your career?

- What is the most adverse situation with which you have had to handle in your professional and/or personal life?

- What is the difference between a good position and an excellent one?

Let's take a look at how John answers the question about leaving his previous position as a Certified Nursing Assistant before having another lined up.

I left my previous position as a CNA in order to focus on my education. I found that although I loved being there for my patients and felt a sense of accomplishment after every workday, it started to become overwhelming for me to complete my work at a quality level. I had just started my clinical rotations for my nursing program and it was a lot to focus on with my day-to-day responsibilities of school and my full-time job. I felt that I was struggling to excel in all areas and was not at my best in any of them. Now that I have recently graduated, I am able to focus again on my employment and I feel confident that the quality training that I received during my schooling will make me a successful Registered Nurse at XYZ Hospital.

Although John is able to focus on the benefits of his education, and not everyone will be afforded that same opportunity, the key to answering the question of why you are leaving or have left your current/past position should be focused on the positives. Avoid making any derogatory comments and any negative impressions. If you keep it focused on how you leaving was to help you grow, you will find more success in your interview rather than focusing on how you felt tied down.

Remember to also keep your answer brief. The hiring manager is not looking for a novel or dissertation; he/she is simply looking to see that you will not make a rash decision and leave the company shortly after being brought on into the new role.

Activity #32

Using the space below, write down your answer to the question "why are you looking to leave your current employer?"

Answering Illegal Questions

Many individuals do not realize that not only are some questions challenging to answer because they revolve around sensitive subjects, but some are also challenging because they are illegal. Illegal questions occur when questions include topics such as marital status, children, age, race, religion, etc. These questions can result in charges of discrimination, which is why they are illegal. If you believe that one of these is asked, here are some of your options on how to handle the question:

- **Answer the question**

  It is completely up to you with whether you choose to answer the question or not. If you feel that the information about you is not relevant to the position or your qualifications, know that by answering the question, you could be working against your best interest.

- **Refuse to answer the question**

  It is your right to refuse to answer an illegal question and any question in an interview that makes you feel uncomfortable. If you feel uncomfortable with answering one of these questions, focus on the wording that you choose to use when declining to respond. You want to make sure that it is known that you feel uncomfortable rather than being viewed as "uncooperative". To help with being seen as cooperative when declining to a question, be sure that you maintain a professional demeanor when doing so.

- **Identify the intent of the question and redirect**

  Although this is the hardest of the options to execute, this is the best option. When you are redirecting the question, you are determining what information the hiring manager is trying to obtain and providing him/her with the basic necessary information. For instance, if the question asked is "Are you a U.S. Citizen?" you can respond with "I am authorized to work in the United States on a permanent basis."

How do you plan on answering illegal questions, should they come up during an interview?

Salary and Benefits Questions

In addition to illegal questions, there are also some guidelines to consider regarding salary and benefit questions. Unless the hiring manager asks you about salary and benefits, you will always want to refrain from asking about these items, especially in a first-round interview. Although many individuals recognize that it is important to know if you could afford to accept the new job, should it be offered, discussing salary, stock options, vacation, holiday schedules, benefits, etc. is tasteless. Your focus during the interview, especially the initial/first-round interview, should remain on the position and your desire to work in that particular role with that specific company.

Leave the discussion of these topics to the employer's discretion. When asked, try not to state the exact amount that you are seeking, but be prepared by knowing salary ranges in your field and the market and how your level of experience relates to these figures. Try to let the employer make the offer but be flexible. Visit *Appendix A* for a guide on additional resources to assist you in researching salary.

Navigating Through Different Types of Interviews

In order to be fully prepared for an interview, you will also need to know and understand how to handle the interview. There are different types of interviews including ones that are more personal and intimate and others that are more virtual and widespread.

Let's take a look at the different types of interviews you might encounter!

Telephone/Screeing Interview

Typically, your first interaction with an employer will be through a telephone/screening interview. This is typically completed with a recruiter or someone in the human resources office. The goal of the telephone screening is to match a candidate with the opening and the company. Since the goal of these interviews is to determine your fit for further consideration, the screening interview tends to be shorter than a face-to-face meeting.

The average phone screen is 30 minutes or less.

Robert Half. (2019, June 3). Get the most out of your phone screen interview questions. Retrieved from https://www.roberthalf.com/blog/how-to-interview-candidates/the-best-phone-screen-interview-questions

If you are asked to complete a phone screen, remember, the goal is for you to earn a face-to-face meeting with the hiring manager.

Regardless of whether you are feeling confident with interviewing, you have probably heard some general rules that apply to a face-to-face interview. The great thing is that most of these will continue to apply with a phone screening. Here are some tips to help you get through a telephone screen:

- Ensure that you know who will be calling, when the call will be made, and on which telephone you will be called

- Shower groom, and dress up a bit. Despite that the interviewer cannot see you, your appearance will help to place you in the mindset of an interview or a more formal event

- Stand up or sit at a table or desk to help you project, enunciate, and feel more knowledgeable and confident

- Eliminate distractions including people and devices

- Avoid eating, drinking (except small sips of water) or smoking during your interview

- Ensure a strong telephone connection in a quiet area

- Have your resume, cover letter, and other supporting materials in front of you

- Make a cheat sheet about the company, position, and a list of questions you want answered during the interview

- Have a list of 3-4 of your accomplishments in front of you to use them in your answers

- Be aware of your vocal variety including your pace, volume, and tone

- Be sure to smile, so that your tone comes across positively

- Avoid filler words such as "um," "ah," "you know," "like," "right?" etc.

The average speaker uses **5** *filler words*

per minute or one every **12** *seconds*

Zandan, N. (2018, August 1). How to stop saying "Um," "Ah," and "You Know". Retrieved from https://hbr.org/2018/08/how-to-stop-saying-um-ah-and-you-know

Skype/Video Interview

Another popular first round interview that you may encounter is a Skype/video interview. This is a popular technique for employers who are considering candidates applying from across the country or employers looking to screen multiple candidates in one day to narrow down the list of candidates for a face-to-face interview.

60% of human resource managers use or have used video interviewing recently in the hiring process

Vuleta, B. (2021, February 26). 30 mind-blowing Interview statistics to get you going in 2021. Retrieved March 10, 2021, from https://legaljobs.io/blog/interview-statistics/

In the event that you are scheduled for a Skype/video interview, there are some steps that you can take to feel prepared.

- Practice before the real interview with the same resource/technology
  Just as you should practice before any interview, it is especially important to practice with Skype and video interviews. This session should be treated as if you were completing the real interview. It is recommended that you wear the clothes you plan to wear on your interview day so that you can see how you appear with the camera. This will help you to feel confident in your look and see if there are any "red flags". To help you prepare for a Skype/video interview, use the South College SkillsFirst Suite interviewing feature.

- Position yourself correctly and look into the camera, not at the picture or screen
  Staging is extremely important during a video interview. You want to spend time finding the balance, angle, and best lighting for the camera. Try to sit further away from the computer so that both your face and upper shoulders are framed in the shot. It may feel a bit awkward at first, but this will also help you to look at the camera and not at the image of the hiring manager. It is still important to provide eye contact with your interviewer, which can only occur when looking into the camera.

- Set the stage, paying close attention to your physical background and lighting
  You need to remember that in a video interview, the hiring manager can see you and your surroundings. You want to appear as professional as possible either sitting at a desk or at a table against a neutral background without any clutter. Be sure that you do not have any wine glasses, beer cans, cigarettes, or mess visible in the background. In addition, aim the light at yourself from the front and not from the behind. If the light comes from behind you, it may provide a shadowed appearance. However, you also want to be aware of the light from the front; be sure that it does not wash you out. If you appear washed out, you may find it helpful to place a white cloth over the light.

- Be present and interact

  It is important that you remember to interact with the interviewer as if he/she was in front of you. You can use some active listening sounds including "yes" or "uh-huh" as well as nod your head up and down in agreement. Be enthusiastic and allow your energy to be contagious without being overwhelming.

- Eliminate distractions from the room, including people, pets, software programs, etc.

  Just as you focused on removing distractions during a telephone screen, you will also be doing the same with a video interview. In addition to being mindful of the individuals in your proximity, also be sure that you have closed any excess programs or background programs running on your computer. If these were to send you notifications or popups during the interview, they can become extremely distracting to both you and potentially to the interviewer.

- Plan and prepare for technological difficulties

  Unfortunately, we cannot always control technology. You have to be prepared for the worst-case scenario. It is suggested that you keep your phone on hand in case you need it to finish the interview through a call. To minimize your computer from quitting or exiting out of the program, be sure to keep the battery plugged in throughout the interview. Hopefully, because you would have completed a practice session prior to the actual interview, you should feel pretty confident on how to navigate through all of the resources and potential issues that may arise.

- Smile

  The final thing to remember is to keep on smiling. Not only will a smile help you to convey a positive attitude, but it will also help you to break the ice and develop positive rapport throughout the interview.

Artificial Intelligence Interview

A growing number of interviews are going beyond the video interview and using Artificial Intelligence. These interviews use the camera on either your computer or phone to record your answers to predetermined questions. Typically, they will ask three to five questions and provide a timed limit for your response. For some employers, a human will review your answers and for others, your answers will be evaluated by artificial intelligence. Regardless of how it is evaluated, the same tips for Skype interviews apply here as well.

47% of employers now use artificial intelligence in their interviewing process

Expert performance tips for Skype and video interviews. (2020, February 7). Retrieved from https://targetjobs.co.uk/careers-advice/interview-types/323749-expert-performance-tips-for-skype-and-video-interviews?zd_source=hrt&zd_campaign=2816&zd_term=chiradeepbasumallick

Group Interview

Another type of interview that you may encounter is a group interview. These are not very popular, especially within the professional world, however, when implemented, these are used to determine two main characteristics of candidates: how a candidate works with one another and how a candidate competes against one another. A group interview will consist of multiple candidates interviewing at the same time. Throughout a group interview, you may experience questions posed to the group for everyone to answer and/or an exercise to complete with the other candidates. Although it is challenging to plan for this type of interview, there are still a couple of tips for success:

- Do not monopolize the time when answering the questions
- Demonstrate teamwork as well as leadership abilities during exercises
- Interact with the other candidates in a collaborative way
- Exude confidence without appearing conceited
- Actively listen to everyone in the group

Panel Interview

In a panel interview, the candidate is interviewed by several people at once. Since almost all of the individuals on the panel will have the opportunity to meet you at the same time, panel interviews are done to help save your time as a candidate, assess how well you handle pressure, and provide more of a consistent hiring decision by all interviewers. If you are invited to a panel interview, there are some strategies that you can implement to help you experience success.

You may want to try:

- Researching the panel members to have familiarity with their roles and responsibilities
- Engage with all the panel members throughout the entire interview
- Try having a conversation with each of the panel members during the reverse interview

Mealtime Interview

The last major type of interview is a mealtime interview. Mealtime interviews occur for a variety of reasons including when an upper executive is a part of the interview process and does not have much time to schedule a separate meeting as well as when a hiring manager wants to assess your ability to function in a social setting. The interviewers of a mealtime interview want to not only know how you handle a fork but how you treat your host, guests, and the serving staff. Some helpful tips to remember during a mealtime interview include:

- Order something mid-range in cost and something that is easy to eat (avoid messy foods such as spaghetti)

- Do not order alcohol

- Do not send a meal back unless it may cause food poisoning

- Only take sips of your drink when you do not have any food in your mouth

- Do not talk with your mouth full

- Sit up straight with elbows off the table

- Do not start eating until your host is ready and when your host is done eating, so are you

- Place your fork (tines down) on the plate

- Do not order a dessert unless your host does as well

- Always offer to pay for your portion and the tip

- Thank your host for the meal and say it was wonderful (even if you didn't like it)

Remember,

80% of communication is expressed through body language

Mayer, A. C. (n.d.). Interview dining etiquette. Retrieved from
https://www.monster.com/career-advice/article/interview-dining-etiquette

Acing the Interview

There are many pieces that go into experiencing a great interview, however, nothing can replace the work that you must put forth in the beginning to prepare. An interview is a two-way communication process where the objective is to earn an offer of employment. This is one of the few opportunities where you will be able to convey your abilities and skills and collect more information about the employer. There is a lot of competition for any particular opening in today's world, so it is important to be prepared for an interview. Whether or not you are chosen for a position heavily depends on your ability to prepare, practice, and perform during the interview.

Research the Company

- Learn as much about the company before you go into an interview. Use various websites to find out how others view the company, what type of news has been reported on the company, and the value/mission of the company

- Prepare notes on the company and write down any questions that you may have so that you can ask them during an interview

- Examine your network and search for someone who works for the company. Be sure to ask questions to those individuals about the company's priorities and/or any interview tips

- Review the job description and familiarize yourself with the qualifications the company is seeking in the successful candidate for that position. Find ways to relate your skills, experiences, and strengths with the opening

- Understand the organization of the company and be knowledgeable on each of the individuals you will be meeting, their position/title, their general responsibilities, and their relationship to the position for which you are interviewing

- Discover information about the company culture so that you can gear your answers to fit the culture of the company

91%

of managers in the U.S. say a candidate's alignment with the company culture is equal to or more important than skills and experience

Heinz, K. (2019, October 02). 42 shocking company culture statistics you need to know. Retrieved March 10, 2021, from https://builtin.com/company-culture/company-culture-statistics

Be Prepared

- Discuss your career goals, job interests, and qualifications by practicing your responses ahead of time

- Review your resume and be prepared to use one or more projects or successes listed on your resume to illustrate an answer to a question

- Have a couple of extra copies of your resume on hand in addition to the ones you know that you will need

- Keep your answers succinct and relevant to reflect the employer's top issues

- Plan what you are wearing to the interview a couple of days in advance

Did you know?

The average ratio of preparation to performance is one hour of practice for every minute of performance

Weber, S. (n.d.). How much should you really practice? Preparation habits of highly successful musicians, athletes, & speakers. Retrieved from https://www.quantifiedcommunications.com/blog/how-much-should-you-practice

Stay Calm

- Interviewing can make some people nervous, but practice really helps to calm nerves and helps you feel prepared and confident in the process

- Listen closely to the interviewer's questions. Take a minute to think about your answer before responding. Remember, silence is acceptable as well as asking for further clarification when needed

- Focus on implementing breathing techniques. Take a few slow deep breaths in order to help you relax

- Try power posing (standing in a position such as a superhero) prior to the interview. Postures that exude confidence can help improve your confidence

- Keep water on hand during the interview so if you need to buy yourself some time to think, you can always take a sip of water

First Impressions

- Your first impression begins as soon as you are noticed on the property

- Be conscious of your body language and try not to fidget if you have to wait for the interviewer

- Remember to treat everyone with kindness and respect, even the receptionist

- Make eye contact throughout your interview and greet and end your meeting with the employer with a firm handshake

- Talk in a positive manner while focusing on speed and tone. Remember, you would not have been invited for an interview if the employer wasn't already interested in your skills and experience

- Be prompt and on time

Impressions are composed by:
55% of what we see
38% of what we hear
7% of the actual words

Rakers, J. (2016, March 10). About. Retrieved from https://institute.uschamber.com/what-makes-a-good-first-impression/

Keeping in mind the statistics above, did you know that others will classify you in specific ways within 12 seconds of meeting you? Take a look at the list below to see how you are classified when someone first sees you.

⬢ Status	⬢ Dominance
⬢ Trustworthiness	⬢ Success
⬢ Charisma	⬢ Likelihood for Promotion
⬢ Leadership Ability	⬢ Adventurousness
⬢ Promiscuity	⬢ Date-ability
⬢ Intelligence	⬢ Friend vs. Foe

Premack, R. (2019, April 24). Science says people decide these 12 things within seconds of meeting you. Retrieved from https://www.businessinsider.com/science-of-first-impressions-2015-2#if-you-could-be-a-friend-or-foe-12

Dress for the Interview

If anything can be implied from the statistic on how impressions are made, your appearance matters. To put it simply, be sure to dress professionally for your interview. It is always better to be overdressed for your meeting than to be under dressed.

65% of hiring managers say clothes can be the deciding factor between two similar candidates

Rakers, J. (2016, March 10). About. Retrieved from https://institute.uschamber.com/what-makes-a-good-first-impression/

What Men Should Wear

- Suit or sport coat with a conservative tie
  - Try to stick to a grey or blue suit
  - Black suits tend to be best for formal occasions such as weddings and funerals
  - Avoid using bright colored or extremely patterned ties, as these can be distracting
- Belt that matches your shoes
- Black, navy, or argyle socks to match your suit - no white socks!

70% of employers claim they don't want applicants to be fashionable or trendy

Patankar, F., & Asghar, A. (2017, February 11). Statistics behind what happens in a job interview. Retrieved from https://www.careergeekblog.com/what-happens-in-job-interview/

What Women Should Wear

- Black, blue, or grey suit (pants or skirt)
- Pantyhose with skirts and dresses, even in the summertime
- Closed toed shoes (try avoiding high heels that make walking challenging, as you may be given a tour)

What to Avoid Wearing

- Low cut tops
- Tops made of see-through material
- T-shirts/tank tops
- Oversized/baggy pants
- Tight and/or clingy shirts, skirts, or pants
- Excessive jewelry
- Miniskirts (or skirts shorter than 2 inches above the knees)
- Jeans
- Shorts
- Open-toed shoes
- Tennis shoes/sneakers
- Baseball caps
- Soiled clothing

Additional Appearance Factors

In addition to the guidelines regarding appropriate apparel, there are also guidelines for your overall appearance as well. Here are some items to consider when you are preparing your interview look:

- Ensure your hair is clean and neatly trimmed
  - For individuals with long hair, make sure your hair is pulled back and out of your eyes
  - Do not fidget or play with your hair during the interview
- Keep fingernails trimmed and polished in a neutral color
- Cover all tattoos prior to your interview
- Clean and press your clothing prior to the interview
- Use makeup conservatively
- Avoid heavy perfumes or colognes
  - These can be viewed as a distraction
  - Some individuals are highly allergic to fragrances
- Clean and polish your shoes
- Avoid excessive jewelry and remove any visible non-traditional piercings
- Ensure your outfit has all of its buttons
- Avoid eating, especially pungent foods, right before your interview - smells can linger
- Keep your look traditional

In the event that you do not currently own any interview apparel, it is also important to know where you can go to acquire these. Although you can go to traditional department stores, these stores can at times be expensive.

Many times you will find success in visiting consignment shops for these types of clothes. Since very few professionals wear suits on a daily basis, these are articles of clothing that people tend to outgrow fairly quickly. When this happens, they will donate their suits, making it more affordable for you to purchase lightly used and lightly worn professional clothing.

You may also find many nonprofits to be a strong source as well. Feel free to check out groups such as:

- Dress for Success

- Career Gear

- Alliance of Career Development Nonprofits

During the Interview

Although your appearance is a crucial component to acing the interview, so are your actions before, during, and after. Here are some measures that you should take during the interview:

- No eating, chewing gum, or drinking anything except water
- No smoking after you are dressed and ready for the interview
- Be polite to the receptionist
- Stand and greet the interviewer with a firm handshake
- Maintain good posture while sitting and standing
- Do not be rude! Keep your cellphone off and away

10% **of Americans say they've had their phone out in a job interview**

Burnett, J. (2018, September 13). Survey: 10% of Americans say they've 'had their phone out' during a job interview. Retrieved from https://www.theladders.com/career-advice/survey-10-of-americans-say-theyve-had-their-phone-out-during-a-job-interview

After the Interview

Once your interview has ended, you will want to follow up with a thank you letter. It is best to spend some time developing a letter that is geared towards the conversations that took place during the interview. Be sure to send your correspondence within 24 hours of the interview in order to stay fresh in the interviewer's mind. A couple of areas that your thank you letter should include are:

- Thank you for the time and consideration
  You may find it helpful to specifically mention the date and time of your interview as well as the position title of interest in your letter. Some hiring managers may have lots of interviews in one day, which may make it hard to connect your name to your interview.

- A discussion point that came up in the interview
  If there were any themes or major focuses that were discussed during the interview, now is your chance to elaborate and reiterate them. In addition, should you think of other questions or concerns after the interview, a follow up email is the best avenue to continue the conversation and put your mind at ease.

- Mention of your interest
  Your thank you letter is the last major opportunity that you have to sell yourself. Continue to express your enthusiasm and mention other pieces that you may have forgotten during the interview. Make sure the employer leaves with a clear idea of how you would fit into the position and the company.

# *80%* of hiring managers find thank you letters helpful when reviewing candidates

Renzulli, K. A. (2019, April 30). Yes, you really do have to send a thank-you note after a job interview-here's why. Retrieved from https://www.cnbc.com/2019/04/30/do-i-have-to-send-a-thank-you-note-after-a-job-interview.html

Although a thank you letter may not always have the desired impact on the hiring manager, you will find that a thank you letter is an appropriate and professional way to summarize the meeting and demonstrate your genuine interest.

See Appendix F for a sample Thank You Letter

Activity #33

Use the space below to write down some topics that you think would be important to mention in your thank you letter.
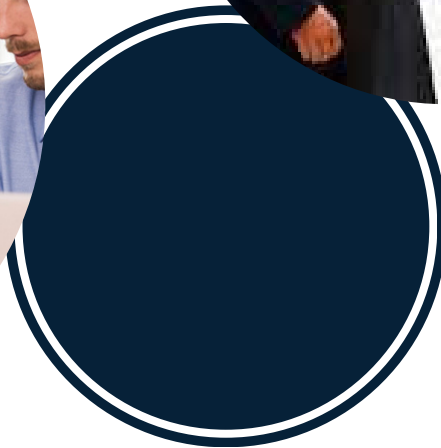
THE JOB OFFER

The Job Offer

After you interview, the job offer can take a long time to arrive.

The average time from an interview to a job offer is 24.5 days

NACE. (2018). Recruiting benchmarks survey report 2018. Retrieved from
https://www.naceweb.org/store/2019/recruiting-benchmarks-survey-2018/

Chances are, due to the many days of silence between the interview and the offer, when the job offer comes, it will be at a time when you are least expecting it. It is important to refrain from answering calls from numbers you do not recognize until you are in a quiet place and have a pen and paper on hand.

If you are not ready to answer the call, let your phone go straight to voicemail. Good thing we took care of preparing your voicemail in the beginning of this workbook, right?

When you call the individual back, be sure that you have some items in front of you including:

- Notebook or pad of paper for notes
- The job description for the position of question
- Notes that you took during your interview

Anatomy of a Job Offer

Typically, one of the first things that an employer will say when offering you a position is "we would like to make you an official offer." Although this is extremely exciting, the key to being able to understand and successfully negotiate the offer is to stay calm. A great response is:

"Thank you, I am excited to hear from you."

Once you have acknowledged the call, the employer will typically begin to give you basic information about the position. Just as every experience throughout the job search is unique, you can expect the same experience with the offer. The items listed below may be some that you can expect with your offer, however, other offers may include more such as a car allowance, signing bonus, relocation assistance, etc. Here are some of the most basic points to consider as you evaluate your job offer:

- **Salary:** Amount and frequency

- **Medical Benefits:** Types (medical, dental, vision, pet, etc.), start date, enrollment information

- **Vacation/Sick Days:** Amount, accrual versus allotment, excess, expectations

- **Insurance Benefits:** Available long and short-term disability, life insurance, malpractice, company versus employee buy-in

- **Bonus:** Availability, payout (individual performance based versus company performance based)

- **401k and/or Retirement/Pension Plan:** Company contribution, company match, enrollment procedures

- **Mileage Reimbursement or Car Allowance:** How and when these are paid (typically found in sales/territory positions, where extensive travel is required)

- **Signing Bonus:** Amount and payout

- **Relocation Allowance/Reimbursement:** Amount and payout

- **Start Date**

- **Location**

Take time during this phone call to ensure that you have gotten as much information as possible regarding the job offer. If there is something that you feel like you would like discussed in further detail or if the offer is vague, you can always request for the offer to be sent to you in writing so that you can see what additional questions you may have.

After you have gathered all of the pertinent information, it is time to start negotiating.

Negotiating a Job Offer

Learning how to negotiate a job offer can be considered an art. Just as you would when buying a home or a car you will find that there are some non-negotiable items and some other areas where you can make concessions. It is important to note that even though in some cases you do not have the ability to negotiate anything or the employer will not allow it, many employers expect you to negotiate for at least your salary and will offer you less in the beginning with every intention for you to negotiate for more.

Only *39%* of workers tried to negotiate a higher salary during their last job offer

Maurer, R. (2018, February 20). Salary negotiations aren't happening as much as you'd think. Retrieved from https://www.shrm.org/resourcesandtools/hr-topics/talent-acquisition/pages/salary-negotiations-are-not-happening.aspx

Despite that the number of candidates who negotiate for a position is lower than expected, those who negotiate tend to have success with receiving higher salaries.

84% of those who negotiated ended up receiving higher salaries

Maurer, R. (2018, February 20). Salary negotiations aren't happening as much as you'd think. Retrieved from https://www.shrm.org/resourcesandtools/hr-topics/talent-acquisition/pages/salary-negotiations-are-not-happening.aspx

In fact,

One-fifth of candidates who negotiated received *11-20%* more money in their salary

Maurer, R. (2018, February 20). Salary negotiations aren't happening as much as you'd think. Retrieved from https://www.shrm.org/resourcesandtools/hr-topics/talent-acquisition/pages/salary-negotiations-are-not-happening.aspx

Responding to an Offer

Once you have received either the verbal or written offer, you will need to respond to the individual who called you with the offer. Before doing so, think through all of the scenarios and complete the following:

- Create a list of all additional questions or concerns you may have
- List, in order of importance, the parts you will want to negotiate
- Practice asking for these items
- Mention any preplanned trips or vacations to ensure transparency

Activity #34

What are some of the items that you plan to negotiate for in your next job offer? Place a number of their order of significance (1 being the highest).

Rank   Negotiating Item

Remember that when you are creating your list and going through your scenarios that it is important to be realistic with your expectations. For instance, if you are pursuing an entry-level position or are in a market where there are many others with similar skills, you won't be able to be as aggressive with your negotiating tactics. Be sure to do your research on everything you can, including salary. Some great places to search for salary ranges include:

- careeronestop.org
- glassdoor.com
- careerbuilder.com

Now that you have determined what pieces of the offer you plan on negotiating, you will call back the hiring manager/recruiter who provided you with the initial offer. You will go through the items that you have outlined earlier and take notes on what the individual states.

You also want to prepare to counter slightly higher than your ideal outcome. Just like anytime you negotiate, the employer will first offer you their lowest and try to meet you somewhere in the middle with what you are seeking.

Let's take a look at our new nursing graduate, John.

What is John seeking?
- Starting Salary of $65,000
- Tuition Reimbursement for continuing education

What is John being offered?
- Starting Salary of $58,000
- Sign-on bonus of $2,000
- Tuition Reimbursement for continuing education

What is John's counter negotiation?
- Starting Salary of $67,000
- Sign-on bonus stays at $2,000
- Certification Renewal Reimbursement in addition to the Tuition Reimbursement

What is the final offer?
- Starting Salary of $65,000
- Sign-on bonus of $2,000
- Tuition Reimbursement for continuing education
- Certification Renewal Reimbursement

Using John's example, you can see how he initially was not anticipating a sign-on bonus, however, the bonus seemed to be pretty standard for the company to provide and he felt that it would help him kick-start his student loan repayments. Since John is looking beyond the immediate future, he negotiated for the salary of his choice by trying to negotiate for $2,000 more annually than what he truly wanted. In addition, since the organization already offers tuition reimbursement, which John was initially seeking in order to help him pursue a Master's degree, he wanted to also gain other monetary and professional benefits, which is why he asked for the company to help fund the renewal fees of any necessary and current certifications and licensures.

Keep in mind that not every negotiation will be as fluid or quick as the way John's example has been displayed. Be prepared that the individual providing you the offer may not be able to respond immediately on the terms that you have requested. Do not worry if he/she says that he/she will need to get back to you on your requests. This is standard when the person you are speaking with does not have full authority to make certain decisions.

Keep in mind that for every moment that the position is vacant, the employer is losing money. This means that the employer will try to guide and complete this process as quickly as possible. When negotiating, it is acceptable to ask for a day or two to review the information, however, a week is generally the maximum. If the organization sets the deadline, accept it and do not push back, otherwise you risk that you will appear unprofessional. If you make your decision sooner, you should let them know as soon as you have decided. By following up as quickly as possible, it is showing respect for the company's time and effort, as well as respect for the job offer.

Rejecting an Offer

Making your decision can also result in rejecting an offer. It is 100% acceptable to reject an offer if you feel unsure about it or if you feel that it is not beneficial to your needs.

17.3% OF JOB OFFERS
(1 IN 6) ARE REJECTED

Sockin, J., & Zhao, D. (2020, March 20). Why do candidates reject job offers? An analysis of international data from Glassdoor. Retrieved from https://www.glassdoor.com/research/app/uploads/sites/2/2020/03/20-03-24-Glassdoor-Econ-JobRejection-Report.pdf

If you plan on rejecting an offer, it is important to focus on your delivery and the means in which you reject the offer. Here are some important guidelines in communicating a rejection response to an employer:

- Always speak to someone via phone when rejecting an offer, never leave a voicemail or send an email with the details of your decision

- Let the company know why you are rejecting the offer without going into too many details

- Express your appreciation and gratitude for their time and consideration of you as a candidate

- Email any managers you met during the interview process after a day or two of notifying the recruiter/human resources representative of your rejection in order to inform them of your decision and thank them for their time and consideration

Accepting an Offer

As job seekers, we always hope that we will be able to meet in the middle with the employer and begin our new job as fast as possible. In order to remain as professional throughout the job offer process as we have throughout the entire job search process up to this point, there are a couple of guidelines that you can follow:

- Thank the person for allowing you the opportunity to work for the company

- Ask about the final steps in the hiring process such as drug screens, background checks, physicals, additional paperwork, etc.

- Confirm your start date, location, time, and dress for your first day

- Follow up via email with the person who offered you the job to express your excitement about the position and confirming any additional details

- Email any additional key constituents you met throughout the interview process a day or two after accepting the job offer to express your gratitude and excitement

After you have accepted the job, there is one last step that you should take.
If you have any outstanding applications, you will want to remove yourself from consideration. This is an important action to take because many industries are smaller than we think. Hiring managers from various companies talk to one another and may discuss their experiences with applicants. When this happens, you may be viewed as untrustworthy or ingenuine about the position and offer. It may cause a bridge to be burned, which is the last thing you will want in your career.

THE APPLICANT TRACKING SYSTEM

The Applicant Tracking System

Now that you have learned how to prepare for the job search and what to expect throughout the process, the final piece to understanding how to be successful with your search is understanding the role of the applicant tracking system (ATS). It is important to know how to navigate through these systems and their role in the hiring process, since many employers utilize them to assist with recruitment efforts. In fact,

99% OF FORTUNE 500 COMPANIES US APPLICANT TRACKING SYSTEMS

Morris, K. (2020, March 03). Survey: How many people lie on their resumes? Retrieved March 10, 2021, from https://www.theladders.com/career-advice/survey-how-many-people-lie-on-their-resumes#:~:text=30%25%20of%20people%20have%20lied,lie%20about%20the%20same%20things.

Fundamentals of an Applicant Tracking System

If you are not familiar with what an ATS is or its primary purpose, it can be hard to know how to surpass one as a job candidate.

At the most basic fundamental level, an ATS is an easy-to-use computer program that is designed to help save recruiters time as they search for the most qualified and best fitting candidates. Although the Applicant Tracking System used by companies will vary along with their functions, there are a couple of different features that they tend to offer to benefit the company including:

- Career page
- Job distribution
- Receiving and sorting applications
- Resume storage
- Interdepartmental collaboration
- Messaging and interview scheduling tools
- Onboarding tools
- Social media sharing

Despite the many facets of Applicant Tracking Systems, you will find one area to have the largest impact on you as a job searching candidate. The functions of receiving and sorting through applications is the most important area of these systems to understand as a job applicant.

An ATS will potentially review your application, resume, and cover letter. It is important that you focus on all of these items equally to help you get past the ATS.

If you have been applying to positions and have not had any luck with Here are the most popular reasons why your applications may be overlooked by the ATS and prohibiting you from securing an interview:

- ### Tracking Application Source
  When you apply to a position and are completing the application, you will typically be asked how you located the opening. Although there is no "right" or "wrong" answer, the employer may be using this as a scoring system, as well as a tool to help them to track where their money is best allocated to locate strong talent. When possible, state that you located the opening via the company's website/job board to increase your chances of getting past the ATS.

- ### Keywords of Position
  Just as with the application source, some ATS algorithms will pull results of resumes that exactly match the keywords from the job description. This means that spelling and grammar that matches the job description is extremely important. You may also find that the density and frequency of the keyword can make a difference as well. Some ATS programs measure the keyword density, meaning that they will favor applicants who use the search term more than once.

- ### Formatting
  The formatting of your resume may also impact the ability for an ATS to read the content. Most ATS programs can only import plain text in the body of a document, which means content in headers/footers, images, graphs, charts, columns, pictures, and text boxes could become distorted or left out completely.

- ### File Type
  With over hundreds of different ATS programs, each ATS has different capabilities to read application materials. In the past, most were unable to read PDF's, but as technology has advanced, most can read a variety of documents. Despite that technology has improved, some companies cannot afford to purchase the newest versions of these systems, which leaves a lot of unknowns for whether or not an ATS is able to read the content on your application materials. With this in mind, be prepared with your resumes and cover letters formatted in both Microsoft Word documents and PDF's.

Let's Beat the Robot

Now that you know what might cause the ATS to overlook your application materials, you can start working toward's beating the system.

Did you know?

70% of resumes submitted are never seen by an employer

Allen, R. (2019, October 7). Applicant tracking system facts: ATS facts. Retrieved from https://getfive.com/blog/eye-opening-facts-must-know-applicant-tracking-systems-ats/

With such a large volume of candidates automatically rejected due to the ATS programs, you need to be prepared to find ways to beat the "robot". Here are some tips to keep in mind when you are applying to help you beat the ATS:

- **Include Keywords**

    One of the most effective steps you can take to beat the robot is to spend time with each application to identify keywords and key phrases. It is important to use the ones that appear more frequently in the job posting or that seem to hold the most significance in the posting. If the ATS sees that you use a key word two or three times, it may indicate that you are more qualified.

    When you are looking to include keywords and phrases from the job description, be sure that you are matching it exactly with the posting. This means that if the word indicates a plural or a specific tense, that you are concentrating on the details. A great tool that you can use for free to aid you with locating key words is Jobscan.

- **Do Not Focus on Resume Length**

    Although you are increasing the chances of your application materials being viewed by a human being by maximizing the use of key words, it can be easy to start stressing over various items in your resume and cover letter, such as length. You may find it helpful to keep in mind that the ATS is scanning these items to qualify you. Most of these systems are not looking at the length when considering you for a position. They simply want to "qualify" you for further consideration. This means that if you are paranoid about the formatting and length, feel free to have two versions of all of your application materials, one for the application, and another for the interview.

- **Write out Acronyms**

  Since every ATS is different, you may find it helpful to include both the acronym and the full name of whatever you are mentioning. Despite that a resume is a formal document that should never use acronyms, you will find this tip helpful to get past the ATS and be descriptive enough for a hiring manager's review.

- **Keep it Basic**

  The last major step to take in order to successfully overcome the Applicant Tracking System hurdle is to keep your resume basic. Although fancy formatting can catch the eye of the recruiter, the fancier you make your resume, the less likely it is to be seen by the recruiter. Instead, have two versions of your resume. Use one version when applying online via the Applicant Tracking System and use the other for an in-person meeting with a hiring manager.

Now that we know how to beat the robot, let's put our skills into action and ensure that we are ready to quickly secure a job.

Keywords:

Activity #35

Use the job description below and highlight all of the key words an ATS might be seeking in a resume.

We are currently seeking registered nurses (RN) to join our team from ICU, CCU, Surgery, CVR or Trauma backgrounds.

The ideal candidate will:
- Develop specialized skills to manage chronically critically ill patients
- Utilize all of your nursing skills on a daily basis
- Work collaboratively with an interdisciplinary team, consisting of respiratory therapists, physical and occupational therapists, speech-language pathologists and physicians to assist patients to regain their independence
- Provide direct care to patients in a fast-paced environment
- Closely observe patients and changes in conditions
- Develop relationships with patients and their families
- Possess a CCRN (Critical Care Registered Nurse) Certification and PCCN Certificate

Activity #36

Locate two to three jobs in your field and complete the following:

1. Write all keywords you located:

2. Create bullet points using the key words listed above that you can use in your resume.

APPENDICES

Appendix A:
Resources

Occupational Research

US Bureau of Labor: bls.gov
O*NET OnLine: onetonline.org
Career One Stop: careeronestop.org
Career Key: careerkey.org
Mapping You Future: Mappingyourfuture.org
CollegeGrad.com
MyPlan.com
MyNextMove.org

Career Development Resources

Optimal Resume: south.optimalresume.com
http://www.linkedin.com/groups

Job Boards/Search Engines

Indeed: www.indeed.com
CareerBuilder: www.careerbuilder.com
Glassdoor: www.glassdoor.com
LinkedIn: www.linkedin.com
USA Jobs: www.usajobs.gov
Zip Recruiter: www.ziprecruiter.com
Monster: www.monster.com
LinkUp: www.linkup.com
SnagaJob: www.snagajob.com
Robert Half: www.roberthalf.com
CareerBliss: careerbliss.com
Information Technology Jobs: www.dice.com

Social Media for the Job Search

LinkedIn: www.linkedin.com
Facebook: www.facebook.com
Twitter: www.twitter.com
Google Plus: www.googleplus.com

Appendix B:
Sample Action Words for Resumes/Cover Letters

CREATIVE SKILLS

acted
adapted
began
combined
conceptualized
condensed
created
customized
designed
developed
directed
displayed
drew
entertained
fashioned
formulated
founded
illustrated
initiated
instituted
integrated
introduced
invented
modeled
modified
originated
performed
photographed
planned
revised
revitalized
shaped
solved

INSTRUCTIONAL SKILLS

instructed
taught
tested
trained
transmitted
tutored

ORGANIZATION/ DETAIL SKILLS

approved
arranged
cataloged
categorized
charged
classified
coded
collected
compiled
corresponded
distributed
executed
filed
generated
implemented
incorporated
inspected
logged
maintained
monitored
obtained
operated
ordered
organized
prepared
processed
provided
purchased
recorded
registered
reserved
responded
reviewed
routed
scheduled
screened
set up
submitted
supplied
standardized
systematized
updated
validated
verified

FINANCIAL/DATA SKILLS

administered
adjusted
allocated
analyzed
appraised
assessed
audited
balanced
calculated
computed
conserved
corrected
determined
developed
estimated
foretasted
managed
marketed
measured
planned
programmed
projected
reconciled
reduced
researched
retrieved

GENERAL ACCOMPLISHMENTS

achieved
completed
expanded
exceeded
improved
pioneered
reduced
resolved
restored
spearheaded
surpassed
transformed

HELPING SKILLS

adapted
advocated
aided
answered
arranged
assessed
assisted
cared for
clarified
coached
collaborated
contributed
cooperated
counseled
demonstrated
diagnosed
educated
encouraged
ensured
expedited
facilitated
familiarize
furthered
guided
helped
insured
intervened
motivated
provided
referred
rehabilitated
presented
resolved
simplified
supplied
supported
volunteered

APPENDIX C:

Reverse Chronological Resume Sample *(Do not copy!)*

JANE DOE
Knoxville, TN 12345
(123) 456-7890
janedoe@my.south.edu

BACKGROUND SUMMARY
Dedicated, resourceful, hardworking individual with over 5 years of experience in propelling quality customer service. Dynamic team leader possessing experience in managing teams of 30+ employees while building rapport with patrons of diverse backgrounds. Leverages strengths in time management, resource management, conflict resolution and problem solving when optimizing office operations.

AREAS OF EXPERTISE

Office Operations	Standard Operating Procedures (SOP's)	Accounts Payable (AP)
Customer Service	Accounts Receivable (AR)	Account Management
Data Entry	Point of Service (POS) Systems	Records Management

EDUCATION
Bachelor of Business Administration   *Anticipated July 2024*
South College – Knoxville, TN

RELEVANT COURSEWORK

Business Law for Commercial Transactions	Fundamentals of Project Management
Quantitative Business Analysis	Financial Statement Analysis
Principles of Management	Operations Management
Business Communications	Organizational Behavior
Introduction to Business	Marketing Management
Principles of Marketing	Strategic Management
Introduction to Finance	Quality Management
Accounting I, II, & III	Corporate Finance
Business Law	Leadership

WORK EXPERIENCE
File Clerk   *March 2019 – Present*
Southerland Associates – Knoxville, TN
- Maintain 500+ client records and files to streamline office operations and boost efficiency, increasing daily patients seen by 25%.
- Deliver office assistance to 20 colleagues through managing/sorting all patient documentation.
- Improve office efficiency by 20% through the implementation of new electronic software.

Sandwich Artist   *January 2017 – May 2019*
Subway – Knoxville, TN
- Greeted and served average of 200 guests daily while efficiently preparing accurate orders.
- Increased sales by 5% through strategically placing advertisements around the store's location.
- Achieved 100% customer satisfaction rate from customer surveys for three consecutive months.

APPENDIX D:

Cover Letter Sample *(Do not copy!)*

JANE DOE
Knoxville, TN 12345
(123) 456-7890
janedoe@my.south.edu

Month XX, 202X

HR REP/HIRING MANAGER'S NAME – POSITION TITLE
ORGANIZATION NAME
ORGANIZATION STREET ADDRESS
ORGANIZAITON CITY, ST ZIP

RE: POSITION TITLE, REQUISITION NUMBER (if applicable)

Dear Ms./Mr./Dr. HR REP/HIRING MANAGER NAME:

It is with a keen interest and strong commitment to the INDUSTRY field that I submit my résumé for the POSITION TITLE (REQUISITION NUMBER) opening at ORGANIZATION. Leveraging experience working with LIST GENERAL AREAS AS OUTLINED BY THE JOB DESCRIPTION, I believe that my LIST 1-2 FOCUSES OF THAT YOUR EXPERIENCE COVERS background will help support ORGANIZATION's goal to INSERT THE COMPANY MISSION/VISION STATEMENT.

Throughout my career, I have held various positions in the LIST RELEVANT INDUSTRIES AND AREAS industry working with INCLUDE THE MAIN OBJECTIVE OF THE DESIRED POSITION. Some of my most notable achievements while in the role of LIST YOUR CURRENT AND PREVIOUS JOB TITLES THAT ALIGN WITH THIS POSITION include:

- ADD RELEVANT BULLET POINT FROM RESUME
- ADD RELEVANT BULLET POINT FROM RESUME
- ADD RELEVANT BULLET POINT FROM RESUME

In addition to my employment experiences, I also have expanded my skills in LIST SOFT SKILLS/TRANSFERABLE SKILLS AS OUTLINED IN THE JOB DESCRIPTION throughout my enrollment in the DEGREE PROGRAM program at South College. During my time in this program, I have partnered with team members to foster an environment that INSERT THE OVERALL OBJECTIVE OF THE DESIRED POSITION.

I am a highly motivated and progress-focused business professional with a track record of LIST 2-3 ACCOMPLISHMENTS THAT ALIGN WITH THE JOB DESCRIPTION'S OUTCOMES.

After reviewing my résumé, I hope you will agree that I am the type of competent and competitive candidate you are seeking to join ORGANIZATION. I look forward to elaborating how my specific skills, abilities, and background will prove to be of value. I may be reached at (123) 456-7890 or via email at janedoe@my.south.edu. Thank you for your consideration.

Respectfully,

Jane Doe

Enclosure

APPENDIX E:
Pre-Interview Checklist

Check mark off these tasks as you complete them in preparation for an interview.

- [ ] Map out the location of the interview. Be sure to find out the full address and drive to the location before so that you can be sure of how long it will take to get there. Don't forget to account for traffic.

- [ ] Know the name of your interviewer

- [ ] Have the phone number on hand for emergencies

- [ ] Research the company to allow you to better communicate with the employer about your specific skills and interest as they relate to the job/industry

- [ ] Ensure your outfit is appropriate, clean, and crisp

- [ ] Practice answering potential questions

- [ ] Consider potential questions to ask the interviewer about the position, company, and expectations

- [ ] Ensure you are early for the interview (no more than 15 minutes)

- [ ] Research the company

- [ ] Pack a pen and paper to jot down a few notes or record contact info

- [ ] Bring extra copies of your resume (you should have 3-5 copies or 2-3 more than the number of individuals you plan on meeting)

- [ ] Bring copies of your references (ensure you have their approval for using those contacts in advance)

APPENDIX F:

Thank You Letter Sample *(Do not copy!)*

JANE DOE
Knoxville, TN 12345
(123)456-7890
janedoe@my.south.edu

DATE

INTERVIEWER'S NAME
NAME OF COMPANY
COMPANY ADDRESS
COMPANY ADDRESS

Dear Mr./Ms. LAST NAME OF INTERVIEWER,

Thank you for taking the time out of your busy day on DAY OF THE WEEK, MONTH DAY at TIME for the opening of JOB TITLE at NAME OF COMPANY. It was a pleasure learning more about NAME OF COMPANY and your direction and goals.

After meeting with you, I believe that my passion, drive, creativity, and knowledge of industry trends and resources would help support positive change and growth at NAME OF ORGANIZATION. From our conversation, I believe that my ability to NAME SOMEETHING MENTIONED SPECIFICALLY IN THE INTERVIEW, will help to benefit the vision of INCLUDE SOMETHING SPECIFIC OR A THEME MENTIONED IN THE INTERVIEW and help to propel NAME OF COMPANY to successfully meeting your immediate goals. It would be an absolute pleasure to join a team of such motivated and driven leaders.

Thank you once again for your time and consideration. I hope to hear back from you again soon!

Respectfully,

Jane Doe

Conclusion

Thank you for reviewing the Career Services Resource Guide!

On behalf of South College, the Career Services department hopes that you found this guide helpful in preparing for the next steps of you career and career development. Please remember that as a South College graduate, you have unlimited access to your Career Services team and their resources and knowledge.

We wish you all of the best with your career and professional development and look forward to watching you continue to grow and flourish as an alumnus.

Created by:
Dr. Mari-Kathryn Arnold, CPCC, CPRW
Executive Director of Institutional
Student Affairs

ESTABLISHED IN 1882, *South College* is a private academic institution focused on serving students who want hands-on, career-driven education that will have a meaningful impact on their lives and livelihoods.

See WWW.SOUTH.EDU/ACADEMICS for more information on programs offered.