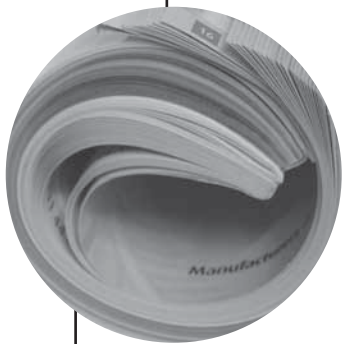


Planning a career direction and finding the position you want is a full-time job in itself and requires a personal commitment of time and energy. The sheer number of options and amount of information available to you can be quite overwhelming. However, your job will be much easier if you map out a plan of action and carefully track your efforts. Your first step is to realize that you are going to be selling a product-you! You must figure out how best to market your product, and that involves a careful and thorough assessment of yourself and what you can bring to a future employer.



Self-Evaluation

Before you try to market yourself to potential employers, you need to know something about what you are looking for and what you have to offer. The more you know about your interests, skills, abilities, values, goals, and personal qualities, the greater your opportunities are for finding the most suitable career.

Networking Skills

Networking is gathering information from and making contacts through the people you already know. Learn how networking can help you with your career search.

Researching Employers

Your task in the career search is to find the most suitable position for yourself. This section will show you how to use your research and investigative skills to discover job openings and prepare for an interview.

Your Resume

A resume is a critical tool in your job search. It is a summary of your qualifications and experience used to elicit further interest from a prospective employer. This section contains guidelines on constructing a resume that will get you noticed.

Cover Letters

Letter-writing skills are essential to your job search. Excellent cover and thank you letters often make a difference in whether or not you are considered for a position. See this section for tips on writing winning letters.

Interview Preparation

For most fields, without an interview you will not get a job. It is in this stage of your job search that you convince an employer to hire you. This section shows you how to make the best possible impression during an interview.

Career Fairs

Attending career fairs can be extremely beneficial to your career search. This section gives you tips on preparing for a career fair, what to expect during the career fair, and how to follow up with employers afterwards.

Evaluating Job Offers

This section outlines the factors you will want to consider when determining whether or not you will accept a position.

From College to Career

This section gives tips that can help you to excel in the workplace.

CAREER OPPORTUNITIES

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Self-evaluation is a process of identifying your personal and professional values, interests, personality type, and skills. You should also pinpoint the kinds of things that motivate you to perform well in the workplace. Essentially, with self-evaluation, you are attempting to answer the questions of who you are, what you want to do, why you want to do it, where you want to work, and what your goals are.

Below are some questions developed by executive recruiters to help you better understand yourself and your career aspirations. They are also questions an employer may ask you during an interview. Answer

these questions as accurately and honestly as you can. They will help you ascertain your career assets and liabilities, which will prepare you for your job search and for future interviews.

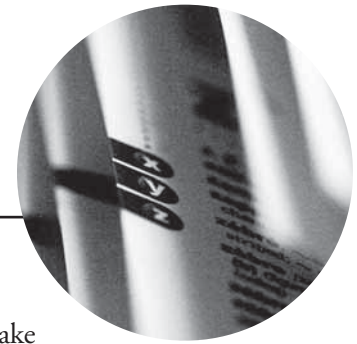
- Would I work better in a large or small organization?
- How important is geographic location to me?
- Do I work better alone, or as part of a group?
- Am I more comfortable as a follower or a leader?
- Which do I do better: analyze or execute?
- Do I prefer to work with people or things?
- Do I work more successfully under pressure?
- Am I a good planner or idea person?
- Do I think well on my feet? Do I make decisions easily?
- Do I express myself well orally? In writing?

Questions

Self-Evaluation

- What characteristics do I admire in others?
- Which function of my job do I perform most effectively?
- Which function of my job do I perform least effectively?
- What do I enjoy doing most? What motivates me?
- What accomplishments have satisfied me in the past year?
- What have I done to correct my shortcomings?
- What level of responsibility do I aspire to in five years?
- What should I be earning then?
- How will I achieve these levels? What skills do I need?
- Am I a good listener?

Recruiting experts agree that a very small percentage of jobs are found by combing through classified sections of newspapers. In fact, around 80 percent of jobs are found through networking.



What is Networking?

Networking is simply gathering information from and making contacts through the people you already know. How do you start establishing a network? After you have professional objectives in mind, begin talking to people you know such as:

- Friends and family
- Classmates and professors
- Former employers
- Colleagues from professional, community, and religious groups
- Former teachers and faculty from schools you have attended

The key to creating a network is to obtain the names of at least two additional contacts each time you talk to someone. The types of questions you should ask when obtaining further contacts are:

- What organizations should I investigate?
- Do you know anyone who works in or is associated with my field of interest?
- May I mention your name when contacting other people or organizations?

Develop a Tracking System

Develop a method of keeping track of each conversation, phone call, letter, interview, follow-up and promise. Without a good organizational system, you could become confused.

Be Professional

As you begin to make professional contacts, make sure you dress and act the part. Conduct yourself in a manner that will convince your professional contacts that you can do the job. This will also help you obtain other referrals much more easily.

Return the Favor

Networking is a give-and-take proposition. Send thank you letters after each meeting or helpful phone conversation. Keep in touch with members of your network and give back to it whenever possible.

Informational Interviews

You can collect information on your chosen field via informational interviewing. Informational interviewing is simply asking questions of different members of your network. Remember to ask for the names of at least two more contacts during an informational interview.

Questions you may want to ask during an informational interview are:

- What aspect of your job was the biggest challenge when you first started?
- What qualifications do you seek of new employees?
- What are the things you like or dislike about your job?
- If you could start over again in this field, what would you do differently?
- Should I have a particular certification or achieve a higher-level degree in order to advance in this field?
- What classes and activities in college best helped prepare you to enter this field?
- How can I make myself a more desirable job candidate?
- What kinds of job titles would I probably have in this field?
- What life experiences have most helped you acquire and develop knowledge of this field?
- Are there any professional groups you would recommend I join?
- How do you see this industry changing in the future?
- Who else should I contact within the field?



Before applying for a position within an organization, you should first do some research to find out essential information about it. You should do this to discover the employer's needs and make sure your qualifications are a good fit for the organization. You also need to have as much information about the organization as possible before going into an interview, because the interviewer may ask you pointed questions to assess how much you know about the company.

Make sure you are familiar with *at least* these aspects of an employer:

- Name, age, and location(s)
- Product lines and/or services
- Parent company and/or subsidiaries
- Financial picture of organization, assets, stock picture, recent mergers, etc.
- Major competitors
- Growth history
- Career possibilities
- Deadline for application

You can find this information in the following resources:

Your Career Guide

This Career Guide is an excellent resource to reach organizations that are actively recruiting college graduates like yourself. Take time to carefully review the career opportunities that these companies have placed in your Career Guide. These advertisements will typically include open positions and contact information. You can then contact the organization if you desire additional information. Be sure to check out the on-line version of this publication at www.Career-Guides.net.

The Employer's Website

You can frequently locate an employer's website by typing the company name into many search engines. Most employers have specific sections of their own websites devoted to employment opportunities.

Internet

There are numerous other places on the Internet that contain employer information as well.

Job Search Assistance Sites

The following sites have valuable information that will help you in your job search. Some of the sites give you the option to post your resume on-line and search through available job opportunities, while others provide more

general recruitment information about employers and enable you to link to their websites.

- www.Career-Guides.net
- www.HBCU-Careers.net

Researching Companies

The following site allows you to search for companies according to a number of search criteria.

- www.companiesonline.com

Researching Graduate Schools & Continuing Education Programs

The Council of Graduate Schools website includes several resources for students.

- www.cgsnet.org

Directories

These resources may provide information about an organization's products or services, number of employees, principal executives, history etc. You should be able to locate the directories listed below in the reference section of a public library.

- *America's Corporate Families*
- *Dun & Bradstreet's: Million Dollar Directory*
- *Middle Market Directory*
- *Reference Book of Corporate Managements*
- *Moody's Manual*
- *Standard Directory of Advertisers*
- *Standard Rate and Data (Business Publications Directory)*
- *The Directory of Corporate Affiliations: Who Owns Whom*

Trade Associations

These organizations produce membership directories, journals and informational briefs. Find associations that match your career interest and then write to ask for their membership list or any printed material they offer. If they publish job listings or have a resume referral service, these could prove to be a great asset to you. And if they have student memberships, then all the better. Remember, almost every type of field or industry that exists has a trade association affiliation.

A resume is one of the most important elements of your job search, and will need to be updated periodically throughout your career as you gain new skills and experience. Your resume will serve as the first impression potential employers will have of you. Employers spend an average of less than 60 seconds reviewing any resume. For these reasons, it is essential for your resume to project a clear and concise picture of your skills, professional qualities, achievements, and goals.

The tips below will help you begin constructing your resume. They are meant solely as guidelines, and you should always check with your career services office and follow their recommendations.

Stand Out

Be cautious if you choose to use a resume wizard or template; they tend to generate resumes that all look alike. Individualize your resume, but be sure not to overdo it. You want your resume to be distinctive, but always remain streamlined and conservative for easy readability.

Structure of Your Resume

The overall structure you choose for your resume will depend on what suits your employment history and experiences best. The following are the most widely recognized resume formats:

Chronological

This is the most common resume format, and probably the easiest to prepare. The chronological resume emphasizes employment and/or experience history, listing these elements in reverse chronological order. (In other words, your most recent experience is listed first.) This format is especially useful for new graduates or those with limited work experience.

Functional (Skill-Based)

The functional resume emphasizes skills and attributes that can be applied to a variety of employment situations. Your skills are broken down into categories that quickly communicate to employers what you can do for them. This format is useful for candidates without direct employment-related experience, or for those who wish to work in fields unrelated to their academic background.

Combination

For many candidates, a combination of elements from the chronological and functional resume formats works best.

Targeted

Some candidates prefer to focus on specific job “targets,” and tailor a different resume for each target. With this format, your skills can be redirected with each resume to hit each target most effectively.

Elements of the Resume

Contact Information

List your name, address, telephone number(s), and e-mail address. Make sure your e-mail address sounds professional or neutral. If necessary, set up an alternate screen name to use for business contacts exclusively. Above all, make sure that any potential employer can easily contact you! Other personal information such as religion, age, marital status, etc. should not be included.

Objective/Summary of Qualifications

There are differing viewpoints as to whether an objective will help or hurt your chances in the job market.

Check with your career services office for their recommendations. If you decide to use an objective, state the type of position you are seeking. Also, consider including in your objective how you will benefit the employer—not what you are seeking from the employer. An alternative to an objective is a summary

of qualifications. The summary of qualifications simply includes skills/traits that you can bring to an employer.

Educational Background

List names and locations of educational institutions attended, degree(s) awarded with completion dates, majors and minors, and anticipated or actual dates of graduation.

Employment History

List employment experience in reverse chronological order, including any summer/part-time jobs and internships. Use action words to describe your duties and achievements, and be sure to indicate when and how increases of responsibility occurred.



INTERVIEW PREPARATION

Interviews allow employers to assess you as a complete person, rather than just your qualifications on the printed page. Employers want to gauge whether or not you would be a good “fit” for their organization. This is also an opportunity for you to find out the same thing about the employer. Most employers consider the interview to be the most important part of the hiring decision.

What Employers Look for in a Candidate

- Self-confidence/ability to communicate
- Work ethic: teamwork, leadership, initiative, flexibility, ability to handle conflict
- Intelligence, critical thinking
- General personality: poise, enthusiasm, creativity, high energy level, interpersonal skills
- Personal management, self-knowledge
- Qualifications-Can you relate your academic program, skills, and/or prior work or internship experience to the needs of an employer?



Key Points to Remember:

Do:

- Arrive 10-15 minutes early
- Maintain good eye contact with the interviewer
- Use a firm, professional handshake
- Listen carefully to the interviewer’s questions
- Be aware of your body language; maintain good posture, appear relaxed and not fidgety
- Show enthusiasm, confidence, courtesy, and honesty
- Keep a positive attitude about former employers, supervisors, and co-workers; be tactful and do not criticize former employers even if discussing an unpleasant situation
- Maintain a professional image-don’t let the employer’s casual approach fool you
- Always present the best of your background and qualifications
- At the close of the interview, establish a date for your next communication
- Always remember to thank the interviewer for his/her time

Don’t:

- Give terse or rambling answers to questions; find a balance
- Be too casual with language or use non-words (“thinking words” like “um...” “uh...”)
- Address the interviewer by his/her first name unless invited to do so
- Dominate the interview or appear arrogant; do not interrupt the interviewer when he/she is speaking
- Criticize yourself or your former employers
- Discuss your personal problems

What to Bring:

- Directions to the interview site
- Name(s) and title(s) of interviewer(s)
- Extra copies of your resume
- Reference lists
- Portfolio of work samples, if applicable
- Good quality pen and pencil
- Leather folder (black or dark color) or briefcase

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INTERVIEW PREPARATION

What to Wear

The following are general tips; some organizations may vary somewhat on what is considered appropriate or inappropriate interview attire. Researching the organization beforehand may yield some insight into these standards. However, when in doubt, it is always best to err on the conservative side.

Dress Tips for Men

- Single or double-breasted suit in small pinstripe or solid shades of navy or charcoal gray.
- Shirts: Light colors, starched cotton. Non-button down collar and long sleeves.
- Shoes: Well-polished, black or brown leather lace-up wingtip or slip-on dress shoes.
- Ties: Solid, thin striped, or small geometric print. Bottom of tie should meet the belt line.
- Accessories: Long, dark socks in solid dark color that complements suit. No jewelry besides wedding band and watch.

Dress Tips for Women

- Suit or tailored dress in solid shades of navy, gray, or black with skirts hemmed above the knee. May also wear pant suit.
- Blouses: White or pastel colors. Silk, cotton, or polyester material with long sleeves and conservative neckline.
- Polished, closed toe shoes with low heels.
- Accessories: Subtle makeup. Nails should be neat with no polish or a clear neutral color. One ring per hand with exception of wedding set. Avoid carrying a purse if holding a briefcase or portfolio.





Practice Answers to Questions Before the Interview

You will generally be asked two types of questions during an interview: traditional and behavioral.

Traditional Questions

Traditional questions are designed to pinpoint aspects of your basic personality, work ethic, history, attitude, etc. When practicing answers to traditional interview questions, try to develop answers that illustrate how your education and life experience can benefit the employer. If you have done a thorough self-assessment and know why you want to work for this employer and in this field, you will be able to answer traditional questions easily.

- What are the two or three things most important to you in your job?
- What is your philosophy of life?
- Tell me about yourself.
- What are your short-term and long-term career goals? How do you plan to achieve them?
- What do you consider to be your greatest strengths and weaknesses?
- In what ways do you think you can make a contribution to our organization? / Why should we hire you?
- What do you know about our organization?
- What did you learn from co-op, internship, or part-time job experiences?
- Why did you choose this career?
- Why would you like to work for this company?

Behavioral Questions

Behavioral questions are designed to examine how you have responded to specific situations in the past as an indicator of how you may behave in the future. When practicing answers to behavioral questions, think about how you have dealt with specific problems in the past. Consider how your qualifications and attributes enabled you to demonstrate leadership, initiative, and problem-solving ability.

- How have you demonstrated initiative?
- How have you motivated yourself to complete an assignment or task that you did not want to do?
- Tell me about the riskiest decision that you have made.
- Can you tell me about an occasion where you needed to work with a group to get a job done?
- What was the greatest challenge you ever faced, and how did you approach it?
- What did you do in your last job to effectively plan and organize?
- Tell me about a time on any job when stressful situations or problems tested your coping skills. How did you handle it?
- What leadership positions have you held? Describe your leadership style.
- Tell me about a time when you failed at something. If you could do it again, what would you do differently?
- Describe your involvement in a team situation in which you were not in a leadership role.

Questions to Ask the Interviewer

Before closing the interview, the interviewer will usually give you an opportunity to ask questions. It is always good to do this because it shows that you are interested in the position. The following are questions you may wish to ask the interviewer:

- Please describe a typical day on the job.
- What personal qualities, skills, or experience would help someone do well in this position?
- What are the company's plans for future growth?
- What are the most challenging aspects of this job?
- Describe the position in terms of the overall department structure.

- What are typical career paths within this organization?
- What types of initial and future training programs do you offer?
- Can you explain the performance evaluation and promotion process?
- What is the retention rate of people in this position?
- What makes your organization different from your competitors?

Follow Up!

Always send a thank you letter to the organization within 24 hours after an interview. Be sure to reiterate your interest in the organization and position. Call the interviewer within two weeks of the interview to inquire about the status of your application as well.

Numerous benefits and opportunities are available to you when you attend a career fair, regardless of your chosen major or your future goals. However, simply attending a career fair is not enough; you need to make your participation count. If you understand what to expect at a career fair and take the proper steps to prepare beforehand, you will receive the maximum benefit from the event and increase your chances of obtaining interviews.

Benefits of Attending a Career Fair

- Increase your chances of receiving an interview with an employer.
- Expand your network of contacts and receive job search advice from experienced recruiters.
- Investigate positions, occupations and /or career fields you could pursue with your specific major and background.
- Learn more about employers and available co-op, internship or permanent career opportunities.

What to Expect at a Career Fair

- Employers expect students to be prepared. Ask thoughtful questions and have a polished resume.
- Employers expect to interact with students seeking employment as well as those simply researching careers and employers.
- Most recruiters are not authorized to hire candidates on the day of the fair. Your goal should be to land an interview, not a job offer.
- Employers' goals are to be exposed to as many job candidates as possible. You will have a relatively short amount of time to sell yourself and make a positive impact on the employer.

Before the Career Fair

Target your top five companies

If possible, obtain a list of the employers who will be attending the career fair, and select the top five organizations you would most like to visit. Make sure that at a minimum you research these organizations before you attend the career fair. (Refer to the "Researching an Employer" section of this guide for researching tips.) The more you can show an employer that you know about their organization, the more likely you are to leave a positive impression.

Prepare a resume

A well-written, error free resume is a must. Make sure you have multiple copies of your resume and a list of references to distribute at the career fair. Refer to the "Your Resume" section of your Career Guide for information on resume writing.

Create a list of questions to ask employers

By asking meaningful questions to employers you show that you have an interest in their company and that you have good listening and communication skills. Be sure to prepare a short list of questions to ask employers. Refer to "Questions to Ask An Interviewer" in the "Interview Preparation" section of this guide for a list of possible questions you may wish to ask.

Prepare to answer questions

You may not sit down to a formal interview, but employers are likely to ask you questions that would be asked during an interview. Review and practice answers to the traditional and behavioral questions that interviewers may ask in the "Interview Preparation" section of this guide.

Sell yourself

Be prepared to introduce yourself to each employer with your name, a firm handshake, a copy of your resume, and your objective. (Why are you attending a career fair and what type of career are you seeking?) Practice this introduction before the career fair so you will be comfortable interacting with employers at the career fair.

Be professional

Present a professional appearance and dress as if you were attending a job interview. If you are in doubt about what to wear at a career fair, refer to "What to Wear" in the "Interview Preparation" section of this Career Guide.

Arrive early

In order to avoid long lines you should plan to arrive at career fairs early. You will spend less time waiting in lines and more time visiting with employers.



CAREER FAIRS

During the Career Fair

Use your time wisely

Survey the room to determine where employers are located and in what order you plan to visit them. If there is a long line to speak with one of your “chosen” companies, keep moving and return later. Your goal should be to make contact with as many employers as possible.

Be confident

Project enthusiasm, confidence, and sincerity. Smile, walk confidently with good posture and make consistent, direct eye contact.

Introduce yourself

When it is your turn to speak with an employer, greet him/her with a firm handshake, a copy of your resume and a brief summary of why you are attending the career fair and/or the type of career you are seeking.

When appropriate, be sure to ask one or more of the questions that you prepared.

Prepare for follow-up

Thank the employer for his/her time, and be sure to leave a copy of your resume. Ask the employer for a business card or company literature for the follow-up protocol. If the employer says they do not have a position in your field, ask for the address of the Human Resources Department so you can write a letter and send your resume. Nearly all employers hire all majors. The person you are speaking with may not be aware of all opportunities offered by the company.

As soon as you walk away from the employer, jot down a few notes about your conversation so you will have a few memorable points to mention in your follow-up letter.

After the Career Fair

Follow up!

Send thank you letters to employers you met within a week of the fair. This shows the employer that you have a genuine interest in their organization and position and may give you a competitive edge over those candidates that do not follow up. Review the “Cover Letters” section of this Career Guide for tips on constructing powerful thank you letters.

Be persistent

If you have observed the follow-up protocols as outlined by the employer, it is appropriate to send a letter inquiring about the status of your application after a reasonable amount of time has passed.

EVALUATING JOB OFFERS

Listed below are factors you will want to consider when determining whether or not you will accept a position. While salary is an important factor, be sure you weigh your starting salary against the salary potential of the position and the cost of living of the geographic area where you plan to live. Also, consider these factors:

Job/Employer Related Factors

- Potential for career advancement
- Work schedule (traditional “9:00-5:00” or flexible hours)
- Work environment/attire (formal vs. informal)
- Bonus or commission plans
- Benefits such as profit sharing, 401K plan, insurance, etc.
- Travel
- Reputation and stability of employer
- Size of employer
- Ability to gain a mentor
- Type of industry

Geographic/Life-Style Factors

- Geographic location
- Climate
- Social life for singles, couples or family
- Commute to work
- Availability of suitable housing
- Size and type of community (suburban, metropolitan, rural)



The less formal atmosphere of your academic career may not provide you with enough opportunities to hone the skills you will need to develop in the workplace. Take time to consider the following as you begin your new career.

Be a Dependable Employee

Be punctual to work and meetings, and avoid frequent absenteeism. Meet established deadlines. Be someone that can be counted on to get the job done.

Master Your Job Tasks

If you want to move up, you must first prove that you understand and can accomplish the basic requirements of the job.

Understand Expectations

Determine what is expected of you from the very beginning. This includes developing clear deadlines for your projects.

Exceed Expectations

Work hard and plan to do more than is expected. Show enthusiasm and take initiative. Avoid “it’s not my job” thinking.

Strive for Excellence

Always do the best you can. Work towards providing your employer with the highest quality final product possible.

Ask for Feedback

Keep your supervisor informed of your progress and ask for regular feedback on your performance. If any assignments are unclear, ask for clarification instead of proceeding in the wrong direction because you are fearful of looking foolish.

Adapt to the Corporate Culture

Learn your organization’s style and culture and be willing to adapt to it. Companies expect their employees to “fit in” and accept the corporate culture. If you don’t understand it, you are more likely to make errors that could hurt your progress. Learn the corporate culture by familiarizing yourself with the employee handbook, observing co-workers’ behavior, and asking questions when in doubt.

Develop Strong Oral and Written Communication Skills

Every job, including technical ones, requires some degree of communication skills. Look for opportunities to make oral presentations and written reports and do them conscientiously and carefully.

Learn to be a good listener to ensure you fully understand instructions. Demonstrate patience and sensitivity with others; avoid public confrontation or complaining. Learn to be tactful when working on a team; consider what others on the team have to say and work with them. Proofread all written work carefully for content, spelling and grammar before submitting it.

Establish Positive Working Relationships

Get to know and be known by others in your work environment, and be professional and courteous at all times. Maintain confidences and avoid gossip because it can be destructive and puts you in a bad light.

You may correspond with customers, clients, business contacts, and co-workers via telephone and e-mail. When doing so, it is vital to maintain a professional image. The following tips will help sharpen these skills in the workplace.

Phone

- Call during typical business hours
- Have all necessary information in front of you
- Call from a quiet location, or reduce/eliminate background noise
- Notify people when they are on a speakerphone
- Make sure voice mail messages are concise and professional. Be sure to clearly state your full name, telephone number (with extension if applicable) and reason for calling

E-mail

- Write in complete sentences; don’t use one-word replies
- Use the subject line to specify the point of the message (not for informal greetings)
- Structure your e-mails like a business letter, and including greetings and closings
- Review the content of your e-mail to make sure the point of the message is clear
- Be sure to use correct grammar and to perform a spell check before sending