

Job Search Handbook

**Step by Step
Guidance
for Finding
a Great Job**

JobSearchHandbook.com

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Introduction

Thomas Alva Edison was quoted as saying genius is 99% perspiration and 1% inspiration. Fortunately, you don't have to be a genius to find a job so we're not going to ask you to sweat that much.

With this guide, we'll reduce your perspiration by pointing out some simple ways to make your job search more efficient and effective. We'll also give you some inspiration with some innovative ideas and stories that will convince you to keep the faith, even if you don't find that perfect job right away.

Using this Handbook

This handbook was put together in a format designed to help you access the information and resources you need quickly. The guide is broken down into chapters reflecting the natural progression of a job search, starting with defining your vision and ending with post-interview follow up.

Each chapter includes one or more resource sections which provide exercises you can do on your own related to the subject being discussed, as well as links to resources on the World Wide Web. Each web resource mentioned includes a link to access that particular resource. However, you can access all the links referred to in this guide quickly by going to a special resource home page we have set up for you. To access that page, visit this web address:

<http://www.jobsearchhandbook.com/links/ProCV/>

To get the most out of working with this handbook, we recommend opening a web browser and navigating to that web address so you can quickly access any resource we mention.

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Chapter 1: Be a Man (or Woman) with a Plan

Many people use a gradually frantic approach to their job search, trying a number of different random tactics, hoping something will eventually work. The problem with this approach is before you know it, you've spent a lot of time on your job search, and may find yourself having pursued jobs that really didn't fit your overall career goals.



Come Up With a Vision

On the other hand, people who develop a long-term vision for themselves often find the pieces just fall into place. For example, Michael Jordan envisioned playing in championship playoffs before he was even in the NBA. Coach Dean Smith of the University of North Carolina talks about how when he first noticed Michael Jordan, he didn't see NBA material. Jordan didn't even make his high school's varsity basketball team. However, the UNC basketball clinic accepted Michael for a summer training program because he was quick on his feet and showed potential. Coach Smith talks about how his staff was amazed at the amount of effort Michael put into practicing and learning the skills that ultimately made him a great basketball player.

If everyone had the same focus Michael Jordan had in his basketball career in their professional careers, the world would be full of a lot of happy and fulfilled people! Playing in the NBA championships might not be in the cards for you. But I'm sure you could imagine a job where you'd be totally happy and fulfilled.

Just as when Michael Jordan was in high school, his immediate goal was to play for a great college team like UNC and not for an NBA team right away, you can create intermediate goals for yourself that will help you get to your ultimate dream job.

Exercises and Resources for Coming Up with a Vision

Exercises

Despite the fact that Michael Jordan wasn't polished when he started off, he did have the raw abilities required to become a great basketball player. Likewise, you have unique abilities and interests which could help you become great in your field. Michael Jordan has talked about how even when he was starting out, he envisioned winning in the NBA championship playoffs.

If you already have that kind of enthusiasm and vision for your career, you're one step ahead of most people! If you don't, the following are some exercises which may help you.

Exercise 1: Put someone else in your shoes. You can do this by imagining what other people who you respect and admire would do with your unique talents and interests. Take a few minutes now to imagine what the following people would plan to do for a career if they were in your shoes:

My favorite celebrity, _____, would plan to do this if they had my talents and interests:

The person I admire most in my field, _____, would plan to do this if they had my talents and interests:

My wisest friend, _____, would plan to do this if they had my talents and interests:

Exercise 2: The first exercise is mostly introspective. You may also find it helpful to get input from some other people.

One way to do this could be with a Talent Contest among your friends. The way it works is this: you give your friends a description of the skills you have now and the job you have now, and their challenge is to come up with something you could be doing 5 years from now that you would be totally passionate about. The only rule is your friends have to be able to explain, logically, how you would be able to get the job starting from where you are now.

The person who describes the best job wins (of course, this is subjective). You can even throw in a prize, like taking the winner out for dinner.

Talent Contest Winner _____

Description of winner's ideal job for me 5 years from now:

Other notable job suggestions friends had for me:

Resources

MAPP CAREER ASSESSMENT TESTS

Not sure which career is right for you? The MAPP Career Assessment test takes into account your personality and aptitudes to determine which career would be best for you. You can find out more or take a sample test on the web by going to this address:

<http://www.jshb.info/links/ProCV/mapp.asp>

JOB AND REAL PEOPLE PROFILES

Think you know where you want to be in 5 or 10 years but you're not sure what the job you're after is really like? A web directory called Wet Feet has a cool resource which lets you look up Career Profiles in virtually every profession. They provide both abstract descriptions of high-level jobs in the various professions as well as profiles of real people who hold those jobs. You can read an interview with a person including a profile of their typical day and advice directly from them about how to get where they are:

<http://www.jshb.info/links/ProCV/wf.asp>

GOAL SETTING AND TRACKING SYSTEM

You've seen him on TV. Tony Robbins, personal coach to celebrities and successful CEOs, has put together a comprehensive step-by-step course which helps you gain the mind power and goal setting skills to achieve your dreams.

<http://www.jshb.info/links/ProCV/robbins.asp>

The Seven Habits of Highly Effective People

Dr. Steven Covey captures the essence of how successful people structure their lives. Being successful doesn't have to be hard. This book illustrates how to align your goals and habits so things fall into place for you in your career and in your life.

<http://www.jshb.info/links/ProCV/books.asp>

Stretch Yourself

When you're envisioning the type of job you'd like to land next, consider the steps you'd have to take to get to your dream job. Successful people tend to maximize a concept that Human Resource professionals call "job stretch." Job stretch is the difference between what your skills are now and the skills that are required to perform a certain set of functions. Successful people seek to make their job stretch as wide as possible while still being able to do their job really well. This means volunteering for that project at work that you might have to spend some extra time researching to be able to do well. And it means applying for jobs that require slightly more expertise than you currently have, rather than slightly less. Having job stretch can make your work more engaging and exciting.

Once you've had a chance to think about the type of job stretch you'd like to experience in your next job, the type of company and co-workers, you should be able to get a picture in your mind's eye about what your next job will be like.

Examples of job stretch:

- Going from managing two people to managing five
- If you're an in-house accounting professional who currently works on only internal financial reporting, taking a job or project that involves some external financial reporting
- If you're a computer programmer – going for a job where you would get exposed to new programming languages and technologies



Develop Your Sales Pitch

Having formed this mental picture, the next step is to come up with a pitch to give to potential employers and recruiters. This is also called an “Elevator Pitch” because you should be able to deliver it in the time it would take to ride an elevator for several floors with a very important person who could help you in your job search (say, Bill Gates, for example). You never know which floor Bill is getting off at, so you want to try to get his interest as quickly as possible while still being friendly.

The pitch should take into account your vision of your ideal next job, where you want to go career-wise, and why you’re qualified. People (including employers) are attracted to individuals who are driven and have a plan to get somewhere in their lives and careers. Having a pitch is also helpful for networking, which as we’ll discuss later accounts for more job placements than any other method. If you can develop a pitch that’s memorable, even if someone you talk to can’t help you with a job lead right away, they’ll remember you and may talk about you to someone else.

When you compose your pitch, you could consider using just bullet points to remind yourself of things to talk about. Start with the most impressive things first and plan to end with a question

that would help you “close” the deal. Closing the deal means different things in different situations. If you’re just networking, the closing process is about finding out how the person can help you and actually requesting that they help you.

If you were a sales professional, the following might be your outline for your elevator pitch:

- Sales professional who has sold more than \$2 million worth of services to Fortune 500 companies over the past year
- Clients served include IBM and General Motors
- Have an MBA from Columbia University
- Seeking an opportunity to get in on the ground floor with a proven company

Say this hypothetical sales professional, named Bob, meets a Vice President of Sales at Oracle (software maker) at a networking event and he’s currently working at Microsoft. He sees the VP’s name tag says Steve on it. The following might be how he’d start off the dialogue:

Sales Professional (Bob): Hi Steve, how are you?

Sales VP (Steve): Good, Bob. What brings you to this networking event today?

Sales Professional (Bob): Steve, I’m a sales professional who has sold more than \$2 million worth of services for Fortune 500 companies over the past year. Some of my clients include IBM and General Motors. As a graduate of Columbia University’s business school, I have been able to bring a consultative approach to the sales process by understanding how my clients’ businesses work. I’m looking for a ground floor opportunity with a proven company. What is your role at Oracle?



Your elevator pitch is something that you’ll need to practice out loud and get feedback from others to perfect.

Exercises and Resources for Developing an Elevator/Sales Pitch

Exercises

Brainstorm a list of the ten most impressive things you have achieved at your current or most recent job. Try to think of things that are quantifiable and easily understandable by a layman. Here are some examples:

- Increased sales by \$1 million
- Exceeded quota by 20%
- Designed custom financial reports which helped the Controller identify \$1 million per year in cost savings
- Manage relationships with people at several Fortune 500 clients
- Developed web site which is visited by over 10,000 people per week

List the ten most impressive accomplishments for your current or most recent position below:

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____
5. _____
6. _____
7. _____
8. _____
9. _____
10. _____

Now that you have come up with this list, ask a trusted friend or a career advisor to help you select the three things they find most compelling:

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____

The next most crucial piece of information to integrate into your pitch is why you're looking for a new position. It can't be "because I got laid off" or "because I'm desperate!" – even if those things are true! You need to come across as being in control of your own destiny. The more of a rare opportunity you are, the more people will want to help you find a job. The more of a commodity you seem to be, the less interested they'll be in you. Here are

Continued on next page

Resources

RESUME REFINEMENT

Refining your resume can also help with your elevator pitch. A good resume will highlight your most impressive accomplishments of your current and prior positions. Once you have a great resume, you can simply pick and choose points from your resume to integrate into your elevator pitch.

Resume Edge is a service that can help you with your resume. Their site provides a library of sample resumes you can refer to for ideas on how to make your resume better. You can also use their site to access their team of professional resume writers, who you can hire to do the work for you. Visit the web address below
<http://www.jsbh.info/links/ProCV/edge.asp>

The Perfect Pitch

David Andrusia looks at job searching from a marketing perspective and provides guidance on how to develop a perfect pitch - both to deliver orally and in writing - in your resumes, cover letters, etc.
<http://www.jsbh.info/links/ProCV/books.asp>

Exercises and Resources for Developing an Elevator/Sales Pitch

some “good” reasons for being open to considering another opportunity:

- Just graduated from college or graduate school
- Looking for more challenging work
- Feel there are more growth opportunities in another industry
- Want to move to a larger/more corporate environment
- Want to move to a smaller/less bureaucratic environment

Here are some things you would not want to give as reasons for looking when in a networking or interviewing environment:

- Don’t like my boss (if you say this, people may think you have a problematic personality – even if it is really your boss’s fault)
- Commute is too long (people will think you’re not dedicated to your work and that your only concern is getting home earlier)

Whatever reason you choose, it should be something that you have some passion about and can talk about at greater length if given an opportunity. For example, if you are looking for a more challenging position, you should be able to talk about the types of work you’d like to get an opportunity to do – like managing others, giving presentations to senior executives, meeting more with clients, etc.

Try making a list of reasons for looking which could be mentioned (this would be towards the end and possibly the last thing mentioned in your elevator pitch).

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____

Now that you have some compelling accomplishments and possible reasons why you’re looking, you have the two most important aspects of your elevator pitch. You may want to mention where you got your most advanced degree from – if it was recent and/or if it’s an impressive degree or institution.

Try giving your elevator pitch to a friend or career advisor, ending with one of the reasons why you’re looking. Try giving the pitch with a few different endings and ask your friend or advisor which one made you seem the most attractive and would

Resources

Exercises and Resources for Developing an Elevator/Sales Pitch

make them most inclined to want to help you (if they were in a position to help).

The version of my elevator pitch that my advisor thought seemed most compelling was:

Resources

Aside from helping you improve how you present yourself in interviews and in networking situations, refining your sales pitch will also help you think through what kinds of jobs would be best for you. This will make it easier for you to focus on just the kinds of job leads that really fit, thus cutting down on how much time you'll need to spend looking. We'll cover methods for finding job leads later in this handbook.

Chapter 2: Improving your resume



Your resume is one of the most important parts of your job search. It is often your resume which creates the first impression on the part of the recruiter or hiring manager, not your charming personality! Here are some critical things your resume must do for you:

1. Communicate exactly what you can do quickly (recruiter should be able to scan the resume and in less than 10 seconds be able to understand what your job function is)
2. Communicate which industries you have worked in – if an employer listed on your resume is not a well-known company, you should note what line of business the company is in. Recruiters are often looking for someone who comes from a certain industry.
3. Communicate that you are professional and diligent. Just as you would make sure you iron your shirt before you go into an interview in person, you need to make sure your resume looks professional too. This means you can't have any spelling errors or grammatical mistakes. Even great writers make grammatical mistakes, so you are taking a big risk if you send your resume to anyone without having someone who is well-versed in grammar and writing style proofread it. If you can't afford to hire a professional resume writer, an English teacher would be a good runner-up choice. Most librarians are also good proofreaders because they read a lot.
4. Emphasize results you've achieved for the companies you've worked for. Simply noting that you were an accountant will not make your resume stand out. You need to indicate what you achieved in that job which made you better than the average accountant applying for the same positions you're applying for. See the previous section on Elevator Pitches for ideas on how to identify your important accomplishments.

5. Be “searchable.” because most resumes are processed through automated systems these days. Searchable means that a recruiter searching for someone by typing in key words needs to be able to find your resume. The twist here is that not all recruiters will think of the same keywords for the same kind of person. One recruiter may type in “attorney,” and another may type in “lawyer.”
6. Not use too much jargon. Keep in mind that some people who read your resume will not be experts in your field. Don’t worry about using big words in your resume to try to impress people. The first person who sees your resume will likely be a recent college grad in the company’s human resources department, and may be completely unaware of the technical terms for the work you do. It’s ok to use some technical words if a lower-level person can still get the gist of what your background and talents are from the context.
7. Not make you seem over or under qualified. If someone reads your resume and thinks you’re too senior for a job, you won’t be considered. Likewise, if they read your resume and on first glance don’t think you’re senior enough, they will also move on to the next resume in their pile/search. One of the first things recruiters look at when they see your resume is the position titles. They often look for someone whose most recent or current job title is the same as the job title for the position they’re trying to fill. Many recruiters (the good ones) will also consider resumes where the most recent job title is slightly junior to the title of the position they’re trying to fill because they realize top performing people are interested in advancing in their careers.
 - If you’re concerned that a job title on your resume makes you seem too senior or not senior enough, consider using a short functional description rather than the formal title. For example, if you were the Chief Financial Officer at a small company and wanted recruiters to consider you for financial management positions at larger firms, you could write “Financial Manager” instead of your official title.
 - Likewise, let’s say you were applying for a job as a software development project manager. Your current job title is “programmer,” but you have also managed some other programmers on some projects. Writing “Developer and Project Leader” instead of your official title would indicate that you have some management experience and make the recruiter more interested in seeing if you could be a potential fit for the job.
8. Not give away how old you are if you are an older professional. It’s unfortunate, but age discrimination does exist. Recruiters associate certain stereotypes with older workers, and you won’t have a chance to prove those prejudices to be inaccurate if they don’t get to meet you in person! Many recruiters and employers feel older employees are less energetic, not “coachable,” and not worth the higher salary that they probably expect.
 - Don’t show years of graduation for schools you’ve attended unless you’re a recent grad applying for your first job out of college or graduate school.
 - Generally, ten years of job history is sufficient. If you show only ten years of job history, a recruiter looking at your resume might not know whether you’re 35 or 55, and that’s not a bad thing!

- Especially if you're an older employee, your resume should communicate energy and enthusiasm. You should also be sure to convey energy in phone calls and in-person meetings/interviews.
9. Not reveal obvious gaps in employment. The biggest concern an employer will have about a gap in employment is whether it is any indication of your likely future performance and/or reliability. If an employment gap is short or occurred several years ago, most employers and recruiters won't notice and you probably don't need to bring it up unless they do. However, if the gap is noticeable, there are several ways you can deal with the situation:
- Using a functional resume. A solution many resume writers would recommend is to use a functional resume instead of a chronological one. This can work if you have a complex job where you have achieved many things in various areas. For example, a programmer who has worked with several technologies could legitimately use a functional resume, dividing up the resume by technologies worked with instead of time periods. This can also work with other technical professions like engineers, attorneys, etc. If the work you do is rather straightforward and you work with a fairly limited range of skills, using a functional resume could make it seem like you're trying to hide your dates of employment.
 - If you do use a functional resume, many people looking at it will still want to know what kinds of companies you've worked for and what the most recent employer's line of business was. You can deal with this by including a note above your list of experiences indicating the most recent employer's name, location and line of business. In this same section you can list other employer names and lines of business you have worked in.
 - Including an explanation of the gap. Another approach is to include an explanation of the gap on the resume itself. This makes sense to do if using a functional resume instead of a chronological one would seem odd because your profession doesn't lend itself to such a resume format. It's also important to note that most people reading resumes prefer the chronological format. If you have a legitimate story as to why you have a gap in your employment dates that most people could sympathize with and understand easily, just being forthright and listing it on your resume is fine.
 - If you had a medical condition that has since been resolved completely or nearly completely, you're better off explaining that briefly on the resume instead of not mentioning anything at all. For example:
 - Dec 2002 to Nov 2004: Took sabbatical from work to deal with a medical problem. The issue has been completely resolved and the doctors feel it will not reoccur.
10. Be congruent with the rest of your "pitch." This is Advertising 101: once you figure out what message you want to deliver to your audience, you have to be consistent or else they will question it. Your resume should reinforce what you say in other places, such as in your cover letter and in interviews and in phone conversations.
- Here's an example: Let's say you're applying for a sales job in an industry different from the one you're currently working in. In a phone conversation with the recruiter you mention you think a big part of being successful in a sales position is coming in to the position with existing contacts. So if your resume does not mention any

companies in the recruiter's company's industry after you've said that, then your resume is not congruent. This will create a dissonance in the recruiter's mind that they may not even be aware of consciously. Being a successful job seeker requires thinking like a marketer: always being aware of how your message is being received by the people you're broadcasting it to.

- For this reason, it is best to think through anything significant you say you have expertise in – either verbally or in writing. Whenever you claim to have expertise in something, you should be able to back it up with at least one real-life story about your experience with it.

It helps if your resume is written in an engaging and interesting writing style. If your resume is pleasant to read, recruiters will already have a good impression before they pick up the phone or send an e-mail to get in touch with you. This is an area where resume writers can be especially valuable because they specialize in making their writing compelling and interesting to read.

Exercises and Resources for Improving your Resume

Exercises

HAVE A FRIEND REVIEW YOUR RESUME

Find someone who isn't very familiar with what you do for a living. When they look at your resume, ask them to grade you on these things:

1. Can they figure out what your job function is within the first 10 seconds of looking at your resume?
2. Can they figure out what industries/markets you have worked in? (hint: if your resume does not state this explicitly, the companies you've worked at should be well-known)
3. Do they remember several significant things you've achieved for your employers after reading your resume? (hint: if your accomplishments were not memorable, they won't be able to!)
4. Were they able to understand what you accomplished in each of your jobs without having to refer to a dictionary or ask you what a word means?

MAKING SURE YOU DON'T COME ACROSS AS OVER OR UNDER QUALIFIED

If you've been sending resumes out to a number of recruiters or have responded to more than 50 job ads and haven't gotten a positive response yet, your resume may be portraying you as under or over qualified for the positions you've been applying for. Point #7 in the preceding list addresses this and suggests some ideas for modifying your resume to make it more appealing.

If you still need help, one of the best sources for advice on this issue is a manager who hires people with your background. The trick to finding out what these people really think about your resume is to meet with them in a situation where they are not considering you for a job. This type of meeting is commonly referred to as an "informational interview." The easiest way to get a meeting like this set up is through networking. Look for networking events for your industry/profession – often available through associations. For help on finding appropriate associations, see the corresponding Resources item in this section. Here are some questions to consider asking in an informational interview:

1. What are the current or previous job titles you look for on resumes of people you would consider hiring for the position I'm seeking?

Continued on next page

Resources

RESUME REFINEMENT

Resume writing firms are a great resource to go to for help with your resume. They are professionals dedicated to dealing with the critical issues discussed in this section.

Resume Edge is a service that can help you with your resume. Their site provides a library of sample resumes you can refer to for ideas on how to make your resume better. You can also use their site to access their team of professional resume writers, who you can hire to do the work for you. Visit the web address below
<http://www.jshb.info/links/ProCV/edge.asp>

PROFESSIONAL/TRADE ASSOCIATIONS

Professional and trade associations are a great way to network with other people in your field. If you're not sure which associations are available for people with backgrounds like yours, the ASAE web site can be a great resource. This is an association which virtually all associations belong to, thus they have a powerful directory of all major associations in the U.S.

By networking with others, you can get feedback about your resume and you can try out your Elevator Pitch (see previous section). You can also network to arrange for informational interviews, see "Making Sure You Don't Come Across as Over or Under Qualified" in the exercises for this section.
<http://www.jshb.info/links/ProCV/asae.asp>

A Pocket Style Manual

Point #3 in the list of critical resume issues in this section deals with making sure your resume is written in the proper style and is free of spelling and grammatical mistakes. The MLA Writing Style Guide can be a great resource for verifying that your resume conforms to accepted writing standards - in terms of punctuation usage, grammar, etc.
<http://www.jshb.info/links/ProCV/books.asp>

Exercises and Resources for Improving your Resume

Any keywords that you think are highly likely that a recruiter would use to search for you should be used more than once in your resume.

TRACKING PITCHES

It may be helpful to keep a diary or a simple list of the jobs you've applied to, and to keep track of which versions of your resume you send to each. If you emphasize a specific aspect of your background in a conversation with a particular recruiter or hiring manager, it's a good idea to make a note of that. You may find it beneficial to have a few different versions of your "Elevator Pitch" available to deliver verbally, just as you have a few different versions of your resume for different kinds of jobs.

Tracking your resume types, pitch types and any special issues you emphasized with particular interviewers can help you keep your overall messages consistent and congruent. This is important for insuring you come across as honest, credible and professional. You could consider setting up a diary or Excel® spreadsheet in a format like this:

Company Job Title Interviewer Resume # Used
Expertise/Experience Emphasized Pitch # Used

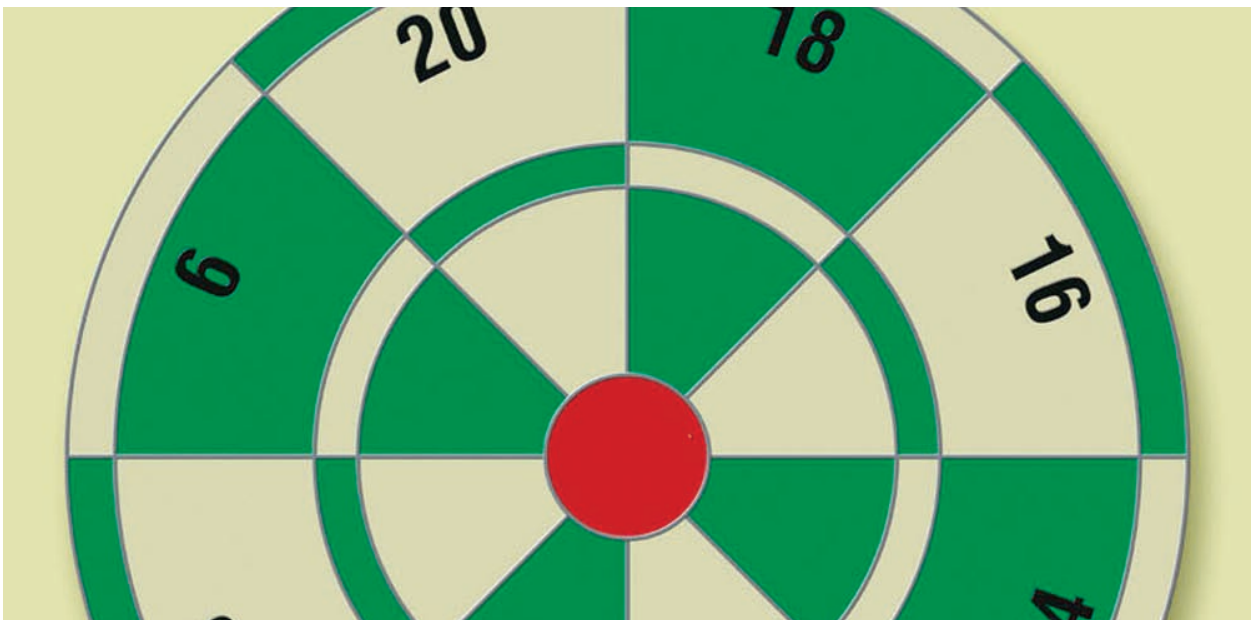
Resources

Chapter 3: Cover Letters

There are hundreds, if not thousands, of people out there who would like to either give you a job or help you find one. It's really just a matter of finding them (or making it easy for them to find you). Just like with marketing a product though, it takes discipline and a thoughtful plan to reach these potential buyers efficiently.

Resume Customization and Using Cover Letters

Before we get into some of the specific ways of finding job leads, let's briefly discuss the concept of "resume targeting." This is the practice of customizing your resume for a specific audience. Targeting with resumes is the same concept as advertisers customizing their message to a particular demographic.



Recently, many big brand marketers have started customizing their messages to make their commercials more interesting so people using TiVo don't fast forward past them and so they stand out from other commercials. For example, Mercedes Benz recently started running commercials in New York City where a couple drives first to La Guardia and then to JFK Airport. For the average viewer who sees a few hours of commercials a week, one that mentions two local places they're familiar with will stand out in their mind. The same goes for recruiters and employers who may receive hundreds of resumes a week. If they get one that's customized for their interests, it has a better chance of standing out.

Here's how you can effectively customize your resume for different employers:

- Have several versions of your resume available for the different types of positions you're applying for.

- For example, if you're applying for jobs in both the insurance and financial services industries, you could have two different resumes available with two slightly different Objective statements.
- Further customizing your resume for the specific position you're applying for makes sense if it's a position you're really interested in and you want to stand out from the pack.
- Keep in mind though that if you're sending out 100 resumes, it may not pay to spend 5-10 minutes customizing each one since landing a job is also partly a numbers game.

What Cover Letters Do For You

Cover letters can be a powerful way to establish a relationship with the potential employer – especially if you haven't met the person yet. They also provide more room for you to discuss the synergies between your goals and theirs than is afforded in a resume. The goal of a cover letter is to establish a personal relationship. To that end, a cover letter needs to at least appear that it was customized for the specific person it's being sent to. A good cover letter will reference the name of the company it is being sent to and the position title. Even if you're sending out a lot of cover letters, this can be accomplished using the Mail Merge function in Microsoft Word.

When you're contacting an employer for the first time by e-mail, the custom is to not include a cover letter but instead to provide an introduction in the body of the e-mail itself. Your resume can be attached in Word format. The introductory text you include in the body of the e-mail has the same goal as a cover letter: to establish a personal relationship. But it is less formal than a cover letter.



Now for a brief word about what a cover letter should not be: it is not a summary of your resume and should not look like a form letter (even if it is one). Also, a cover letter should not include information that's not in your resume. Some busy managers and recruiters simply skip cover

letters and don't read them. However, sending a resume to an employer without a cover letter will give them the impression you're randomly sending your resume to lots of companies and don't really care in particular about their firm. Unfortunately, you'll create the same impression if you send a cover letter that looks like a form letter and isn't customized at all. Even worse though, the person reading the resumes may have spent an extra 20-30 seconds reading a letter that did not provide them with any additional information than was in your resume and did not take advantage of the opportunity to start a personal relationship with the person.

An exception to all of this is if you're posting your resume on a job board. In this case, the recruiter bears some of the responsibility in starting the relationship. Here's an analogy to explain this: if you're looking for a date and you approach a woman (or a man) at a bar with a canned pick-up line, they'll probably respect you less than if you said something original. On the other hand, if they were to approach you at that same bar, they would be the ones who'd have to come up with a way to introduce themselves.

Exercises and Resources for Cover Letters

Exercises

DETERMINING HOW POWERFUL YOUR COVER LETTERS ARE

As an exercise, save all the job ads you reply to and the corresponding cover letters you send in response for a week. An email written in response to a job ad with a resume attached would count as a cover letter.

At the end of the week, ask a trusted friend or a career coach to make believe they are the hiring manager for several of the jobs you applied to. To do this, they will need to first review the job ad. Then, they will read your email/cover letter as if they received it and were considering you among many other applicants for the job. Ask them to answer these questions:

1. Did they feel like your cover letter demonstrated that you understood who they were looking to hire?
2. Did they get the impression by reading the email or cover letter that you had some skills/qualities which might make you an outstanding candidate for the job?
3. On a scale from 1 to 10, how excited would they be about getting in touch with you after reading your cover letter/email? If it's not a 10, what could you have done differently in your cover letter to make them more interested in talking to you?

Resources

PROFESSIONALLY WRITTEN COVER LETTERS

In addition to writing resumes, professional resume writers are also good at writing cover letters. Your resume writer can create one cover letter which you can customize, or can create several different versions of a cover letter for the various audiences you expect to be sending them to.

Resume Edge offers professional cover letter writing services. They also offer a library of sample resumes and cover letters you can look at to get ideas.

<http://www.jshb.info/links/ProCV/edge.asp>

Chapter 4: Networking



Many studies about job searching have all come to the same conclusion: networking is the #1 way people find new jobs. That's not to say that other methods don't help. You may find yourself applying for a job with a company and not getting hired there, but one of the people you interview with might pass your name along to someone else. So networking may be involved in a way you don't expect. If you expand your definition of networking and make it a part of your life, chances are you'll have a much easier time of moving ahead in your career.

Harvey MacKay, one of the most renowned experts on the subject of networking, says whenever he meets someone, he comes up with an "excuse" to stay in touch with the person. It may be something personal they have in common, such as both being tennis players, or something business related like being in the same professional association. He also talks about how having an attitude of being predisposed to looking for ways to help people you know is contagious: they'll try to think of ways they can help you too. This is the essence of networking: staying in touch with people and looking for ways to make the relationship mutually beneficial. Check out MacKay's book, "Dig Your Well Before You're Thirsty: The Only Networking Book You'll Ever Need." The title says it all!

Tapping Your Current Relationships

When you're looking for a new job, don't forget about one of the most powerful resources you have: people you already know. Think about who's in your address book. If they knew you were looking for a new position, would some of them be able to help you? Putting in a simple phone call or sending an e-mail to people you know could help you uncover some valuable job leads. Keep MacKay's principles in mind though: your relationships need to be mutually beneficial. If someone knows you are happy to help them, they'll be more interested in helping you.

After reading the above paragraph, you might think about going through your rolodex to see who you can get in touch with. If you're like most people, you probably have contacts you haven't talked to for a long time. These are contacts that have or are in danger of going stale. For a long-term solution to this problem, you may want to consider an innovative new tool called RelationshipSecure that can help you automate some of the process of staying in touch with people.

RelationshipSecure provides several features that help you maintain your existing relationships and keep them from getting stale. It provides a verification feature that lets you send out e-mail mailings to your contacts asking them if their information is correct. If it isn't, they can make any changes necessary and your Outlook address book is updated automatically. It also lets you send out other mailings like Birthday and Anniversary e-greeting cards. Find out more about this software by visiting their web site at www.RelationshipSecure.com.

Expanding Your Network of Contacts

You may find you're one of the lucky people who knew someone in their immediate circle who introduced them to their next job. If you're not, there are many other resources available for you to build your network and start establishing the contacts that can get you job leads. One place to look is networking events. Here is a brief (but not exhaustive) list of places to go to find networking events:

- Technology Executives Networking Group (TENG) – For Technology Executives. Website: www.theteng.org
- Financial Executives Networking Group (FENG) – For Finance Executives (CFOs, Controllers, etc.). Website: www.thefeng.org
- ExecuNet – General networking for executives making \$100,000+. Website: www.execunet.com
- Institute of Electrical and Electronic Engineers (IEEE) – Website: www.ieee.org
- Association for Computing Machinery (ACM) – For I.T. Professionals & Computer Scientists. Website: www.acm.org
- Crain's Business Publications – Publisher of Crain's New York Business, Crain's Detroit Business, Crain's Chicago Business, et. al. These publications list local networking events in these major cities. Website: www.crain.com
- Subscribing to industry and professional publications. These also often list career moves. Can help you stay on top of your industry and give you an opportunity to reach out and congratulate someone you met at a conference who just got a promotion.

Integrating Networking Into Your Job Search

When you're meeting people who can help you advance in your career – whether it's at a networking event, an employer's offices, or meeting with a recruiter – keep in mind these basic principles of salesmanship:

- Always look your best. You are marketing yourself so you want to look as appealing and professional as possible.

- Don't come across as desperate. Remember: you are the prize. Someone selling a used Oldsmobile would probably need a big "For Sale" sign on it and would need to explain why he's selling it and how well it works. On the other hand, someone selling a new Mercedes could just sit back and let people observe how nice the car looks and maybe try it out and see how well it performs. You want to be the Mercedes dealer, not the Oldsmobile seller.

If you're not used to networking and need a little hand-holding to get started, a Career Coach can be a great resource. Even people who are a little shy can be successful at networking with a little personal coaching. Your career coach can give you some pointers that fit in with your unique personality that you can use to be successful in various networking situations. Having a coach available can also be helpful in overcoming specific networking/professional relationship challenges.

If you've ever been in the position of hiring people, you know the challenges recruiters face in trying to sift through resumes to find talented individuals. Reading resumes is time consuming and so is interviewing. Networking gives you an opportunity to cut through the fog that recruiters don't really want to deal with anyway. Someone looking to make a hire would much rather just have someone recommended to them by a co-worker or associate than have to sift through lots of resumes. It may sound unfair but this is often how positions get filled. If you adapt a networking mindset, you can be in a position to use networking to your advantage.

Exercises and Resources for Networking

Exercises

COMING UP WITH REASONS TO STAY IN TOUCH

One of the most effective ways to build a strong network of contacts is to stay in touch with existing contacts. This takes a continual effort of coming up with reasons to reach out to people. People appreciate it if you remember their birthday, anniversary, something that's important or interesting to them.

Get a jump start on this right now – go through your address book and find “excuses” to get in touch with 10 people you haven't been in touch with for a while. Showing genuine concern/interest and being open to helping them will make it more likely that they will be opening to helping you at some point when you need it.

Keep in mind: every one of your contacts increases your networking reach exponentially. If you figure everyone has an average of 200 contacts, you could have access to up to 40,000 people through your network if your relationships are maintained well!

Resources

KEEPING CONTACTS FROM GOING STALE

RelationshipSecure provides several features that help you maintain your existing relationships and keep them from getting stale. It provides a verification feature that lets you send out e-mail mailings to your contacts asking them if their information is correct. If it isn't, they can make any changes necessary and your Outlook address book is updated automatically. It also lets you send out other mailings like Birthday and Anniversary e-greeting cards.
<http://www.jshb.info/links/ProCV/rs.asp>

STAYING ON TOP OF INDUSTRY NEWS

Staying on top of what's happening in your industry is important for effective networking. You should be subscribing to all the pertinent publications for your profession and industry. These publications often advise of changes in management at important companies, developments in technology and techniques, etc. They also list important networking events and conferences. A great resource is the Trade Pubs library of trade and professional magazines. Their site lets you browse magazines for your profession and industry. You may even qualify for a free subscription.
<http://www.jshb.info/links/ProCV/mags.asp>

PROFESSIONAL/TRADE ASSOCIATIONS

Professional and trade associations are a great way to network with other people in your field. If you're not sure which associations are available for people with backgrounds like yours, the ASAE web site can be a great resource. This is an association which virtually all associations belong to, thus they have a powerful directory of all major associations in the U.S.
<http://www.jshb.info/links/ProCV/asae.asp>

BUSINESS CARDS

You should always have appropriate business cards to give out to networking contacts - whether at networking events or elsewhere. If you are not employed or if you don't want to take job opportunity calls at work, you can get a new set of business cards made up. To find out about getting a free set of color business cards, visit this web address:
<http://www.jshb.info/links/ProCV/cards.asp>

Dig Your Well Before You're Thirsty

Harvey MacKay, one of the most renowned experts on the subject of networking, says whenever he meets someone, he comes up with an "excuse" to stay in touch with the person. It may be something personal they have in common, such as both being tennis players, or something business related like being in the same professional association. He also talks about how having an attitude of being

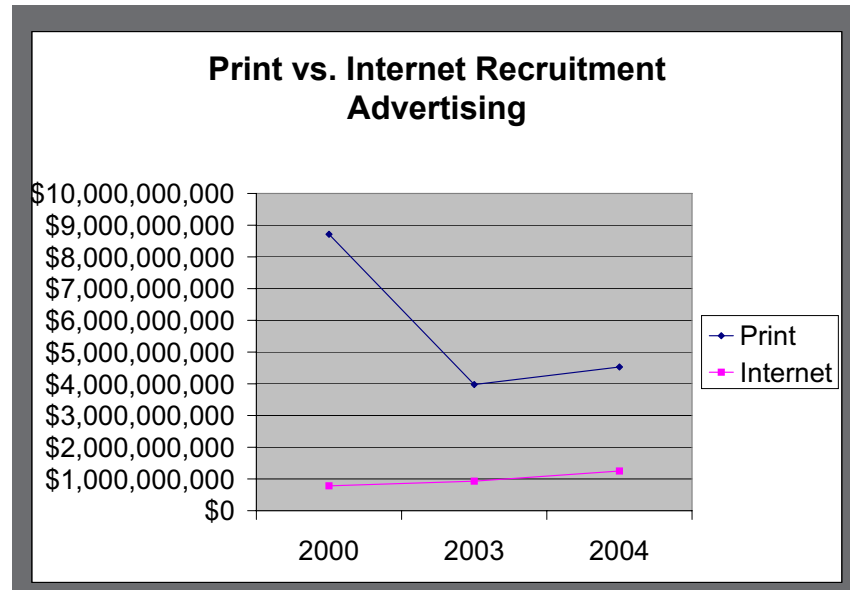
Exercises and Resources for Networking

Resources Cont...

predisposed to looking for ways to help people you know is contagious: they'll try to think of ways they can help you too. This is the essence of networking: staying in touch with people and looking for ways to make the relationship mutually beneficial. Check out MacKay's book, "Dig Your Well Before You're Thirsty: The Only Networking Book You'll Ever Need." The title says it all!
<http://www.jshb.info/links/ProCV/books.asp>

Chapter 5: Using Job Boards

Even though job boards are a new technology that have been around for just a few years, there are already many signs that they are a significantly more effective recruiting technology than what had been used before (mainly newspaper classified ads).



Source: Monster Worldwide

As you can see from this graph, since online job boards have come on the scene, employers have drastically cut their use of print recruitment advertising and are starting to use job boards (Internet recruitment advertising) more and more. More is still being spent on print advertising (like classifieds) than on internet recruitment advertising, \$4.6 billion vs. \$1.2 billion on internet job advertising). However, part of the reason for this is because employers get more for their money with online job advertising. Employers can get a 60-day job ad on Monster.com for about \$400, compared with 1 day (generally a Sunday) in the New York Times for about the same amount. As the graph also illustrates, employers now spend over \$1 billion per year to recruit from job boards.

How likely you are to find your next job through the Internet depends on a number of factors. One of them is the profession you're in. Some studies have suggested nearly 50% or even more of IT jobs are found online. For less tech-savvy positions, the chances of finding your next job online are generally lower. If most job seekers in your field are not tech-savvy, employers will probably not bother looking online for those types of candidates. For example, employers generally do not search the Internet for low-wage job candidates like home health aides and cashiers. The feeling is many of these people don't have computers and aren't on the job sites.

In other professions, there is a quickly changing dynamic. When job boards first became popular, most higher-level managers still had their secretaries do most of their work. It was not uncommon in 1997 for a CEO to spend little or no time on the computer since it was seen as an

administrative tool. By 2000, that had started to change with many executives and other high level managers starting to see e-mail and the web as a necessity for doing their jobs and staying in touch with employees and customers. Whereas recruiters had originally thought executives would never look for jobs online, by 2002, a study by outplacement firm Drake Beam Morrin reported 6% of management-level jobs were found through the Internet in the prior year. This statistic is continually increasing with more and more management jobs being found online.

Even with the impressive growth of job boards, the top source for finding a new job is still by word of mouth in most professions. The 2002 Drake Beam Morrin study found 61% of management-level jobs were found through networking. The percentage tends to vary depending on the profession but usually anywhere between 40% and 70% of positions are filled by word of mouth. About 5% of jobs are still filled through newspaper ads. Overall, across all professions, job boards account for about 10-15% of all jobs found.

Here are some tips to get the most out of using job boards:

1. Make sure the salary you're asking for is in line with what other people with your background are looking for. Think about it from the employer's perspective: if you got a list of 50 resumes, and 45 of them are asking for a salary you think is reasonable and 5 of them are asking for a salary that seems high, which ones will you look at first? How do you know what a reasonable salary is? One way is to look at job listings for your profession in your local area and make sure what you're asking for is within the range of what employers are willing to pay.
2. Make sure recruiters can reach you easily at the contact information you provide. The e-mail address you put down on the job boards should be one that you check frequently. Keep in mind that with free e-mail services like Yahoo and Hotmail, you have to check them at least every few days if you're getting a decent amount of e-mail so they won't fill up. If a recruiter tries to e-mail you and their message bounces back because your mailbox was full, chances are they'll just move on to the next person on their list. Same goes for phone numbers. You should provide both a work or cell phone number so recruiters can reach you during the day, as well as an evening phone number just in case they're working late (as many recruiters do) or they brought some resumes home with them. You should have an answering machine or voice mail, and make sure it works properly. If you have a fax machine on the same line, make sure it's set not to answer the phone.
3. Make sure your resume is compelling. Your resume is your representative. Would you hire someone to represent you if they didn't look at least as professional as you yourself? Probably not. Same goes for resumes. Make sure your resume is free of spelling and grammatical errors (use the spelling and grammar check in Microsoft Word). Make sure your resume is easy to read and can be understood by a layman. If a busy recruiter has 50 resumes to look through on a job board and they can't understand within the first 30 seconds of looking at your resume how you can help their company, they'll just skip on to the next resume. No one wants to work any harder than they have to. See the Resources section below for ideas on improving your resume.

4. Keep in mind there are many job boards used by recruiters. Don't put all your eggs in one basket and rely on just one job board. Post your resume on several sites. You can use a service like ResumeDirector which will do this for you. ResumeDirector will let you enter your resume once and will then post it on over 90 job sites including Monster, HotJobs, CareerBuilder and many more. See the Resources section below to find out more about ResumeDirector.

5. In the best case, you could have a 50% chance of finding a job through a job board. In the worst case it could be as low as 10% or so. Knowing this, it makes sense to spend no more than 50% of the time you're allotting for job searching on using job sites. Just like when you invest in the stock market, you should diversify your portfolio and use several different job searching methods. Talk to people and attend events, for one thing. Many recruiters prefer to search for candidates rather than posting job ads and having to read through hundreds of resumes. Instead of spending 20 hours a week responding to job ads, your time is most likely better spent first making sure you have a great resume (see the section on Improving Your Resume earlier in this handbook), then getting your resume posted on all the pertinent job sites (see point #4, above), and responding to only the most promising job ads. Use the remaining time on other methods of job searching like attending networking events.

6. Don't think of job leads you get from job boards as just potential jobs. Think of them also as Networking Leads. When you get asked in for an interview after posting your resume or responding to a job ad, go there with a networking mindset. Regardless of whether you're meeting with a third party recruiter or a direct employer, your approach should be to think of opportunities to create a long-term relationship with the company or individual. If you are looking for ways to help them long-term -- whether it's referring friends to them or other potential business -- they will start thinking of ways to help you long term. They will also be more receptive to referring you to someone else if they don't think the position is the right fit for you.

7. Update your resume regularly on the most popular sites. Most job sites receive less than 1,000 resumes per day, which spread out across the thousands of counties in the U.S. does not amount to an inordinate number. However, the top 3 job boards - Monster, HotJobs and CareerBuilder - each receive 15,000 or more resumes per day. On these three sites, your resume will start appearing lower in the search results recruiters see after a couple weeks. Therefore, we recommend logging in to each of these 3 sites about twice a month and changing one or two words in the resume so it will appear as if it's updated.

8. Get Noticed. The multimillionaire Aristotle Onassis came to this country as a poor immigrant from Greece who couldn't speak English very well. He didn't think he had a good chance of getting a loan if he followed the normal protocol and filled out an application at the bank. So he decided to follow the bank's loan officer around. He didn't say anything to the man, but wherever he went, Onassis was not too far behind. One day the loan officer was coming out of a restaurant after finishing his lunch and noticed Onassis standing across the street. He went up to him and asked, "Who are you and what do you want?" To which Aristotle replied, "I'm Onassis and I want a loan." Sure enough he got one and the rest is history.

Does this mean you should follow employers around? Probably not. Even if you wanted to, you probably couldn't because everything's done through computers now. But there are some things you can do to stand out and get noticed. If you see a position on a job board that you feel is a good fit for you, make a conspicuous note of that in the e-mail you send with your resume. Consider coming up with a headline for the message subject or the top of the e-mail that will get the recruiter's attention, like "LPN NURSE WITH 6 YEARS EXPERIENCE WORKING IN HOSPITALS LIKE YOURS." A recruiter may get 100 responses or more to a job ad. They're more likely to look at a resume if there's a personal note relevant to the specific position. You can also consider faxing the resume with a service like FaxMyResume.com to bypass the recruiter's inbox. One caveat here: don't invest a lot of time with ALL the job ads you see - just the best ones.

Exercises and Resources for Using Job Boards

Exercises

BEING EASILY REACHABLE

When was the last time you tried calling yourself (at the number listed on your resume)? If it's been a while, try calling your number and leaving a voice message for yourself. Listen to your outgoing message (the one where you ask callers to leave their name and number). Make sure your outgoing message sounds professional. It's also helpful if your outgoing message states your name. You don't want a recruiter to wonder whether they got the right phone number or not.

Also, try sending yourself an email. Is your email address easy to type? Make sure your email address is professional (i.e. grungerocklover@aol.com would not convey a professional image).

Resources

POSTING YOUR RESUME

Posting your resume on job boards has several advantages over proactively responding to jobs. It's not as time consuming if you do it right, for one. It's important to note that there are over 90 major job sites in the U.S. Your resume should be posted on all the pertinent job sites to be seen by as many recruiters as possible. Some recruiters subscribe to one job board but not others.

Using a service like ResumeDirector can get your resume posted on over 90 job sites at once. Their service will post your resume on major sites like Monster, HotJobs, CareerBuilder, Flipdog, etc. Plus, you can use it to get posted on niche job sites like 6FigureJobs and AwesomeTechs.com (for IT Professionals). To find out more, visit this web address
<http://www.jshb.info/links/ProCV/rd.asp>

POSTING YOUR RESUME WITH THE RIGHT SALARY RANGE

Posting your resume with a salary range can actually make you more attractive to recruiters. Recruiters generally have their own salary range - what the company can pay. Especially in professions where salaries vary widely (such as engineering and information technology), indicating your salary range makes it easier for the recruiter to spot your resume in their search as being one that is probably a good match for the job they're trying to fill. For example, if a recruiter is looking for a mid-level Visual Basic programmer in New York, a typical salary range for this kind of skill set and experience would be around \$43,000-\$50,000. The recruiter might do a search for "visual basic" on a job board. Of course, this will return much more senior people who have say 10 years of experience and are looking for \$90,000. It will also return people who are recent graduates who've only taken a class in Visual Basic. The

Exercises and Resources for Using Job Boards

Exercises

Resources Cont...

recruiter wants to look at as few resumes as possible to find people who could be a good fit. Only two things are visible on their search screen: your job title/resume description, and your salary range. If you have no salary range listed but the resume above you does (and their salary range is within the range for the job the recruiter's trying to fill), the recruiter will probably click the resume with the salary range listed first.

One easy way to find out what kind of salary range you should be asking for is to order a Personal Salary Report. This report is compiled by salary experts who scour salary surveys to find out the range of salaries for people with your particular background and who are in your geographical location. To find out more or to order a custom report, visit this web address

<http://www.jshb.info/links/ProCV/sal.asp>

RESUME REFINEMENT

Resume writing firms are a great resource to go to for help with your resume. They are professionals dedicated to dealing with the critical issues discussed in this section.

Resume Edge is a service that can help you with your resume. Their site provides a library of sample resumes you can refer to for ideas on how to make your resume better. You can also use their site to access their team of professional resume writers, who you can hire to do the work for you. Visit the web address below

<http://www.jshb.info/links/ProCV/edge.asp>

Chapter 6: Resume Distribution



Up until this point in our discussion, the term “recruiter” has been used to refer to both direct employers (i.e. hiring managers working inside companies looking to hire people) as well as to refer to third party recruiters who are hired by an employer to find job candidates. Often, the distinction doesn’t matter because you always want to present yourself in the best possible way. But there are differences and they’re important to point out, especially when it comes to distributing your resume.

Direct employers are the companies that make the ultimate hiring decision. Within a direct employer, there are the hiring managers who are the people who decide if someone is hired. Then there are “gatekeepers.” Gatekeepers are people like human resource professionals and assistants to the hiring manager who screen out resumes and candidates and whose job it is to present the most qualified people to the hiring manager. Some hiring managers don’t use HR people or assistants. This is the best situation because these gatekeepers often make mistakes and screen out qualified people. When communicating with a direct employer, you may not know right away if you’re talking to a hiring manager or a gatekeeper. It’s always best to treat the person as if they’re a hiring manager and present yourself in the best possible way. Your pitch, which we mentioned early in this guide, can be used to communicate your strengths. Making yourself memorable is one way to get past gatekeepers.

Third party recruiters can be subdivided into contingency recruiters and retained recruiters. Recruiters paid on a retainer receive a fee based on the amount of time they put in. Contingency recruiters are paid a commission when a person they recommend to the direct employer is hired. If the direct employer doesn't hire any of the people they recommend, a contingency recruiter is not paid anything. If an employer goes with a retained recruiter, they usually have just one firm working on filling a position. If they go with the contingency approach, they typically tell a number of firms about the position and hire the first person they like – regardless of which recruiter the candidate came from.

From the job candidate's perspective, there are advantages and disadvantages to each type of recruiter. With contingency recruiters, the recruiter is looking for a candidate that they think will be appealing to the employer. They're looking for someone who'll be an easy sell. If you don't come across to them as an easy sell, you may still be able to get the recruiter to pitch you to the employer if you provide them (the recruiter) with a good pitch that can help them make the sale. With retained recruiters, the employer generally expects the recruiter to be more thorough, and to present candidates who have been vetted, or screened, to a higher degree than they'd expect from a contingency recruiter. Of course contingency recruiters are also concerned about the long-term fit because they usually offer a guarantee – if you quit or get fired within the first 3 months after the placement, the contingency recruiter gives the recruiting fee back to the client (the direct employer). But with contingency recruiters, there's more of an emphasis on selling because they have to get one of their people hired before one of the other contingency recruiters presents someone to the client that the client decides to hire. So when dealing with contingency recruiters, you have to give them ammunition to use to sell you to their client (more about the sizzle). With retained recruiters, you have to communicate to them why you are in fact a good fit for the job (more about the steak).

Establishing relationships with recruiters can be a very powerful way for you to get hired. It is a recruiter's business to have relationships with many employers. A recruiter can open a lot of doors for you if they're motivated to do so. Whereas hiring managers are busy and generally not focused on recruiting, recruiters' only business is to recruit so it's generally easier to create relationships with them.

When it comes to resume distribution, you can target recruiters, direct employers, or both. If you're an executive and you're interested in working for a startup, distributing your resume to venture capital firms could also be a good idea.

If you want to contact recruiters in your area and/or industry/profession one by one, a resource for finding recruiters you may want to try is the web site RecruitersOnline.com.

Another way to reach recruiters and employers is by posting your resume on job sites and responding to job listings. This is discussed in the previous chapter, chapter 5.

A resume distribution service is yet another way of getting your resume in front of recruiters and hiring managers. Some recruiters and hiring managers hire frequently and for a specific type of profession and/or industry. Since they know ahead of time they're looking for specific types of

professionals, these people often sign up to receive resumes from a distribution service such as ResumeArrow. See the Resources section below for more information.

Resources for Resume Distribution

RESUME DISTRIBUTION BY E-MAIL

By signing up with a service like ResumeArrow, you can get your resume emailed to thousands of these recruiters and hiring managers at once. It's a very efficient way to reach lots of people who may be working on open positions requiring someone with your background, and who could be good networking contacts for you. Using ResumeArrow will cost somewhere between \$49 and \$85. To find out more, visit this web address:

<http://www.jshb.info/links/ProCV/dist.asp>

RESUME DISTRIBUTION BY POSTAL MAIL

Resume Stork provides another unique way of getting the attention of recruiters. Using their service, you can have your resume delivered to employers by postal mail. You can select employers by industry type or SIC code and target just the specific employers you want to receive your resume. They take care of printing out your resume, addressing the envelopes and dropping them in the mail. To find out more, visit this web address:

<http://www.jshb.info/links/ProCV/stork.asp>

Chapter 7: Other Sources of Job Leads

Newspaper Classifieds

Newspaper classifieds are another potential source for job leads. They're not used as much these days because job boards have become more popular. But they can still be a good source. Some recruiters and employers use them instead of job boards for various reasons. Some recruiters & employers are old-fashioned and may not be comfortable with technology. Some recruiters may feel they'll reach more "passive" job seekers (i.e. people not desperate for a job) by advertising in the newspaper. Whatever their reason, it's a good idea not to write off the newspaper classifieds when it comes to looking for jobs.

Contacting Employers Directly

If there are some specific companies you want to work for, go ahead and get in touch with them directly. Big Fortune 500 companies often have a special website you can go to and apply online. After completing the application process with these sites, it wouldn't hurt to give their H.R. department a follow-up call a week or so later if you haven't heard from them. Your information will most likely go into a database that their staff can search when they have positions open. But calling them may give them an impetus to check their open positions and see if they have anything that matches your background.

Chapter 8: Interviewing



Many studies have shown that interviewing does not provide the company with the best candidate for the job. Does that mean that interviewing is bad? No, it's more that most interviewers are not that good. Very often, you'll be interviewed by a recruiter who doesn't know that much about the job, a human resource professional that knows about the company but not about your specialty, or by a hiring manager who knows their area but hasn't been trained in interviewing techniques. Plus, interviewing often ends up being subjective and coming down to what kind of connection you have with the interviewer. That being said, there are several things you can do to increase your chances of a successful outcome in your interviews.

1. Research the company beforehand. If you come in to the interview knowing about the company through research on their website, perhaps through talking to people who've worked there, etc., you will come across like a professional who is serious about finding a good match with an employer.
2. You should do as much listening as possible in the interview to find out what the employer is looking for. The more you know about what the employer wants, the better you can tailor your responses so that they fit in with the employer's vision for the position. This doesn't mean you should lie or exaggerate. However, knowing more about what qualities are important to the employer will help you determine which aspects of your experience, personality, vision for your career and vision for how you can help them to emphasize. For example, if an employer is most concerned about finding someone with good people skills, you'd be better off talking about how well you work with people and how you like working with others than you'd be talking about your great computer skills (although it would be important to talk about computer skills too if the employer's interested in that).

How can you find out what things the employer values? If you're asked an open-ended question like "Tell me about your experience with this kind of work," you could respond with a question like "I have a wide range of experience. If you could tell me what qualities are important to you when considering someone for this position, I can better address specific ways that I'm qualified." Salespeople call this technique "lead with need" – that is, selling by first finding out what the customer (in this case the employer) needs.

3. Have materials available to help illustrate your expertise. You should always bring at least one copy of your resume with you to an interview. And it's a good idea to bring more than one copy in case you spend time with more than one interviewer. Having other materials available can also be helpful and can provide more opportunities for you to discuss your strengths. As we discussed above, many interviewers don't really know what to talk about in an interview, so bringing your own materials helps focus the discussion on positive things you've accomplished. For example, if you've written articles that have been published in trade journals or products you've helped create have been reviewed in articles, you could bring copies to the interview.

When you introduce additional materials, your approach should be to downplay their significance. They should be referenced as evidence of your tremendous capabilities. If you come in to the interview and ask them right away if they want to see your published articles, you'll seem desperate and too eager. On the other hand, if they ask you a question about something that you happened to write about in an article, you could say "I've explained that in detail in an article I wrote last year. Would you like a copy?", it would come across as more natural and more impressive.

4. Most interviewers will give you an opportunity to ask questions about the position or the company. Depending on how much structure there is to the interview, you could bring up the topic yourself or the interviewer may ask if you have any questions at the end. This would be a good opportunity for you to ask questions to determine if you think the position would be a good long-term fit for you. Questions could include asking the interviewer what they think of the company. Or asking what the co-workers are like. In addition to these questions providing you with information, they illustrate to the interviewer that you are serious about finding a good match and they will be more likely to see you as an honest, straightforward person they can feel comfortable hiring.

5. Give the interviewer a reason to decide. This is what salespeople call "closing." Showing the interviewer that you'd be a valuable addition to their company is the most important part of the interview. But you can increase your success rate with interviews by giving the interviewer a reason to make a decision. If the interviewer thinks they have all the time in the world and that you'll be available whenever they finally get around to making a decision, they might decide not to decide and keep interviewing people until they come across someone who makes them feel more compelled to make a decision. However, if you make yourself come across as more of a rare commodity, they will feel that if they want to hire you, they have to decide quickly. If you say something like "I am interested in a new position but I want to conclude my job search within the next week so I can be happily settled in with my new employer," that will convey that you are serious about making a move and they too have to be serious about considering you. Whatever

you say to try to “close,” make sure it’s genuine. No one likes someone who comes across as manipulative. Another important point: closing works best when they’ve already been sold on the product (you).

If you get nervous before an interview, you’re not alone. Most people do. It involves skills like selling and negotiation that most people use very rarely. One way to deal with the nervousness is to practice. Another way to reduce your nervousness is to learn as much as you can about how to be successful in interviews. We have outlined some exercises and resources below to help you with both.

Exercises and Resources for Interviewing

Exercises

MOCK INTERVIEWS

The biggest aspects of success in job interviews are preparation and effective communication.

Being prepared involves researching the company and the industry. If the job requires skills you don't have or haven't used for a while, you should read up on those things as much as possible before the interview, while still being candid about how much experience you have with them.

On the communication side of things, you should keep in mind that most interviewers are not skilled at the interview process themselves. Coming in to an interview expecting to overcompensate for the interviewer's deficiencies is better than expecting them to know the right questions to ask you. If you haven't been asked a question that would give you a chance to reveal information which would show how you're qualified for the job, look for an opportunity to interject that information yourself.

If you are unclear about a requirement of the job or don't feel you have enough information about the position, the company, etc. to answer a particular question, speak up! It's better to ask for more information than to answer a question "incorrectly" and have the interviewer think you're not smart or experienced enough.

Setting up the Mock Interview

With all this in mind, find a friend or a career coach who can do the following exercise with you. Find a job opening that you'd like to apply for. Give the job ad to your friend or career coach and ask them to prepare to interview you. The interview will take place a few days to a week after your friend gets the job ad from you (depending on how much time they need to prepare). Your friend/coach should do the following:

1. Learn about the company they are interviewing you for
2. Make up any details about the job that are missing from the job ad. For example, if the job is for a marketing manager but the job description doesn't say how many people are to be managed, they would make that up. They should not let you in on these additional details until the interview actually takes place.
3. They should come up with what they think the most critical qualities are for success in the job. Some of these may be already stated or

Continued on next page

Resources

JOB INTERVIEW GUIDE

One way to do really well in interviews is to learn as much as you can about them. The Job Interview Guide provides a resource to help you do that. It covers the most commonly asked interview questions and reveals what their ideal answers are. If you've ever been unsure about how to answer questions like "Tell us about yourself" or "What kind of salary are you looking for?" then you'll find this guide extremely valuable. To find out more, visit this web address: <http://www.jshb.info/links/ProCV/ebook.asp>

COMPANY AND INDUSTRY RESEARCH

Vault Reports is a site that provides a directory of companies and industries. If you're looking for inside information about a major company or organization, this is a site that can help you. Current and former employees contribute information about experiences working at these companies. To access these reports, visit this web address: <http://www.jshb.info/links/ProCV/vault.asp>

CAREER WEB PORTFOLIOS

Another tool you can use to highlight your accomplishments in interviews is Career Web Portfolios. Career Web Portfolios can include supporting materials like articles you've written or that have been written about your work, as well as charts and graphs illustrating your achievements, and even quotes and references from clients and/or former employers.

It's best to downplay or undersell a career web portfolio when introducing it in an interview. It is very impressive to have one but only if you don't treat it that way. You want to come across as someone who makes the extra effort to do a good job - including to present yourself well in interviews - but not to come across as someone who's desperate for a new job. You can introduce the career web portfolio in response to a question. For example, if the employer asks about sales growth numbers at your last employer, you can refer them to a graph you have illustrating those numbers in your career web portfolio. Introducing them to your career web portfolio also leaves them with something new and interesting that they'll want to play with after you leave the interview.

Another benefit to career web portfolios is they can be used effectively to get a major advantage in phone interviews, especially since studies have shown people remember what they see more than what they hear.

To find out more about Career Web Portfolios, visit this web address

<http://www.jshb.info/links/ProCV/cwp.asp>

ASKING FOR THE RIGHT SALARY

One easy way to find out what kind of salary range you should be asking for is to order a Personal Salary

Exercises and Resources for Interviewing

Exercises

MOCK INTERVIEWS

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Setting up the Mock Interview

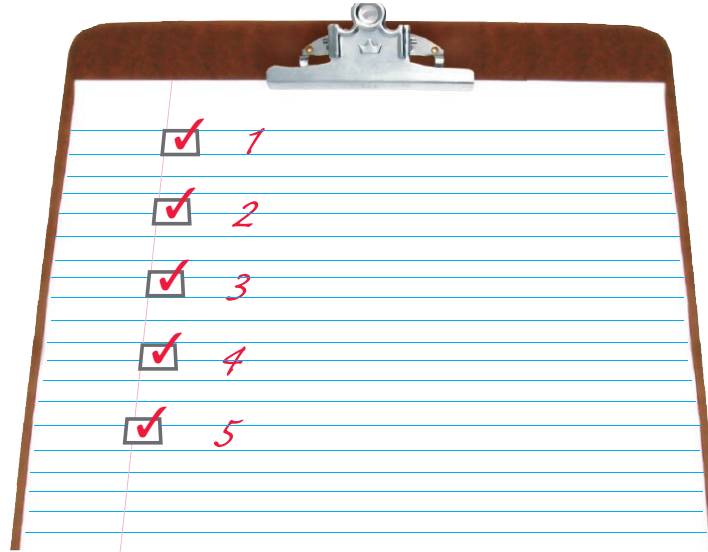
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Resources

Report. This report is compiled by salary experts who scour salary surveys to find out the range of salaries for people with your particular background and who are in your geographical location. To find out more or to order a custom report, visit this web address:

<http://www.jshb.info/links/ProCV/sal.asp>

Chapter 9: After the Interview



After the interview is over, your first step should be to make an assessment of how it went. Here are some questions to ask yourself:

1. Did I understand what qualities were important to the interviewer and what the central duties of the job would be?
2. Did the interviewer understand the important aspects of my background which would make me qualified for the position?
3. Did I provide examples citing the most similar prior experiences I had which prepared me to deal with the most critical aspects of the position?
4. If the interview was with the hiring manager and not with a recruiter who's acting on the hiring manager's behalf, was the hiring manager someone you could see yourself getting along with and having a productive working relationship?
5. On a scale from 1 to 10, how interested are you in the job after going on the interview?

These post-interview inventory questions are designed to help you think through in an objective way how the interview went. In cases where you were not able to satisfy what the interviewer was looking for, sometimes it will be that you're not the best person for the job – the job may turn out to be different from what you initially thought. In other cases, the interviewer may have been in a bad mood, have been a poor communicator, or otherwise impaired from being able to give you a fair chance to show how you were qualified. And lastly, there will be situations where you could have performed better if you had been better prepared.

Thank-you letters

If you realize you would not be compatible with one or some of the people at the company or if you realize the job simply isn't something you'd want to do, you can simply move on to the next job. On the other hand, if you are interested in the job and you think you were a good match for it, it's often a good idea to send a thank-you note in the mail. Thank-you notes should only be sent to a hiring manager after an in-person interview. They should not be sent after telephone interviews.

GOAL OF THANK-YOU LETTERS

The primary goal of a follow-up letter is to create positive feelings on the part of the interviewer, and for those feelings to be associated with you. A secondary goal can be to remind the interviewer of your strengths and what talents you can bring to the job. This can be especially helpful to mention if you're unsure if the interviewer understood in the interview how skilled you are in a particular area.



FORMAT OF THE LETTER

A thank-you letter should be fairly short. Keep in mind it's being received by a busy person who is probably having a stressful day. Making the letter positive and perhaps including a tasteful joke can make the interviewer feel good about having taken the time to read the letter. You may also express your appreciation for the time they spent with you in the interview and the information they provided. If you have good handwriting, you can even send a hand-written note to make the letter seem more personal.

The salutation you use in the letter should be the same salutation you used with the interviewer in person. So if the interviewer said to "call me John" then that's the salutation you should use in the letter. If you're unsure, it's always safest to use a formal salutation like "Mr. Smith."

SAMPLE LETTER

Dear Mr. Smith:

Thank you for taking the time to meet with me on Friday regarding the position of Senior Accountant at your firm. I was very impressed with your operation and the people I have met so far in your office. I appreciate how critical it is for your firm to revamp its financial reporting systems, and I would appreciate the opportunity to help ABC Corporation reach that goal. In my experience revitalizing the financial reporting systems at my current employer, DEF Company, I have seen how beneficial a successful resolution of these issues can be. Again, it was a pleasure meeting you and I remain interested in joining your team.

Sincerely,

Joe Doe

Employment References

Most people don't give much thought about references until after a potential employer asks for them. After all, searching for a job is very time consuming and doesn't give you much of a chance to think about anything except getting interviews. But reference checks are a very important part of the job search process: both for job seekers and for employers. For employers, references are a chance to add depth to the information they have learned about you from the interview and from your resume.

At a minimum, your references should confirm the information the employer has about you and that you are a competent employee. However, you should strive to provide references who can be as enthusiastic about you and you would be about yourself. A great reference makes the hiring manager feel good about their decision to hire you and sets a positive tone for your first few days on the job. As the saying goes, you only get one chance to make a first impression and your references can help you do that.

Getting Your Ducks In Order

It's a good idea to get a reference letter from your manager as soon after leaving a position as possible. Getting a reference letter right away makes it easier for your manager to recall specific contributions you made to the team. Even if you don't end up needing a reference right away, having the reference letter provides you with something to fall back on in the event you are unable to contact your former manager at a later time. Plus, if you decide to go back to the manager a year or more later to ask them to provide a phone reference, you can remind them about the reference letter they wrote for you.

Before asking someone to take the time to write a reference letter or provide a phone reference, it's a good idea to get a feel for what they would say about you. One way to do this is to say "Do you feel you know me well enough to write a good reference letter?" instead of just "Could you write a reference letter?" This way, if the person doesn't feel they could say something positive, they have an easy way to decline your request.

Employers who ask for references want to confirm dates of employment and position titles at a minimum. They will also try to find out if your former boss would rehire you given the opportunity. And many employers will ask the reference to grade your abilities in the specific areas that will apply to your new job. For example, if you're applying for a job as a manager, the employer may ask your reference to rate your managerial skills on a scale from 1 to 10. Having a sense of the types of questions employers are likely to ask your references, you should try to gauge the potential reference's response to these questions before deciding to let them vouch for you. For example, you could say "I'm curious - if you had the chance, would you hire me again to work for you?"

Using Non-Employer References

If you don't have a lot of good references from former employers, non-employer references can be helpful too. Generally, a potential employer will want at least two references from former employers. But if they require three references, you may be able to provide two from former employers and one from someone else. Professors, former co-workers and customers can all be good references if they know you well. If you have a choice between providing three lukewarm references from former employers or two lukewarm references from former employers plus one glowing reference from someone you didn't work for, the latter is probably the better choice. A survey done by the Society of Human Resource Management (SHRM) found more than eight out of ten human resource professionals regularly check references, so don't count on an employer not contacting a lukewarm or bad reference.

Legal Issues

There are a lot of misconceptions about the legal issues surrounding reference checks. Some job seekers mistakenly believe that former employers can only provide dates of employment, position titles and salary history. Even though many companies have established regulations specifying that managers are only to confirm dates of employment, position and salary history, many managers are either unaware of these regulations or simply ignore them. Legally, an employer can provide as much information as they want about your tenure with their organization.

As long as a former employer does not knowingly provide false information in a reference check, it is fair game. An employer can legally say or write negative things about you if they are just opinions. For example, the employer could say "John was a horrible manager." What is not legal would be for an employer to knowingly provide false information. For example, if a former manager didn't like you, they could not say "John started a fire in our office building that caused thousands of dollars in damage" if it was not true.

Resources for After the Interview

Resources

ASKING FOR THE RIGHT SALARY

One easy way to find out what kind of salary range you should be asking for is to order a Personal Salary Report. This report is compiled by salary experts who scour salary surveys to find out the range of salaries for people with your particular background and who are in your geographical location. To find out more or to order a custom report, visit this web address:

<http://www.jshb.info/links/ProCV/sal.asp>

CHECK YOUR OWN REFERENCES

Regardless of the legal rules, you do not want your references to say bad things about you. There are companies that for a small fee will call your references and provide you with the results. If you suspect a reference you're using is saying unfavorable things, you may wish to consider using a reference checking firm. Alison & Taylor is one of the leading companies in this market.

If you find that a prior employer is in fact saying bad things about you, consider consulting an attorney. Having hard evidence of what the employer said from Alison and Taylor will make the attorney's job easier and more clear-cut. Even if the prior employer did not break the law, it may still be worthwhile to pay an attorney to send the employer a strongly-worded letter admonishing the employer of the risks of divulging more than dates of employment, positions held and salary history. This will usually be enough to get your former boss to stop ruining your chances of landing another job.

To find out more about Alison and Taylor, visit this web address:

<http://www.jshb.info/links/ProCV/at.asp>

Chapter 10: Continual Improvement

We started this handbook with a story about Michael Jordan, an amazing individual who is a great example of someone who has been tremendously successful in his career. The high school basketball clinic was where he started to become a great player. But he didn't end his journey there. He kept on practicing and learning until he got into the NBA. Then he kept at it more and more until it just became a way of life. He even was able to apply the same skill of continual learning to become a good baseball and golf player. People like to talk about how Michael fell short of expectations in these other sports but the reality is his being able to transition to those other sports was nothing short of amazing, even though he wasn't able to play at the level of athletes who had been playing those other sports as long as he'd been playing basketball.

If you want to make more money and to be able to command the types of positions you really want, you need to adopt a Michael Jordan attitude. When continued learning and growth becomes a habit and it's integrated into your lifestyle, you'll find yourself moving into a whole new echelon of career success. Continued growth is the key to being able to compete in today's era of globalization and high unemployment.

Hopefully by now you're excited about the idea of integrating continual learning into your career. How can you do this? Well for one thing, successful people tend to maximize a concept that Human Resource professionals call "job stretch." Job stretch is the difference between what your skills are now and the skills that are required to perform a certain set of functions. Successful people seek to make their job stretch as wide as possible while still being able to do their job really well. This means volunteering for that project at work that you might have to spend some extra time researching to be able to do well. And it means applying for jobs that require slightly more expertise than you currently have, rather than slightly less. Having job stretch can make your work more engaging and exciting.

Another way to integrate continual learning is through formal education. This includes taking classes, earning degrees and certifications, reading, and generally absorbing knowledge in all ways possible.

Exercises and Resources for Continual Improvement

Exercises

We've mentioned networking several times in this handbook. It's because it's very important! Not only can networking help you find job leads, but it can also help connect you with people who can share their wisdom and knowledge with you. As an exercise, read at least one of Harvey MacKay's books. You'll find yourself inspired and eager to do as much networking as you can!

Resources

COLLEGE CLASSES AND CERTIFICATIONS

In addition to "brick-and-mortar" educational institutions, there are also several well-respected colleges offering online classes. Taking classes over the Internet allows you to get the benefits of a college class without having to add more time to your commute and more time away from your family. To find out about options for continuing education courses, visit this web address:

<http://www.jshb.info/links/ProCV/degrees.asp>

STAYING ON TOP OF INDUSTRY NEWS

Staying on top of what's happening in your industry is important for effective networking. You should be subscribing to all the pertinent publications for your profession and industry. These publications often advise of changes in management at important companies, developments in technology and techniques, etc. They also list important networking events and conferences. A great resource is the Trade Pubs library of trade and professional magazines. Their site lets you browse magazines for your profession and industry. You may even qualify for a free subscription. Visit this web address to find out more:

<http://www.jshb.info/links/ProCV/mags.asp>

PROFESSIONAL/TRADE ASSOCIATIONS

Professional and trade associations are a great way to network with other people in your field. If you're not sure which associations are available for people with backgrounds like yours, the ASAE web site can be a great resource. This is an association which virtually all associations belong to, thus they have a powerful directory of all major associations in the U.S. To access their directory, visit this web address:

<http://www.jshb.info/links/ProCV/asae.asp>

GOAL SETTING AND TRACKING SYSTEM

You've seen him on TV. Tony Robbins, personal coach to celebrities and successful CEOs, has put together a comprehensive step-by-step course which helps you gain the mind power and goal setting skills to achieve your dreams.

<http://www.jshb.info/links/ProCV/robbins.asp>

IMPROVING YOUR FINANCIAL STATUS

Financial problems can be a major distraction from your focus on your career. And if you don't have financial problems, you also should be confident that the money you're making is being used as effectively as possible. For more information on maximizing your financial resources, visit this web address:

<http://www.jshb.info/links/ProCV/finance.asp>

Dig Your Well Before You're Thirsty

The only networking book you'll ever need!

<http://www.jshb.info/links/ProCV/books.asp>

