Getting Hired:
Job Hunting, Resume & Cover Letter Writing, Interviewing

Richard J. Frederick
Instructor of Management
Rust College
June 1, 2005
Preface

Today many graduating seniors find themselves facing a more restricted job market. During periods when there are fewer jobs available, it is more important for individuals to develop the marketing skills needed to get the job. This research was conducted to help college students, my daughters, other family members, and friends that find themselves seeking employment.

I am often amazed at the amount of time individuals will spend on the things that interest them the most. Because I have two daughters that have played golf on the college level, I have found myself spending numerous hours at the driving range, working with them on some aspect of their golf swing. While I am there, it is easy to witness someone on either side of me that has no clue about what a golf swing really looks like, or what they are doing. However, they spend their time trying to learn a very difficult skill without the aid of any instructions. I bring this up just to point out the sheer insanity of what individual’s will go through to do something that interests them, even when it adds no real value towards what they will earn in their lifetime. Yet, very few graduating seniors, or unemployed individuals spend the time required to improve any of the marketing skills they will need to help them gain meaningful employment.

Often I have a student come into my office seeking help with a resume they have written. It is amazing to learn that the majority of these individuals spent the night before writing this resume, and only because they are going to be interviewed sometime within the next few days. When I ask about their cover letter, if they know how to dress for the interview, or ask how much time they have spent working on their interviewing techniques, they look at me in bewilderment. I do not know why I should be shocked at
this because I recently had to force my youngest daughter, a sophomore in college, to write her first cover letter and resume.

When my oldest daughter came to me just before graduating and asked for help with writing her resume, I met with some resistance when I asked her to spend some time with me learning some things everyone should know about marketing themselves to give her a better chance at getting employed. As I went through each area of importance, I could tell from her body language, that she felt she had better ways to spend her time. Yet, in the end she was one of only a few students that graduated with a teaching degree from the University of Memphis that got a job in the Shelby County School System, the year she graduated. Before you try to point out that this is because she is the daughter of an educator, let me point out some interesting facts: I teach on the college level in Mississippi and know nothing about the Memphis City or Shelby Country School Systems, she did not graduate with honors (unless you count the fact that I was honored she graduated), and her networking skills were as undeveloped as the other skills she needed to find gainful employment.

Why did she get the job while others graduating with honors and better school records failed? Yes, she is one of the most remarkable young teachers I have seen (not just because she is my daughter), but there is no real way to demonstrate a skill you have not yet used, during an interview. So, could it be that there are learnable marketing skills that improve your chances of obtaining the job you want? As you will see from this paper, research indicates that individual’s who develop good self-marketing skills, are more likely to obtain meaningful employment before those individuals with better qualifications, better educational backgrounds, and no self marketing skills. This paper
was designed to help individuals learn some of the basic skills needed to enable them “to get the job!”
Table of Contents

Preface .................................................................................. 2

Introduction ........................................................................... 8

Job Hunting ............................................................................ 9

When to Start Seeking Employment ........................................... 9

Some of the Most Common Ways of Seeking Employment ......... 11

Networking ........................................................................... 11

Employee Referrals ................................................................ 13

Want Adds ............................................................................ 13

Use of the Internet ................................................................. 13

Private Employment Agencies ................................................ 15

Internships ........................................................................... 15

Places on Campus .................................................................. 16

Possible Placement Within Areas of Interest ......................... 17

Cover Letters ........................................................................ 19

Writing an Effective Cover Letter ......................................... 20

Format .................................................................................. 24

The Heading (Opening Paragraph) .......................................... 24

The Text .............................................................................. 26

The Close (Closing Paragraph) ................................................. 30

Signing off ............................................................................ 30

Sample of a Solicitation Type Cover Letter ......................... 32

Sample of a Prospecting Type Cover Letter ......................... 33

The Resume ........................................................................... 34

Resume Writing ..................................................................... 37
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The One-Page Chronologically Listed Resume</td>
<td>39</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Heading</td>
<td>39</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Objective</td>
<td>40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Offer</td>
<td>41</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Educational Background</td>
<td>41</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Work History</td>
<td>43</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Related Experiences</td>
<td>44</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Additional Sections</td>
<td>44</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Top 10 Qualities Employers are Looking For</td>
<td>46</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sample One Page Chronologically Listed Resume</td>
<td>47</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Two-Page Chronologically Listed Resume</td>
<td>48</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sample Two Page Chronologically Listed Resume</td>
<td>50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sample One Page Skills Resume</td>
<td>52</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Resume Templates</td>
<td>53</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Professional Resume Writers</td>
<td>53</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Scannable Resumes</td>
<td>54</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sample Scannable Resume</td>
<td>55</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interviewing</td>
<td>56</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Anxiety</td>
<td>58</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Practice Using Video Equipment</td>
<td>59</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dressing for the interview</td>
<td>60</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Men</td>
<td>62</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Women</td>
<td>62</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Proper Etiquette for Dining Interviews</td>
<td>63</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Strategies for a Good Interview 65
  Develop Credibility From Within 65
  Show Your Qualifications 66
  Does Your Background Meet the Employers Needs 67

Parts of an Interview 69
  Things Employers Look for in Potential Candidates 70

Jobs and Salaries 71

What to Do Once the Interview Begins 72

Types of Interviews 74

Answering Questions in the Interview 76

Commonly Asked Questions During the Interview 77
  Types of Questions 77
  Examples of Questions 79

Following the Interview 84

Do Thank-you Letters Work 84

Sample Thank You Letter 86

References 87
The late 1800’s and early 1900’s saw the explosive birth of the industrial revolution in the United States, and the start of a major exodus of farm labor as the major source of jobs (Wren, 1994, p.41). Workers often lacked the educational skills needed to perform many of the tasks for which they were hired. Recruiting was based on the physical attributes that potential employees could bring to employers. Employers were more interested in ways of increasing the productivity of their employees, which led to the days of job specialization (Drucker, 1999). Job specialization during this period may have best been described in the movie “Seabiscuit.” The movie opens by describing the times and the early days of the assembly line. It was described as, “the days of specialization, where the seamstress became a button sewer and the carpenter became a knob turner.” Employees were not expected to create new ideas; they were only required to produce.

Today employees are more educated and the major source of jobs in the United States, as well as in many developed economies, is in the service industry (Dulek & Suchan, 2001, p.70). The skills that will be needed in the future center around an employee’s ability to create knowledge for the organizations where they work (Drucker, 1999). In the past it was a manager’s responsibility to monitor workers, seeking ways to increase productivity. Today employees are more likely to be empowered; employers are seeking employees who are innovative and are able to develop ways to make themselves and others more productive (Drucker, 2002).
Job Hunting

The most common way to conduct a job search is by sending resumes; however, it is also the most ineffective way to conduct a job search. Bernard Haldane Associates estimates that only one interview is obtained for every 170 resumes sent and processed (2005). Often a little extra work can increase the odds of obtaining an interview from a cover letter and resume. The problem is that the majority of individuals only send these cover letters and resumes to potential employers for positions they find in local newspaper’s daily want ads. This is often caused by a fear of personal rejection in a face-to-face meeting. However, it is estimated that over 85% of all available jobs are not listed in want ads (Haldane, 2005).

One of the most feared tasks that many of us face is the prospect of spending our day job hunting. So when you get that sick feeling in your stomach and you start to develop those sweaty palms, remember you are not alone. There are several reasons for this fear: we do not like to hear the word “no” that comes with rejection, we have bought into the myth that there are no jobs available (Haldane, 2005), and we have not developed the skills needed when it comes to seeking employment. These fears are developed because we do not know where to find suitable employment, we lack the skills needed to write an affective resume and cover letter, and we do not know what to expect in an interview. It is time to get over these fears; if you are not good at something, all it takes is practice to make improvements.

When to Start Seeking Employment

The vast majority of us fail to go on an interview or send out a resume until we have lost our current job or have graduated from high school or college. “Many, including the better students, often wait until their last semester in school before setting aside even
nominal time for job search preparations and focus” (McCorkle, Alexander, Reardon, Kling, 2003). So, when is the best time to start seeking employment? The best time to start seeking employment is “now”, regardless if you are currently employed, unemployed, or in school. Remember the skills needed to obtain employment are only learned and developed when they are used. If you wait until you are employed, or you graduate from school before starting the employment process, your learning curve is well behind those students currently seeking employment.

Just because you are currently employed does not mean that you cannot look for a better job and just because a job is offered does not mean you are required to accept. Often individuals find themselves trapped in jobs that they do not find interesting or enjoy because they are afraid they cannot find another job. Individuals should always have the confidence within themselves that they can find a job if necessary. However, it is important to remember that changing jobs too often can make the individual unmarketable.

If you wait until you graduate before you start seeking any real employment opportunities, keep in mind thousands of students are graduating from colleges and high schools all across the country at the same time (McCorkle, Alexander, Reardon, & King, 2003). Many of these graduates will be seeking the same jobs you are trying to obtain. Starting early may give you the competitive advantage that you need. Students should start seeking employment and networking opportunities as soon as they arrive on campus.

Why do individuals wait until they graduate or are unemployed before they start seeking jobs that they are skilled in, educated for, or interested in? One reason so many college graduates wait so long before seeking employment is because of their expectations that good jobs will seek them (McCorkle, Alexander, Reardon, & King,
Another reason so many individuals wait until they are no longer in school or out of work before seeking employment is the fear of rejection or failure. Rejection is not something that most of us train to become comfortable with. The first thing individuals need to do to overcome rejection is to understand that rejection or failures are a part of life and that they move us closer to the things we want. The major difference between successful and unsuccessful individuals is that successful individuals have failed more often then unsuccessful individuals. Often when an individual fails they stop trying because of a fear of continued failure. Successful individuals see failure as the process that brings them one step closer toward success, learning from their failures and moving on.

Another reason individuals often find themselves without a job and unprepared is because once we have a job, many of us develop a feeling of complacency. It is important for each of us to understand that the days of a single career for life may be a thing of the past for most Americans. The average individual starting their working career today will change career paths at least five times before retirement.

**Some of the Most Common Ways of Seeking Employment**

While the most common way of seeking employment is by checking the want ads in the daily newspaper, it is often the least productive. Individuals should use every alternative available to them to find the ideal job. Following are some of the more common ways of seeking employment:

*Networking:* Just writing resumes to obtain that ideal job are not the most productive way of obtaining a job. Successful individuals have developed a network of individuals that they can call on if employment needs should arise. “Evidence shows that informal ties play a major role in the location of job openings and the placement of unemployed
persons” (Villar, Juan, Corominas, & Capell, 2000, p. 389). The majority of job leads resulting in employment, come from social contacts. A study by Pamela Kaul indicated that 75% of all jobs are filled through networking (1992), yet only about 12% of the individuals seeking employment use networking to obtain employment (McCorkie, Alexander, Reardon, & Kling, 2003).

Bohlander, Snell and Sherman report the following findings:

The average rating for nine recruitment sources on a 5-point scale (1 = not good, 3 = average, 5 = extremely good):

- Employee referrals: 3.84
- College recruiting: 3.81
- Executive search firms: 3.71
- Professional associations: 3.08
- Want ads: 3.05
- Direct applications: 2.86
- Private employment agencies: 2.78
- Public employment agencies: 1.92

The majority of job applicants often report that they not only heard about the jobs they were seeking from a social contact, but indicated that social contacts were used in employment efforts (Villar, Juan, Corominas, & Capell, 2000, p. 389).

Often getting a job in life is not as much about what you know, but whom you know. How many times have you had the opportunity to meet someone, having some control or influence over hiring within their organization, and you failed to take advantage of the opportunity because you felt inferior to that individual in some way? Many organizations and employment counselors recommend networking to their clients as a means of maintaining employment, or using networking during job searching periods (Villar, Juan, Corominas, & Capell, 2000, p. 390).

How many business cards do you have from individuals or friends with some influence in their place of employment? If you were to spend some time watching
successful businessman, one of the first things they always do is to exchange their
business cards. Businessmen know the importance of networking. You should make it a
point to get to know as many people with influence as you can, and make sure they know
you. Once you get a job do not forget to continue the process of networking.

Employee Referrals: Often organizations reward employees for successfully
recommending qualified individuals. Organizations who seek referrals understand that
the quality of employee referrals is often quite high, because individuals are hesitant to
recommend someone that they feel will not perform up to company standards
(Bohlander, Snell, & Sherman, 2001).

Want Ads: It is important to remember that most want ads require the use of a cover
letter and resume. Organizations who use want ads seldom interview the majority of
individuals who send in resumes, because they often receive more responses then they
need. Often when employer’s uses the want ads, they have immediate needs to fill a
position, and are willing to sacrifice some quality of candidates for speed (Devaro, 2005).
Because this type of employment search is often a numbers game, candidates need to
understand that the quality of the cover letter and resume often determine which
candidates will be interviewed.

Use of the Internet: One of the fastest growing ways organizations find qualified
candidates is by use of the Internet. Almost 90% of all Fortune 500 companies use the
Internet as a means of recruiting or listing current positions available within the
organization. The use of the Internet can result in a larger, more qualified pool of
candidates for the employer to choose from, at much lower costs per employee (Feldman
& Klaas, 2002). Using the Internet places a higher degree of importance on the cover
letter and resume.
The use of the Internet has some strong advantages and disadvantages to consider when doing a job search. While the Internet does provide a large pool of choices when looking for a potential employer, it can also create additional expenses for both the employer and employee. A larger pool of qualified candidates means higher wages for the employer and can result in undesired moving expenses for the applicant to consider (Fountain, 2005). Candidates that use the Internet as a form of employment search are usually willing to move, looking for top salaries, and are more concerned with the type of job they are seeking and not the size of the organization (Feldman & Klaas, 2002). It is estimated that nearly 50% of those individuals that obtain employment through Internet sources will move (Fetto, 2002).

Following is a list of some of the more used Internet recruiting sites:

- Career Builder: [www.careerbuilder.com](http://www.careerbuilder.com) - provides listings and offers links to other sites.
- CareerMosaic: [www.careermosaic.com](http://www.careermosaic.com) - one of the largest sites containing listings from some of the leading corporations
- CareerWeb: [www.cweb.com](http://www.cweb.com) - another of the top career resource sites
- E-Span: [www.espan.com](http://www.espan.com) - is one of the first recruiting web sites and one of the best known
- Hot Jobs: [www.hotjobs.com](http://www.hotjobs.com) - a newer site which offers advanced management features and smart agents to streamline the recruiting process
- JOBTRAK: [www.jobtrak.com](http://www.jobtrak.com) - a leading college recruiting site
- JobWeb: [www.jobweb.com](http://www.jobweb.com) - a college recruiting site run by the National Association of Colleges and Employers
- The Monster Board: [www.monster.com](http://www.monster.com) - one of the oldest and largest recruiting sites
- Net-Temp: [www.nettemps.com](http://www.nettemps.com) - the largest recruiting site for temps
- Online Career Center: [www.occ.com](http://www.occ.com) - a general recruiting site which attracts leading employers
JobEngine: www.jobengine.com - a job posting and resume-search site for computer industry professionals (Bohlander, Snell, Sherman, 2001, p.146).

**Private Employment Agencies:** Private employment agencies are professional organizations that charge a fee for placing possible employees with possible employers. Private employment agencies are paid in two methods. One method of payment is on a fee paid basis, where the potential employer pays the fee for finding a qualified candidate. The other method of payment is where the potential employee pays the fee. While private employment agencies are a useful resource, it should be noted that when they work on a commission basis (contracts where the potential employee pays the fees), the commission could be more motivating than what is best for their client. Potential employees who use this type of service should seek reputable and qualified professionals, who are interested in their clients needs.

The advantage of an employment agency is that the potential employee does not need to have skills in cover letter and resume writing, they only need limited interviewing skills, and they do not need to spend the time or energy needed to find a potential employer. However, it is important to understand that when using an employment agency on a fees paid basis, the best employment agencies develop strong ties to organizations by finding the best qualified individuals for the organizations that pay them. Because organizations pay out large sums of money to obtain these qualified employees, only about 5% of all vacancies are listed with employment agencies (Haldane, 2005).

**Internships:** Internships are a useful tool for college and university students to examine potential areas of interest. Internships can often lead to potential placement upon graduation and they provide a useful resource for networking. Far too many
students do not understand the importance of internships in the business world today. Students can learn about internship opportunities by “reviewing professional literature, listening to speakers share their professional experiences, participating in class and club activities that are designed to introduce new career opportunities, or attending professional conferences” (Verner, 2004, p.26). Students can also do volunteer work in the area of interest to gain valuable insight and to start networking. In order to make an internship experience fruitful for the student, it is important that the student does the required research to locate the best possible internship.

Internships help students in more than one way:

1. They provide students with valuable insight into what the job is about. Often students find out during an internship period if this is the career choice that really interests them. Students also learn of any possible weaknesses in their educational background and areas of possible additional needed studies (Verner, 2004).

2. An internship gives the student valuable hands on training that they often do not receive while in college.

3. If a student understands how to network, an internship provides the student with an excellent opportunity to do some quality networking. Interns should spend their time shaking hands during the internship period, introducing themselves to individuals that can help them when seeking possible employment after graduation.

Places on Campus: When should students begin networking, start seeking internships, and begin job placement searches? Many students fail to take advantage of networking and job placement searches available on campus. It is important that students
begin networking shortly after they arrive on campus. All students should be aware of where the placement office is on campus. Often the placement office can provide students with valuable information about available internship programs and employment sources. The earlier students begin searching for opportunities, the more likely they will find opportunities of interest.

Campus life also provides students with access to extracurricular activities through organizations that provide opportunities to network with individuals who can help when it comes time to seek employment. Many colleges bring potential employers to campus to aid students in possible employment; however, fewer employers are visiting campuses (McCorkie, Alexander, Reardon, & Kling, 2003). As an example, Rust College offers a Business Week that provides students with the opportunities to meet employers, attend valuable seminars and lectures, and participate in mock interviews.

**Possible Placement Within Areas of Interest**

Individuals should not be afraid of taking a job that is close to what they are looking for if they cannot find the ideal job (Simanoff, 2005). Often these types of jobs give candidates the experience needed to gain an advantage over a knowledgeable candidate with no experience when the ideal job becomes available. Individuals are also able to start networking and gaining valuable insight into employment practice, which can help them in the future. Individuals already employed are under less pressure and tend to be more relaxed when seeking new career opportunities.

College students interested in gaining a career in their area of study often find it difficult. The following list indicates Majors with the best chances of employment in the area of interest and those with the worst chance of employment within the Major:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Best</th>
<th>Worst</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Business management</td>
<td>Ethnic and cultural studies</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Field</td>
<td>Field</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>------------------------------------</td>
<td>--------------------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Health professionals</td>
<td>Parks, recreation, leisure, and fitness</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Engineering</td>
<td>Theological studies / religion</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Computer and information science</td>
<td>Philosophy and religion</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Physical sciences and technologies</td>
<td>Foreign languages and literature</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(Bohlander, Snell, & Sherman, 2001, p. 150)
The Cover Letter

Everyone at some point in their life finds themselves looking for a job. One of the biggest mistakes that many of us make when looking for a job is to assume that the most qualified individuals always get the best jobs. In reality, often the individuals who are the most skilled job hunters, and know how to get hired are the ones who get the best jobs (Haldane, 2005). Obtaining a job in today’s marketplace requires developing the job-hunting skills needed in order to be successful.

For many of us the first step in obtaining meaningful employment is writing a cover letter and resume. While this may not be one of the most effective ways of obtaining an interview, the most effective cover letters and resumes produce the best results. The cover letter may be your only chance to establish the impression needed to obtain the right to be interviewed for the position. “The application letter is often lost in the quest for the perfect resume. But a clear, detailed application letter can clear the road to interviews and job offers” (Dulek & Suchan, 2001, p.70).

Daily adds in the newspaper, trade journals, and Internet are all sources of possible employment that require the use of a cover letter and resume. Individuals should always attach a cover letter to any resume, unless the potential employer specifically requests you send a resume only. If the purpose of the resume is to obtain an interview, then the purpose of a cover letter is to catch the eye of the potential employer so that they will give your resume their full attention (Kleiman, 2005).

One of the most important steps in writing a cover letter is taking the time to do a little research first. The more information you gain about the organization before you begin writing a cover letter the more effective your letter will be. Once you have found the job that interests you, some of information that you might find helpful in writing a
Getting Hired 20

cover letter are things like the name of the person you are sending the information to, what type person they are looking for, what the job involves, and any special skills that would be helpful in obtaining the job.

**Writing an Effective Cover Letter**

Far too often individuals assume the only reason for a cover letter is to introduce their resume. However, “Unlike a resume, the application letter gives stylistic latitude, providing an opportunity for the writer to convey key personality traits that match those cultivated by the organization” (Dulek & Suchan, 2001). A personalized cover letter that has a positive effect on the reader can lead to an interview and often guarantees that your resume gains more attention (Frank, 2004). It could be said that the cover letter is a “sales pitch” to get the potential employer to read the resume and grant an interview (Kleiman, 2005).

A well-written cover letter provides the applicant with advantages not provided by the resume. For those that believe that the cover letter is a mere introduction and goes unnoticed, it should be noted that individuals are able to convey information in the cover letter not found in the resume. Furthermore, a poorly written cover letter can turn the reader off, which usually means the resume goes unnoticed. Finally, the cover letter allows the reader to see how well the applicant will fit within the organization (Dulek & Suchan, 2001).

A cover letter is a business letter and should be treated like all business letters. The cover letter should be written grammatically correct, with no misspelled words, using the correct business etiquette (O’Briant, 2000). Individuals do not want the cover letter to be so short that it only notifies the reader of the resume. However, the writer needs to remember they are talking to business people, and while the letter should not be overly
formal, the writer needs to keep unneeded personal information, which has no value to the employer, out of the cover letter (www.ciltuk.org.uk).

An example of unneeded personal information: I am a single mom with three wonderful children ages 5, 7, and 8. Remember, as the writer, you need to focus on what you can do for the potential employer and not what is important to you. Also, information of this nature could be viewed negatively. The reader may see a possible need for the writer to care of sick children, which may cause excessive absences.

The purpose of the cover letter is totally different than the resume, and while some of the information found in the cover letter may overlap the resume, there are noticeable differences. These differences are:

1. The resume should show the potential employer that your skills match those needed for the position for which you are currently applying. The cover letter is designed to show the employer that you are a match for their organization needs (Locker, 2000, p.538). Two of the most important things that a potential employer seeks from a job candidate are their ability to communicate, and how well they will fit within the organization (Honaker, 2005). An effectively written cover letter indicates that the potential employee matches organizational needs and is an effective communicator.

2. The resume is used to summarize your qualifications, while the cover letter indicates to the employer how your qualifications can help the organization (Locker, 2000, p.548).

3. The resume often just gives highlights of skills using short phases. Complete sentences are rarely used in a resume (Locker, 2000, p.548). Writing skills are expressed in the cover letter requiring correct English and sentence structure. A
poorly written cover letter often tells the potential employer that the candidate does not pay close attention to detail.

Following is a list of things that lead to an affective cover letter and some of the most common errors found in cover letters:

1. When writing a cover letter, think in terms of what the employer’s need and want. The writer needs to present him or herself as the solution to the potential employer’s problems (Frank, 2004).

2. Always address the letter to a person who has the power to hire you. The best way to find a person’s name is to call the potential hiring organization and ask. While there are other methods of learning the name of whom to address the cover letter, this is the most effective because you can also discover if the individual has any courtesy titles and the proper spelling of their name (Locker, 2000, p. 538). There is nothing worse then sending a letter to an individual and misspelling their name.

3. Use correct English when writing a cover letter. Individuals should always ask someone else to proof read their cover letter and resume. Relying on a computer is not always the most effective way to catch mistakes (Arbor, 2004).

4. “Write it like you say it. Forget the overly formal, stilted language you see in most cover letters. Don’t use words like “pursuant” and “Commensurate.” Keep it conversational” (Frank, 2004). Individuals writing cover letters should avoid trying to impress the reader with big words or an extensive vocabulary (Dulek & Suchan, 2001).
5. The purpose of the cover letter is different than that of the resume. The writer of a cover letter should avoid trying to rewrite the resume in a more detailed fashion.

6. Try avoiding the use of personal pronouns like I and me (Frank, 2004). While it may not be possible to eliminate the total use of the word I, writers should try to find ways of writing with limited use of the word I. Remember that the focus on the cover letter is on what you can do for the employer and not on yourself.

7. Avoid asking questions in the cover letter. Often questions come across as to pushy (Dulek & Suchan, 2001). If you have any questions the best place to ask them is during the interview. However, questions may be asked in an informational type cover letter.

8. While flattery is something we think sounds good, it should not be used in a cover letter. Individuals using flattery are often labeled insincere or untrustworthy (Dulek & Suchan, 2001).

9. When writing a cover letter, it is important for the writer to ask for the interview early; usually at the same time they indicate the position for which they are applying. Example: I would like the opportunity to be interviewed for the position of Sales Manager with your organization. Remember it is a business letter, and the opening paragraph of a business letter states the reason for the letter, not the closing paragraph.

10. When writing a cover letter and resume, the best color paper to print them on is white. The writer should use a higher quality paper, usually individuals can purchase resume paper at most office warehouse stores (Arbor, 2004). The cover letter and resume should be printed using the same type or quality paper.
and matching envelopes. Other more commonly expected colors for paper used in cover letters and resumes are cream or gray. Never use company stationary where you are currently employed to print your cover letter or resume. Only use plain paper. Flowery paper may be nice when sending a letter to a friend; however, this type of stationary should never be used in business writing.

11. Never double space when writing a cover letter. Remember, it is a type of business letter and not a research paper.

12. The writer should limit the cover letter to one page. If there is too much material to read the potential employer will often overlook the entire cover letter and resume.

Format: The most common format used in writing a business letter is the block format. There are other formats for writing a business letter; however, the block writing format is the most commonly used form of business letter and easiest to learn. Remember you are trying to place yourself in the best light, so simple but correct is often the best tool (www.ciltuk.org.uk). One key to writing a successful cover letter is to remember that it is a business letter. Do not try to be too fancy using creative fonts. The cover letter needs to be readable. Most business people find Time New Roman style, 12 fonts, acceptable.

The Heading (Opening Paragraph): The heading requires four pieces of information:

1. The address of the sender should come first. Staying in block format the sender’s address should appear first. The sender’s name is optional at the top of the address box in this section; however, if the sender wants the reader to remember their name, it is acceptable to place it here as well as in the signature block at the end of the letter. Remember that in block format the
sender’s address is set against the left hand margin. However, it is acceptable to center the sender’s address.

2. The date should be placed just below the sender’s address or along the right margin on the same line as the sender’s name. If the sender has centered their address then the date should always be placed just below the sender’s address.

3. Next the writer should skip a line after completing the sender’s address section and add the mailing address to which the letter is being sent. The receiver’s address is always along the left hand margin in block format. Always place the name of the person to whom you are sending the cover letter to at the top of the receiver’s address section.

4. Following the sender and receiver’s address section the writer should skip a line and insert the greeting. This should include the title and name of the person to whom the letter is being sent. Show that you have done some research by addressing the letter to a person and not a position (O’Briant, 2000). The only time it is acceptable to address a cover letter to a position or to “whom it may concern,” is if the sender has tried every means possible to find the name of the receiver and has failed. Even then it is still a bad idea. One helpful hint would be to call the place where you are sending the letter and ask to whom you should address your application letter. Once you have a name, ask for the correct spelling and title.
**Example of the heading of a cover letter in strict block format:**

Sandy Brown  
1452 Malibu Dr.  
Memphis, TN 38111  

May 20, 2005  

Mr. Samuel L. Block, HR Director  
Kress Manufacturing Co.  
1423 States St.  
Nashville, TN 37112  

Dear Dr. Block, Human Resources Director:  

**Example of the heading of cover letter with senders address centered:**

Sandy Brown  
1452 Malibu Dr.  
Memphis, TN 38111  
May 20, 2005  

Mr. Samuel L. Block, HR Director  
Kress Manufacturing Co.  
1423 States St.  
Nashville, TN 37112  

Dear Dr. Block, Human Resources Director:  

*The Text:* The text of a cover letter depends on the type cover letter that the writer is sending. There are three types of cover letters that are used in different situations. If the writer is only seeking information about a possible job, they will use an informational type letter. In this type of letter the writer is not seeking employment but instead is trying to learn about the job or what the requirements are for the job. This is the only type cover letter that may or may not be sent with a resume and often has questions within the text (Locker, 2000). While the purpose of this type of cover letter is to gain information, it is not uncommon to ask for an informational interview in the opening paragraph.  

There are two types of cover letters that are used when the intended purpose of the writer is obtaining employment. The first type of cover letter used for obtaining employment is a soliciting letter. Soliciting letters are used when the writer knows that
the employer is currently hiring. If a writer was responding to a newspaper ad, he or she would use a soliciting letter. In most cases, the writer should ask for an interview in the opening paragraph of a soliciting letter (Locker, 2000).

The final type cover letter is a prospecting cover letter. This type of cover letter is used in situations where the writer has no direct knowledge that the employer is currently looking to hire anyone (Locker, 2000). While the intended purpose of this type of cover letter is to gain employment, the writer’s purpose is to try and interest the employer in his or her skills. Because the purpose of this type of cover letter is to spark an interest in the writer as a candidate for employment, it may not be necessary or appropriate to ask for an interview in the opening paragraph.

The writer is best able to determine the type cover letter to use, and what needs to be included, by understanding the audience. Knowing your audience, doing a little research, and spending some time planning, are keys to effective writing (Carter, Bishop, & Kravits, 2002). The text of any type cover letter is divided into three sections:

1. The first section of a cover letter is the opening, which should contain the reason for the letter. When using the block format of business writing, start the first sentence at the far left hand margin. A business letter paragraph does not need to meet the three to five well-written sentence standard used in proper writing. Because of this the opening paragraph is often no more than a few sentences; however, certain information must appear in this section.

a. Ask for an interview when using soliciting cover letter. If sending a prospecting or informational cover letter, the writer is not required to ask for an interview in the opening paragraph.
b. Inform the potential employer of what position or job you are seeking (Locker, 2000). Ask for the position or job just as it was listed in the want ad or on the Internet.

c. Inform the potential employer of how you learned about the position. This is important because it allows the reader to know what position you are seeking and if their form of advertising is effective.

d. As the writer you can place the fact that a resume is attached here or you can do it in the last paragraph.

Example solicit cover letter opening paragraph:

I would like to interview for the position of HR Training Manager, listed in the Commercial Appeal, dated March 9, 2004. My qualifications and teaching background make me the ideal candidate. Attached is a copy of my resume to help you in your evaluation.

Example informational or prospecting cover letter opening paragraph:

With a strong teaching and HR background, I would be the ideal candidate to improve the training efforts of any organization. Attached is a copy of my resume to help you get a better look at my qualifications.

2. The writer should use the next two to three paragraphs of the cover letter to show the potential employer why he or she is the solution to their problems.

a. This is the most important section of the cover letter or resume. The writer should do as much research as required to write in a way that will let the potential employer know why they are the solution to the potential employer’s problems. Stress only the quality and traits that make you right for the position (www.ciltuk.org.uk). You may be an excellent welder, but if the position does not require welding, the potential employer is not interested. **Do the required research before writing this section.**
b. Try to use the words the potential employer used in their ad or what you may have found in their mission statement. *Example:* You may read in their ad, “one year driving experience as a professional driver with an excellent driving record.” Then you might place a sentence in the cover letter, which reads, “I pride myself on having been driving professionally for the last three years, during which time I have maintained a perfect driving record.”

c. Do not be afraid to mention any quality that you may have that will help the potential employer see you as the solution to their problem. If you are unwilling to discuss your qualities, who will (www.ciltuk.org.uk)? However, only mention the qualities that you possess. Do not add qualities that you do not possess to make yourself look better. Sometimes when candidates are too desperate to get employed, they are often willing to lie to improve their position (Prater, 2002). When the potential employers discover that you do not have these qualities, they will assume the rest of your cover letter and resume contain more false information. Make yourself look as good as possible with the talents and qualities you possess.

**Example of text demonstrating that you are the solution to the organizations problems:**

Training others has always been an interest of mine. Anyone seeking the position of HR Training Manager should have the ability to communicate effectively with an adult audience. My educational background in Human Resources, along with three years of teaching young adults on the community college level, has given me the abilities needed to communicate with a business audience.

While a faculty member at Hopkins Community College, I taught several specialty classes for business organizations. My ability to successfully develop helpful power-point presentations, allowed me to communicate effectively with these types of adult
audiences. Three years teaching experience has taught me how to find the necessary resources needed to create the type of learning environment that makes learning easy.

Along with the ability to develop training sessions to cover organizational objectives, my educational background in Human Resources provides me with the knowledge needed to conduct training classes on hot Human Resources issues. One of my areas of interest is in diversity training. I have taught several classes on diversity and much of my elected research on the educational level was on topics like diversity.

The Close (Closing Paragraph): The last part of the text of the cover letter is the close. Always thank the reader, tell them that you are looking forward to hearing from them, and tell them how to get in touch with you. If you did not tell the reader in opening that your resume is enclosed, you should do it now. While it is not required, it is strongly suggested that the writer needs to tell the potential employer that they will call to set up a possible interview. However, if you do this make sure you call. Again this section of the letter does not need to be a complete paragraph in terms of the number of sentences.

Example of a closing paragraph in a soliciting cover letter:

Thank you for your time and consideration. I shall be in the Nashville area within the next two weeks. I will call you within the next few days to set up a possible interview. If you need any additional information, I will be able to present it to you at that time. Feel free to call me at 901-757-6345 if you need to meet with me earlier. I look forward to talking with you.

Signing Off: The final part of the cover letter simply requires the writer to sign off. Always write and print your name in this part of the letter. If you did not give your phone number in the last paragraph of the letter, you might want to do this on the line after your printed name.

d. Because you are the writer of the resume and you will retain all copies, it is not required to add any information below your signature unless you are sending in a sample of your work along with your resume.
Even then it would be better to mention that fact in the body of your cover letter where you informed the reader of your resume.

**Example of the proper way to sign off in a business or cover letter:**

Sincerely,

Sandy Brown

Always center your cover letter vertically on the page. It is generally recommended that you send your resume along with the cover letter regardless of the type cover letter you are sending.

The cover letter and resume is often the first appearance that the potential employer has of you and it represents the type work you will do for their company. First appearances are the most important, and may be the only chance the writer has to present their reasons why the potential employer should hire them. Again, take the time to have someone read over your cover letter and make sure all words are spelled correctly and it is written using correct grammar. Misspellings are more critical to the writer than an occasional English error; however both should be avoided.

The National Association of Colleges and Employers states that the most important thing employers are looking for is good communications skills. Your ability to speak and write, are two of the ways we communicate in today’s business world. A poorly written cover letter or resume could be the reasons for failing to obtain an interview. A lack of required skills, knowledge, and experience are other factors that result in turndowns.
Sample of a Solicitation Type Cover Letter:

Sandy Brown
1452 Malibu Dr.
Memphis, TN 38111

Mr. Samuel L. Block, HR Director
Kress Manufacturing Co.
1423 States St.
Nashville, TN 37112

May 20, 2005

Dear Dr. Block, Human Resources Director:

I would like to interview for the position of HR Training Manager, listed in the Commercial Appeal, dated March 9, 2004. My qualifications and teaching background make me the ideal candidate. Attached is a copy of my resume to help you in your evaluation.

Training others has always been an interest of mine. Anyone seeking the position of HR Training Manager should have the ability to communicate effectively with an adult audience. My educational background in Human Resources, along with three years of teaching young adults on the community college level, has given me the abilities needed to communicate with a business audience.

While a faculty member at Hopkins Community College, I taught several specialty classes for business organizations. My ability to successfully develop helpful power-point presentations, allowed me to communicate effectively with these types of adult audiences. Three years teaching experience has taught me how to find the necessary resources needed to create the type of learning environment that makes learning easy.

Along with the ability to develop training sessions to cover organizational objectives, my educational background in Human Resources provides me with the knowledge needed to conduct training classes on hot Human Resources issues. One of my areas of interest is in diversity training. I have taught several classes on diversity and much of my elected research on the educational level was on topics like diversity.

Thank you for your time and consideration. I shall be in the Nashville area within the next two weeks. I will call you within the next few days to set up a possible interview. If you need any additional information, I will be able to present it to you at that time. Feel free to call me at 901-757-6345 if you need to meet with me earlier. I look forward to talking with you.

Sincerely,

Sandy Brown
Sample of a Prospecting Type Cover Letter:

Sandy Brown
1452 Malibu Dr.
Memphis, TN 38111
May 20, 2005

Mr. Samuel L. Block, HR Director
Kress Manufacturing Co.
1423 States St.
Nashville, TN 37112

Dear Dr. Block, Human Resources Director:

With a strong teaching and HR background, I would be the ideal candidate to improve the training efforts of any organization. Attached is a copy of my resume to help you get a better look at my qualifications.

It is important for any HR Training Manager to have the ability to communicate effectively with an adult audience. My educational background in Human Resources, along with three years of teaching young adults, on the community college level, has given me the abilities needed to communicate with a business audience.

While a faculty member at Hopkins Community College, I taught several specialty classes for business organizations. My ability to successfully develop helpful power-point presentations, allowed me to communicate effectively with these types of adult audiences. Three years teaching experience has taught me how to find the necessary resources needed to create the type of learning environment that makes learning easy.

Along with the ability to develop training sessions to cover organizational objectives, my educational background in Human Resources provides me with the knowledge needed to conduct training classes on hot Human Resources issues. One of my areas of interest is in diversity training. I have taught several classes on diversity and much of my elected research on the educational level was on topics like diversity.

Thank you for your time, I shall be in the Nashville area within the next two weeks, and would like a chance to get to meet with you. I will call you within the next few days to set up a possible interview. If you need any additional information, I will be able to present it to you at that time. Feel free to call me at 901-757-6345 if you need to meet with me earlier. I look forward to talking with you.

Sincerely,

Sandy Brown
The Resume

There are several different versions of the resume just as there are different ways to write a cover letter. Again the secret to success is to write a resume that demonstrates you have the qualifications that the potential employer needs. Once you have developed a successful resume, it becomes easy to make the minor changes needed when applying for different positions. Because the era of one job for a lifetime has now passed, there is no better time than the present to start to develop your resume.

A resume needs to be readable and follow a logical flow that allows the reader to see you as the person needed by their organization. Larry Salters states this about the resume, “The focus should be brief, and relevant information organized in hierarchical order of importance, with the goal of securing an interview” (2002, p. 18). The writer needs to have the ability to write a resume in a way that clearly demonstrates their qualifications, skills, and achievements in ways that the potential employer understands (Welton & Morton, 2002).

Resumes present several types of problems for the writer but font style should not be one of them. Because this is a piece of business writing you should stay with styles widely accepted in the business world and it should match the font of your cover letter. While Times New Roman is an acceptable font style, the size depends on what the writer is trying to do; however, it should never be so small the average reader cannot see the font or so large that it overpowers the page. Therefore, the length of the resume, often determines the font size.

Example: If you want to use the one-page resume and you are using 14 fonts, which will require a second page, try using 12 fonts. The most common font sizes used in resume writing are 14, 12, and 10. For the average college student, someone beginning
their career path, a one-page resume is all that is needed. While a one-page resume is the most common type resume, individuals with more experience may find it necessary to use a two-page resume. The average resume should not exceed two pages; however, there is no universal standard for length of resume (Kennedy, 1998). If anything the rules on length have changed in recent times, with the emphasis more on developing the marketing aspect of the resume (Conkil, 2004). In fact, Kitty Locker reported that in one finding, many interviewers stated they preferred shorter resumes, they were more likely to grant interviews to individuals with longer resumes (2000, p.508).

Understanding how employers use resumes may help you understand the importance of doing a good job when writing your resume. First and foremost employers use the resume to help them decide whom they will interview. Because the employer, in most cases, has never seen you, it is important that you present yourself in light of what the employer wants (Anonymous, 2000). Many resumes are sent electronically in today’s business world, the potential employer can key in on any criteria, like career objective or a specific skill (Salters, 2002). For this reason it is more important for those writing resumes today; to understand what the potential employer wants.

Many of today’s employers are requesting electronic copies of resumes because it is easier to pass them within departments without creating a hard copy. It is important for those who send their resumes electronically to remember to also send a hard copy by mail, unless otherwise instructed. Often resumes sent electronically are required to be scannable (To see an example of a scannable resume see page 55).

The potential employer often uses the resume to review the writer’s skills, to see if you have the skills needed to perform the responsibilities required to do the job. An employer assumes that the work you do on your resume and cover letter is the best
possible work you can do. Unprofessional work, when it comes to spelling and grammar, often results in the failure to obtain an interview. Also, those individuals who conduct the actual interview use the resume as a means of reviewing what you have done before the interview (Locker, 2000). There are other uses of the resume by the potential employer but these are the ones most important to candidates for employment.

Following are some facts that everyone should know before beginning to write their resume:

1. Avoid the use of the word “I” in the resume. While it is fine to use “I” a limited number of times in the cover letter, avoid it at all times within the resume.

2. The flow of the resume can help paint a better picture of the writer. Poorly constructed resumes are just as harmful as poorly written resumes.

3. Never send a resume out to anyone without a cover letter. The only time when it is proper to send a resume without a cover letter is if you are asked to send a copy of your resume only. If it is unclear as to what the potential employer wants, always send a cover letter with your resume.

4. Only include needed information in your resume. Why add material discussing a skill that is not needed in that position.

5. Never lie when writing a resume. If a lie is uncovered or what you said is looked on as a lie, the likelihood of you getting the position or being interviewed is unlikely.

6. Try not to use the same words over and over when writing a resume. Sure your tasks at some of your places of employment may have been the same, but nothing is more boring than reading the same words over and over.
7. Stay away from generic resumes because they come across just that way. Generic resumes are meant as a guide and nothing more. Also, some generic resumes do not fit your needs in the majority of situations.

Chart 1A on the following page, contains information most recruiters are looking for on your resume. The first column ranks items in order of importance as listed by College Recruiters, second by Fortune 500 Administrators, and third by Business Instructors. The three columns show the percent of each group that assigned any importance to that area. When writing a resume, there is always some information that everyone wants to see; however, it is up to the writer to decide what information they will include. If you feel that it will give the potential employer a better picture of you, then you should include the information. However, there are certain pieces of information that everyone should include in their resume. The important pieces of information tend to be those in the ninety percent range and higher in Chart 1A.

**Resume Writing**

While there are several different forms of resumes, they all basically list their information one of two ways. The most common method of listing information is chronologically; however, it is also correct to organize your resume by the skills you possess (Welton & Morton, 2002). When seeking a more technical type job, it is more preferable to arrange your resume by the skills that you are able to demonstrate. The resume that lists your experiences and education chronologically is the one used most often by those starting a career path, or looking for work that requires some training. A doctor should use a skills type approach, while a young college student would use a resume that lists things more chronologically.
### Resume Content Ranked Important by 50 Percent or More of the Hiring Officials

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Resume Content Items</th>
<th>College Recruiters</th>
<th>Fortune 500 Administrators</th>
<th>Business Instructors</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Name</td>
<td>99.5</td>
<td>100.0</td>
<td>100.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Degree</td>
<td>99.5</td>
<td>100.0</td>
<td>100.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Name of College</td>
<td>98.1</td>
<td>100.0</td>
<td>100.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Employing Company(s)</td>
<td>99.1</td>
<td>99.3</td>
<td>100.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Job Held (Titles)</td>
<td>99.5</td>
<td>100.0</td>
<td>99.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Telephone Number</td>
<td>98.6</td>
<td>100.0</td>
<td>100.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. Dates of Employment</td>
<td>98.6</td>
<td>99.3</td>
<td>96.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. Address</td>
<td>99.5</td>
<td>99.3</td>
<td>100.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9. Duties – Work Experience</td>
<td>97.6</td>
<td>94.7</td>
<td>98.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10. Major</td>
<td>98.1</td>
<td>99.3</td>
<td>97.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11. Special Aptitudes/Skills</td>
<td>93.4</td>
<td>91.9</td>
<td>98.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12. Achievements – Work Experience</td>
<td>90.9</td>
<td>89.2</td>
<td>97.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13. Previous Employers – References</td>
<td>83.8</td>
<td>81.8</td>
<td>91.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14. Date of Graduation – College</td>
<td>96.2</td>
<td>95.3</td>
<td>92.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15. Job Objective</td>
<td>82.4</td>
<td>91.7</td>
<td>71.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16. Career Objective</td>
<td>88.1</td>
<td>83.3</td>
<td>70.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17. Years Attended – College</td>
<td>88.0</td>
<td>83.0</td>
<td>75.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18. Summary of Qualifications</td>
<td>81.4</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>N/A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>19. References</td>
<td>85.7</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>N/A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20. Awards, Honors – College Achievements</td>
<td>88.2</td>
<td>91.4</td>
<td>96.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21. Willingness to Relocate</td>
<td>75.1</td>
<td>89.4</td>
<td>75.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>22. Combined Job and Career Objectives</td>
<td>82.8</td>
<td>76.6</td>
<td>69.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>23. Professional Organizations – College</td>
<td>90.0</td>
<td>84.7</td>
<td>96.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>24. Grade Point Average – College</td>
<td>91.5</td>
<td>90.8</td>
<td>76.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>25. Minor</td>
<td>92.1</td>
<td>80.8</td>
<td>82.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>26. Military Experience</td>
<td>72.7</td>
<td>80.1</td>
<td>80.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>27. Current Organizations Memberships</td>
<td>80.9</td>
<td>75.5</td>
<td>94.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>28. Professors/Teachers – References</td>
<td>72.2</td>
<td>65.3</td>
<td>88.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>29. Reason(s) for leaving Job(s)</td>
<td>60.8</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>N/A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>30. Scholarships – College Achievements</td>
<td>83.4</td>
<td>84.1</td>
<td>92.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>31. Student Government Activities – College</td>
<td>82.9</td>
<td>78.7</td>
<td>84.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>32. Work Supervisor Name</td>
<td>53.1</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>N/A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>33. References Supplied Only on Request</td>
<td>52.5</td>
<td>75.5</td>
<td>79.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>34. Name of High School</td>
<td>59.4</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>N/A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>35. Publications</td>
<td>65.0</td>
<td>77.9</td>
<td>92.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>36. Resume Title</td>
<td>47.8</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>N/A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>37. Community Involvement</td>
<td>56.2</td>
<td>70.2</td>
<td>80.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>38. Date of Graduation – High School</td>
<td>33.2</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>N/A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>39. Salaries Received for Jobs</td>
<td>38.3</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>N/A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>40. Diploma – High School</td>
<td>49.3</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>N/A</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

One of the first things anyone should do before attempting to write their resume is to form a list of all the things that they feel will help promote their position. Some of the things that the writer should consider placing on the list are things like professional experiences, accomplishments, and activities (Welton & Morton, 2002). Remember to
add in awards, special accomplishments, or any licenses that you may have obtained. The writer should use the material listed in Chart 1A, as an aid to determine what things should be added to their resume for each particular position for which they seek employment. It is important for the writer to keep their resume updated by checking it and making required updates from time to time.

**The One-Page Chronologically Listed Resume**

A chronologically listed resume should be divided into specific parts and the chronological lists should be in reverse order (what you did last or are currently doing should be listed first). The reader should be able to clearly see when one section of the resume ends and another begins. While there is more than one way to write a resume, each resume should contain certain parts and information that most employers want to see. Some of the most important things an employer is looking for are name, address, phone number, education, work experience, and any special skills that the potential employee may have learned that would be helpful on the job.

**Heading:** A lot of this information can be found in the heading so take some time and lay out an attractive heading. The heading is the only part of a resume that has no title. Never start a heading by using a title like “The Heading,” just start with your name.

**Example of a simple one-address Heading:**

Sandy Brown  
1432 Malibu Dr.  
Memphis, TN 38111  
sbrown@uomemphis.edu  
(901) 757-6345
a. Notice that the person’s name and phone number are bolded. This is to draw the attention of the reader to these two important pieces of information from your point of view. Be careful with the use of bolding, it should only be used sparingly to draw the reader’s eye to an area of importance. If a writer bolds too much material, it demonstrates poor writing etiquette.

b. The heading should contain your name, address, and phone number, along with your e-mail address if you have one. If you are currently living away from home and want to list a mailing address as well as your home address this is acceptable. Place the two addresses side by side with your home address to the right.

**Sample two-address Heading:**

Sandy Brown

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Campus Address</th>
<th>Home Address</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>P.O. Box 1066</td>
<td>1432 Malibu Dr.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>150 Rust Avenue</td>
<td>Memphis, TN 38111</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Holly Springs, MS 38635</td>
<td><a href="mailto:sbrown@aol.com">sbrown@aol.com</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><a href="mailto:Sandy1210@rustcollege.edu">Sandy1210@rustcollege.edu</a></td>
<td>(901) 757-6345</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(662) 252-8000</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Objective:* Each area after the heading should have a title to allow the reader to understand the flow of your resume and to be able to find the information that is of interest to them. The area immediately following the heading is usually the **OBJECTIVE.** The objective is the section of the resume where the writer tells the reader what position they are seeking. Often writers are much too broad or add unneeded information in this area of the resume. If your objective reads “Looking for a high paying job to make my life more comfortable,” you may want to re-word your objective statement. Everyone wants a high paying job and this makes you sound lazy. Again, if your objective reads something like,
“To obtain any entry level position with your company,” then your objective is much too broad. Your objective needs to be very detailed. If you are seeking a position listed in the paper, ask for that position as it is listed in the want ad.

**Example Objective:**

**OBJECTIVE:** To obtain a position within the HR Department, conducting the needed training for the organization.

1. The title of this section is in all caps and bolded. This allows the reader to understand what will be contained in this section.

2. Notice that the objective clearly states that the writer is seeking a position in training, within the HR Department. Because HR Departments are responsible for several tasks within an organization, the writer clarified their area of interest by stating that they wanted to conduct the organizations training efforts.

**Offer:** The next area of the resume is known by several titles: SUMMARY OF SKILLS is the most common; however, OFFER is often more professional. The OFFER is the second chance you have to sell yourself as the most viable candidate. The writer did this earlier in the middle section of the cover letter; however, in the cover letter they did it in sentence form while in the resume they will only use short phrases. Remember it is an offer, what you are bringing to the table.

**Example Offer:**

**OFFER:** Three years Teaching Experience – Human Resource Educational Background… polished oral communications skills… ability to develop effective Power Point presentations… writing and research skills

**Educational Background:** There is not a correct order for information to appear on a resume. However, the information should be placed in the order that presents their skills
in the best light. Because the majority of individuals that have just graduated from college have very little work experience, their strongest highlight is their educational background. For this reason it is common to see one’s educational background directly follow the offer.

**Example Education:**

**EDUCATION:**

- MBA, The University of Memphis, Memphis, Tennessee, with a major in Management. Expected date of graduation: August 2000. Current Grade Point Average 3.8 (4.0 scale).

- BBA, Austin Peay State University, Clarksville, Tennessee, with a double major in Business Administration and Economics. Graduated: May 1998. Grade Point Average: 3.86 overall; 3.89 in major (4.0 scale).

- BBA, The University of Kentucky, Hopkinsville, Kentucky, major concentration Management. Graduated: May 1996. Grade Point Average: 3.7 overall (4.0 scale).

---

1. Things that must be present in the educational background section are all degrees, schools where they were obtained, major area of study, and dates of graduation. One of the things of lesser importance is the writer’s GPA. If the writer’s GPA is above 3.0 it is suggested that it be added; however, if the GPA is below 3.0, it is generally recommended that the writer not include their GPA in this section. Anyone who has not graduated, but plans to in the near future, needs to state expected date of graduation somewhere in the information. Never give yourself credit for a degree you have not yet earned. Also, if the writer has listed any college work the need to list their high school diploma is not required. The potential employer will assume that if you have graduated or plan to graduate from college in the near future, you have completed high school.
2. If the writer has more than one degree, they need to be listed in reverse chronological order, starting with the most recent degree first.

*Work History:* Again there are no requirements that any specific information needs to fall in any required order within a resume. However, it is common to see an individual’s work history or experience to come immediately after their educational background in a more simplified resume. This section often has several heading, any of which are correct (Work History, Work Experience, Relevant Experience, Employment, and other).

**Example Work History:**

**EMPLOYMENT:**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Hopkins Community College</th>
<th>College Instructor</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Memphis, Tennessee</td>
<td>August 2000 – present</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Taught Management classes, which included Principle of Management, Diversity Management, and Human Resources Management. Duties required student advisement, development of curriculum, and producing all supportive material, such as Power Point slides and lectures needed for each class.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>41 North Hardware</th>
<th>Sales Associate</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Memphis, Tennessee</td>
<td>1994 – 2000</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Worked fulltime in a fast-paced retail operation while attending college.

1. Just as with the educational history, an individual’s work history must be placed or listed in reverse chronological order, starting with the most recent employment history first.

2. Do not write your work experience like a job description, the writer should describe their work experience in their own words, explaining what their responsibilities were. List any accomplishments or awards earned while employed at a particular organization. If you were in sales and were named
salesman of the year, let the reader know. This shows the potential employer that you were a responsible employee.

*Related Experience:* If an individual’s work history is short they may want to show related experiences to help show what skills they possess (Kuhn, 2005). If the writer chooses to do this they should place the related experiences in reverse chronological order after the work history.

**Example Related Experience:**

**RELATED EXPERIENCE:**

Senior Class Vice President  
University of Kentucky  
Lexington, Kentucky  
1997 – 1998

Required to make public speeches representing the University of Kentucky and the senior class.

*Additional Sections:* All sections that follow should give the potential employer a clearer picture of what you are about. Honors, Awards, Personal Information, Activities, and References are common areas found after your work experience. Again none is more important than the other, and should only be used to support the writer’s position. If the writer has not earned any awards, omit this section. Also, remember the writer is trying to keep this to a one-page resume if possible, but needs to remember they should never eliminate vital information to keep the resume to one page. However, if adding a single line turns your resume from a one-page resume to a two-page resume, it might be better leaving out any information that has little value to the writer. If the information is important, then try to restructure your resume so that it remains only one-page. Two-page resumes are becoming more common as our work history seems to be getting longer in today’s society. If adding references causes you to go to the second page it is
recommended that you leave references off the resume. The writer is not required to add a line that reads, “References available upon request,” most employers would expect you to provide that information if it were requested.

**Example Highlight Information:**

**HONORS:** Golf Scholarship: University of Kentucky

**ACTIVITIES:** Golf

1. The writer should be careful when using a personal information section. Stick with things like nonsmoker, if you are one, and hobbies or interests (example: amateur photographer). Avoid things like your height, weight, or age. Be careful not to add things like “single mom.” Once you provide information that can be seen in a negative light, that information cannot be taken back. Remember you are trying to place yourself in the best possible light.

A one-page resume is designed to be simple. The writer does not want to crowd so much information into a one-page resume that it seems cluttered; however, it is important to fill the page and make the resume seem attractive, with a logical flow. Again, remember spelling and grammar is important because the potential employer believes this is your best work.

Page 47 contains a sample of a completed one-page resume. Notice how easy it is to follow and how the information seems to flow from one section to the next. Only use bolding to highlight headings or relevant information. Over use of bolding is incorrect business grammar. While we all like to save money, remember that your cover letter and resume are not areas where you should try to save money. Cover letters and resumes should be printed on the good quality bonded paper. Color is not as important as the
quality of the paper, but three of the most common colors are ivory, cream, and gray. The envelope should always match the paper that the cover letter and resume were printed on and the most preferable texture for cover letters, resumes and envelopes is linen or pebble.

**Top 10 Qualities Most Employers are Looking for:**

1. Communication skills (verbal and written)
2. Honesty/integrity
3. Teamwork skills (works well with others)
4. Interpersonal skills (relates well to others)
5. Motivation/initiative
6. Strong work ethic
7. Analytical skills
8. Flexibility/adaptability
9. Computer skills
10. Self-confidence (Arbor, 2005, p.27)

*NEXT PAGE SAMPLE ONE-PAGE RESUME*
Sample One-Page Chronologically Listed Resume:

Sandy Brown  
1432 Malibu Dr.  
Memphis, TN 38111  
sbrown@uomemphis.edu  
(901) 757-6345

OBJECTIVE: To obtain a position within the HR Department, conducting the needed training for the organization.

OFFER: Three years Teaching Experience – Human Resource Educational Background… polished oral communications skills… ability to develop effective Power Point presentations… writing and research skills

EDUCATION:  
MBA, The University of Memphis, Memphis, Tennessee, with a major in Management. Expected date of graduation: August 2000. Current Grade Point Average 3.8 (4.0 scale).

BBA, Austin Peay State University, Clarksville, Tennessee, with a double major in Business Administration and Economics. Graduated: May 1998. Grade Point Average: 3.86 overall; 3.89 in major (4.0 scale).

ABA, The University of Kentucky, Hopkinsville, Kentucky, major concentration Management. Graduated: May 1996. Grade Point Average: 3.7 overall (4.0 scale).

EMPLOYMENT:  
Hopkins Community College  
College Instructor  
Memphis, Tennessee  
August 2000 – present

Taught Management classes, which included Principle of Management, Diversity Management, and Human Resources Management. Duties required student advisement, development of curriculum, and producing all supportive material, such as Power Point slides and lectures needed for each class.

41 North Hardware  
Sales Associate  
Memphis, Tennessee  
1994 – 2000

Worked fulltime in a fast-paced retail operation while attending college.

HONORS: Vice President Senior Class University of Kentucky  
Golf Scholarship: University of Kentucky

ACTIVITIES: Golf
The Two-Page Chronologically Listed Resume

For the more mature individuals and students who have a longer work history, the two-page resume is often required to give the reader a more detailed look at the writer. Do not be afraid to use the two-page resume when required. Other than the amount of information, there are only a few minor differences between a two-page resume and a one-page resume.

If you elect to use a two-page resume there is one additional requirement that is needed. At the top of the second page before adding any additional information the writers last name and page number should appear in upper left-hand margin. This simple but often overlooked task helps the reader keep your resume together. The last thing you want to happen is to write a two-page resume and have the reader mix up your second page with another person’s first page.

Example second page Heading two-page resume:

Jones, p. 2

health, and investment products to corporations and individuals. Responsible for recruiting and training of new sales representatives. Sales Representative: Named Agent of the Year and selected to Million Dollar Round Table – 1989 –1990.

If you are using the two-page resume, it is more preferable that you add your references if the space is available; however, it is never required unless asked for by the potential employer. When using references, the writer needs to understand how most employers use references so they can make better choices of whom they place on the list.

Most employers place very little weight on references. The reason for this is because of whom the writer chooses to add as a reference and the fact that most employers know that no one would put someone on that list that would say something negative about them. With that in mind, the writer should spend some time looking for three people that
will help the potential employer push them to the top of their list of potential candidates.

The biggest mistake most writers make is in placing three of the same type people on the list, which really is of no help to the potential employer (Example: 3 of your college professors). The writer should use a more rounded selection of references. When the writer chooses someone from work, a close friend, and a professional from some other field than where they work, it helps the potential employer get a better overall picture of the writer (Example: A college professor, your work supervisor, a close friend). Like in the one-page resume, the two-page resume should be well organized, well written, and have no spelling or grammar errors.

NEXT PAGE SAMPLE TWO-PAGE RESUME
Sample Two-Page Chronologically Listed Resume

John Paul Jones
7444 Apple Tree Drive
Memphis, TN 39122
(901) 755-6607  e-mail: samstown@aol.com

OBJECTIVE:

To obtain a teaching position in Management on the college level.

OFFER:

Over 20 years Human Resources – Sales – Management – Marketing – New Business Development – Teaching Experience … profit performance effectiveness … market assessment and penetration abilities … organization and time management expertise … writing and research skills … business/financial expertise … polished communications… presentation and staff/customer relations talents … hiring and training experience … teaching experience … and a strong desire to teach.

EDUCATION:

MBA, The University of Memphis, Memphis, Tennessee, with a major in Management. Expected date of graduation: August 2000. Current Grade Point Average 3.8 (4.0 scale).

BBA, Austin Peay State University, Clarksville, Tennessee, with a double major in Business Administration and Economics. Graduated: May 1982. Grade Point Average: 3.86 overall; 3.89 in major (4.0 scale).

ABA, The University of Kentucky, Hopkinsville, Kentucky, major concentration Management. Graduated: May 1980. Grade Point Average: 3.7 overall (4.0 scale).

EMPLOYMENT:

Shelby County Board of Education  Substitute Teacher
Memphis, Tennessee  August 1998 – present

Prepare class materials and covered agenda required by the present teacher.

Prudential Insurance Company of America  Human Resources
Memphis, Tennessee  1982 – present

Eighteen years in management and sales with responsibility of all areas of the Insurance business. Human Resources Manager: Directed sales team responsible for selling life, health, and investment products to corporations and individuals. Responsible for recruiting and training of new sales representatives. Sales Representative: Name
Agent of the Year and selected to Million Dollar Round Table – 1989 – 1990.

Credithrift of America
Hopkinsville, Kentucky
Assistant Manager
1983 – 1984

Supervised six member staff in managing $1 Million loan portfolio and collection practices. Improved bad debt ratio from 8% to 3% while providing intensive customer services and financial counseling.

41 North Liquors
Hopkinsville, Kentucky
Sales Associate
1978 – 1983

Worked full time in fast-paced retail operation while attending college.

Cress Manufacturing Company
Hopkinsville, Kentucky
Production Foreman
1974 – 1978

Supervised, scheduled and trained 16 member production crew manufacturing commercial kilns in unionized, labor-intensive operation.

MILITARY – PERSONAL:

UNITED STATES NAVY – Honorable Discharge 1970-1974
Married – Non-Smoker – Excellent Health – enjoy playing golf – amateur photography.

UNDERGRADUATE PROFESSIONAL ACTIVITIES AND HONORS:

Phi Theta Kappa, National Honor Fraternity of Junior Colleges, 1979 – 1980
Alpha Beta Gamma, National Business Honor Society of Junior Colleges, 1980
Million Dollar Round Table, Insurance Industry, 1989 – 1990
Agent of the Year, The General Agents and Managers Association of Memphis, 1989

REFERENCES

Ms. Lisa Ellis
7356 Ashley Oaks Dr.
Memphis, TN 38125
(901) 751-2141

Dr. Robert Taylor
Professor of Management
The University of Memphis
Memphis, TN 38152-6454
(901) 678-5716

Dr. Nicholas Fessler, CMA, CPA
Assistant Professor of Accounting
The University of Memphis
Memphis, TN 38152-6454
(901) 678-2685
**Sample One-Page Skills Resume:**

**William Zwick**  
4372 Longtree Drive  
Memphis, TN 38122  
(901) 756-0856  e-mail: wzwick1@aol.com

**OBJECTIVE:** To obtain a career as a placement officer on the college level working with graduating seniors.

**Writing Experience**

Spent last three years as a Professional Resume and Cover Letter writer.  
Wrote Job-hunting column for the Commercial Appeal, the daily Memphis newspaper.  
Two years experience writing job descriptions for a multinational insurance company.  
Helped develop training manuals used in a multinational insurance company.

**Hiring and Training Experience**

Worked two years as a hiring manager for a multinational insurance firm, training new agents during their first two years of service with the organization.  
Developed training programs used in training insurance agents.

**Computer Experience**

Familiar with the applications of Microsoft Office 2000.  
Developed Power Point presentations used in training programs of a multinational insurance company.  
Developed a web page using Microsoft Front Page.

**Business and Management Experience**

Successful owner of small business, Zwick’s Resume Writer  
Managed twenty member training staff.

**Educational Background**

MBA, The University of Memphis, Memphis, Tennessee, with a major in Management.  
Graduated: August 1990. Grade Point, Average 3.8 (4.0 scale).  

BBA, Austin Peay State University, Clarksville, Tennessee, with a double major in Business Administration. Graduated: May 1982. Grade Point Average: 3.86 (4.0 scale).  

BBA, The University of Kentucky, Hopkinsville, Kentucky, major concentration Management. Graduated: May 1980. Grade Point Average: 3.7 overall (4.0 scale).
Resume Templates

Individuals need to develop a resume template that allows them to make easy or minor changes when applying for each individual position. This is because you are trying to match your skills with those that a potential employee is looking for, often a resume that is acceptable to one potential employer, may not be acceptable to the next. Also, so many individuals today are being forced to change career paths over time, it is important to keep your resume up to date (Kuhn, 2005).

Download resumes templates from Office Online:


Professional Resume Writers

Another consideration for individuals that lack the skills needed to develop an effective resume is to seek professional help. Individuals who are seeking to start a career path right out of college or high school should only use a professional resume writing service as a means of last resort. This is because so many college graduates lack any real detailed work experience and find themselves applying for entry level positions. Many of the tools available today can help them develop a more than adequate resume. Individuals that are seeking higher-level entry positions within an organization, with a much more detailed work history might consider using a professional resume writing
service. Quality professional resume writer’s keep up with the changes and trends in effective resume writing (Conklin, 2004).

**Scannable Resumes**

The format for developing a scannable resume is much different than the standard resume. If the employer requests a scannable resume, the writers should use nouns to describe their skills instead of verbs because computers do a better job of picking up nouns (Salters, 2002). Employers that seek scannable resumes often do word searches to find acceptable candidates to interview.

*SAMPLE SCANNABLE RESUME NEXT PAGE*
Sample Scannable Resume:

John W. Doe

Keywords: sales experience; competitive; self starter; computer skills; hard worker; achievement oriented; management

Permanent Address
2323 East 2nd Street
Memphis, TN 38108
(901) 388-7654
E-mail address: jwdoe07@aol.com

Education
B.B.A. in Risk Management, May 2005, The University of Memphis, Memphis TN
“A” Grade Point Average
A.B.A. in Management, June 2003, Southwest Community College, Southaven, MS
“A” Grade Point Average
Courses related to major and insurance sales include developing communications skills in public speaking, writing, and group work
Risk Management
Insurance Assessment
Accounting I and II
Micro Economics
Macro Economics
Statistics
Business Communications
Finance
Basic Computer Concepts
Leadership
Organizational Management
Principles of Management
Global Management

Sports Experience
Two-year Letterman, Southwest Community College, Southaven, MS, NAIA Golf
Two-year Letterman, University of Memphis, Memphis, TN, NCAA Division I Golf
ALIC (Athletes Living in Christ)

Experience
Internship HR Department, Prudential Insurance Company, Jacksonville, FL,
Summer 2003, Trained as insurance agent
Summer 2004, Worked with training coordinator to develop training classes for newly hired agents, gained knowledge about life insurance products and annuities.
Interviewing

All the work an individual does to seek possible employment like job-hunting, writing the cover letter and resume, and the required phone calls are only aids that help the individual obtain an interview. Any or all of these activities by themselves will not lead to employment without an interview. Everything that has been done up to this point only gives the individual the right to meet face-to-face with a potential employer who has the power to decide who gets the job. Up to this point the potential employer has only received a snapshot of who you are and seen a sample of your writing skills.

Earlier we discussed the things employers want to see the most in their potential employees. Communications skills and the ability to interact with their fellow employees were two of the most important things that most employers are seeking (Koonce, 1997). How you handle yourself during the interview will give the employer the information they need to decide if you are the right fit for their employees and the organization as a whole.

Do not take an interview lightly. While some college students are able to study for an exam the night before the test and still make a passing grade, they often do not do their best work. If an individual does this type of preparation for their interview, they may still be looking for a job after the interview, be prepared (Welton, Morton, & Amig, 2002). “Comedian Woody Allen is quoted as saying “eighty-five percent of success in life is just showing up.” No one seems to have the exact numerical figure, yet the essence of the statement and the proportions specified seem to make sense. One might add that the other 15 percent is good preparation.” (Lazarus, 2004, p.48).

How do individuals go about preparing for an interview? Hopefully you have already done some of the work needed to prepare for the interview when you did your research seeking information about the company before you sent them your resume. However, if you
have not done any research, now would be a good time (Hagevik, 1998). The more information you find out about the organization that will be interviewing you, the better you can prepare for the interview and the questions that you will be asked in the interview.

Possible employers, who grant someone an interview and see that the person being interviewed knows nothing about the organization, often determine that the interviewee is not interested in the position. Individuals can obtain the information they need using the Internet or by calling the organizations personnel director and asking any questions they might have about the organization. Also, keeping up with the things that are happening in the business world can help an individual better understand some of the problems many organizations are facing today (Sorenson, DeBord, & Ramirez, 2001, p.258).

If you are scared, think of interviewing as a game or some kind of sport. Those that have the best game plan, practice the hardest, and do a good job scouting the other team, will win the majority of the time. Treat interviewing as a game and remember that you want to be on the winning team. With that in mind here are some things you need to do before the interview that can give you the winning edge:

1. After you have sent in your cover letter and resume, call and ask for an appointment, specifically if you notified the potential employer of your intention to call for an interview in the cover letter (Locker, 2000, p.544). Those individuals that wait for the potential employer to call them for an interview are often left behind.

2. Go by the place where you will be interviewed in advance. This will prevent you from getting lost on the day of your interview and allow you to arrive on time. Always arrive early; never be late for your interview.
3. Make sure you are dressed correctly for the interview (Posthuma, Morgeson, & Campion, 2002).

4. When you arrive, notify the receptionist and take a seat. Try to look busy if possible this can be accomplished by reading a company magazine if provided, or looking over some of your material on the company.

5. Do not smoke while waiting for the interviewer.

6. At the arrival of the interviewer, stand, move toward the interviewer, and shake their hand, do not wait for the interviewer to extend their hand.

**Anxiety**

“The interview becomes an atmosphere where people are weeded out. Some resumes are tossed out. And potential employees occasionally pass out while being interviewed.” (Singer, 1991, p. 30) One of the most feared tasks that we are sometimes asked to participate in during our lifetime is the dreaded job interview. Most of the current research indicates that individual anxiety is a part of all interviews; however, they do little to tell you how to overcome this anxiety. For the most part many writers simply point out that you are not alone (Dorio, 1998).

Things you can do to help overcome anxiety:

1. Do not look at anxiety as a bad thing. While we would much rather feel comfortable during an interview, it should be pointed out that some anxiety keeps us alert, and on your toes. All professional golfers face anxiety in the final round of any major championship. Those that learn how to harness this anxiety often emerge as the winner. The more times they face this form of anxiety, the easier it is to understand how to harness this energy the next time they find
themselves in a similar situation. Do not be afraid to go on an interview and fail.
Each time you interview, you too will learn how to harness that excess energy.

2. Practice, Practice, Practice! Anxiety is often caused because of a fear of the unknown. When you decide to walk across a room, how much time do you spend thinking about what you must do in order to walk? Does it cause you much anxiety? Doubtful, you have been walking all your life and you know how to walk. If you were forced to retake your drivers test today, would it cause you any anxiety? Again it is doubtful, because you know how to drive; however, how did you feel when you originally went to take your drivers test. Practice relieves anxiety.

3. Be aware that there are certain things we do without realizing it that indicate to the interviewer we are nervous. Becoming aware of these indicators will not do away with our fears, but it is less likely the interviewer will notice your anxiety. Try to avoid: foot tapping, hair twirling, hand wringing, lip licking, finger nail biting, and failure to keep good eye contact with the interviewer, these are all signs of anxiety (Dorio, 1998).

4. Too often before we go on an interview we convince ourselves that we are feeling some anxiety. If you continue to tell your friends how nervous you are, you have already convinced yourself that you are nervous. Think in terms of what you will do once you get the job, and not about how you will mess up the interview.

**Practice Using Video Equipment**

Once you have received the call for your first interview, what are some of the things you should do before you go on that interview? Practice! Practice! Practice! Before you go on
your first interview, practice with a friend by answering some of the more common questions asked during interviewing. If you have a video camera, record your practice and review what you have done. Individuals seldom change a behavior that others notice; however, if the same individual sees how that behavior looks, they become more conscious of the behavior and try to change (Neil, 2004). The process of video taping your practice sessions gives the individual instant feedback on any bad habits they have and allows them to spot problem areas that they need to work on. Often when an individual sees how they look in an interview, they are able to notice that they are sometimes too stiff, fail to smile, or keep good eye contact with the interviewer. All these things indicate a lack of self-confidence, which is something most interviewers look for in a possible candidate.

By becoming more aware of the things that we do that indicate or express how we are feeling, we also become aware of the little things that tell us how the interviewer is feeling. It becomes easier to pick up on things that interest the interviewer and capitalize on them. Remember that there are two people in the interview and the one that maintains control is often the winner. Some employers have started using video tapes during interviews to help them make better decisions about who they hire, so practicing the techniques can help any candidate (Neil, 2004).

**Dressing for the Interview**

Many potential candidates often fall short when it comes to doing the needed research required to learn how to dress for the interview. However, an individual’s initial impression can have a huge impact on their success or failure during an interview (Welton, Morton, & Amig, 2002). An applicant’s appearance, and physical attractiveness has an influence on how an individual is perceived during the interview (Posthuma, Morgeson, & Campion,
Because individuals are unable to change their physical attractiveness, in the short run, it is important to know how to dress for success.

You should never over dress or under dress for an interview; however, when in doubt always wear business attire (O’Briant, 2000). Too much cologne or excessive jewelry is just as harmful in an interview as not dressing properly for the position (Welton, Morton, & Amig, 2002). Individuals need to remember that they should always dress to meet company standards. If you were being interviewed for a position in a machine shop, coming in a suit might be perceived as over dressed. In that case clean generic work clothes with clean polish work shoes would be acceptable. If everyone in the company wears blue pin-stripped suits, it might be a good investment to purchase a blue pin-stripped suit. If you are wondering how you can learn this information, here is a helpful hint. Go by the organization during lunch or around closing and see how the employees are dressed when they come out. If everyone leaving is dressed in a blue pin-stripped suit, you will know how to dress. It is not a good idea to go by an organization on Mondays or Fridays because these are often casual dress days (O’Briant, 2000).

Here are some common tips when it comes to dressing up for an interview. Each of us may have our own style, but when it comes to dressing for the interview, it is important to ask yourself do you really want to express your own style, or do you want to get the job? You may be trying to save money when you are in college because of limited funds; however, this is one area where you need to invest in yourself. Money spent on business attire that helps you look more presentable in the interview is money well spent.
**Men:** Good business attire for men:

1. Men should wear suits that are dark in color, dark grays and navy blue being the best colors. The suit should fit well and can be either buttoned or unbuttoned when standing but never buttoned when sitting.

2. While shirt color is optional it is still best to stick to white shirts with long sleeves. The shirt should be well pressed and it is best to avoid button down collars.

3. Always wear an undershirt when dressing in a suit.

4. Avoid extremes when it comes to neckties. Silks are best and the necktie should help coordinate the shirt and suit, stay away from some of the more outrageous prints, Fred Flintstone may be a conversation piece with your children at home but it is not a good print for a business necktie.

5. Socks should match shoes and shoes should be well shined and match pants or be darker in color. For this reason it is hard to beat a pair of well shined black loafers or wingtips.

6. Jewelry needs to be very simple in nature. Leather watchstraps are better than other types and potential job candidates should always avoid gold chains and earrings (O’Briant, 2000).

**Women:** Good business attire for Women:

1. Women should wear a suit or dress in darker colors or a basic solid color, never wear a sleeveless dress. A jacket that goes along with the dress gives the individual more credibility. The hemline of the dress should be at the knees or just below. Avoid full-length dresses or the mini look. Research indicates that women who dress in dark color suits tend to come across as strong and are more
likely to get the job (Posthuma, Morgeson, & Campion, 2002). Women should never wear tight or revealing clothing.

2. Women should always wear stockings that coordinate well with their shoes. The shoes should be the same color as the dress or darker, closed toed pumps are best.

3. Jewelry needs to be simple to avoid drawing too much attention to your jewelry. Avoid wild earrings and overly excessive rings and bracelets. Limit the number of rings you wear on each hand. Unlike men women’s watchbands can be leather or different forms of metal or gold.

4. Your purse needs to match your shoes without being oversized or the clutch type; however, it is preferable to carry a briefcase instead of a purse (O’Briant, 2000).

**Proper Etiquette for Dining Interviews**

From time to time individuals could be asked to attend a dining type interview. This can be the most traumatic type interview because it adds an element to the interview that few of us are familiar with -- dining etiquette. These interviews are used to evaluate your social competence. Individuals are interviewed in a casual manner and often the topic is left up to the candidate being interviewed. You should always avoid controversial subjects like religion or politics. Since this type of interview is used to determine your social competence, one should discuss things like community, sports, or current business issues (Hagevik, 1998). Here are some rules of thumb to use when being interviewed over lunch:

1. Napkins should be placed on your lap and not tucked into your shirt. It is acceptable to follow the lead of your host; however, never follow the lead of anyone else, especially if you know better.
2. Have you found yourself wondering which piece of silverware to use when?

First, do not panic. While you might make a mistake, unless you are applying for the CEO of an organization, it will unlikely cost you the job. However, it is impressive when a candidate does things correctly. Start from the outside in and it is hard to go wrong. Example: Most meals start with a salad. The salad fork is found on the far left hand side of the plate. The only exception to this rules your dessert spoon. The dessert spoon is usually placed perpendicular to the other utensils above the plate. If you drop any silverware while eating, it is the waiter’s job to retrieve it. Ask the waiter for the needed piece silverware; do not pick up the piece you dropped.

3. To avoid using the wrong glass during a meal, it is advisable and proper to allow the waiter to pour all beverages.

4. At the completion of your meal, you should cross your silverware on your plate, which is a signal to the waiter that you are finished. Keep your napkin on your lap and place it on the table when you are ready to leave.

5. Ordering can cause some problems; however, the best rule of thumb is to look for alternatives and follow the lead of your host. If they pick an item from the menu of average price, so should you. If they pick the most expensive item on the menu, it does give you some flexibility; however, it is still advisable to be more conservative. When ordering, never order something that should be eaten using your fingers or is generally considered messy. Never order alcoholic beverages regardless of what your host does. It does not look good and you need to maintain a professional state of mind. Getting drunk during a business interview is a deal breaker.
6. Follow good table manners: do not talk with your mouth full, keep your mouth closed while chewing, keep your elbows off the table. If you leave the table for any reason during the interview, leave your napkin on your chair, not the table. Only place your napkin on the table when you are ready to leave (O’Briant, 2000).

Strategies for a Good Interview

Often candidates develop a feeling of anxiety about being interviewed because either they have not done the research needed or they are unsure of what they think the interviewer will be looking to find in a candidate. Candidates should rest easy because it is just as hard for the interviewer. A resent study published by the Human Resources Department Management Report found that the most difficult tasks facing hiring managers were determining whom to interview from the resumes they received, and the interview itself (2005). Also, the majority of individuals that are starting the interviewing process find themselves in the same position.

Candidates are often unsure because of conflicting information they receive about how to handle themselves during the interview. What influence tactics should the candidate use in the initial job interview? Should the candidate demonstrate confidence, should they try to control the interview, or should they just follow the lead of the interviewer? Studies indicate that during the initial interview, “that applicants who focused more on being pleasant, agreeable, and offering compliments to interviewers were deemed better fits to their prospective jobs (and were hired at a much higher rate) than applicants who focused more on their credentials for the job.” (Muir, 2005, p.156).

Developing Credibility From Within: An individual can develop credibility from within an organization when they know someone within the organization that they can refer to that
already has credibility within that organization (Sorenson, DeBord, & Ramirez, 2001).

Example: Bob Smith (the company Vice President) asked me to stop by and talk to you.

There are several ways to help establish credibility. They include:

1. Ask your contact to introduce you to the employer or even set the interview up for you.

2. Ask your contact to write you a letter of recommendation that you can include with your resume.

3. Ask your contact if you can use their name during the interview.

Contacts can be obtained by good networking or just doing a little research. If you call the HR Department to ask about job requirements, you should ask them if they would give you the name of a contact person. After speaking with the individual, ask him/her if you can use their name if you obtain an interview for employment. An informational interview can be helpful in developing good contacts. During an informational interview, show your resume to a manager and ask if you can use their name if a position should become open.

Show Your Qualifications: To show you are qualified, you must know the qualifications for the job and be able to demonstrate that you have them (Sorenson, DeBord, & Ramirez, 2001). Here are some ways to learn about any qualifications you may need for a job:

1. Make a list of the qualifications identified in the job listing or newspaper want ad.

   Example: Job listing as appears in paper – Job requirements include a bachelor’s degree in a business or related field from a major four-year institution, excellent computer and writing skills, and the willingness to meet with people from other companies including cold calling. The qualifications you should have noticed are: a bachelor’s degree in business from an accredited school, computer skills, writing skills, and good communications skills.
2. See if you can find any implied skills by talking to the Human Resources Department or in job listing. *Example:* Sales skills and abilities.

3. Potential employees can gather information about the position and the company from someone who works for the company and use the information to update your qualification list. *Example:* You might ask a friend that works for the organizations questions like: What computer skills are needed? What kind of writing is required within the organization?

*Does Your Background Meet The Employers Needs* (Sorenson, DeBord, & Ramirez, 2001): Again using the same job listing example shown above: Job requirements include a bachelor’s degree in a business or related field from a major four-year institution, excellent computer and writing skills, and the willingness to meet with people from other companies including cold calling.

1. Computer Skills: Candidates should stress their computer skills pointing out their ability to do things like developing their own web page and they should discuss any training they have obtained in different computer skills. To repeat that they were skilled in Microsoft Office would be of little value during an interview because that information can be found on the resume. The candidate needs to show the potential employer how they can help the company with the computer skills they have already obtained.

2. Writing Skills: Candidates should show how they used writing with their past employers. If the candidate helped develop training manuals for an organization, they should explain how that helped these organizations and how they can help the potential employers organization. If the candidate does not have a work
history they may show how they helped develop brochures for the fraternity that they belonged to in college.

3. Communication Skills: Candidate needs to stress any public speaking they have done for past employers or during college or their private life. Do not be afraid to mention things like any speaking roles you have at the church you attend. Calling the congregation to worship and making the announcements for a large congregation is a form of public speaking. If you were a class officer in college and required to make presentations to the student body, indicate this to your potential employer.

4. Sales Skills: Candidates can show how they used their sales skills as a waiter or waitress at the local Olive Garden while attending college. Just because an individual has never had a sales job does not mean they have never had to use sales skills. Remember, if a candidate thinks about it, they should be using good sales skills during the interview if they have any hopes of getting the job.

Many candidates fall short when it comes to showing how their background can help the potential employer. They fall short because they fail to understand how some things they have done in life relate to what the employer is looking for in the candidate. If you have just graduated from college with a teaching degree and are asked about any past experience teaching fourth graders, how do you answer? Too often a potential candidate will say that this would be their first teaching position. However, a candidate that talks about how they have taught fourth grade Sunday school at their local church for the past four years, has established more credibility, provided you have done so.
Parts of an Interview

Most initial interviews last about 30 to 45 minutes (Muir, 2005) and consist of four stages: the opening, questioning, selling, and closing (Welton, Morton, & Amig, 2002). Some understanding of these four parts will give candidates a better understanding of what is going on and how to handle themselves. During the opening stage of the interview, the interviewer is trying to place the interviewee at ease so they can present their best qualities. During this stage a candidate needs to maintain a positive attitude, keep good eye contact with the interviewer, and be aware of any negative body language they may be demonstrating. Always shake hands with the interviewer when entering the interviewing session. If you have prepared well for the interview, there is no need to be nervous.

The second stage is the questioning stage and is often the stage that is the most difficult for a candidate. During the questioning stage the interviewer is trying to determine if the candidate is suitable for the position for which they are applying. If you have done your research and practiced the interviewing process, the candidate should be prepared for any questions they are asked. Candidates should be aware that often questions are designed to try to get them to reveal negative experiences they have encountered. If the candidate is asked about something that is potentially negative, they should be honest and answer the question in a positive manner. During the questioning stage, the candidate should use their selling skills to present him or herself in the best manner. Also, if the candidate has any questions, they should not be afraid to ask them.

The selling stage is the period of time used by the interviewer to sell the candidate on their organization. Usually this is a strong indication that the interviewer is somewhat impressed with you as a possible employee. During this period, a candidate could be asked to return to meet other individuals and this should be considered a second interview. Often
the interviewer will talk about things like company benefits, schedules, and salary during this period if you have not already asked these questions before.

The final stage of any interview is the close. Candidates should again shake hands with the interviewer thanking them for the time they have spent with them. During the final stage of the interview, it is proper and highly recommended for a candidate to ask when they can expect to hear from the organization about possible employment.

Things That Potential Employers Are Looking for in Potential Candidates

The most important things employers are looking for in any potential candidate are the skills needed for the job and the candidate’s ability to fit in well within the organization. However, there are things that most employers seek from every candidate that seeks employment and understanding them can improve a candidate’s possible employment (Messmer, 2003).

1. An important quality that any candidate for employment can demonstrate is honesty and integrity. Many organizations today are being faced with issues that are centered on ethics. “In a recent survey commissioned by our company, 58% of chief financial officers polled said the qualities that impress them most about job candidates, aside from willingness and ability to do the job, are honesty and integrity.” (Messmer, 2003, para. 3). One of the fastest ways to take yourself out of the running for potential employment is for a potential employer to find that you have lied on your resume, cover letter, or during the interview. If a lie is uncovered, no matter how innocent, most potential employers will assume there are other inaccuracies in your information.
2. Potential employers like to see that a candidate for employment demonstrates enthusiasm. Enthusiasm is often demonstrated in the way candidates answer questions during the interview.

3. Something that goes hand and hand with enthusiasm is commitment to the profession you are trying to enter. Have you, as a candidate for employment, taken the steps needed to make you the best at your profession or have you put forth the minimum effort required. Do not be afraid to obtain some of the certificates now available in many professions. Spending a week at a conference during the summer or before applying for a job to obtain a professional certificate could be the thing that tips the scale in your favor.

4. Many college students think that additional degrees will insure employment. While an MBA is a useful degree, an MBA with a strong work history demonstrates your ability to get the job done. Do not be afraid to take a job in your career path while working on that MBA.

5. Potential employers are looking for candidates that are adaptable. If you are unwilling to move or work during non-traditional hours, your chances for employment are greatly diminished.

6. Employers want to know that the potential candidate has not reached the peak in their ability to grow and learn new things.

7. Organizations seek individuals that are team players and willing to accept organizational realities (Schuler, 2001).

Jobs and Salaries

Can you price yourself out of a job? One area often overlooked by individuals doing research before going on an interview is compensation. There is a strong chance that one of
the questions you will be asked during an interview will be about your salary. If your salary request is too high, you can price yourself out of the market; however, if you under price your value, an employer often sees you as lacking experience and are just as likely not to hire you. Potential candidates need to spend some time doing research to learn the salary ranges in their potential career path. Employers think in terms of a salary range depending upon experience and education. While education is one of the keys that can lead to a successful job search, experience is more likely to command a greater salary. There are many web sites that can provide you with salary ranges for particular job listings within the area where you live. Salaries often change from area to area across the nation.

Do not force the issue of salary too early in the interview if the question does not come up. The more information you have in any negotiation process strengthens your position. Asking about salary too early in the interview does not allow you to see how well your skills match what the employer needs. Early in the interview the employer does not know what you are worth to the organization and it is very possible that you will under sell yourself. “It is best to delay the subject of salary until later in the interview. Loaded with information about your strengths, the employer should see you as a more valuable asset than when you began to talk.” (Schuler, 2001, p. 205) The key to negotiating a good salary is to be patient.

What to Do Once the Interview Begins

Successful candidates often are the ones that are able to develop a good first impression (Welton, Morton, & Amig, 2002). You have arrived on time and you are dressed correctly, sitting in the lobby and reading a company magazine while you wait for your interview. When the interviewer calls your name, will you be ready to make a good first impression? While a bad first impression is not always a killer, it can lead to obstacles you will have to
overcome during the interview. Here are some rules of thumb that will help establish a good first impression and get the interview off on the right foot (Sorenson, DeBord, & Ramirez, 2001):

1. Introduce yourself to the interviewer, ask his name, offer a copy of your resume to the interviewer, and shake the interviewers hand. Example: While extending your hand say “Hello, I am Bill Smith and your name is?” Once the interviewer as told you his/her name ask if they would like a copy of your resume. However, if you offer a copy of your resume it would be advisable that you have one available at that time. Also, your handshake needs to be a good firm handshake but you do not have to crush the interviewer’s hand. A firm handshake displays confidence.

2. Always allow the interviewer to indicate where they want you to sit and never be seated until the interviewer asks you to be seated.

3. Keep good eye contact with the person during the interview in the opening stage as well as other stages of the interview. People that always look down or away can come across as dishonest and demonstrate a lack of self-confidence.

4. Emphasize similarities, which can be accomplished by carefully listening to the interviewer and matching your strengths to what the interviewer is looking for. Focus on common attitudes, interests, and values of the interviewer and yourself.

5. Show that you are competent by demonstrating knowledge of the employer, demonstrating knowledge of the business by using the language of the profession.

6. Answer questions from a positive point of view. Stress things you liked; not what you disliked.
7. Never speak badly about a place where you have worked or a person that you have worked for because one of the main things a potential employer is looking for in any candidate is their ability to get along with other employees.

8. Use statements that show you are a doer and not a watcher (“I enjoy playing tennis.” instead of “I like watching basketball.”).

9. Keep in mind that the interviewer is a person just like you. If you have done your homework and prepared well, you will do just fine.

Types of Interviews

Most of the time the potential candidate for employment will be informed of the style of interview they will face once they arrive for their interview. Applicants should be aware that the number of interviewers and how the interview will be conducted differs from organization to organization. The style interview that most of us are more familiar with is the one-on-one type interview; however, even elements of this more basic type interview can cause some anxiety for any potential candidate.

The location of the one-on-one interview often determines the types of questions asked and the atmosphere in which the questions are asked. From time to time a potential candidate will be asked to be interviewed over lunch, while walking throughout the facilities, in the office of the interviewer, or in a small generic office type atmosphere.

Often the interview is conducted inside the office of the interviewer; this is the easiest type interview because it allows the potential candidate to learn more about the interviewer. It is important for the potential candidate to quickly observe the things of importance to the interviewer and if the opportunity presents itself during the interview bring them up in the conversation.
Example: As you entered the interviewer’s office you noticed his diploma from the University of Duke. If the interviewer asked you about the school that you attended, you might reply, “The University of Kentucky has a very solid Business Division offering several business degree, taught by some of the best professors in their field. My undergraduate degree is in Management. I noticed that you went to Duke we have had very memorable basketball games against each other.”

Interviews conducted while walking around the facilities gives the potential candidate an opportunity to see some of the skills that will be required to do their job. The potential candidate should try to incorporate some of the skills they possess into the conversation that will be helpful to the organization. Dinning interviews are usually reserved for second or third interview but a basic understanding of dinning etiquette is helpful. Often the most difficult one-on-one interview is conducted in a more generic type sitting, because they provide the potential candidate with the least amount of information about the interview. Regardless of the location, if the potential candidate has done their homework they will do fine during the interview.

While the location of the interview changes from time to time so does the number of people who will conduct the interview. Often potential candidates are exposed to a panel or team type interview, where more than one interviewer is present to ask questions. If your potential responsibilities overlap from department to department or from manager to manager, often all parties will be present so that no potential questions go unasked. In these types of situations panel interviews are more cost effective and produce a more consistent type result (Schuler, 2001). Candidates should remember to try to keep some eye contact with each member of the panel, even if they are not participating, during these type interviews (Hagevik, 1998).
Some organizations today are conducting the initial interview over the telephone as a means of saving time and money. If you are asked to conduct a telephone interview it is important that you find a location that is private and void of any distractions. Avoid using a speaker/phone while doing other things or walking around because it indicates to the interviewer that your time is worth more than theirs and the job is unimportant to you. Try to conduct yourself in the same manner you would during a face-to-face interview (Hagevik, 1998).

Regardless of the location or number of interviewers, the potential candidate should understand that interviewing etiquette applies to all type interviews. The location or number of interviewers will not cause problems for the potential candidate that is well prepared. Potential candidates should also be aware the often the interviewer will be taking notes during the interview. Do not try to read anything into what the interview is doing regardless if you feel you answered the question well or poorly. Take notes on how you felt about your performance after the interview.

**Answering Questions in the Interview**

The ability to answer questions correctly during the interview is an art that can be learned just like any other skill. It takes practice so do not be afraid to go on interviews for jobs that you feel you might be interested in. The more you interview the better you get at answering the questions that are asked during the interview. If you handle the interview well and they offer you the job, you are not required to take the position.

“Learn the art of interviewing by accepting as many interview opportunities as you can, even with organizations you think you may not want to join.” (Schuler, 2001, p.204)
You may also learn something about the organization that makes you want to go to work for them. Once you have left the interview you should write down notes about what you feel you did well and what you would change if you had another opportunity.

The purpose of an interview is simple; it is designed to get you to reveal something about yourself that the interviewer does not already know. The interviewer is trying to find the best fit between those being interviewed and the organization the interviewer represents. You need to be open and show that you can answer all questions comfortably; however, you should never volunteer unnecessary information about yourself. Example: If you are asked why you want to leave your present position, you might answer that you are seeking an organization that will allow you to grow within the organization. Then ask what type programs their organization provides to help individuals move up in the organization. This shows that you want to take on more responsibility and does not give the interviewer a chance to ask a response question like; does your present organization have programs to help you advance?

Never be afraid to ask questions; however, do not just ask a question for the sake of asking a question. Questions should show some logic and reasoning. If you answer a question that is asked of you and respond with a question of your own, you show the interviewer that you are able to listen, answer, and seek deeper information. Again if the interviewer asks why you left your present position, you might answer that you are seeking upward mobility and then ask the interviewer if this is a newly created position or why is the position currently open. However, if you ask a question try not to come across as someone smug. You should come across as someone trying to learn as much about their organization as they are trying to learn about you.
Commonly Asked Questions During Interviews

The questions asked by the interviewer during the interview are designed to get you to revel something about yourself that is not already known, good or bad, in order to make a better decision about hiring you. The only real way to obtain the skills needed to answer these questions is by knowing what the more common type questions are and practicing answering those questions before you go on the interview.

Types of questions: While all questions are designed to try to get you to reveal information about yourself, the way they do it is often quite different. Most of the questions asked in an interview will fall within one of the three following categories (Bohlander, Snell, & Sherman, 2001):

1. Openers or Ice Breakers: These type questions are used to place the person being interviewed at ease.

   Example of an Ice Breaker: In reviewing your resume I see that you are a golfer. What is you handicap?

   How to Answer: (Remember you need to show your ability to get along with others.) My current handicap is 5; however, I play golf because it gives me a chance to relax. I find golf is an excellent way to meet and talk to others. Do you play golf? (Good you have already shown one of the qualities potential employers are looking for and you are getting the interviewer involved.)

2. Closed ended or short answer questions: These type questions are designed to restrict the candidate’s answers. The interviewer wants you to stay on topic. They can require a one-word answer or they may require a little more conversation, but the candidate is required to stay on topic.
Example Closed Question: Does working longer hours cause problems for you or your family?
How to Answer: No, I have always felt that, quality organizations like yours adequately compensate their employees for their efforts. (Notice that the answer was short but that it pointed out to the interviewer you feel this is a fine company and that you expect to be paid for the effort you put forth.)

3. Stress Questions: Stress questions are designed to make you feel uncomfortable and show that you can think on your feet.
Example Stress Question: What is your biggest weakness and what are you doing to overcome it?
How to Answer: Remember this type of question is designed to make you think on your feet. These are the most difficult type questions that can be asked during an interview; however, with a little practice even these questions become simple in nature. I often find myself cheating my family of quality time. I am the type person that when assigned a task, I like to work until that task is accomplished. In the past I have found myself missing many of my daughters school projects because I am at work. I am trying to learn to do a better job of balancing my time. (By answering in this manner you have told the interviewer your greatest weakness is that you work too hard! Why would they not hire someone that works hard?)

Examples of Questions: Following is a list of questions most commonly used during interviews and their purpose. These are questions commonly asked by interviewers in one form or another. If you learn how to answer these questions effectively your chances of doing well on an interview have greatly improved.
1. Question: What are your long-range objectives?

   Reason for the Question: To determine what you are looking for in a career path and see where you feel you will be in the future.

   Suggestions: The potential candidate needs to be careful about questions of this nature. If you see yourself opening your own business five years down the road and you are using this position to gain valuable training, it might not be advisable to tell this to the interviewer. A better answer might be “To gain valuable insight and training needed to make me the best in my profession.”

2. Question: Why did you leave your last position?

   Reason for the Question: To get you to reveal any potential problems that you may have had with other employers that might carry over to this position.

   Suggestion: It is never advisable to run down any past employers.

3. Question: Did you ever encounter unethical behavior at work or school, and what did you do (Messmer, 2003)?

   Reason for the Question: Questions of this nature are asked to learn your opinion about topics that are of interest to the employer.

   Suggestion: Potential candidates for employment should be aware of the issues that businesses are facing today, especially those that effect the organization where you seek employment.

4. Question: Tell me why you feel we should hire you?

   Reason for the Question: This question is often asked to get you to help the interviewer identify why they should consider you the candidate they choose.
Suggestions: You have just been given an excellent chance to sell yourself, take advantage of the situation. If you do not know why an employer should hire you why should they?

5. Questions: “Can you give me an example of a time when you successfully took charge of a group and helped guide it into getting a job done?” (Lazarus, 2004).
Reason for the Question: This is a classic example of a stress question but do not panic. The employer may be looking for someone with management skills and they are just trying to see if you have the skills they want to see in a candidate.
Suggestions: Think about the question asked. If the question is asked how you took charge, answer in terms of what you would do as a leader.

6. Question: Tell me about yourself.
Reason for the Question: In reality this is not even a question, and yet more potential candidates for employment answer this incorrectly. The potential employer is looking for a good fit between the organizations needs and the individual.
Suggestions: When a potential candidate is asked why they should be hired they are slow to go into a selling mode, yet when asked to talk about themselves, they are off to the races. This however is not the time to go into a selling mode. What you think are your strong points may not be what the employer is looking for in a candidate. If you have done your homework, you should bring out strengths you have that are more in alignment with what the company is looking for in a candidate.

7. Question: What is your greatest strength? / What is your greatest weakness?
Reason for the Question: To get the employee to reveal something positive or negative about themselves.
Suggestions: Here the potential employee needs to talk about strengths using examples to show how they are strengths, and try to turn any weaknesses into positives.

8. Question: What are your salary requirements?
Reason for the Question: Potential employers often ask this question to see if you understand your own worth.
Suggestions: Do the required research to determine a salary range for the career path you have chosen. If you have listened during the interview you understand what your strengths and shortcomings are to the organizations; this should help you evaluate your worth.

9. Question: What was the most difficult position you have been placed in during your past employment, and how did you handle the situation?
Reason for the Question: Often potential employers ask questions like this to determine how well you work under pressure.
Suggestions: Focus on how you solved the problem and not on who or what caused the problem. If your past employer caused the problem, discuss what the problem was and how you handled it. Do not blame your employer for the problem.

10. Question: Why do you want to work for this organization?
Reason for the Question: This question is often asked to determine if you have some understanding of their organization.
Suggestion: Now is your chance to show that you know what their strengths are and why they are in business. If in your research you discovered the organization is an industry leader in an area that interests you, discuss this with the interviewer.

11. Question: Why have you had so many jobs in the past?
Reason for the Question: To see if there is any pattern of problems that may indicate possible problems if they hired you.
Suggestions: Focus on how you are looking for opportunities to develop the skills needed in this career path. Be able to back this up with examples that can support what you indicated.

12. Question: How did you learn about this position?
Reason for the Question: This type of question is asked to help determine where they should place their efforts to find qualified candidates for employment.
Suggestions: This information is just to help the employer. Show that you are a team player and willing to help the potential employer by answering the question.

Reason for Question: Potential employers often ask this type of question to determine if the candidate is really interested in their organization.
Suggestions: Make use you have done your homework and respond with examples of how you have the ability to make a positive impact on their organization.

13. Tell me about your favorite/least favorite manager. (Messmer, 2004)
Reason for the Question: This type of question is often asked to see if the candidate is able to use diplomacy skills and is able to work well with the people above them. Are you a team player?

Suggestions: Do not be afraid to point out possible areas where you felt improvement was needed without doing it in a hostile manner. Speak as if you were a manager and you were talking to an employee, showing them areas where they need to improve. The key is to be objective, just because you may not have liked you last manager, does not mean that they lacked any strengths.

These are some of the more common types of questions asked on interviews. The more you interview the more you will come to realize that all interviewers use some version of these same questions. The better you do in preparing to answer questions like these, the better you will do on your entire interview.

Following the Interview

Once you go on an interview, write down the things you felt you did well in the interview and the things you did poorly. This should be done as soon as possible after the interview so that you will remember the interview in as much detail as possible. Polish your strengths while working on your weaknesses, and you will become good at interviewing. Remember that interviewing is an art, and once you learn how to handle yourself, getting a job is easy. Getting the job you really want may take a little more work. It may require more training or learning new skills; however, even if you fail here, you have learned some important information. Once you obtain the additional training or skills, try again. Also, once you are in the interview and you see that additional skills are needed for that dream job, do not be afraid to ask the interviewer if they have any programs that will allow you to start working for them while you gain the skills needed. Never be afraid of taking a job that will help you
develop marketable skills within your area of interest if you fail to obtain your dream job (Simanoff, 2005).

**Do Thank you Letters Work**

It is always a good idea to send some kind of thank you letter within 24 hours to the organization that interviewed you. While it is not always necessary to send a thank you letter, it is good manners and helps demonstrate good people skills employers are looking for in candidates for employment (Jennings & Hayes, 2000). The way you word this letter may be what tips the scale in your favor. Do not use the simple thank-you for taking your time to interview me approach. Your thank you letter should show the interviewer that you are a good fit for their organization by providing examples of how you are the solution to their employment needs. Talk about things you discussed in the interview so that the interviewer knows that you were very much interested in this position.

The thank you letter should be on good quality paper and in the same format as the cover letter. Address the thank you letter to the person who conducted the interview (do not forget his or her name). One way to remember the interviewers name is to ask for a business card at the completion of the interview. Also, remember to thank the interviewer at the end of the interview as well. Example: Thank you for spending some time with me today. I am very interested in your organization and will be waiting to hear from you. Could I please have one of you business cards in case I need to talk to you in the future? Some companies will not make an offer until they hear from you; failure to send a thank-you letter could keep you from getting the job (O’Briant, 2000).
Sample Thank You Letter (Always center a business letter on the center of the page.)

Sandy Brown
1452 Malibu Dr.
Memphis, TN 38111
June 12, 2005

Mr. Samuel L. Block, HR Director
Kress Manufacturing Co.
1423 States St.
Nashville, TN 37112

Dear Dr. Block, Human Resources Director:

Thank you for taking the time to discuss the possibilities of employment with Kress Manufacturing. I am very interested in the company and what it has to offer their employees.

I feel with my background in education and my ability to communicate with and adult audience that I am the individual that can best help Kress Manufacturing. Teaching students about some of the important issues that face all business organizations today has given me the background needed to help develop an affective training program for Kress Manufacturing.

I will be waiting to hear from you; however, if you need any additional information please feel free to call me at 901-755-3321.

Sincerely,

Sandy Brown
References


Retrieved on March 14, 2005, from the University of Phoenix EBSCOhost database.


Retrieved on June 3, 2005, from the University of Phoenix, ProQuest database.


Retrieved on June 10, 2005, from the University of Phoenix, ProQuest database.


Retrieved on June 3, 2005, from the University of Phoenix, ProQuest database.


Retrieved on June 2, 2005, from the University of Phoenix, ProQuest database.


Retrieved on June 12, 2005, from the University of Phoenix, ProQuest database.


