



# Strategies for Success

Surviving and  
succeeding in today's  
world of work

By Phil Blair



Manpower®



Manpower®

If you're looking for your first job, to change jobs, or are unemployed, you don't have to face these challenges alone. Valuable employment resources are available to help you during your transition. Whether you're seeking proven advice on resume writing, successful interviewing, or how to secure a position at your ideal company, you will find this guide helpful. The industry insights inside will make your transition to new employment easier and more rewarding.

As the world's leading staffing firm, Manpower has more experience than any other recruitment organization. We specialize in all aspects of developing and enhancing individuals' work lives, from initial job placement to advanced career guidance.

We created *Strategies for Success* to help you increase your chances of finding a satisfying job. Here you will find the structure for your job search that is crucial to achieving your career goals.

Our goal at Manpower is not simply to assist you in finding "just another job," but to help you achieve a fulfilling career. We're here to help you every step of the way.

Sincerely,

Phil Blair

Executive Officer, Manpower of San Diego

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## Introduction

Finding a job is an exciting challenge, one that often feels overwhelming at first. If you apply the proven strategies offered in this guide, we're confident you'll be up to the task. You can rely on our insider tips and tools to make your search easier and faster.

This handbook guides you through the critical steps of a successful job search. Look to our *Beyond Job Success* section for advice on maintaining a satisfying life-work balance. After all, finding a job is only part of your success.

Developing a balance between your personal life and professional life is key. By monitoring your wellbeing, including your financial, professional, emotional, and physical health, you will be ready to take on all of life's challenges. Your journey begins now.

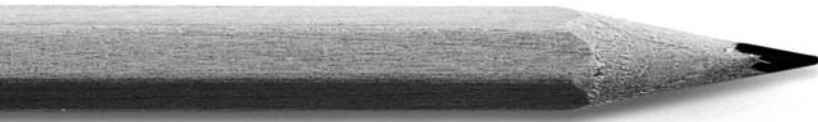


## Getting started

You now have a job – and that job is to find your next job! Thinking about your job search from this perspective helps you remain focused and achieve success faster. A job search is hard work, but ultimately very rewarding work.

It is important to develop a consistent routine that keeps you motivated and committed to your goal. Set your alarm every morning. Each day you should create a “to-do” list, which will include Internet research, phone calls, emails, letters, meetings, interviews, and other proactive job search tasks and activities. Viewing your job hunt as a full-time occupation strengthens your determination to reach your goal.

A successful job search starts with a thorough plan. Every section of Strategies for Success guides you through the essential steps to create and execute your plan. You’ll start by evaluating your current situation and transferable career skills. Next, you will discover how and where to find jobs. You will also learn how to create a standout resume, select appropriate references, write compelling cover letters, and complete thorough job applications, both online and in-person. You’ll discover how to get the most out of the Internet as an effective networking and job search tool. Finally, you’ll learn how to prepare for and excel at your next interview, as well as how to best follow up after the interview.



This publication is designed to provide accurate information in regard to the subject matter covered. If legal advice, career counseling, or other expert assistance is required, the services of a professional should be sought.

## Career transition

Change is inevitable. When we experience changes in our work situations, whether planned or sudden, we often feel distressed. Everyone endures a career transition at some point in his or her career. How you choose to cope with a career change directly impacts your future success.

The emotions you focus on during a career transition can determine your outcome. Depression, insecurity, fear, withdrawal, and other negative emotions are natural reactions to sudden career changes or job loss. On the other hand, you may experience positive feelings of excitement and rejuvenation. These are the emotions you'll want to focus on.

Remember that finding a new job opens up a world of exciting possibilities—opportunities to increase your earning power, meet new people, discover new companies, and acquire valuable skills. Embracing a positive outlook will help you take full advantage of fresh opportunities as they unfold in your direction. An upbeat, optimistic attitude makes all the difference.

So, let's take a step back, evaluate your situation, *accentuate the positive*, and create a plan for success.



## Preparation

**Take care of the basics.** Assess your financial situation. It is wise to confirm that you can make ends meet during your search. Start by analyzing your expenses to make sure you are living within your means. Next, seek closure on any lingering unresolved emotional issues. Don't hesitate to reach out to your doctor for a referral to an expert if you feel it might be helpful. Support groups and therapists provide excellent guidance in times of transition. Staying in touch with family and friends is especially important now.

**Stay focused.** A job search is persistent, challenging work. Try your best to stay on top of any and all job leads. Remind yourself that your current job is to find your next job. Success is just ahead.

**View change as opportunity.** Try not to dwell on the most challenging aspects of looking for a job. Think positively. List the job search activities you find fun and inspiring (meeting new people, showcasing your skills to potential employers, following your dreams, launching a new career, etc.). Post your "positive points" list where you can glance at it often. Maintain an optimistic attitude, and seek positive feedback and encouragement from supportive friends and family. A better career is within your reach.

**Commit yourself to taking action.** Set your goals high. Get into a positive job search state of mind. Develop a daily schedule that includes satisfying action items. Tackle your "to do" list with enthusiasm. Doing so will motivate you in the morning and give you a sense of accomplishment at night. Don't forget to reward yourself along the way.

"Successful people are simply those with success habits."

*Brian Tracy*

**Enroll in classes to expand your skills.** This is a great time to build upon your current skills or discover a new career path that has always interested you. This is also an excellent time to expand and improve upon the essential computer skills that are discussed in our helpful *Using the Internet* chapter.



**Stay active.** Physical activity is medically proven to reduce stress and improve your overall health and emotional wellness. Concentrate on the sport or activity you enjoy the most and integrate it into your schedule whenever possible. This may also be a good time to take up a new sport or hobby that has always interested you. For example, running is an excellent activity that almost anyone can do. It provides a wonderful feeling of physical accomplishment and pride that is measurable. Walking is also a great way to stretch and relax physically as well as mentally. You will be amazed at how many great ideas come to you while exercising.

## Today's job market

We live in a dynamic world of work that is constantly evolving. Rapid changes in economic, technological, social, and political situations equal lasting workplace transformations. While shifting workplace trends aren't always easy to keep up with, they could lead to your next exciting career opportunity.

Most people will face a major career change at some point in their lives. Studies show that today's typical college graduate will change professions at least three times and jobs as often as 10 times during their working career. The average job lasts approximately eighteen months. Staying current on the latest job market trends and competitive job search skills is vital to your success.

Developing an awareness of current job market trends is important. Check the Internet, newspapers, industry magazines, government employment reports, and other reliable sources often to learn about the hottest job fields. Research which companies are hiring and what skills are currently most attractive to employers.

According to the U.S. Department of Labor's Bureau of Labor Statistics, by 2014 "three out of every 10 new jobs created in the U.S. economy will be in either the healthcare/social assistance or private educational services sectors." The education and health service sector alone is slated to increase by 30 percent and will add more jobs to the U.S. economy than any other industry. Your knowledge of tomorrow's jobs, including a firm understanding of the local, national and international occupational outlook, will be an asset to you throughout your job search.



## 2004-2014

### **Fastest growing occupations**

1. Home health aides
2. Network systems analysts
3. Medical assistants
4. Physician assistants
5. Computer software engineers
6. Physical therapist assistants
7. Dental assistants
8. Personal and home care aides
9. Network administrators
10. Database administrators

### **Occupations with the greatest job growth**

1. Retail salespeople
2. Registered nurses
3. Post-secondary teachers
4. Customer service representatives
5. Janitors
6. Wait staff
7. Food preparation and serving workers
8. Home health aides
9. Nursing aides, orderlies
10. Operations managers

Source: Bureau of Labor Statistics

# Your Career Plan

To relieve uncertainty about your future, begin by developing a personalized career plan that outlines the steps you should take to achieve your career goals. Think of your “career plan” as a detailed roadmap to your future. It will help you narrow down what you want to do for a living, and, equally as important, exactly how you plan to get there.

## Steps to developing a career plan

The following steps will help you distill your job search to fields that best suit your skills and requirements. Focus on what you *want* to do and what you *have* to do in order to achieve a satisfying career.

**Know yourself.** Start thinking about skills you currently possess. Then think about rating your experience and knowledge in each area of skill. You should include skills and talents you feel you have and also what friends and family tell you you’re good at. This is no time to be modest about your strengths. Our helpful *Evaluate Yourself* section gives you the opportunity to list and rate your skills on paper. Be sure to include any and all training you have gained through part-time or full-time jobs, as well as volunteer or charity experiences.

**Identify job interests.** To determine your career interests, think about what you like to do *inside* the workplace as well as *outside* the workplace. Consider experiences, activities, and travels you have enjoyed. Evaluate what you appreciated most, what you found challenging, and what you learned from those experiences. What would you do for *free* if you could afford it? Think “outside of the box;” this is the time to dream. Brainstorm on ways you can apply your dreams to your future career. After imagining your dream job, remember that you still have valuable skills to fall back on if necessary. This is also a good time to list activities you don’t like doing and want to avoid no matter what. Examples include public speaking, cold call sales, or commission-only positions.

**Research careers available to you.** By failing to research potential new careers, you might miss out on jobs that fit your interests and abilities. What types of positions are large and small companies in your area advertising for? If you are willing to relocate, research jobs in acceptable out of town locations. What are the careers of the future in your area? What do your friends and family

do for a living? What types of career classes are offered at the local colleges and career centers? The list of positions potentially suited to your skills is endless.

**Determine how to make it happen.** Create a strong plan of action. Once you determine the career paths you want to pursue and the jobs you'd like to seek (there should be several), you'll need to decide which actions must be taken when in order to succeed.

By developing a personalized career plan, you can focus on exactly what work you want to do and how to find your perfect position. When the time comes for you to create your resume, you will have a better understanding of your skills, experiences and objectives to present to potential employers.

## **Organize your job search**

To effectively manage your job search as well as your time, it is wise to have all of your materials, resources, and information organized and at the ready.

**Supplies** – Include resume paper, stamps, a calendar, and a notebook or binder in your job search supply kit. You will need to access the Internet – either at your home, Internet café, local library, or community college. Renting a wireless Internet-ready computer is also an option. Also, keep your *Strategies for Success* copy handy during your job search to use as a quick reference.

**Paperwork** – Gather educational transcripts, letters of recommendation, reference lists, and a record of former employers, complete with accurate addresses, phone numbers, and dates of employment. Having this information at your fingertips will make phone interviews, networking, completing job applications in-person and online, as well as crafting your resume, much easier.

**Wardrobe** – Have your interviewing outfit or suit clean and ready so you can wear it with confidence at a moment’s notice. What you wear to an interview should reflect the corporate culture of the company. If possible, drop by your prospective workplace before your interview to get a “heads-up” on the dress code. Are employees wearing suits and ties or casual apparel? How are the managers and supervisors dressed?

During an interview, even a courtesy interview, try to dress one notch up from what you think the interviewer will wear. Doing so is often considered a sign of respect to the person you meet with. For interviews above the courtesy level, dress respectfully and appropriately to look like you’ll fit right in at the company. If you overdress or appear too casual, it will be obvious to the interviewer that you didn’t research the proper apparel. You want the interviewer to visualize you working at his or her company.

Avoid wearing anything too flashy or unconventional to an interview. You want potential employers to remember you, not your eccentric tie or loud scarf. Steer clear of garments that are too tight or too revealing that might show poor taste. Be sure each item of clothing you wear is ironed and pressed. Each garment must be free of stains, tears, or missing buttons. Sloppy oversights like these show a lack of preparedness and a lack of concern about appearances. During interviews hiring personnel are imagining you in front of their customers. If you would present yourself disheveled and unkempt for an important interview, potential employers will presume that this is how you would appear in front of their customers. Would they be proud to have you represent their company?

**Daily schedule** — Create a daily worksheet of job search action items to accomplish. For example, determine which new contacts you should call, email or visit each day. Also, keep a tally of how many resumes you should send to whom, as well as which follow-up actions you promised to whom when.

Begin building your schedule for the next day and future days as you finish each day’s tasks. Always keep tomorrow’s activities planned well in advance. You should never arrive at your desk and wonder what you should be doing at the start of your day. Try to allow extra time in your daily schedule for impromptu meetings and calls in case a potential employer unexpectedly requests your presence.

**Activity log** — Carefully keep track of all of your job search contacts and activities. Keep a log of contact times and dates, as well as detailed employer information, including phone numbers, Web sites, email addresses, follow-up information, action items, and more.

The time you spend organizing detailed job search information may seem tedious and time consuming. However, doing so will help you stay focused on your goals and effectively track your progress. You want to avoid the panic of asking yourself, “Who was it I said I would call when?”

## Evaluate Yourself

One of the first steps in finding a new job is performing a realistic self-assessment. Knowing what you like to do, what your strongest skills are, and what is important to you in a career will help you refine your job search. Confident awareness of the skills you “bring to the table” will also help you market yourself to potential employers. By clearly describing your skills and how they will benefit the company you’re applying to, you will position yourself as a leading candidate for the job.



## Know what you want and need

- Are you seeking full- or part-time work?
- What shifts do you prefer?
- How far are you willing to travel?
- Which work environment do you like best (office or field work, telecommuting, etc.)?
- How much do you *want* to earn?
- How much do you *have* to earn?
- What benefits do you require?
- And much more!

## Know what you like

- Do you like working with people?
- Do you prefer working on a team or independently?
- Do you like numbers and detailed processes?
- Are you creative?
- Do you like working with equipment (computers, tools, machines, vehicles, etc.)?
- Do you enjoy working with technology (the Internet, multimedia players, specialty software, etc.)?
- Are you outgoing (comfortable with public speaking and/or sales)?
- And much more!

# Top 10

## Qualities/skills Employers want

Source: National Association  
of Colleges and Employers

- Honesty/integrity
- Interpersonal skills (relates well to others)
- Strong work ethic
- Teamwork skills (works well with others)
- Analytical skills
- Motivation/initiative
- Flexibility/adaptability
- Computer skills
- Detail-oriented

## Know your skills

We all have unique skills. To stand out from other job applicants, it is essential to know how to best categorize and present your skills to potential employers.

Job skills are typically divided into **three main categories**:

**Transferable Skills** – General skills that can be applied to a wide range of jobs. Examples include problem-solving, written communication, detail-oriented, self-motivated, etc.

Your Transferable Skills are:

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**Job-Related Skills** – Skills that are specific to a job. Examples include a command of certain types of software, office machines, phone skills, computer programs, driving a forklift, etc.

Your Job-Related Skills:

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**Personal (Adaptive) Skills** – Skills that pertain to your personality. Examples include enthusiasm, punctuality, honesty, loyalty, dependability, and attitude. Provide examples of how you have applied each of these “character” skills to your career. (You will likely be asked behavioral questions during interviews in order to demonstrate your personal skills. Behavioral interview questions are addressed in an upcoming section.)



Your Personal skills:

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Capturing the right blend of skills and persuasively communicating them to potential employers is often the key to landing a new job. Remember, employers want to hire a complete package.

Earlier in this section you listed your workplace likes and dislikes, transferable career and personal skills. Now you will use the preferences you listed to organize a “preferred job duties” brainstorming session. Concentrate on the specific duties of your *ideal* job and your *acceptable* job.

Start with what you love to do— and what you would do for *free* if offered the opportunity! You will likely spend more than 30 percent of your day in the workplace, so it is essential to truly enjoy your job. If you don’t like your job, your quality of life will surely suffer, as will your employer and fellow coworkers.

Take this opportunity to list job duties you prefer to *avoid* at your new job. These might include sales, public speaking, extensive travel, and other tasks and duties you aren’t comfortable performing. Be as realistic as possible about your career likes and dislikes.

**Love to Do**

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**Like to Do**

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## Willing to Do

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## Dislike Doing

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## Creating a Target Companies List

Your next step is to create a list of companies that you're confident would benefit from your skills and satisfy your career goals. These companies can be large or small, situated nearby or in other cities, or perhaps even located abroad if travel is one of your career objectives.

"When you set a goal, you program it into the subconscious; then the subconscious takes on a power of its own and starts moving you rapidly toward its goal."

*Brian Tracy*

Log on to O\*NET-SOC online at <http://online.onetcenter.org/> for full access to the Occupational Codes database and the Standard Industrial Classification System to find jobs you might not otherwise discover. Talk with friends, family, and networking contacts about companies they work for or maintain positive business relationships with. Visit online job boards. Read the classified employment ads in local newspapers. Gather resources at your local Chamber of Commerce, and never stop listening for new information, leads, and contacts.

Next you will organize an A, B, and C list of companies you wish to pursue. Spend your job search resources and time accordingly.

Target Companies List

<b>A</b>	<b>B</b>	<b>C</b>
Love to work for	Want to work for	Will work for
_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____

Never underestimate the value of completing the goal-defining exercises in this handbook. As you consider your career wants and needs in detail, you may realize that what is most important to you isn't what you originally thought. Life-changing realizations like these can bring a whole new world of opportunities your way; take full advantage of them.

After reading this section take some time to describe your ideal job. Include as many details as possible: work environment; salary and benefits; responsibilities; the size and culture of the company; industry type; amount of travel; equipment or technology used; advancement opportunities; special projects you might play a role in; and any other features related to your ideal job. Be sure to complete this exercise for each of your possible career paths. You should consider several different careers to multiply on your options.

# What Is Your Ideal Job?

One of the most common concerns we face in our industry is the frustration of job seekers who don't know what they want to do. Often they are indecisive or conflicted about what they'd like to do for their first job, or they don't like the job they're currently doing but can't decide upon a different one. Job seekers cannot execute effective searches if they don't know what they're looking for. So, let's start at the very beginning of a successful job search—defining exactly what you want to do with your life and your career.

There are countless books and Web sites devoted to helping you define your life's purpose and find your next career. We suggest the acclaimed psychology classic *Man's Search for Meaning*, by Viktor Frankl, M.D., Ph.D. You may find it helpful to ask yourself some of the following thought-provoking questions that Frankl poses as you embark upon your job search:

- What were you doing when you last lost all track of time?
- What do people say you are very good at?
- How would you answer if a seven-year-old asked you, "What are you most proud of in your life?"
- Who is living the life you most envy?
- What job would you gladly do for free?
- How do you want to be remembered?
- What would you tell your great-grandkids is most important in your life?
- What excites you?
- What angers you?
- What can you do about both?

Use Frankl's questions as guidelines to help you process your thoughts on potential jobs as you complete the "Ideal job traits" list below. Each time you think about a new and different career, refer back to your answers to Frankl's life-purpose defining questions and see where it fits in. If a certain career or job helps you fulfill your life's purpose, go forward with gusto. If not, drop it and move on quickly!

## Ideal job traits:

Desired	Required	Avoid
_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____

Congratulations! You've now finished four important job search lists:

1. A self-evaluation of your transferable career skills and talents
2. Your workplace requirements and preferences
3. Ideal and acceptable companies that you'd like to work for
4. A detailed description of your ideal job traits

Now blend the four lists. Where they overlap is where you begin. The more intersections in your four lists, the more you know which company is right for you. You now have a solid foundation of specific jobs you'd like to seek out at specific companies. Be aware that your job search lists will constantly evolve as you acquire information along the way.



## Career research

### **[www.acinet.org](http://www.acinet.org)**

America's Career InfoNet, a component of CareerOneStop, is an online resource for making informed career decisions. The site offers occupation, industry, and state specific information for students, job seekers, workforce professionals and employers.

### **[www.bls.gov/oco](http://www.bls.gov/oco)**

The U.S. Department of Labor's Bureau of Labor Statistics Occupational Outlook Handbook is a classic A to Z format reference guide for a wide range of occupations. Data offered includes: the nature of an occupation, working conditions, training and educational requirements, career advancement, job outlook, and earnings potential.

### **[www.onetcenter.org](http://www.onetcenter.org)**

A useful government Web site that offers full access to the Occupational Codes database and the Standard Industrial Classification System. The site helps job seekers determine which occupations are best suited to their skills and requirements.

"Ability is what you're capable of doing. Motivation determines what you do.  
Attitude determines how well you do it."

*Coach Lou Holtz*

## Attitude

Your education and "hard skills" pale in comparison to the attitude you bring to the job. Listed in the box below are the top 10 skills that employers will look for when interviewing you. Very few are "hard skills" taught in books or classes. These are life skills (or "soft skills") that relate to teamwork, motivation, energy, honesty, and connecting well with others. Coming across as a positive, upbeat, capable, and confident person is vital. Project that you will be a leader on the team, one who will energize and inspire coworkers. Demonstrate these quality "soft skills" during your interview and you'll move closer to being offered the position.

Attitude is the most influential personality trait that you directly control. If you come across in your interview as a positive, capable, upbeat, and confident person who will encourage coworkers and boost workplace morale, the job will likely be yours.

Evaluate your outlook on life from time to time. If you find yourself dwelling on the negative, take some time off if you can. Read about the power of positive thinking. Escape to the gym or to a funny movie. Surround yourself with upbeat people at meetings and clubs. You'll find that a positive attitude is very contagious. Attaining a relaxed, positive frame of mind clears the way for your success.

“Choose your passion, not your pension”

*Edward James Olmos, actor*



## All about resumes

A resume is a brief written summary introducing yourself and your career accomplishments and work objectives, qualifications, skills, and experience to potential employers. Your resume should spark a hiring manager's interest in meeting you and learning more about your background and how you might benefit his or her organization.

A resume should *not* tell your personal life story. It should showcase your career history *only*. You will create a different resume for each career path you consider. Each resume will focus on the strengths you “bring to the table” for each particular career field. For example, an experienced professional writer will likely have separate resumes devoted to various writing arenas, like journalism, marketing and public relations and copywriting.

When you review each of your resumes, ask yourself, “Does this resume make me feel proud?” and “Does this resume show that I will bring value to an employer?” If you answer “yes” to both questions, then you are ready to submit your resume to potential employers.





## Resume types

**The Traditional Resume** – The traditional resume provides prospective employers with a description of your career history and the skills you are marketing. It must be highly polished and pleasing to the eye.

- Print it on quality white, standard-sized (8.5” x 11”) bond paper.
- Triple check that your resume is grammatically perfect (spell checking is crucial, as is reading the document aloud for errors).
- Use attractive fonts and styles.
- Use short, eye-catching phrases that begin with action verbs.

**The Scannable Resume** – Resumes scanned into a computer are often used by very large or technology-based companies that receive thousands of resumes per day. Often a hiring manager’s interest is based on keyword content matches. Scannable resumes should be easily “readable” by a computer.

- Avoid font embellishments like underlining, italicizing, and boldfacing.
- Use compelling keyword nouns to describe your career skills and experience.
- Include a brief keyword summary of your abilities and accomplishments to make it easier for a computer to select your resume.
- Use standard fonts and typefaces, such as Arial, Helvetica, Optima, Universe, Times New Roman, Palatino, and Courier, all sized between 10 and 14 points.
- Print it on only one side of the page only.
- When faxing, set the fax to “fine” mode.

### Tips for a successful keyword summary

- Use ample keywords to define your skills, experience, education, professional affiliations, and industry background.
- Use language and acronyms specific to your industry.
- Expand your keyword list with specifics. For example, list the exact names of software and versions you use.

**The Email Resume** – Many employers request resumes via email. Preparing your resume for email is fairly straightforward.

- Save your resume as an ASCII file. Three popular file formats are Plain text (.txt), Rich text (.rtf), Microsoft Word (.doc) and Hypertext (.html). Plain text remains the most widely used format on the Internet.

- Avoid boldface, underlines, italics, special fonts, odd type sizes, and margin settings. Also, use the spacebar instead of tab when starting a new line. Use asterisks instead of bullets.
- Each line should be no longer than 60 characters.
- Email your resume as part of the message itself, not as an attachment, unless otherwise noted. Simply cut, copy and paste your plain text resume into the body of your email message.
- Consider making your resume available in an Adobe Acrobat PDF (.pdf) file format.

## Resume formats

**The Chronological Resume** – The chronological resume is the most popular and widely accepted resume format. It is organized by job title and presents your work experience in chronological order. This type of resume is easy to read and can be quickly scanned for employment history.

Use a chronological resume when:

- Your employment history is steady and consistent, with no major gaps in employment.
- You haven't changed career tracks recently.
- Your course of employment includes positions that progressively increased in responsibility and scope.
- Your past position titles are impressive and/or you were recently employed at a well-known company.
- Your major career accomplishments were achieved in your most recent positions.

**The Functional Resume** – The functional resume highlights your career skills, accomplishments, and qualifications at the top of your resume, regardless of when they occurred in your career. Your employment history is not the focus and is accordingly positioned near the bottom of your resume.

Consider using a functional resume when:

- You want to emphasize skills and accomplishments outside of your most recent position.

- You were out of the job market for an extended period of time and are reentering.
- You have held a variety of unrelated jobs.
- You are switching careers.

**The Combination Resume** – The combination format blends and amplifies the benefits of both chronological and functional resume formats. By beginning with a summary (functional format) of your most impressive qualifications, skills, and accomplishments, combination style resumes immediately place the emphasis where you want it. An employment history section (chronological format) follows your summary of career strengths.



Consider using a combination resume when:

- Your employment history is steady and progressive.
- You are applying for a position for which the chronological resume is expected but you also want to highlight qualifications from earlier positions.
- You need a fast, effective means to match your skills to the job requirements.

**Multiple Resumes** – You will need to “massage” your resume for each position that you are serious about applying for. It is important to highlight your strengths for each job. This process begins with individually tailored cover letters and resumes. Each resume should target industries, positions or companies. Be sure to highlight the training and experience you have that is most applicable to each position.

For example, if the position is a marketing job that requires experience in finance, a hiring manager shouldn’t have to search your resume for your finance experience. Instead, rewrite your resume specifically to that job. Your new resume will pull both your marketing and finance experience to the surface. An interviewer should never have to search for pertinent education, experience or training that you in fact possess but did not make obvious on your resume. This is an exercise you should perform for every position you are serious about attaining.

## Basic resume sections

### Identifying information

- Place your first and last name, city (your home address is not necessary), applicable phone numbers, and email address at the top of each page. Use the name you prefer to be addressed by, so the interviewer doesn’t have to guess. An example might look like Robert “Bob” Jones.
- Be sure to include phone numbers where you can definitely be reached. If you list your cell phone number, always answer professionally. If you list your home phone number, use reliable voice mail or a functioning answering machine with a professional sounding message including your full name. This is not the time for a playful or child’s voice-outgoing message. If necessary, prep your family members or roommate(s) to take a detailed message for you so you can reply to potential employers in a professional, timely manner.

### Objective or summary

- A specific, straightforward objective focuses your resume and clearly communicates the position and career direction you seek.
- Be broad enough to merit consideration for related jobs.

- Define your areas of interest (what types of positions you wish to gain and which skills you hope to use).
- Identify the type, size, and scope of the organization you want to work for.
- Describe the level of position you seek (entry, supervisory, etc).
- Keep your objective reasonable and honest. Unrealistic objectives can create obstacles to employment.
- If you are applying for a specific job, rewrite your objective to very closely match the job. (This is where you can lead the reviewer into seeing that you are a natural match for the position.)

An optional resume section can be titled Relevant Experience. This section describes your relevant but likely unpaid experience. Examples include internships, volunteer work, self-improvement, and other activities that show personal initiative. A Relevant Experience section is especially important if you are entering the workforce after a long absence. Name organizations and committees where you demonstrated your skills in motivating volunteers.

## Experience

- Decide on the resume format you will use for each position — chronological, functional, or combination.
- Include the company names and locations (city and state) of former employers, a brief description of the organization, dates of employment, position title, and key accomplishments.
- Record past work experiences in terms of transferable skills that will highlight you as a match for the position.
- Begin each descriptive phrase with an action verb, e.g. “managed,” “achieved,” “developed,” etc.
- Make certain that your work history section is relevant to your objective.
- Include key accomplishments and make them as quantifiable as possible, for example, “generated more than \$1,000,000 in sales,” “reduced overhead by 15 percent,” etc.

## Education

- List educational achievements and degrees in reverse chronological order. If you have a bachelor's degree, list only the bachelor's degree. It is unnecessary to list a high school diploma or G.E.D.
- Provide the complete name and location of relevant academic institutions. Include the subject(s) you majored in.
- Note honorary societies, academic honors, and graduation with distinction (Golden Key National Honor Society, graduating Cum Laude, Dean's List, etc.)
- Do not list grade point averages unless this is your first job out of school.
- Relevant coursework may be included for recent graduates. For example, someone seeking employment as an entry-level accountant might list applicable business courses, like economics and bookkeeping, classes, etc.
- Related research, academic publications, and thesis work should be listed for applicants possessing a master's degree and/or a Ph.D.

## Military background-

If you have served in the military, be sure to use the experience to your advantage. San Diego, for example, is a well-known military town where experience in any branch of the Armed Forces is highly regarded.

- List your branch of service (Navy, Army, Coast Guard, Marines, Air Force, etc.)
- Service start date and end date
- Highest rank and rate achieved
- Additional education and/or vocational training

## Activities and Accomplishments

- Reveal how you spend your free time, and that you are a well-rounded person who is interesting to meet.
- Provide positive insight into your involvement with motivated groups and individuals.
- Include sports, volunteer opportunities, hobbies, activities, and organizational memberships. Especially emphasize activities where you excelled at

leadership roles. These will lend to potential employers envisioning you as a leader. You want to appear interesting, not quirky. For example, note that you were captain of the tennis team, not that your hobby is knife throwing!

Know when to take a break. Indulging in a even a little rest and relaxation creates an ideal environment for calming your mind, strengthening your body, and restoring your soul. The intelligent use of free time, in large measure, is the key to happy and worthwhile living.



# Resume worksheet

## Identifying Information

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

City, State, Zip \_\_\_\_\_

(Area Code) Home Phone \_\_\_\_\_

(Area Code) Cell Phone \_\_\_\_\_

Email Address \_\_\_\_\_

Fax \_\_\_\_\_

## Objective

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

## Experience/Career Summary

Company Name \_\_\_\_\_

City, State \_\_\_\_\_

Dates Employed \_\_\_\_\_

Name of Supervisor \_\_\_\_\_

Brief Description of Company \_\_\_\_\_

Title \_\_\_\_\_

Brief Description of Your Responsibilities \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_



(Key Accomplishment) \_\_\_\_\_

(Key Accomplishment) \_\_\_\_\_

Company Name \_\_\_\_\_

City, State \_\_\_\_\_

Dates Employed \_\_\_\_\_

Name of Supervisor \_\_\_\_\_

Brief Description of Company \_\_\_\_\_

Title \_\_\_\_\_

Brief Description of Your Responsibilities \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

(Key Accomplishment) \_\_\_\_\_

(Key Accomplishment) \_\_\_\_\_

**Education** (place before experience for recent graduates only)

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

**Activities and Accomplishments** (what makes you interesting)

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

**Keywords** (optional)

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

# Action verbs

Fortify your traditional resume with powerful verbs that convey strong action. Potent descriptive words are particularly useful within the traditional resume format.

Achieved	Enforced	Investigated	Reported
Administered	Established	Launched	Resolved
Advised	Evaluated	Maintained	Resorted
Analyzed	Executed	Managed	Revitalized
Appointed	Expanded	Minimized	Saved
Assessed	Forecast	Negotiated	Simplified
Audited	Formed	Obtained	Sold
Centralized	Formulated	Operated	Solved
Certified	Generated	Organized	Staffed
Converted	Guided	Planned	Standardized
Created	Hired	Presented	Studied
Decentralized	Implemented	Processed	Supervised
Designed	Improved	Produced	Surveyed
Determined	Increased	Published	Tested
Developed	Initiated	Purchased	Traded
Directed	Inspected	Recruited	Trained
Documented	Instructed	Reduced	Upgraded
Effected	Interpreted	Referred	Verified
Eliminated	Interviewed	Regulated	Won
Employed	Introduced	Reorganized	Wrote

## Keywords

Keyword nouns increase the likelihood of your resume being selected electronically. When employers search scanned and email resume databases, they look for specific keywords that pertain to jobs they need to fill. For example, an AT&T hiring manager might perform a keyword search for nouns and terms like “customer service,” “Chicago,” and “telecommunications.”

Use keywords when you think potential employers are scanning for descriptive words that are relevant to your career experience but might not otherwise appear on your resume. For example, if you worked at a call center, you may want to include “telemarketing” or “customer service center” as keywords on your resume. Add any pertinent keywords to the bottom of your resume.

Accounting Supervisor	Insurance	Programming
Advertising	Inventory	Publicity
Asia	Law Enforcement	Purchasing Manager
Bachelor of Arts /B.A.	Legal	Public Relations
Bachelor of Science / B.S.	Magazine	Quality Assurance
Bank Teller	Management	PhotoShop
Bookkeeping	Manufacturing	Systems Analyst
Cash Management	Marketing	Research
Computer Technology	Master’s Degree	Sales
Dean’s List	Material Management	Senior Editor
Drafting	Mathematics	Soldering
Editorial Experience	Negotiator	Software Engineer
\$85 Million in Sales	Nonprofit	Spreadsheet
Electrical	Circuits Order Entry	Statistics
Feature Writer	Operations	Teaching Certification
Field Sales	OSHA Standards	Technical Writing
Financial Training	Phones	3.6 GPA
Forecasting	Planning	Treasurer
Fortune 500	Product Development	University of Arizona
Industrial Machinery	Production	Word Processing

## Resume tips

- Keep your resume simple, honest and straightforward.
- Make it no longer than two pages.
- Showcase your job accomplishments and results.
- Proofread for flawless spelling and grammar.
- Quantify your experience and achievements (list measurable successes whenever possible).
- Sell yourself (but don't exaggerate).
- Eliminate any unaccounted for gaps in time.
- Avoid flashy artwork or pictures (unless you are an artist, model or actor).
- Use standard 8.5" by 11" quality, white paper.
- Do not list personal references.
- Adhere to standard resume sections.
- Use bullets or asterisks for lists.
- Insert targeted keywords.
- Avoid complete paragraphs.
- Avoid confusing abbreviations.
- Avoid fancy fonts.



# Sample resume: functional

## **Pat M. Sample**

San Diego, CA 92101  
Home (619) 999-1628  
patsample@jobhunt.com

### **OBJECTIVE**

To start a career with GHE Office Supplies as assistant manager of the customer service department.

### **SALES**

- Up-sold for an inbound telemarketer of a 2,000-item product line.
- Accrued the highest "Power Points" on work team for perfect attendance and successful up-selling. Earned ABC Performance Award for accomplishment.
- Set record for acquiring 100 new customers in August 2003.

### **CUSTOMER SERVICE**

- Recognized by management for ability to handle difficult customers.
- Simplified scheduling process for a 500-employee call center.
- Cross-trained in customer relations, billing, and new accounts.
- Successfully tested new call center tracking software.

### **WORK HISTORY**

June 2004 – March 2007	ABC Office Supplies Customer Service Representative
May 2001 – April 2002	XYZ Phone Company Call Center Representative Human Resources Representative

### **EDUCATION**

Bachelor of Business Administration, Spanish Minor May 2001  
San Diego State University  
Dean's List, Six Semesters

### **ACTIVITIES**

United Way Volunteer, Spring 2005, 2006  
ABC Company Performance Award, September 2005

### **COMPUTER KNOWLEDGE**

Microsoft Word, PowerPoint, Excel, Internet Explorer, Outlook, Lotus Notes, Access

### **KEYWORDS**

Marketing, Microsoft Word, PowerPoint, Bachelor of Business Administration, Spanish, Telecommunications, Customer Service, Temporary Services, Personnel, Human Resources, Sales.

References available upon request

# Sample resume: chronological

## **Pat M. Sample**

San Diego, CA 92101  
Home (619) 999-1628  
patsample@jobhunt.com

**OBJECTIVE** To obtain a customer service position in a Fortune 500 telecommunications company in the San Diego area.

**STRENGTHS** Demonstrated proficiency in a variety of computer software programs with a background in the office supply and telecommunication industries.

### **WORK HISTORY**

#### **ABC Office Supplies**

**June 2003 - March 2006**

Largest direct marketer of office supplies in the United States.

##### **Customer Service Representative**

- Inbound telemarketing, up-selling and order entry for a 3,000-item product line.
- Accrued the highest "Power Points" on work team for perfect attendance and successful up-selling. Earned ABC Performance Award for accomplishment.
- Recognized by management for ability to handle difficult customers.
- Simplified scheduling process for a 500-employee call center.
- Set record for acquiring 100 new customers in August 2003.

#### **XYZ Phone Company**

**May 2000- June 2003**

The Midwest's leader in telecommunications services.

##### **Call Center Representative**

- Performed data entry, set up new customer accounts and fielded customer inquiries.
- Answered incoming 800-customer service line. Performed a variety of related administrative duties.
- Cross-trained in customer relations, billing and new accounts.
- Successfully tested new call center tracking software.

### **EDUCATION**

#### **Bachelor of Business Administration, Spanish Minor**

**May 2000**

Ohio State University

Dean's List, Six Semesters

Golden Key National Honor Society

### **ACTIVITIES & ACCOMPLISHMENTS**

United Way Volunteer, Spring 2006

ABC Company Performance Award, September 2000

References available upon request

# Sample resume: combination

## **Pat M. Sample**

San Diego, CA 92101  
Home (619) 999-1628  
patsample@jobhunt.com

**OBJECTIVE** To obtain a customer service position in a Fortune 500 telecommunications company in the San Diego area.

**STRENGTHS** Demonstrated proficiency in a variety of computer software programs with a background in the office supply and telecommunication industries.

### **SALES**

- Up-sold for an inbound telemarketer of a 2,000-item product line
- Accrued the highest "Power Points" on work team for perfect attendance and successful up-selling. Earned ABC Performance Award for accomplishment.
- Set record for acquiring 100 new customers in August 2003.

### **CUSTOMER SERVICE**

- Recognized by management for ability to handle difficult customers.
- Simplified scheduling process for a 500-employee call center.
- Successfully tested new call center tracking software.

### **WORK HISTORY**

#### **ABC Office Supplies**

**June 2003 - March 2006**

Largest direct marketer of office supplies in the United States.

#### **Customer Service Representative**

- Inbound telemarketing, up-selling and order entry for a 3,000-item product line.
- Accrued the highest "Power Points" on work team for perfect attendance and successful up-selling. Earned ABC performance Award for accomplishment.
- Recognized by management for ability to handle difficult customers.
- Simplified scheduling process for a 500-employee call center.
- Set record for acquiring 100 new customers in August 2003.

#### **XYZ Phone Company**

**May 2000- June 2003**

The Midwest's leader in telecommunications services.

#### **Call Center Representative**

- Performed data entry, set up new customer accounts Answered incoming 800-customer service line.
- Performed a variety of related administrative duties.
- Cross-trained in customer relations, billing and new accounts.
- Successfully tested new call center tracking software.

### **EDUCATION**

#### **Bachelor of Business Administration, Spanish Minor**

**May 2000**

Ohio State University

Dean's List, Six Semesters

### **COMPUTER KNOWLEDGE**

Microsoft Word, PowerPoint, Excel, Internet Explorer, Outlook, Lotus Notes,

### **ACTIVITIES & ACCOMPLISHMENTS**

United Way Volunteer, Spring 2006

ABC Company Performance Award, September 2000

## Reference tips

Selecting references is a critical component of job search success; take time to choose them wisely. In this section I share suggestions on identifying a good reference and proper reference etiquette. I will also review questions employers ask references, and how to draft a reference page for potential employers.

### Selecting your references

Strive for a balanced group of references, including recent or current coworkers, long-time professional contacts, and colleagues. Choose reliable references that know you well and can speak knowledgeably about your professional and personal attributes. These should be individuals who respect you and want you to be successful. It is *not* appropriate to list family or friends as references.

### Reference etiquette

1. If you haven't spoken to a reference in a while, a visit, call, or email him or her. This is your chance to update them on your career and demonstrate that you have grown professionally.
2. Provide your references with as many details as possible about your current job search. Supply them with a copy of your most recent resume, explain why you left or are leaving your current position, and tell them why you are requesting to use them as a reference. You may want to discuss a specific skill you would like them to share while speaking with potential employers.
3. Do not list references on your resume. Provide them only upon request.
4. Be sure to inform your references every time you supply a potential employer with their contact information. Keep them updated on your job search progress. Ask your references to contact you each time a potential employer contacts them.
5. When your job search is complete, send a letter, card or email to your references to thank them for their assistance and good recommendation.



## Reference questions

Hiring managers use professional references to confirm your workplace practices and responsibilities. References help employers' determine whether a candidate will fit into their company's business and corporate culture.

Many large companies are concerned about potential litigation and will accordingly remain reserved when providing information, especially if the individual in question was a former employee. Often references' responses to employers' questions pertain only to a former worker's length of employment and whether or not he or she would be considered for rehire. If you feel a reference might state to a hiring manager that he or she would *not* rehire you, you should provide your potential employer with an explanation in advance. (References' response limitations are not usually a reflection upon the individual they are discussing with potential employers. They are simply a reality of employment law.)

Consider offering your references a copy of the questions below in order to help them prepare for a conversation with your potential employer.

Here are some typical questions employers ask references:

- Please describe the applicant's professional style.
- What was the applicant's most significant contribution to your organization?
- Why did the applicant leave your company?
- What are the applicant's strengths? Weaknesses?
- What type of management style best fits the applicant's personality?
- How would you describe the applicant's relationship with his or her office peers? Supervisors? While at your firm?
- Given the described potential position at our organization, would you hire/rehire the applicant for the job? If not, why?

## Your reference list

Print your reference sheet on paper that matches your resume. Provide your name, phone number, and email address at the top of the page in the same format and typeface as your resume. Include the following information for each reference:

- Reference's Full Name
- Position/Title
- Company Name (and what the company does)
- Company Address
- Office Phone
- Home or Cell Phone - Only if explicitly approved by the reference!
- Relationship to you (former supervisor, etc.)

The statement "References provided upon request" should appear at the bottom of your resume. It is considerate *not* to share your references' contact information *every* time you submit your resume. Be sensitive about when and how often you will call upon them.

When a potential employer requests your references, it is usually a sign that they are sincerely considering hiring you; it puts you one step closer to attaining the job. Once you know that your references will soon be contacted, quickly call them to let them know. In addition to giving your references a "heads-up" on what to expect and with whom they will talk, brief them on why you are interested in this particular job. Be sure to detail any points you would like them to bring up during the reference call. Take the opportunity to thank them as well.

## Finding jobs:

Even in tough job markets, there are still plenty of job openings, those made public and those only revealed among top management. It just takes a little extra work —often a clever blend of resourcefulness and persistence— to find them. Here are some pointers on where to best focus your job search in order to optimize your success:

**Apply directly to an employer.** Select employers that interest you and gather their addresses, phone numbers, and Web sites. Consider visiting the company with resume in hand or directly call the organization. If you don't have a contact name, ask to speak to a hiring manager or human resources representative.

**Network.** Ask every friend, relative, teacher, former coworker, and casual acquaintance possible about job openings they know about. Tell everyone you know or meet that you are job hunting. The more people you enlist in your job

search, the better your chances for success. Your “Christmas card” list is an obvious place to start. Don’t be afraid to ask for help — someday those who’ve helped you might ask for *your* help! You will find that people are happy to help. Don’t turn them down — you never know whom your next great lead will come from. (The next chapter contains an entire section on the art of successful networking.)

**Search the Internet.** The Internet offers more up-to-date job listings and job-related information than any other source. As a result, the competition for positions advertised online is staggering. With human resources departments everywhere being inundated with resumes submitted on the Internet, it is critical to make yours stand out from the crowd. Posting your resume on the Internet for hiring managers to see is as essential as looking for jobs online. If your resume is compelling enough, recruiters and hiring managers will be inspired to contact you to arrange an interview.

**Consider smaller companies.** Most new jobs come from thousands of small, growing companies, usually with fewer than 100 employees. Although larger employers are often more visible and aggressive in recruiting employees, smaller companies usually offer similar positions. Focus on small companies in your community that are expanding and projecting high growth. They are often easier to approach than large corporations.

**Explore temporary work.** Working as a temporary employee provides valuable experience, contacts, and references. Temporary jobs often develop into permanent opportunities. At Manpower, our customers hire 42 percent of our temporary associates. Many staffing companies offer free training to increase your career skills. Manpower’s Training and Development Center (TDC) ([www.manpowerfdc.com](http://www.manpowerfdc.com)) offers online career development and education to you at no cost.

**Executive Search, Headhunters & Recruiters.** Consider working with a professional recruiter if you have a specialized skill set or an advanced level of career experience. Recruiters specialize in specific industries and skill clusters, including finance, information technology, healthcare, technical writing, and engineering. If a recruiter contacts you while you are employed, save his or her contact information. You never know when you may need it. If a recruiter

thought highly enough of you to reach out to you, they would be pleased to hear from you in the future. Teaming up with the right recruiter can significantly strengthen your career network.

**Government sources.** Federal and state government resources offer job search assistance that is easily available to you at little or no cost. Stop by your local career center to take advantage of their excellent services. In San Diego, you can visit one of the San Diego Workforce Partnership's nine One-Stop Career Centers.

**Check the newspaper.** Newspaper classified ads and business sections are obvious avenues for job seekers. While they consistently expose job applicants to current local career openings, only approximately 25 percent of new jobs are acquired through newspaper ads. Still, classified employment ads are excellent fodder for job search ideas.



# Networking

Networking is a popular term for making valuable connections and contacts. As I mentioned earlier, it is a personal skill that involves reaching out to friends, friends of friends, family members, and colleagues. You can use networking to discuss new directions; generate career options; problem solve, assess transferable skills; find job leads; sharpen your resume; rehearse for interviews; gain access to role models and mentors; and receive emotional support. The ultimate goal of networking is to line up interviews for potential jobs, including “courtesy interviews” intended only for information and job tip gathering.

The people you know, and the people your networking contacts know, are your biggest assets in securing employment. Alert all appropriate contacts in your network as soon as you launch your job search. It is recommended that you *do not* announce to your current employer and/or coworkers that you’re looking for a job elsewhere. There is no advantage to doing so and could lead to an early release from your current job.

Studies show that more than 60 percent of job seekers secure jobs through networking. The list below offers several examples of possible networking contacts. As you widen your contact search, your network will expand and improve through meetings, job fairs, placement agencies, classified ads, industry publications, and newsletters, as well as listings on the Internet and TV.

## Create a contact list

Write a list (known in the industry as your “Christmas card” list) of 50-plus individuals whom you can count on for networking purposes. Include some or all of the following individuals:

- Neighbors – current and former
- Employers – current and former
- Coworkers – current and former
- Friends
- Family members
- Teachers – including high school and college professors and advisors
- Members and clergy from your church or religious institution

- College alumni – consider contacting your college career center for leads, no matter how long ago you graduated
- Social acquaintances, including exercise partners and sports teammates
- Salespeople you've done business with
- Fellow volunteers you know from charity work
- Classmates – from any grade level
- Politicians, including local city council and school board members
- Doctors, dentists, lawyers, accountants
- Business club members and executives

## Prioritize each contact

After you've compiled a list of potential networking contacts, prioritize them while keeping the attributes of a good contact in mind:

- Likes you and/or has a reason to help you (also known as a personal or professional investment)
- Knows a wide range of people who are “plugged in,” has important connections in the careers you are exploring
- Is savvy about the current local job market and future employment trends
- Is successful and/or a leader in his or her career

## Network plan

Research your chosen career path on the Internet, in bookstores and at the library. Keep an open mind. You never know where you'll meet someone who might be your next influential networking contact, so always be alert!

### Tips for activating your network:

- Tap into a network of successful individuals with whom you can discuss their careers.
- Develop a list of companies you would like an introduction to via contacts who currently work there.
- Ask friends and family if they know anyone who works in your desired career field. Request relevant contact information accordingly.
- Create a documentation system or database for tracking all contact names and networking activities (spoke to contact on this date/time, discussed this topic, this was the outcome, these are the resulting action items, file all email exchanges, etc.).

- Prepare a persuasive, 30-second personal pitch, known in the employment industry as your “elevator speech” (coined for the time it typically takes to ride an elevator). Your pitch should be your answer to the question “What kind of work are you looking for and how can you benefit this company?”
- Maintain a professional level of appropriateness while networking — know whom to ask for what when.

### Elevator speech

“I’m looking for a position with a small to medium sized high-tech manufacturing firm where I can use my five years of experience in sales management to contribute to the advancement of its manufacturing, sales and public relations goals.”

### The networking call

Call your highest priority networking contacts first, and then work your way down the list. Be ready to deliver a compelling 30-second summary of your purpose for calling. Prepare another 30-second summary (elevator speech) of exactly what type of position you are seeking. Speak clearly and confidently. A direct, goal-oriented approach is appropriate for calls to potential employers as well as to friends and acquaintances on your networking list. The key to a successful networking call is to sincerely *ask for job search help*.

Be careful not to directly ask for a job, only seek out a future employment referral or the name of hiring managers or other contacts regarding available job openings.

Practice your 30-second pitch several times, until you are completely comfortable saying it with ease and confidence. Refine your personal pitch by using an audio or video recording device and playing it back. Listen for persuasiveness, content and clarity. Be sure not to speak too quickly and avoid slang.

**Sample call** “Hello, Mr. Smith. My name is Joe Jones. I got your name from my uncle, John White, who works with you at Basic Corporation. He told me that Basic might benefit from my skills as a database programmer. My background includes three years with Green and Gold Limited. Would you have a few minutes for me to come in and talk with you about Basic or any other firms that might offer positions that could use my skills and background?”

## Expand your network

**Structured events and forums** specifically tailored for networking opportunities and contact exchanges include:

- Job fairs
- Career-specific networking clubs
- Civic conventions
- Professional association meetings
- Trade shows
- Internet user groups and online professional bulletin boards
- Chamber of Commerce and staffing agency-sponsored “pink-slip” gatherings
- Scheduled one-on-one meetings

**Unstructured settings** where you can turn on your networking skills include: restaurants and bars; continuing education classes; parties and other social occasions; on the bus; train or airplane; Internet chat rooms; sporting events; volunteer activities; and fundraisers.

## Networking tips

- Find contacts that sincerely want to help you.
- Stay in touch. Keep interested contacts aware of your job search progress until you can inform them of your new position.
- Remember to thank your contacts for information and leads. Send a handwritten thank you note or email within 24 hours of your last meeting or conversation.
- Be clear about what you are requesting of your networking contacts.
- Be prepared to network anytime, anywhere. Stock up on business cards and resumes and keep them close at hand.
- Create general business cards that serve as your “calling card.” You don’t need to list a job title or company name on them, just your basic contact information.
- Effective networking is not a one-shot deal. Nurture long-term reciprocity by staying in touch.
- Build relationships with people experienced in the career you’re pursuing. Enlist them as sounding boards for your ideas and career goals.



- Volunteer opportunities, part-time employment, and temporary work are alternate avenues for networking for professional resources and job leads.

### **The Power of Professional Associations**

Professional associations offer a wealth of avid networkers. Request meeting invites to career-relevant professional associations. Keep your eyes open for potential contacts and employment opportunities. These meetings are often high energy and inspiring. A positive professional atmosphere can be infectious, and will keep you energized and motivated.

Career associations offer behind-the-scene insights into to the “hidden job market” and the world of viable networking. Many professional association Web sites post membership directories, upcoming meetings, industry news and job trends, as well as hard to find targeted resource libraries. To connect with associations related to your industry, visit the American Society of Association Executives at [www.asaecenter.org](http://www.asaecenter.org).

Exciting, face-to-face networking happens all around us. In today’s tech-heavy world, it’s easy to get stuck in the office behind a computer monitor. Sometimes being too “plugged in” can unplug you from connecting in-person with powerful people who could positively influence your life and career. So take a deep breath, enter the world of networking and “just do it!”

## **Job fairs**

Attending a job fair is a great opportunity to gain information about a variety of jobs and companies. Job fairs are valuable one-stop career shops where you can forge networking contacts, discover internships, and find seasonal and permanent work. Here are some valuable tips on how to get the most out of job fairs:

### **Locating job fairs**

Check your local Manpower office, the Internet, newspapers, college career centers, and employment agencies for dates, times, and locations of upcoming job fairs. Select job fairs that feature local companies and positions that interest you.

## Prepare for the job fair

Begin by identifying your top career strengths as described on your resume (and in the lists you completed earlier in this book). Be prepared to confidently discuss your career achievements with potential employers and job fair representatives. Before attending a job fair practice introducing yourself, delivering your “elevator speech,” describing your professional strengths, and your ideal job. This is when friends and family who are good listeners come in very handy.

Dress exactly as you would for an interview. Bring several resumes. You will likely need more than you planned for. Also take along a notepad, pen, and, of course, your appointment book in case a prospective employer wants to arrange a meeting or an interview. Consider including a general cover letter with your resume that clearly identifies your career objectives and qualifications. Strong, succinct cover letters make a positive impression. Few job fair attendees take the time and effort to write and distribute cover letters. Consider carrying a small handheld portfolio instead of a bulky briefcase so you can easily shake hands with potential employers, recruiters, and networking contacts.

If you know which companies will be represented at a job fair, research the company on the Internet before the event. You will be better prepared to ask intelligent, informed questions, as well as converse with representatives about their company’s recent accomplishments and future plans. You will be aware of recently posted job openings and discuss them with potential employers in-person. If you’re pinched for time, prioritize which companies you’d like to meet with the most.

## At the job fair

View your job fair interaction with potential employers as seriously as you would a job interview. Treat each job fair meeting as if you were being interviewed on the spot. On-site job fair interviews are common and should be taken seriously. Pay attention to the nonverbal cues of the company representatives working the booths. If an interviewer looks over your shoulder or at his or her watch, it's probably time to move on.

Job fairs are a prime opportunity for gathering information. They are a forum for discovering which positions are open where and the qualifications of the talent being hired. Don't be shy about requesting applications, business cards, and lists of current job openings.

## Follow-up

Following-up with recruiters and new contacts after a job fair is more than an afterthought. How and when you follow up leaves as much of a lasting impression on potential employers as your on-site interview. The day after a job fair, send a cover letter expressing your interest, a fresh resume and a personalized thank you note to each contact with whom you developed a mutual interest. Remind him or her of your recent job fair meeting and relevant career qualifications. If you committed to call the employer, do so, but leave only one or two messages. Be prepared to wait for a response.



## **Internet job searching**

Companies increasingly rely on the Internet to recruit talent in today's competitive labor market. Supplementing your job search with keyword Internet employment searches and online resume posting services greatly increases the odds that your resume will be matched to a compatible employer.

The Internet offers a wealth of constantly updated information and resources for job seekers. You can explore job search services online, including salary comparison sites, resume and cover letter writing clinics, relocation information, cost-of-living calculators, the latest interview trends, and networking exchanges. With the click of a mouse, you can sift through massive job databases to find positions that best match your skill set and requirements. You can post your resume to sites that employers regularly peruse and chat with fellow job seekers.

## **Computer/Technical literacy**

Companies are growing faster than ever due to continuing advances in information technology. As a result, nearly all jobs today require some level of computer literacy. Employees are expected to possess a basic understanding of computer hardware and software, especially word processing, spreadsheets, and email. Online time keeping and accounting, raw HTML or HTML editing application proficiency, textual Web site content creation and management, Internet research, and online meeting scheduling are only a few of the many computer skills in high demand.

Job seekers should acquire as many computer skills as possible to be competitive in today's job market. Consider contacting computer education resources like your neighborhood community college or career center to bring your computer skills up to date.

Additional computer skills often required include knowing how to:

- Use both Mac and Windows operating systems
- Establish an email account
- Attach files (photos, documents, videos, etc.) to emails
- Use basic Web browser functions (bookmarks, refresh, history, etc.)

- Scan/upload photos, documents, and other file types for online posting
- Use search engines
- Download software

## **Benefits of Internet job searching**

- Access to infinite job opportunities. There are thousands of job sites to choose from, including those tailored to specific professions, job requirements, and locations.
- Day or night availability – 24/7. The Internet allows you to job search whenever and wherever your schedule allows.
- Using the Internet as a job search tool demonstrates your ability to effectively use a computer and navigate the Web to potential employers.

## **Searching job databases and posting your resume**

The sheer volume of Internet career and job search sites is a major benefit to job seekers. Many Web sites feature job databases stocked with up-to-the-minute employment opportunities. Applicants respond directly to job openings by emailing potential employers, posting digital versions of their resumes online, or by completing online applications.

Posting your resume on the Internet is like placing a high-visibility advertisement that says you're looking for a job. Companies and recruiters search resume databases by the hour. Hiring managers use keywords to locate ideal candidates based on their experience in a particular industry, education level, job performance or skill set. When you post a resume online, the number of companies that access it increases exponentially, as well as your odds of being correctly matched with employers' needs.

## Concerning Resume Confidentiality

If you are unfamiliar with the origin of a job search Web site, consider requesting confirmation of the confidentiality of its database. Keep track of where you post your resume online. Once you have a job, you may want to remove your resume postings. A good database will automatically delete your resume after approximately three to six months if it is not updated.

## Establishing an email account

When job hunting online, you will be asked to provide an email address for online correspondence. If you don't already have one, you can quickly and easily establish a free, Web-based email account at [www.yahoo.com](http://www.yahoo.com), [www.hotmail.com](http://www.hotmail.com), [www.goowy.com](http://www.goowy.com), or [www.gmail.com](http://www.gmail.com), and several others. Even if you don't have Internet connectivity at home, you can access your online email account by entering your username and password from most public, Internet-enabled computers. If you already have a personal email account, consider creating a separate account solely for job search purposes.

## Searching a career site

Job search forms, widgets, and user interfaces vary depending on the Web site. Job seekers are usually given the option to search for jobs by category, location, required skills, or job title.

Keyword searches are also common online. Keywords allow you to input search strings that describe the exact characteristics you're looking for in a job or company. They also help you narrow down your job list to positions that best fit your specific skills and job requirements.

## Using job search agents

Job search agents are computer programs that match a person's employment requirements with corresponding job listings. Agents continually scan for jobs based upon specified criteria, and accordingly notify job seekers when matching jobs are found.

The advantage of using a job search agent is the time you save. Instead of logging on at career Web sites every day to search for recently posted jobs, you simply visit a job agent one time to establish your account and automated service. Once you've supplied a job agent with your job search criteria, you should begin receiving emails notifying you of jobs tailored only to your specifications.

Most job agents allow you to decide how often you will be automatically notified of matching jobs via email. Typical notification options are daily, or every 3, 7, 14, or 30 days. Job agent notification allows you to view new jobs the moment they appear online, empowering you to be one of the first applicants, and giving you an early edge over the competition.

## Internet job search resources

The Internet is teeming with thousands of career Web sites designed to make your job search easier and faster. Some of the best sites for general career information, company research, and current job openings are listed below. We selected the following sites based on quality of job listing content, ease of use, and links to other helpful career resources.

### Bookmarks

Incorporating bookmarks (CTRL + D on most computers) into your Internet browser is a good way to remember and gain instant access to the Web sites you use most often during your job hunt.

\*The following Web sites were verified as accurate and valid at publication. However, due to the dynamic nature of the Internet, resources may cease to exist and Internet addresses may change.

## Top job listing sites

### [www.careerbuilder.com](http://www.careerbuilder.com)

Features job matching technology that scans your resume for keywords, remembers what you've searched for and collects details from jobs you've applied to.

### [www.hotjobs.yahoo.com](http://www.hotjobs.yahoo.com)

Yahoo!hotjobs offers customized job searching and resume posting, daily updated job search FAQs, interviewing tips, networking advice, and salary calculators.

### [www.indeed.com](http://www.indeed.com)

Indeed is a *jobs only* search engine. In a single search, Indeed scans all current job listings from major job boards, newspapers, associations, and company career pages.

### [www.jobing.com](http://www.jobing.com)

for resume postings and job searches by cities

### [www.monster.com](http://www.monster.com)

Allows job seekers to keyword search jobs, post resumes, research job fairs and peruse career advice. Use Monster's unique Discover Your Passion tool to find out how to effectively let your life's passions drive your career.

### [www.simplyhired.com](http://www.simplyhired.com)

Simply hired is a simple, one-step job search site. Users can search half a million jobs by keyword, or location, or both.

### [www.usajobs.com](http://www.usajobs.com)

USAJOBS is the official job site of the U.S. Government's Office of Personnel Management, a one-stop source for federal employment information.

## Job search advice – career guide sites

### [www.careerjournal.com](http://www.careerjournal.com)

This is the *Wall Street Journal's* executive career site, featuring Dow Jones Network news and information for current and aspiring business executives. The site features information on how to best work with executive recruiters, search for jobs as a mature worker, and how to maximize your financial compensation.



### **[www.onetcenter.org](http://www.onetcenter.org)**

a handy government website that will help you determine skills and education necessary for a multitude of occupations

### **[www.quintcareers.com](http://www.quintcareers.com)**

Quintessential Careers offers free college, career and job search content, including job hunting tips, career trend news, and career coaching/counseling.

### **[www.rileyguide.com](http://www.rileyguide.com)**

The Riley Guide helps job seekers find employment online and offers an in depth *A-Z Index* of useful job hunting Web sites and services. The site does not post jobs or resumes, but instead points job seekers to the top sites that do.

### **San Diego Workforce Partnership      [www.sandiegowork.com](http://www.sandiegowork.com)**

The San Diego Workforce Partnership (SDWP) provides a variety of helpful tools and services to assist you during your job hunt. Whether online, or at one of their nine local One-Stop Career Centers, job seekers, both adult and youth, can look to the SDWP for referral to and placement in high quality jobs, education, and training programs.

## **Employer/company research sites**

### **[www.businesswire.com](http://www.businesswire.com)**

BusinessWire is a leading source for breaking news, photos, press releases, multimedia, and regulatory filings for companies throughout the world.

### **[www.cnnmoney.com](http://www.cnnmoney.com)**

Where *CNN*, *FORTUNE*, *MONEY*, *BUSINESS 2.0*, and *Fortune Small Business* magazines converge online to offer up-to-the-minute business news and financial market coverage.

### **[www.hoovers.com](http://www.hoovers.com)**

Hoover's, Inc. delivers reliable information and statistics on U.S. companies, industries, and the people who lead them. Hoover's enables users to search for specific corporation and industry data by company name, ticker symbol, or executive name. Company information pages provide company capsules, financials, and news.

[www.vault.com](http://www.vault.com)

Vault is a membership-based career site that offers employee surveys from thousands of top employers, exclusive salary information for top consulting and finance firms, insider news on workplace culture, compensation, and hiring.

## Researching companies

If you want to stand out in an interview, know something valuable about your potential employer. By thoroughly researching the employer, you increase your chances of making a positive and memorable first impression, as well as the ability to conduct constructive market research.

I was conducting an interview for a salesperson when the candidate asked, “What does Manpower do?” It was a short interview.

Phil Blair

Be prepared to answer this common interview question: “Why are you interested in our organization?” If you don’t know anything about the company, you won’t be able to answer effectively.

## What to look for

Never be satisfied with general knowledge about an employer. For example, you may know that General Mills makes breakfast cereal, but you might not be aware that the Minnesota-based company also markets other popular food brands, such as Pillsbury, Yoplait yogurt, and Betty Crocker. Without a solid foundation of preliminary research, you could interview with a subsidiary of a much larger company and not realize it.

Here are several questions you should find answers for before interviewing with a potential employer:

- What types of jobs are available within the company? Once hired, what is the potential for career growth?
- What are the company’s objectives and philosophy?
- What services and products does the company manufacture/sell?
- How successful is the company? What are its annual sales, assets and earnings?

- What has the company's growth pattern been like? What is the forecast for anticipated growth?
- Who are the company's competitors?
- What are the names of key executives? Is the company publicly or privately owned?
- What is the general industry reputation of the company?
- What are the organization's major achievements?
- What is the size of the company? How many employees does it have?
- Where is the company located? How many locations are there? Where is the company headquartered?
- How long has the company been at this location and other applicable locations?

## Sources of company information

- Employer Web sites
- Industry magazines – BusinessWeek, Fortune, Forbes, etc.
- Annual reports
- Company brochures/marketing materials (especially recent press releases)
- Related professional associations
- Related conferences
- Related tradeshow
- Your local Chamber of Commerce
- Local newspapers
- Local trade journals
- Company Stock Market reports (search using the firm's NYSE ticker symbol)
- Internet company profiles ([www.hoovers.com](http://www.hoovers.com), for example)

The quickest way to find information about a company, and to discover persuasive talking points, is by reading recent press releases from the company's Web site, business news search engines, and your local newspaper or business journal.



## Job search letters

Job search correspondence comes in many forms: resumes, cover letters, emails, follow-up letters, thank you notes, and more.

**A cover letter** should always accompany your resume. No matter how you respond to job opening advertisements and postings, whether by email, in-person or by U.S. Mail, a cover letter is always appropriate.

**Follow-up letters** are ideal after a significant meeting or discussion with potential and current employers, networking contacts, recruiters, as well as other influential business associates.

**A traditional thank you note** is essential following all job interviews, even those that might not have led to employment, but were beneficial nonetheless.

Writing clear, concise business letters is a critical part of your job search. Even after putting your best material down on paper, additional fine-tuning is required. Proofread and spell check all of your written job search correspondence, including email body text and attachments. Ask someone whose opinion you value to read your letters and offer constructive feedback. For additional professional letter writing assistance and techniques, look to the many cover letter and business writing how-to manuals at your local library or bookstore.

## Cover letters

Your cover letter is just as important as your resume. Not only do cover letters set the tone for an employer's first impression of you, they are also a prime opportunity for you to tailor your qualifications to the job opening you are applying for.

A cover letter should be brief and introductory, neither a synopsis of your job history nor a lengthy self-description.

Three paragraphs should be sufficient. Your purpose is to trigger an employer's interest in you as a leading candidate and to showcase your business writing skills. Your goal is to earn an interview.

When writing cover letters, avoid describing your personal attributes in terms like "assertive" and "highly motivated." Instead, list career accomplishments that best demonstrate your most appealing skills and character strengths. In other words, don't simply tell potential employers you are a hard worker who gets results – show them.

Here are some basic rules for preparing a cover letter:

**Paragraph 1** – The first paragraph clearly identifies the position you are applying for. Here you will note where and how you learned of the job opening. Straightforward, clear information should steer your resume to the right recruiter or hiring manager's desk. For example:

I am responding to your July 20 job posting on  
www.websitename.com for the call center specialist position at your  
firm's New Jersey headquarters.

You can also include the names and position titles of relevant individuals you've met at job fairs or networking events.

**Paragraph 2** – The second paragraph demonstrates that you can get the job done. Use this paragraph as a bridge to connect the job skills listed on your resume with the requirements for the available position. Consider including information that details related assignments or accomplishments, similarities to your current or most recent position, and why you believe you would excel at the job. Including quantifiable proof of your successes, such as numbers, statistics, programs established, etc., increases the impact of your accomplishments to potential employers. For example:

My qualifications appear to be a match for the position you have described:

**Your Requirements**

Three years of experience in a call center or customer services department.

**My Experience**

More than four years of experience as a customer service specialist at ABC Phone Company.

**Final Paragraph** – Deliver your closing pitch in the final paragraph. Here you will confidently restate your interest in the job and thank your potential employer. Be sure to request the next step in the employment process — an interview. Inform the recruiter or potential employer of how best to contact you to schedule a meeting or an interview. If necessary, repeat your phone number and email address. If you committed to contact the person your cover letter is addressed to, follow through. Doing so demonstrates your accountability, self-motivation, and interest. For example:

I look forward to discussing with you soon how my background and experience could benefit your organization. I can be reached via email anytime, yourname@email.com, or by phone, (555) 555-1234. Thank you for your time and consideration.

## Follow-up letters

Every professional interaction, whether online, by phone or in person, presents an opportunity for further correspondence. After an important meeting with a colleague or business contact, or perhaps a recruiter or potential employer at a job fair, remember to send a follow-up letter. An effective follow-up letter is more than a simple “thank you for your time” note. It is an opportunity to reinforce your conversation, confirm action items, and further describe your qualifications. You can include much of the information found in your cover letter in your follow-up letter.

When preparing a follow-up letter, it is best to:

- Mail your letter within 24 hours of meeting. Address the person you spoke with by his or her full name and title.
- Express appreciation for his or her time, advice and consideration.
- Summarize the important points of your conversation (to show you were listening as well as to remind the recruiter or interviewer of your discussion—add a personal touch, if possible).
- Express your enthusiasm for the project, position and the company.
- Request an interview or other next step, if appropriate.
- Include a new, more detailed copy of your resume.

## Thank you notes:

While email thank you letters are increasingly common, traditional thank you notes sent by mail are more professional and remain preferred.

I recommend handwritten notes to personalize your relationship with business contacts, etc. Taking the time to write a thank you note demonstrates your appreciation and interest in a potential job and addresses any necessary follow-up items. It is best to send your thank you letter within 24 hours of meeting with your contact. Professional follow-up letters are instrumental in making a second good impression on your interviewer, allowing you to rise above the competition. Avoid coming across as generic and insincere by echoing some specifics of your meeting or a personal exchange in your thank you letter.

In today's fast-paced climate of acronyms, email and text messages, the classic handwritten thank you letter has more impact now than ever, adding a personal touch that sets you apart from the competition.

## Job applications

In addition to reviewing resumes, employers often depend on job applications to discover their next new hire. Many companies use applications, in-person and online, as tools for standardizing the data they obtain from all job seekers, including some information that might not normally appear on your resume. Completing job applications will be your main means of communicating your qualifications to employers if you haven't yet completed your resume.

Filling out job applications may seem redundant if you already have a resume prepared. However, they are worth your time and consideration. Most human resources departments require job seekers to complete applications.

### Tips for filling out a strong job application

**Be prepared.** Have several forms of personal and job-related identification close at hand. Most companies will require your Social Security number and a valid driver's license. You will also need a thorough list of past employers, dates and locations of employment, as well as your salary history.

**Be honest.** Answer all questions truthfully. Most companies will perform a background check. Falsifying facts, especially those regarding education, criminal history, or cause of termination of employment could result in the immediate reversal of a job offer or even a possible discharge (if you were already hired).

Bring your resume worksheet with you to make completing job applications faster, easier, and more accurate.

**Read and follow directions carefully.** Job applications require information using a variety of instructions and formats. Be sure to follow directions as precisely as possible.



**Neatness counts.** Complete job applications as neatly as possible. Use a black or blue ink pen – never a pencil or colored marker. Avoid crossing out answers. Erase neatly whenever possible or request an additional application.

**Provide details.** Answer application questions completely to the best of your ability. Whenever possible, supply measurable details of career skills and workplace accomplishments.

**Avoid leaving blanks.** If there are questions that do not apply to you, simply respond with “not applicable” or “n/a.”

**Proofread carefully.** Scan your application for possible errors several times – enough to ensure that it is factually accurate and spelling/grammar error free upon submission.

## Interview preparation

### The Basics

The objective of a job interview is to gather information about a company or position, while persuading the employer that you possess the skills and experience they need. The employer’s objective is to collect relevant information about your career strengths and capabilities in order to evaluate your potential employment and/or role in carrying out their company’s mission.

Tips for Your Best Interview:

#### Make a Good First Impression

- Arrive five to 10 minutes early. Never be late.
- Be organized. Bring your resume and any other necessary paperwork in a neat, clean folder or attaché. Keep all papers in order, never disheveled, tattered, or torn.
- Shut off and put away your cell phone and/or headset, iPod, BlackBerry or other personal electronic devices in the waiting or reception area and throughout the interview. This is not the time to text message, accept calls, play video games, or check voice mail.
- Treat all whom you encounter, from the lobby to the interviewing area, with businesslike respect and consideration, including administrative assistants and others, no matter their professional rank.

## **Dress for Success**

- Dress appropriately. Clean, unwrinkled, and matching professional business attire is a must.
- Wear clean, proper-fitting clothes. Avoid garments that are baggy or tight.
- Limit jewelry and flashy accessories.
- Clean and polish your shoes.
- Do not wear a baseball cap.
- Style your hair neatly.

## **Organize Your Materials**

- Carry extra copies of your resume, preferably an expanded version.
- Bring a professional quality pen and notepad.
- Prepare a list of written questions to discuss with your interviewer.
- Bring a copy of your professional references.
- Project your best attitude and wear a warm, confident smile.

## **How to prepare**

There are three steps to good interview preparation:

Step One – Fully understand your career history and professional strengths and how they contribute to the skills and talents you will present to employers.

Step Two – Practice your interview skills until you've mastered them. Study the helpful list of interview do's and don'ts in the upcoming section. Try to remain calm and confident throughout your interview; it's easy to overlook important details when you're nervous or hesitant.

Step Three – Develop interview enhancing C.A.R. stories, brief narratives that describe professional Challenges, Actions, and Results you played a direct, valuable role in. Establishing several C.A.R. stories centered on your best career accomplishments prepares you for marketing your talents during an interview. C.A.R. stories also help you answer open-ended interview questions with compelling, memorable answers that underscore your strengths and abilities.

Begin your C.A.R. story by describing a professional accomplishment or challenge. Next, share the skills, resources, and tools that you employed to overcome an obstacle and reach your goal. C.A.R. stories make a positive impression on employers because they illustrate specific Challenges, Actions, and Results that you played a lead role in.

The following questions are intended to help you fine-tune your C.A.R. stories for successful interviewing:

**C. Challenge or problem that you have encountered.**

- What needed to be accomplished to overcome the challenge?
- How and why did the obstacle arise and how did you discover it?
- How did you initiate action to remedy the situation?
- Describe your specific assignments, responsibilities, or duties related to carrying out the solution.

**A. Action that you took to resolve the problem or situation.**

- What skills did you use (interpersonal, technological, multitasking, etc.) to achieve a solution?
- Describe your solution and how it was successful?
- How did you execute your goals, plans, and procedures?
- Accentuate your creative and innovative approach.
- What did members of your team achieve under your supervision and guidance?
- If the challenge was particularly difficult to overcome, emphasize the inventive methods you used to tackle the problem.

**R. Results you achieved.**

- What did you accomplish?
- Express how skillfully you carried out your responsibilities.
- Describe your contributions and achievements.
- Specify how you realized your results in measurable terms (using related dollar amounts, percentages, profit margin increases, etc.).
- Emphasize who (the company, department, supervisor, local community, etc.) benefited from your results and how.

If you're just entering the job market, it's important to emphasize academic accomplishments or skills earned from educational, internship and volunteer opportunities.

All job candidates, experienced or not, should develop a list of intelligent questions for their interviewers. This demonstrates that you are a focussed, well-researched go-getter.

Employers often ask leading questions designed to determine whether or not you have the right “chemistry” to fit within their company’s mission and culture. Sharing C.A.R. stories helps you demonstrate the specific qualities and characteristics employers seek. In addition to sharing personable C.A.R. stories, always be prepared to answer technical questions related to your areas of expertise.

## **Positive/Negative and Neutral Questions**

It doesn't take much to turn negative and neutral questions into positive opportunities to shine. Recover from challenging questions by offering specific, upbeat examples describing your career experiences and skills. Remember to focus on your C.A.R. stories.

To be ready for a variety of question styles, practice your answers to the following typical interview questions:

### **Positive Questions**

- What are your strengths?
- Why should we hire you?
- What can you contribute to our organization?
- Why do you feel you are qualified for this position?
- How have you been successful in your career and why?
- Tell me about job responsibilities you enjoy.
- Describe your ideal job.
- Tell me about a situation when you felt very effective on the job.

## **Negative Questions**

- Tell me about a work situation when you felt ineffective.
- What didn't you like about your last position, supervisor or company?
- What is the biggest mistake you've made in your career?
- Tell me how you've handled a difficult coworker, supervisor, or junior peer.
- What have supervisors criticized about your work style?
- What type of business environment do you find the most challenging?

## **Neutral Questions**

- What will your references, including former supervisors and coworkers, say about you? Emphasize the positive feedback you've received, not the negative. Quote affirmative statements and praise that your references have said or written about your work performance.
- How would you describe your communication style with supervisors, peers, and assistants?
- How do you handle working under pressure?
- What are your salary requirements and expectations? It is better to offer a range, not a specific figure. Often candidates opt to negotiate pay following a formal offer for the position. Although important, salary shouldn't be the sole deciding factor in whether or not you accept a job.
- Why are you interested in this position?
- What is important for me to know about you?
- What are the key lessons you have learned in your career?
- How do you set priorities?
- How do you feel about relocation?

## **Questions Job Applicants Ask**

An interview is a time to learn more about the company's philosophy, the different aspects of the job you're applying for, and what the company requires of its employees. These questions are as important as the ones asked of you. Be sure to ask questions respectfully, from an informed perspective based on your pre-interview research. You are asking your interviewer to expand on what you already know about his or her company.

## **Company**

- What future plans does the company have for this position?
- What are some of the company's long- and short-term goals?
- What is the company's corporate culture like? What are the company's values?

## **Job**

- Is this a new/existing/revised position? If new, why was it created?
- Within the areas of responsibility, what are the two or three most significant goals you would expect me to accomplish?
- Where does this position fit within the company's structure?
- What level is this position (entry, advanced, supervisory, etc.)?
- What are the position's main responsibilities?
- Who would I interact with in this position?
- Which job duties/activities would I split my time between and how?
- Are there opportunities for growth and advancement? If so, what additional career opportunities might be open to me?
- What are the goals for the department I would work within?
- What are the major challenges in this position (and for this organization)?

## **Questions *NOT* to ask**

Avoid asking your interviewer personal questions, including how they got their job or what their opinion of the company is. Though questions like these might be important to you, your first interview is not the time to get the answers. It is also considered inappropriate during a first interview to directly inquire about salary, retirement plans, vacations, bonuses, and holidays. Wait until you have received or are in the process of negotiating a job offer.

## **Questions job applicants should *Never* ask**

Never discuss personal or other opinions about politics and religion. Don't ask your interviewer's opinion of a former employee.

## Difficult questions to expect during an interview

The following are tricky questions you will likely encounter in an interview. Practice your answers to them before your interview.

1. Tell me a little about yourself?

Reference your career experience, accomplishments, and qualifications for the job – not your personal accomplishments.

2. You seem to switch jobs a lot. Why?

Job situation, downsizing, career exploration, a short-lived personal situation are all acceptable reasons.

3. What would you change about your former job?

Avoid speaking negatively about your former position, coworkers, and supervisor. Perhaps you could explain that you desired more responsibility. Seeking opportunities to rise to the occasion on the job demonstrates initiative.

4. Where would you like to be in your career five years from now?

Consider the promotions you might earn if you work hard for this company over the next five years. Inform your interviewer that you plan to still work for him or her in the coming years.

5. Tell me about an example of a major problem you faced and how you overcame it?

Describe a C.A.R. story related to career, school, or civic activities. Deliver a thorough, compelling narrative. Provide important details. Your interviewer wants to observe how you define problems, identify options, decide on a solution, handle obstacles, and solve predicaments.

6. In your lifetime, what was your greatest accomplishment? What did you learn from it?

A personal touch works well here, such as your marriage, birth of a child, or helping someone in need.

7. What was your greatest failure and what did you learn from it?

Fessing up to a failure shows maturity. Avoid examples that might reflect

on your ability to do the job or could potentially reflect poorly on your character.

8. What is your greatest weakness?

Focus on work, not character weakness. Transform this question into a positive opportunity, perhaps by showing how your commitment to work often translates to working however long it takes to get the job done.

9. What motivates you to do a good job?

Financial gain is not an acceptable answer. A better answer might be, “My motivations are having responsibilities and being acknowledged when the job is done right.”

10. Have you ever been fired from a job? If so, why?

It is best to be honest. If you were fired for a reason related to personality differences, it is acceptable to say so.

11. Have you ever been convicted of a crime?

It’s not against the law to ask this question if it has a bearing on the job you are applying for. A bank, for example, wouldn’t want a convicted embezzler working in the vault. If you have a conviction, it is best to admit it and perhaps even explain what transpired. If possible, describe what you’ve done to make amends.





# Interview tips

First impressions are extremely important. Review our list of simple interview do's and don'ts to make the best first impression possible.

## DO

- Turn off your cell phone, BlackBerry, and all other electronic devices.
- Obtain clear, accurate directions to the interview location. Use a reliable map or print driving directions from Web sites like [www.maps.google.com](http://www.maps.google.com), [www.mapquest.com](http://www.mapquest.com), or [www.expedia.com](http://www.expedia.com).
- Deliver a firm handshake and maintain appropriate eye contact.
- Remain poised and smile frequently.
- Answer questions honestly and without hesitation.
- Project confidence.
- Stay focused on the employer and how you will benefit them.
- Remain calm and be sincere.
- Use your interviewer's name whenever greeting and or departing.
- Close the interview by asking what the next step will be.

## DON'T

- Carry a bulky handbag or heavy briefcase. A small portfolio or attaché are better choices.
- Take a seat unless offered one.
- Wear clothes that are soiled, wrinkled, and/or overly baggy.
- Chew gum or eat during the interview.
- Contradict or second-guess yourself aloud.
- Speak negatively or indiscreetly about a former manager or coworker.
- Wear a flashy, distracting tie or loud, clashing colors.
- Falsify information.
- Get overly friendly and casual. Remain formal, business-minded, yet appropriately relaxed.
- Avoid nervous habits, like cracking your knuckles or tapping your foot.

## Follow up

Always write a thank you note within 24 hours of an interview, even if you feel the interview didn't go smoothly and/or you are no longer interested in the position. Thank the employer for their time and consideration. If you are still interested in the position, your thank you letter is a great opportunity to restate your interest and applicable skills.

A phone call or brief email is another way to follow up with your interviewer to find out where he or she is in the decision process. Ask if you can provide additional information, references or assistance.

## Conducting an ethical job search

While it is tempting to embellish or falsify details about your background, employment history or education, doing so is a gamble that is never worth taking. Not only is it unethical, but also your prospective employer will likely discover the truth via references and/or background checks. It's not uncommon for companies to revoke employment offers or terminate long-term employees found to have falsified information on their application or resume.

## Tell them you want the job

"Tell your interviewer you want the job — period," says Dana Fullbright, an information technology recruiter for Universal Studios in Orlando, Florida. "So many people leave without ever saying they want to be hired. It sounds so simple, but it's true. Let the employer know that you want to work there."

If you haven't yet decided, you should inform the interviewer that you're definitely interested in learning more about the job and the company. Always leave the door open. You can turn down a job, but you have to get the offer first.

Before exiting the interview, double-check your list of questions and ask about any follow-up and/or action items.

## Salary information:

And now the fun part ... You have officially been offered the job and need to make sure you are offered, or that you ask for, a fair salary. Keep in mind that salary is only one piece of your compensation package. What you require depends on what is important to you and your family. To some, it's salary alone. To others, it's health benefits, education, vacation, retirement, company car, or a car allowance. Consider recently available benefits, including stock options, signing bonuses, office location options, on-site childcare, and exercise facilities, working from home, etc. Make a list of which benefits matter most to you and your current (and future) family members. Negotiate each item with fair-minded give and take.

Use your negotiation skills to maximize your compensation package without appearing unreasonable or inflexible. The finesse required to accomplish this delicate balance is something you may want to read up on and understand well. Here are some Web sites to help you along the way:

### **[www.payscale.com](http://www.payscale.com)**

PayScale offers pay analysis comparing your job profile to the salary and compensation packages of people whose skills and experience match yours.

### **[www.salary.com](http://www.salary.com)**

Salary.com offers on-demand compensation management, information on pay and benefits as well as performance and salary data. Users can research their career worth based on job title and ZIP Code searches. Cost-of-living calculators and salary differentials are also offered.

## Beyond job success

Looking for a job is not always easy. Several studies show that losing a job or looking for a new job are some of the most stressful events that people endure. In addition to finding secure employment, it is crucial to find a balance that allows you to manage your finances, stay healthy, cope with emotions, and find time for your friends, family, and hobbies. Here are some tips for maintaining a satisfying work-life balance:

## Maintaining financial stability

- Investigate severance payment options, and continued health insurance if possible.
- Contact your state's Unemployment Insurance Office to learn about benefits you may be eligible for.
- Evaluate your current financial situation and develop a realistic survival budget.
- Keep your finances under control and set payment priorities.
- Decipher which bills you must pay (food, rent or mortgage, utilities, car expenses, etc.).
- Record all incoming money (unemployment compensation, severance pay, income of spouse/children, interest from savings accounts, investment dividends, tax refunds, etc.).
- Make a list of all your assets and their current values.
- Contact your creditors to arrange flexible payment schedules.
- Review your retirement security. Visit [www.ChooseToSave.org](http://www.ChooseToSave.org) to download a free retirement savings calculator.
- Contact nonprofit organizations that provide confidential financial guidance, such as Consumer Credit Counseling Services (CCCS). Call 1-888-656-CCCS (2227) or log on at [www.cccsstl.org](http://www.cccsstl.org).
- Use your local Yellow Pages to find childcare and elder care assistance programs.
- Get a head start on understanding legal topics at [www.nolo.com](http://www.nolo.com), Nolo's Self-Help Center online.
- Consider talking openly about money with your family. Set long- and short-term financial goals and reduce expenses.

## Coping with emotional changes

Satisfying work is important in our lives, far beyond our earning potential. A person's self-esteem and sense of security often depends on a job's predictable daily routine and purposeful activities. You may experience a range of strong emotions when living through the changes that job loss can bring. Here are some tips for staying positive during challenging times of transition:

- Think about what's good in your life now – family, friends, career skills – and you'll find motivation for the future.
- Focus on possibilities and accomplishments.
- Reevaluate your goals. Imagine following a dream you've always desired.
- Be open with your family about anxiety and other feelings.
- Keep your children up-to-date on your job search and celebrate your successes with them.
- See yourself as a positive role model for your children and others.
- Get feedback and support from others. Avoid becoming isolated.
- Join a support group where you can share hopes and plans, and let off steam.
- Follow a daily schedule – work on resumes, make calls, do research, set up interviews.
- Take pleasure in daily activities, like grocery shopping, cooking, and running errands.
- Volunteer – doing something for others increases your self-esteem, your network, and your skills.

## Stay healthy

- Eat well, exercise, have fun, get adequate rest, and commit to an active lifestyle.
- Aerobic exercise, like running or biking, speeds up your heart rate, improves your breathing, and increases your overall cardiovascular fitness.
- Strength building activities, like weight lifting, build muscle and healthy bones.
- Stretching and yoga postures increase flexibility and help you avoid injuries and soreness.
- Exercise and good nutrition promote healthy self-esteem and psychological wellbeing.
- Health is key to reaching the positive frame of mind you need to reenter the workplace.

# New job success and staying employed

## Make the most of your new job

You'll succeed in your new job by doing the best you can, regardless of whether the job is a temporary or professional position in your chosen field.

Stay current in your line of work by reading and studying about recent developments in your profession. Subscribe to trade publications to broaden your knowledge. If your company offers to pay for continuing education, consider taking advantage of the offer. Doing so sends a message to your employer that you are committed to expanding your professional and personal knowledge.

Here are a few tips for new employee success:

**Be a dependable employee.** This lets your supervisor know your job is important to you, and that they can count on you.

**Master your tasks and do more than is expected.** Avoid adopting an indifferent, "It's not my job," attitude. Instead, go above and beyond.

**Position yourself to take on more responsibilities.** Show initiative and solve problems before they arrive on your supervisor's desk. If you must bring a situation to your supervisor's attention, have plans for a potential solution.

Keep the lines of communication open. Inform your supervisor of how you're progressing and ask for regular feedback on your performance. If any assignments are unclear, ask for clarification instead of proceeding in the wrong direction.

**Enjoy the company of your coworkers.** Get to know and be known by others in your work environment. Your professional growth depends on it.

**Avoid office politics.** Maintain confidentiality and avoid workplace gossip. Maintain diplomacy and discretion in the office whenever possible. Don't hesitate to ask peers and coworkers for professional advice and assistance, and let them know they can depend on you for the same as well.

**Learn the art of tact when working on a team.** Tact is defined as having “a keen sense of what to say or do to avoid giving offense” and “possessing skill in dealing with difficult or delicate situations.” Practicing tactfulness includes being receptive to others’ input and knowing when to compromise.

**Be assertive, self-confident and visible.** Emphasize the three E’s—Enthusiasm, Energy and Excellence.

Your new employer can be your best ally in creating a satisfying balance between your work and your personal/family life. Take advantage of the employee assistance programs likely offered at your new workplace to maintain the best work-life balance possible.

Now that you have successfully navigated the job search process, be sure not let your skills go unused. Continue to research the job market in your current or future chosen field. Make valuable contacts and build relationships with potential employers. You should always have additional career advancements and opportunities to consider, even if you are currently employed. If your supervisor discovers that you are exploring other possibilities, and you are an excellent employee, he or she may realize that you have options and may value you even more.

## Additional resources

- *Job Hunting for Dummies* Second Edition, by Max Messmer, Robert Half, and Max Messmer Jr.
- *Job Interviews for Dummies*, by Joyce Lain Kennedy
- *Changing Careers for Dummies*, by Carol L. McClelland
- *Your Dream Career*, by Carol L. McClelland
- *What Color is Your Parachute? 2007: A Practical Manual for Job-Hunters and Career-Changers*, by Richard Nelson Bolles
- [www.SignOnSanDiego.com](http://www.SignOnSanDiego.com), The San Diego Union-Tribune
- [www.sandiegocatwork.com](http://www.sandiegocatwork.com), San Diego Workforce Partnership
- [www.CalJobs.ca.gov](http://www.CalJobs.ca.gov), California Employment Development Department
- [www.eResumes.com](http://www.eResumes.com), Online Resume Writing Services
- [www.manpower-sd.com](http://www.manpower-sd.com), Manpower San Diego



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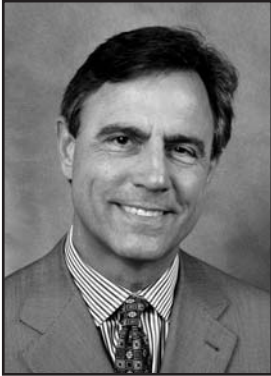
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## About the author



PHILIP C. BLAIR  
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Phil Blair is one of San Diego's most visible and respected business leaders. For more than 30 years, he, along with business partner Mel Katz, has propelled Manpower of San Diego to the largest Manpower franchise in the United States. With annual revenues exceeding more than \$100 million, Manpower is San Diego's fourth largest employer, providing approximately 4,000 jobs daily through six countywide branches.

Blair's success is marked not only by his talent and business acumen but also by a genuine desire to contribute to the fabric of the Greater San Diego community. His ongoing commitment and accessibility are evident in his many successful relationships with employees, clients, charities, businesses and professional organizations, local and regional government, and citizen groups.

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