

CAREER SERVICES *at Whitworth*

Job Search Basics

Imagine getting onto an elevator in an office building after a job interview. As the doors almost close, a person walks onto the elevator. As you both prepare for the silent journey downward, the individual turns to you and says, "I noticed that you were interviewing with our HR director today. What's your background?" The timer has started. You now have thirty seconds or less before the elevator reaches the bottom floor to succinctly state your background. Can you do it?

The thirty-second elevator pitch is something you should practice and perfect. It is the basic introduction of who you are and what you are looking for. It will form the basis of your introductory message when networking, your opening statement in telephone contacts with employers, and the foundation of your "Tell me about yourself" answer in an interview.

Marketing Preparation

Preparation is perhaps the most important element of any successful job search. The strength of your preparation will carry you through the entire job search process. Preparation includes:

- Determination of your strengths and weaknesses
- Evaluation of your job and career interests
- Establishment of a career track/path
- Research on companies of interest
- Using key marketing tools to position yourself on the job market
- Networking with anyone who might be able to provide you with job leads

Step One: Your Job Search Plan

1. *Determine the job you want*
The very first thing you need to do is determine the exact thing you want to do. First, make a list of the things you like to do and the things that you feel are a strength for you.
2. *Determine the best companies for you*
You need to make some decision about the types of organizations that fit your needs, style, and personality. Examine such issues as size, corporate culture and management style.

3. Determine your search strategy:
 - ✓ On-campus Recruiting
 - ✓ Career Fairs
 - ✓ Networking
 - ✓ Direct Mail Campaign
 - ✓ Internet Job Sites
 - ✓ Company Web Sites
 - ✓ Job Postings, Classified Ads: such a small percentage of jobs are ever advertised – as few as 5% of all jobs – that your chance of success in landing the job of your dreams from this method are only slightly better than your chances of winning the lottery.

Strategic Advertising

A successful job search begins with a strategic advertising plan. To employers, you are a product—like a pair of Nike running shoes. And, just like any good retailer, you should market yourself by promoting your best attributes.

The first step in selling yourself in a given industry is to learn as much as you can about a field. Learn the right “buzz” words, but they alone won’t bag you your dream job. You need to understand what the words mean and how to use them. When networking, familiarity with a given industry will allow you to begin dialogues with the people who can actually help you. Networking requires not only contacting influential people through family, friends and business connections, but attending industry events as well. A pro-active approach to attending seminars, trade shows and other functions is to introduce yourself to the speaker or panelists presenting.

Networking

Career experts estimate that the vast majority of job openings are never advertised or publicly announced, but filled through word-of-mouth or networking – known as the “hidden job market.” The likelihood of a job opening not being advertised at all increases with the level of the job. Yet, even with this knowledge, most job seekers fail to fully utilize networking for all it’s worth.

Networking means developing a broad list of contacts – people you’ve met through various social and business functions – and using them to your advantage when you look for a job. People in your network may be able to give you job leads, offer you advice and information about a particular company or industry, and introduce you to others so that you can expand your network.

The best place to start developing your network is with your family, friends, and neighbors – and with their family, friends, and neighbors, but don’t stop there. Talk to co-workers, colleagues in your industry, and those you meet at industry gatherings, such as trade shows and conferences. Talk with former co-workers, bosses, and teachers.

The Steps to Successful Networking:

1. **Develop a firm grasp of job search basics.**
2. **Conduct a self-assessment.** An honest review of your strengths and weaknesses is vital.
3. **Prepare a strong resume.** If you don't already have a resume, now is the time to develop one.
4. **Decide how to organize your network.** This step is crucial to your success. If you have ongoing access to a computer, the best method is a database or spreadsheet where you can enter key information, such as names, titles, company names, addresses, phone numbers, fax numbers, email addresses, and dates of communication.
5. **Communicate with your network.** It is extremely important to stay in touch with your network, which you can easily do by phone, mail, or email. Don't be afraid to ask for their help.
6. **Initiate informational interviews.** One of the best ways to gain more information about an occupation or industry – and to build a network of contacts in that field – is to talk with people who are currently working in the field.
7. **Follow up with your network.** The key is keeping your network informed of your situation and thanking them for their efforts. Never take your network for granted.

Step Two- Job Interviewing

How can you prepare for the interview BEFORE you go in to meet the employer?

- Figure out as much as possible about the employer's needs.
- Compose and rehearse answers to frequently asked interview questions.
- If you have an opportunity to do a practice interview, such as a mock interview, do it.
- Transferable Skills: Be sure to point out your transferable skills, with examples that are not always evident from your work experience or education.

What are the most Critical Success Factors companies are looking for, and how can they be incorporated into an interview?

Career experts don't always agree, but here's one expert's list:

1. Communication skills (written and oral)
2. Teamwork
3. Leadership
4. Interpersonal skills
5. Critical thinking and problem-solving skills
6. Proficiency in field of study

Top 15 Job Interview Questions

While job seekers can use the power of the Internet to thoroughly research prospective employers, their performance in an interview will make or break the chances for a job offer. By rehearsing interview questions, they can become better prepared to demonstrate how they can benefit an employer. MonsterTrak.com has compiled a list of the top 15 interview questions from the country's leading employers, to help job seekers prepare for job interviews:

1. Tell me about yourself.
2. What do you know about our company?
3. Why do you want to work for us?
4. What unique qualities or abilities would you bring to this job?
5. What are your major strengths and weaknesses?
6. How long do you plan to stay at our company? Where do you see yourself in five years?
7. Tell me about a time that you failed at something, and what you did afterwards.
8. Describe a time when you worked on a team project. What was your relative position on the team? Were you satisfied with your contribution? How could it have been better?
9. Why did you choose your school and course of study?
10. Think back to a situation in which you had to resolve a conflict. Tell me how you did it.
11. Tell me about a project that you had either at work or school. Describe in detail how you managed it and what the outcome was.
12. What do you do in your spare time?
13. What salary are you expecting?
14. What other types of jobs or companies are you considering?
15. Have you any questions for us?

The goal is to persuade the employer that the interviewee has the skills, background, and ability to do the job and can comfortably fit into his/her organization. Personality, confidence, enthusiasm, a positive outlook and excellent interpersonal and communication skills count heavily.

What You Should Not Ask in the First Rounds of Interviewing

- Don't ask about salary, stock options, vacation, holiday schedule or benefits.
- Don't grill the interviewer. It's OK to ask about the person's background, but only as an interested party, not an interrogator.

Questions You Should Ask in the First Rounds of Interviewing

- May I see a copy of the job description?
- Why has the job become available?
- What qualities are you seeking in the person for this job?
- What is the next step/ when will you make your selection?

Prepare five or six questions before the interview and take them with you. When the time comes for you to ask questions, take out your list. This will show good preparation on your part. This time is a valuable opportunity for you to get the information you need to help you make an informed decision.

Resources/ Links:

www.quintcareers.com

www.msn.com (careers)

www.jobweb.com

www.collegegrad.com

www.monstertrak.monster.com

www.careerbuilder.com

www.rileyguide.com

www.careerjournal.com/jobhunting

www.job-hunt.org/hiddenjobmarket.html

www.careerjournal.com/jobhunting/networking/20030211-rosemarin.html

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