

**ARE YOU JUST AFTER A JOB?
OR
DO YOU WANT THE JOB YOU'RE AFTER?**

The purpose of this publication

This has been written for those people who are just starting out in the search for employment, and those after a second or third job that offers career advancements. The NSW education system provides invaluable assistance through career advisers and the development of student portfolios. This publication should be taken as a supplement to what the NSW education system offers in that it refers to “the next step”, or the job after the job after school as well as the job after school.

Introduction

It is important to understand a few things about being employed, and looking for a job.

Firstly, employers aren't out there to “get you” or prove that you're a liar. They are looking for the right person to carry out a specific job. If they select the wrong person, they are out of pocket (it takes \$25,000 to recruit, train and educate) and you end up being unemployed after only a short time. A series of short term employment jobs because of this is not good on your résumé and future employers will see you as a short term, and a cost to them, not an opportunity.

Therefore it is in your best interest that employers do their job properly. But you must help them. You have to sell yourself so that if you are the best person for the job, you and you alone are responsible for telling them that.

Secondly, having a job should be more fun than going to school, and you get paid for it.

Between jobs or waiting for your first job.

What you do between jobs is extremely important for two reasons :

- Doing nothing leaves you with idle time to keep reminding yourself that you do not have a job or any decent income. It will damage your self esteem and confidence which will be affect your performance in future interviews
- Any interviewer worth their salt will ask you what you have been doing. An answer of “nothing” will indicate to them that you are a person of little “get up and go”, lazy and probably do not want to work.

The first time I was retrenched, I was given 6 weeks pay, had three children at school, a mortgage in the six figure bracket at an interest rate of 17%. The only income was from wife's part time job and two weeks on the (then) dole. I survived financially and emotionally for six months because of the advice given to me by a friend in the recruitment industry. This was :

- Keep yourself busy at all times.
- When you start feeling depressed, find a project to do that you know you can complete and has an obvious outcome or result.
- Don't worry about your finances, just minimise your expenditure.

These are simple and effective, and they worked for me.

The worse thing you can do is do nothing or go to the pub because a grog is what you need for your depression. All you're doing is wallowing in self pity which affects your self confidence which will affect your performance at the interviews you go to. It's also draining whatever financial resources you may have, adding to your depression as your money runs out faster. Finally, you will turn up to interviews either late or hung over which in both cases will ensure you will not get the job, which will again add to your feeling of depression and lengthen your term of unemployment.

I remember my first bout of depression was cured by changing the water pump on my aging Volvo. For those of you who don't know the 244 Volvo, changing the water pump involves removing radiators and using special devices to wedge the pump upwards whilst bolting it into place. This took me 5 hours, but I felt good about myself afterward as well as saving money which made me feel better again.

Perhaps Volvo repair is not up your alley, but projects could include a thorough car clean; write an article for the local paper; re-arrange your bedroom; create something (a garden, a chair, a dress). Whatever you chose, ensure that you can complete it. Training a dog is not recommended as this requires not only your skills, but the willingness of the dog to participate who is, in any case, permanently unemployed and cannot understand the urgency for you to complete this project.

Other activities that will make you feel good and will convey a good impression at that job interview could include community service work for charities; casual work which helps your mental frame of mind as well as your finances. A close friend of mine who was unemployed for a year used to clean the windows at McDonalds, starting work at 4 am. He is now employed on a salary in excess of \$150,000 - he kept his self esteem and sustained some income while finding the job that he wanted and knew he was capable of.

Understand the process

Tear this page out and keep it handy as a memory jogger.

The Employer

They do not have to prepare. They have done this many more times than you have applied for jobs.

Places an advertisement which will have specific skills and experience that they are after

They will get about 100 responses, and will select about 5 to 10 for the first interview that OBVIOUSLY (from the letters and resumes) best suite their criteria.

They will phone or write to you to confirm a time for the first interview

At this interview they will be checking your experience, competence. They will probably not discuss salary and conditions.

At the completion of all the applicants, they may have a second round of interviews with 3 to 4 people. If they go to 2 interviews, salary will now be a topic.

They will send you a letter of offer which should include all salary and working conditions.

You

Prepare and keep refining your resume based on feed back from previous interviews.

Write a covering letter of no more than one page that clearly tells them that you have the experience they are after. Attach your resume.

Find out about the company, what they do.

Check your grooming (nails, hair etc)

You must show confidence, without being arrogant. Show politeness, do not interrupt the interviewer. Remember body language and always have an intelligent question prepared about the job.

As above, but prepare yourself for negotiating a salary and reasons to give them why you are worth that amount.

Accept it, as it was the job you were after.

If you do not get the job either at first or second interview, phone the interviewer and politely request them to help you - could they please give one or two tips to improve your next application. Incorporate this into your next application.

Competencies

You may wish to think about your capabilities in what are known as “competencies”. Some of these will not apply to the first time applicant, however they are worth while thinking about for future career and using them to explain to a prospective employer your career aspirations.

They can also be used for examining your strengths and weaknesses, using the strengths in your applications, and the weaknesses in self development.

Managing the business

- Professional and technical knowledge
- Organisational and business knowledge

Managing self

- Critical thinking
- Self management and learning

Managing relationships

- Interpersonal and communication
- Influencing skills

Managing opportunity

- Achievement and action.
- Initiative and innovation
- Strategic perspective
- Capacity for change.

Nine months before I turned 35, I trained for a marathon, that's 42 Kms. It was one of those other projects that I knew I could achieve, and I did. For an employer this demonstrates commitment, training and desire to achieve.

Job application checklist

Stage	Major components for you.	Have you done it ?
<u>The Résumé</u>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> You have to sell yourself and first impressions do count. 	
<u>The letter in response to a job advertisement</u>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Specific to the requirements in the advertisement. Deliver in person. 	
<u>Choosing your referees.</u>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Choose referees that can attest to your work ethics. Inform your referees that they may be called and what job you have applied for. 	
<u>Preparing for the interview</u>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Prepare probing, intelligent questions. Know the exact place and time of the interview, the interviewer's full name, and its correct pronunciation and his/her title. Find out specific facts about the Company Refresh your memory on the facts and figures of your present employer and former employers or your school and personal interests. 	
<u>Practice</u>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Practice the interview, particularly entering the office, shaking hands, waiting to be seated and looking people in the eye with a friend or relative. 	
<u>Pre - interview checklist</u>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> This is it, it should be completed. 	
<u>The interview.</u>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Be prepared to answer questions. Ask your probing questions. Greet and farewell in a proper fashion. Do not display : <ol style="list-style-type: none"> Poor personal appearance. Poor personal hygiene (body odours, cigarette smoke on clothing) Lack of planning for career - no purpose or goals. Lack of confidence and poise, nervousness, ill at ease. Unwilling to start at the bottom - expects too much too soon. Lack of tact. Lack of courtesy - ill mannered. Lack of vitality. 	
<u>Finally</u>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> If you miss out on a job, turn this disappointment into opportunities and phone the interviewer to find out how to improve your performance. 	

The Résumé

Applying for a job is a matter of selling yourself, nobody else will. You are competing against many other applicants, and first impressions do count. The résumé and your covering letter will not only create this first impression, but tells them how well you fit their job.

A first time job applicant does have some difficulty in marketing their experience, however this can be, to a certain extent, overcome by detailing committee positions, sports teams, school activities and part time or casual jobs. Committee positions show a commitment to help and achieve; sports team show a team spirit and able to work with others; and part time or casual work does provide you with experience. It is important that you think about what you did at school or TAFE and how this can be interpreted into meaningful attributes in the work place. A treasurer on a committee shows attributes of wanting to help others and financial responsibility.

A proforma résumé would look something like this :

Your address	Your Name	Your phone number(s)	
CAREER OUTLINE			
Last company (or School)			
Position held #1		date from	date to
Position held #2		date from	date to
Position held #3		date from	date to
Next last company (or School)			
Position held		date from	date to
DETAILED EXPERIENCE			
Last company (or School)			
Position held #1		date from	date to

In the résumé it is important that :

- It is no longer than four pages.
- Do not repeat yourself, as this will come across as padding.
- Do not include referees unless specifically requested.
- Triple check the spelling.
- When writing about your experience, put yourself in the shoes of somebody who doesn't know you and ask the question "so what ? what does this tell me ?"
- Get somebody else to read and check it.

The letter in response to a job advertisement

Where your résumé and portfolio may be the same for each job application, the letter MUST be tailored to each job application.

The advertisement will state what the employer is after as far as skills, experience and training. Identify these, and associate what you have done in the past to these attributes. If it is your first job, you will have to relate your school activities; school results and personal interests into the work environment.

The letter should also make it clear that you have a particular interest in the proposed work, industry and this company in particular.

Generally then the letter should:

- Be no more than one page, but at least 4 paragraphs.
- Be to the point “I am applying for ...” as distinct to “I would appreciate your consideration of my abilities to fulfill the duties”
- Address the specific skills, experience and attributes that are listed in the advertisement.
- Be neat and tidy. Stand back from the letter and make sure that it looks attractive to you.
- Be sent as soon as possible after the job is advertised.

When possible, I tend to hand deliver the letter to a reception area. This provides the opportunity to eye ball the premises, assess traveling time for the interview, saves \$0.45, but most importantly, it is an opportunity to ask the reception people for brochures and product information. If they ask why, tell them the truth, “I am applying for a job, and I want to know more about its operations.”. If this gets to the interviewer, this stands you in good stead.

Choosing your referees.

Usually employers will want referees to include your last boss. If you do not have any previous employment, then choose referees that can attest to your :

- Ability to learn and adjust.
- Hard and diligent application of your talents.
- Apply yourself to the best of your ability.
- Willing to participate with others - teamwork.
- Honesty, loyalty and reliability.

Preparing for the interview

Remember that an interview is a two-way street. The employer will try to determine through questioning if you have the abilities necessary to do the job. You must determine through questioning whether the company will give you the opportunity for the growth and development you seek. Probing questions you might ask.

- a) A detailed description of the position?
- b) The why reason the position is available?
- c) Anticipated induction and training program?
- d) What sort of people have done well?
- e) Advanced training programs available for those who demonstrate outstanding ability?
- f) What happens after this interview?

Know the exact place and time of the interview, the interviewer's full name, and its correct pronunciation and his/her title.

Find out specific facts about the Company - where its offices, plants or stores are located; what its products and services are; what its growth has been; and what its growth potential is for the future.

Refresh your memory on the facts and figures of your present employer and former employers or your school and personal interests. You will be expected to know a lot about this as you have lived it.

Practice

Practice the interview, particularly entering the office, shaking hands, waiting to be seated and looking people in the eye with a friend or relative.

Pre - interview checklist :

Take with you :

- A brush or comb to tidy up just before you walk into the building.
- A spare copy of your letter and résumé.
- A handkerchief.
- A pen and paper.
- The names and contact phones for your referees.
- Memorise your “intelligent” questions.

The interview.

I cannot stress enough the 3 Ps for an interview **Plan, Prepare** and **Practice**.

The primary purpose, for you, in the interview is let them know :

1. Why you are interested in the job and the company.
2. What you can offer them and that you can do the job.

If you are extremely nervous, then at the interview do not :

- Accept a tea or coffee, although water would be fine. Your shaking hands will “rattle” the coffee cup as you replace it on a saucer or desk. Most embarrassingly, you may spill it and if you end up with a hot coffee in your lap you may say something that may terminate the interview.
- Do not hold sheets of paper at the bottom as a slight hand shake will be magnified by the time the quiver gets to the top of the paper. Hold papers at the top, middle or with both hands.
- Do not try and use “big” words, you will mispronounce them.

This list gives 29 reasons that are most frequently mentioned by employers for rejecting job applicants. The information is based on reports from 153 companies.

1. Poor personal appearance.
2. Lack of planning for career - no purpose or goals.
3. Lack of confidence and poise, nervousness. ill at ease.
4. Unwilling to start at the bottom - expects too much too soon.
5. Lack of tact.
6. Lack of courtesy - ill mannered.
7. Lack of vitality.
8. Limp, fishy handshake.
9. Sloppy application form.
10. No interest in company or in industry.
11. Intolerant, strong prejudices.
12. Inability to take criticism.
13. Late to interview without good reason.
14. Failure to express appreciation for interviewees time.
15. Indefinite responses to questions.

16. Overbearing, over aggressive, conceited, superiority complex, "know-it-all";
17. Lack of interest and enthusiasm - passive, indifferent.
18. Overemphasis on money - interested only in best dollar offer.
19. Makes excuses, evasiveness, hedges on unfavourable factors in record.
20. Lack of maturity.
21. Condemnation of past employer(s).
22. Fails to look interviewer in the eye.
23. Indecision.
24. Lack of knowledge in field of specialisation.
25. Emphasis on who he/she knows.
26. No interest in community activities.
27. Lack of appreciation of the value of experience.
28. Never heard of company.
29. Asks no questions about the job.

Be prepared to answer questions such as:

For the person who has been in the workforce before:

- Have you discussed your dissatisfaction with your current employer, what was their response?
- What has been your most enjoyable role to date, who was your best boss and why?
- What sort of career progression are you hoping for?
- What is your five year plan?
- What sort of management style do you respond best to?
- What size company would you like to work for?
- Do you require additional training and if so, then in what areas?
- What is your preferred cultural fit?
- What are your salary expectations for your next role?

For the first time and all job seekers

- Why did you choose this particular role? What do you really want to do in your next career move?
- Why would you like to work for our organisation? What do you want to be doing in your career five years from now? Why?
- What was your last salary?
- What interests you about their products and services?
- Can you get recommendations from previous employers? What would they say about you?
- What have you learned from some of the jobs you have held? Which did you enjoy most? Why?
- What have you done that shows initiative in your career?
- What is your major weakness? What are you doing about it?
- What do you think determines a person's progress in a good company?
- Are you willing to relocate?
- How do you spend your spare time? What are your hobbies?
- What does teamwork mean to you?
- What type of books do you read? What was the least one?

How to conduct yourself :

- Arrive on time or a few minutes early. Late arrival for a job interview is never excusable.
- If presented with an application, fill it out neatly and completely.
- Greet the interviewer by his/her surname if you are sure of the pronunciation. If you are not, ask him/her to repeat his/her name.
- Shake hands firmly.
- Wait until you are offered a chair before sitting. Sit upright in your chair. Look alert and interested at all times.
- Try to get the interviewer to describe the position and the duties to you early in the interview so that you can relate your background and skills to the position.
- Be a good listener as well as a good talker. Do not interrupt the interviewer, let them finish talking. "You have two ears and one mouth, they should be used in that proportion"
- Always look the interviewer in the eye while you talk to him/her. Do not gaze around the room, examine your finger nails etc.
- Don't answer questions with a simple "yes" or "no". Explain whenever possible. Tell those things about yourself which relate to the position. BUT
- Don't "over-answer" questions.
- Make sure that your good points get across to the interviewer in a factual, sincere manner
- Answer questions truthfully, frankly and as much to the point as possible.
- Never, ever make derogatory remarks about your present or former employers or Companies. Do not comment on politics or economics.
- Don't inquire about salary, holidays etc at the initial interview unless the interviewer raises the issue first. You should know your market value and be prepared to specify your required salary or range.
- Always conduct yourself as if you are determined to get the job you are discussing. Never close the door on an opportunity. It is better to be in the position where you can choose from a number of jobs rather than only one.

Don't be too discouraged if no definite offer is made or specific salary discussed. The interviewer will probably want to communicate with his/her office first or interview more applicants before making a decision.

“Competency” based questions

Competency based questions take the form of “Have you ever been in the situation of ...” – for example, it may be a question such as “Have you ever been in the situation of disagreeing with your boss?” As soon as you answer YES to one of these questions, the interviewer will immediately respond with “Please describe the situation and what you did to resolve the situation.”. They are after practical situations at work that are usually more difficult to handle.

“Seminar” briefings

Seminars are increasing in popularity particularly with non skilled employment. The typical scenario is that the employer will hold a briefing session where all the job applicants attend at the one time. The facilitator of the session will go through the company, the job, the requirements etc. There will be another person in the room watching and listening to the job applicants to determine their interest and attention to the facilitator.

So actions such as falling asleep, doodling, sniggering and joking with a friend are not regarded as good.

Leaning forward a little and paying attention, making notes, asking questions, on the other hand, will stand you in good stead. Again, just ensure that the questions you ask have merit so even in seminars or briefings sessions, preparation is still important.

Finally

When you miss out on a job, turn this disappointment into opportunities. Phone the interviewer along the following lines *"I was disappointed I didn't get the job with you. I am very interested in being a rocket scientist, and would value your opinion as to how I may improve my application for other similar jobs."* Listen, do not argue, but do ask them to expand on any comments that they make *"what do you mean by ..."*

Your opportunities are twofold :

- This is invaluable feedback which should be included next time you apply for a job.
- If they have another similar job in the future, your interest in their company, their opinion and the job will not be forgotten and will provide you with an advantage.

Now : Go back to page 2 and make a project out of improving your application. No application is perfect - there is always scope for improvement.