

# **CAREER TOOLKIT**

**Alumni Career Solutions**

**Lehigh University Alumni Association**

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Lehigh University's Alumni Career Solutions program provides comprehensive career counseling and education to Lehigh alumni. This education takes the form of web content, web seminars, pod casts and the "Career Toolkit." This material is intended for individual educational use only and is not to be used, reproduced or distributed for consulting or other for-profit purposes.

# Career Toolkit: Eight Steps to a Successful Job Search

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## *MESSAGE FROM ALUMNI CAREER SOLUTIONS*

*We've put together this toolkit with the hope of saving you time. We know that looking for a new position, changing careers or applying to graduate school is a time-consuming process and we wanted to assemble materials that are "the best of the best."*

*Rather than you drafting a cover letter or taking a stab at your first "professional summary," we have assembled many samples which show the most effective way to present yourself. We've also included sample interview questions, questions that you can ask on your interview as well as salary negotiation strategies. If you haven't job searched before, this guide will support you through each phase of your search.*

*So . . . call us and set-up a coaching appointment and attend our web seminars. We're confident that we can make your job search a little easier and lot more effective.*

*The staff from alumni career solutions,*

*Lori Kennedy & Robin Dougherty*

## **STEP ONE: ASSESS YOUR SKILLS, INTERESTS AND VALUES**

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In moving forward in our career or job search, we need to take a few things into account: our values, skills, interests, and personality preferences. When we examine these areas via assessment and/or conversation with a career coach, we can learn more about ourselves and more about career options. Once we have these, we can then move forward and investigate career options through online research and informational interviews.

### **Step 1 – What’s important to you in a job?**

#### **Work Values**

Please review the list of work values on the following page. Values play a central role in the selection of, and satisfaction with, your career and lifestyle. Therefore, it’s important to be aware of what values are most important to you.

### **Step 2 – What are your skills and interests? Complete the Campbell Interest and Skill Survey**

This exercise should take you between 30-45 minutes to complete and the fee is \$18.00 (paid directly to the publisher).

After you have completed the exercise, please e-mail your ID and password to your career coach. We will review and print your results prior to your next appointment. Please print a copy for yourself.

<http://www.pearsonassessments.com/tests/ciss.htm>

### **Step 3 – Personality (optional)**

Examining your personality preferences and strengths can help you discover some insight into yourself and how your personality can fit into certain careers. Many of you may have taken the Myers Briggs Type Indicator (MBTI). If you know your personality type from this assessment, check out [www.personalitytype.com](http://www.personalitytype.com) to review information regarding your type.

To take the assessment online: <http://www.typefocus.com/>

### **Step 4 – Where do you want to work? Industry Research**

<http://www.wetfeet.com/Careers---Industries.aspx>

This site lists profiles of 30 different industries. Please review the industries and list the top 3-5 industries that interest you.

# Work Values Checklist

Your value system is both a reflection of your personal philosophy and the basis of many of your decisions. Values play a central role in the selection, of, and satisfaction with, your career and lifestyle. Therefore, it is important to be consciously aware of what values are most important to you. The following activity has been designed to help increase your awareness of your work values. The following is a list of 29 work values. Once you have rated them, examine the values you rated 1 and 2.

Rank each value: (1) Very important; (2) Important; (3) Somewhat important; (4) Not important.

- \_\_\_\_\_ Help society: contribute to the betterment of the world I live in.
- \_\_\_\_\_ Help others: help others directly, either individually or in small groups.
- \_\_\_\_\_ Public contact: have lots of daily contact with people.
- \_\_\_\_\_ Work with others: have close working relationships with a group. Work as a team toward common goals.
- \_\_\_\_\_ Affiliation: be recognized as a member of an organization whose type of work or status is important to me.
- \_\_\_\_\_ Friendship: develop close personal relationships with co-workers.
- \_\_\_\_\_ Competition: when I compare my abilities against others there are clear outcomes.
- \_\_\_\_\_ Make decisions: have the power to set policy and determine a course of action.
- \_\_\_\_\_ Work under pressure: work in a situation where deadlines and high quality work are required by my supervisor.
- \_\_\_\_\_ Power and authority: control other people's work activities.
- \_\_\_\_\_ Influence people: be in a position to change people's attitudes and opinions.
- \_\_\_\_\_ Work alone: do things by myself, without much contact with others.
- \_\_\_\_\_ Knowledge: seek knowledge, truth and understanding.
- \_\_\_\_\_ Intellectual status: be regarded by others as an expert or a person of intellectual achievement.
- \_\_\_\_\_ Artistic creativity: do creative work in any of several art forms.
- \_\_\_\_\_ Creativity (general): create new ideas, programs, organizational structures or anything else that has not been developed by others.
- \_\_\_\_\_ Supervision: have a job in which I guide other people in their work.
- \_\_\_\_\_ Change and variety: have job duties that often change or are done in different settings.
- \_\_\_\_\_ Stability: have job duties that are largely predictable and not likely to change over long periods of time.
- \_\_\_\_\_ Fast pace: work quickly, keep up with a fast pace.
- \_\_\_\_\_ Recognition: be recognized for the quality of my work in some visible or public way.
- \_\_\_\_\_ Excitement: do work that is very exciting or that often is exciting.
- \_\_\_\_\_ Adventure: do work that requires me to take risks.
- \_\_\_\_\_ Profit/gain: expect to earn large amounts of money or other material possessions.
- \_\_\_\_\_ Independence: decide for myself what kind of work I'll do and how I'll go about it, not have to do what others tell me to do.
- \_\_\_\_\_ Moral fulfillment: feel that my work is contributing to a set of moral standards that I feel are very important.
- \_\_\_\_\_ Location: find a place to live (geographic area) that matches my lifestyle and allows me to do the things I enjoy most.
- \_\_\_\_\_ Community: live in a town or city where I can get involved in community affairs.
- \_\_\_\_\_ Physical challenge: have a job with physical demands that are challenging and rewarding.

# Assessment Summary:

## Step 1: What's important to me in a position?

Top 5 work values:

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.
- 5.

## Step 2 – What are your skills and interests?

My top three Orientation scales from the Campbell Interest & Skill Survey

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

Potential jobs that interest me:

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.
- 5.

## Step 3 – Personality (optional)

MBTI Code:

## Step 4 – Where do you want to work?

Industries that interest me from wetfeet.com

- |    |    |
|----|----|
| 1. | 3. |
| 2. | 4. |

# Resume Suggestions for the Experienced Candidate

### **Summary, not an objective.**

- The resume for an entry-level position typically includes a general objective describing the type of opportunity desired, the experienced candidate will be better served by summarizing three or four skills that match the employer's needs. These highlights can appear in a short paragraph or quick "bullet" format. See "What is a Professional Summary," page 7, for specific information to include in your summary.

### **Lead with experience, not education.**

- Typically resumes of recent graduates provide education information after the objective. Although you should include this information on your resume, it's better to place it toward the bottom; your actual experience is more important than your education and should lead your resume.

### **Focus on accomplishments, not only responsibilities.**

- When detailing job history, don't fall into the trap of just listing responsibilities. Think in terms of what you accomplished by completing those tasks. In other words, don't just tell employers what you did; also tell them the outcome of your actions. "Developed departmental budget" could be a responsibility. "Proposed and tracked annual \$500,000 departmental budget. Only division to meet deadlines and operate within budget during past three years" is a statement that demonstrates the results of your problem-solving abilities.

### **Include relevant activities, not hobbies.**

- Clubs, organizations and outside interests – a staple for entry-level candidate resumes – should be approached with caution by the experienced candidate. Activities that relate directly to your self-improvement efforts, e.g. continuing education and the position you're seeking are important to include. Hobby-type activities should not be included.

### **Your resume isn't limited to one page.**

- The length of the resume may also be different for the experienced candidate. Whereas a two-page document might not be appropriate for a new graduate, it can serve a valuable purpose for the experienced-level professional. Often, the candidate has enough relevant accomplishments and experiences to expand to a second page.

# Resume Suggestions for Young Professionals

It's been a while since you looked at your resume, maybe since your senior year at Lehigh. Now that you are a full-fledged member of the work force, it is good professional practice to keep your resume completely up to date at all times. You just never know when that next opportunity may arise. Here are some tips to help you start the updating process.

## Give it a general once over

- Take a look at the format. It may be time to update how it looks. Is it time to let go of your college days on paper? Grab a highlighter and highlight activities, internships, school awards, courses, leadership positions, the camp counselor job from your freshman year summer, and even that GPA. These are all grist for the resume-cutting mill. Working from the least recent experiences is a good place to start.

## Deciding what goes

- Invariably, you have to add to your resume now, but still keeping to the **one page** "rule" is still applicable at this point in your career. You have to decide what college leadership and activities, awards, courses, etc. still merit space, if at all, on your resume. Chances are it's time for them to go. You now have significant, recent and related experiences and skills sets to include, so creating space is crucial.

## GPA and other education information

- Unless you are applying for graduate school, it's time for the GPA to make its exit from your resume. If you have a master's degree or are currently enrolled in a program, list that degree first, working backwards chronologically. For the sake of space, it also may be time to omit any academic awards, Dean's List, etc. Keep in mind you want to focus on more recent experiences, so these items need to go. Finally, your education section may have to find a new home, closer to the bottom of your resume.

## Objective vs. Professional Summary

- More than likely, your current objective is short, sweet, and to the point. While it served you well as a job-seeking senior, it is now outdated and does not do you justice professionally. You may have reviewed the professional summary information in the Toolkit and felt a little overwhelmed by what you saw. What you want to try is a hybrid of both, more like a summary statement. Make sure you keep it work-centered, not self-centered. Here is an example:

*Public relations professional with five years of experience seeking opportunity in PR consulting firm. Proven expertise in managing PR campaigns across multiple media, working with national and local press and coordinating large-scale events.*



### **Formatting: Reverse Chronological, Functional, and Combination**

- More than likely your current resume is in a reverse chronological format. It's the most common format; however, depending on your experiences and your future goals, you may need to re-evaluate this type. Here's a breakdown of the three formats and why the purposes for each one:

*Reverse chronological:* Use this format to show positive job progression and promotions and if you plan on seeking a new position in the same or similar field. This is most preferred by employers.

*Functional:* This format focuses more on your skill sets, rather than a chronological work history. Use this format if you have time gaps in your employment history, or if you are switching to a new career.

*Combination:* As you may have deduced, this is a combination of the first two formats. Your skills and experiences are first with a listing of your employment history at the end. This format can help highlight the skills you have that will meet the needs of the employer.

### **Additional professional training**

- This can be a new category on your resume, if applicable. Any certifications, licensures, and/or extensive training can go here. Anything that is directly related to the position for which you are applying is better placed in your summary statement.

### **Volunteering/Community involvement**

- Don't forget about these areas! Employers are looking for well-rounded candidates!

### **Quick tips**

When emailing your resume, the body of your email is your cover letter and your resume should be attached. If possible, create a pdf version of your resume, so the integrity of the formatting remains when opened by another reader.

If you are a foreign national, include on your resume that you have your green card or if you are eligible to work in the U.S.

# What is a Professional Summary?

Your professional summary is a fundamental communication tool you will use in networking meetings and interviews. You will also use written versions of it in your cover letters and on your resume.

Your professional summary responds to a request that you are likely to hear often during your conversations with people; for example, tell me about yourself. This question presents you with a great opportunity to succinctly and positively position yourself in the minds of listeners. After you have written your summary, practice it out loud so that it comes out naturally and unrehearsed.

## Guidelines for composing your professional summary

Keep your statement concise – under two minutes. Structure it around the following general categories:

### **Profession**

Begin by stating your professional identity in the present tense (I am a chemical engineer). Create a vivid image by associating yourself with your true profession rather than your previous job title.

### **Expertise**

When expressing your expertise, focus on the competencies and skills. For example, a human resources manager might discuss competencies in employee relations, training and development and benefits administration.

### **Types of organization/environments**

Summarize the organizations or environments in which you have worked, such as a Fortune 100 firm, large chemical engineering company, small consulting firm, government agency or nonprofit entity. You may also mention other positions held such as participating on the board or taking a leadership role in a professional association.

### **Unique strengths**

Articulate the qualities that differentiate you from others in your field, emphasizing a particularly deep and marketable technical knowledge, an exceptional approach to problem solving, or some other specialty or focus that sets you apart.

Source: Lee Hecht Harrison LLC, 2001

# Sample Professional Summaries

## **Engineer**

**Accomplished Six Sigma-Certified Mechanical Engineer** with 5+ years experience in design and systems engineering. Experience includes design, analysis, manufacturing coordination, integration, and technical data development. Successful in hands-on design environment with creative design approaches. Eager to learn new skills and gain knowledge in various technologies and disciplines. Secret Security Clearance.

### **Proven experience in:**

Mechanical & Structural Design Techniques  
Six Sigma Methodology  
Systems Engineering Processes  
Concurrent Engineering  
Integrated Product Teams  
Product Specifications Research

CAD: Pro-E and ANSYS  
GD&T Controls  
Process Evaluation  
Production Performance Tracking  
Trade Studies  
Information Collection

Technical Report Writing  
Design Solutions  
Configuration Management  
Risk Management  
Product Costing & Analysis

## **Manager**

Marketing and Customer Care Operations Executive with 15+ years progressive experience and proven ability to develop and manage large (2,000-person) teams, deliver cost and efficiency improvements, and achieve record-setting revenue growth and profits. Industry experience includes telecommunications, semiconductors, energy, consumer products, and education. Areas of expertise in:

- P&L/Product Management
- Customer Care Operations
- Program/Project Management
- Business Development
- Process Management
- Marketing
- Strategic Planning
- Account Management
- Product Development

## **Teacher**

Master's level teacher with three years of classroom experience working with diverse students including, learning disabled, bipolar, gifted and autistic children from first through fourth grades. Recognized ability to gain and maintain student cooperation, actively engage students in the learning process and meet the varying learning needs of students. Clear understanding and competence in attending to:

Curriculum development  
Special needs students  
Multiple forms of assessment  
Balanced reading instruction  
Learning styles

Lesson planning  
Differentiated instruction  
Multiple intelligences  
Technology integration  
Parent communication

# Writing the Accomplishment-focused Resume

*\*Sample resumes are available in the addendum of the toolkit.*

As most professionals begin to draft a resume, their instinct is to provide a description of their job responsibilities. Although this is an important element of your resume, you will want to put the focus on the accomplishments or outcomes that you have achieved in your roles. When detailing your most current position, aim to provide your prospective employer with two pieces of information:

**Responsibility statement** – provide a brief overview of your job description. Summarize information from your job description and special projects that will be of interest to a prospective employer. Use one paragraph for your most recent position and one sentence for previous positions.

**Accomplishment statements** – follow this paragraph with bulleted statements that demonstrate your accomplishments/outcomes achieved in your most recent position. These statements should demonstrate your achievements and contributions to your organization. Aim for 4-8 bulleted accomplishments for your current position and 1-3 accomplishments for previous positions.

## **Example of a responsibility statement followed by bulleted accomplishments:**

Provide leadership in the development, standards alignment, maintenance and revision of the K-12 educational program. Monitor renewal cycle, new program proposals, and text and resource adoptions. Co-drafted three year plan for standards implementation.

- Launched district-wide “Walk Through” initiative for the collection of qualitative data on standards goals. Collect data from 1,500-2,000 students annually.
- Led the development and implementation of K-12 assessment plan. Developed a five-year approach to classroom, district and standardized assessments. Launched K-12 benchmark assessments in language arts and math.
- Designed, developed and supervised the implementation of the K-12 ESL program, including policy design, program structure, curriculum resources and assessments.
- Coordinated the development of an academic assistance program for middle and high school students performing at the basic or below basic level of proficiency on PSSA assessments.
- Developed and coordinated annual summer “Bridge” program as an early intervention program for at-risk elementary readers.
- Coordinated the development and implementation of middle school adventure-based PE program.
- Initiated and developed teacher-on-assignment position to fortify communication, support, and accountability for staff development initiatives and standards-based reform.
- Coordinated the development of curriculum and instruction, professional development, and technology departments’ content on RTM web page to increase public awareness of district initiatives.

# Writing a Keyword Resume

Since hiring managers may receive literally thousands of electronic resumes in response to a single job posting, it is important that your resume stands out. Today, nearly half of all mid-sized companies and almost all large companies are using computerized applicant tracking systems.

- Keywords are the nouns or short phrases that describe your experience and education that might be used to find your resume in a keyword search of a resume database. They are the essential knowledge, abilities and skills required to do your job.
- Begin by reviewing sample descriptions of the job you wish to obtain and for any jobs you have held in the past. If you are presently employed, contact your human resource department for a copy of job description(s).
- Make a list of the keywords you have determined are important for your particular job search and then list synonyms for those words. As you incorporate these words into the sentences of your resume, check them off.
- Craft your professional summary statement carefully and include key words that match the needs typically requested in your field. Maximize the use of industry-specific terminology and abbreviations. Recruiters will instruct the search engine dictionary to search for “buzz” words.
- Acronyms and abbreviations can either hurt or help you, depending on how you use them. It is better to spell out the abbreviation if there could be any possible confusion. However, if a series of initials is so well known that it would be recognized by nearly everyone in your industry and would not likely be confused with a real word, then the keyword search will probably use those initials (e.g. – CPA). When in doubt, always spell it out at least one time on your resume. A computer only needs to see the combination one time for it to be considered a “hit” in a keyword search.
- There is no such thing as a perfect listing of keywords for any single job. The computerized applicant tracking programs used by most companies allow the recruiter or hiring manager to personalize his or her list for each job opening, so it is an evolving process. You will never know whether you have listed every keyword possible, so focus instead on getting on paper as many related skills as possible.
- Always be sure to follow the instructions provided by the employer on the preferred way to send your document electronically (attachment, e-form, etc.).

Source: Adapted from [eresumes.com](http://eresumes.com)

# Drafting your Cover Letter: A Standard Outline

Your Name  
Address  
City, State, ZIP Code  
Date

Name  
Title  
Company  
City, State, ZIP Code

Dear Mr./Ms. \_\_\_\_\_

**1<sup>st</sup> Paragraph (Purpose)** – State why you are writing and the type of position or field of work in which you are interested. Indicate how you learned of this position. If there is not a specific position available, indicate how your interest originated. Demonstrate briefly your knowledge of the specific company.

**2<sup>nd</sup> Paragraph (Background and qualifications)** – Refer the employer to an enclosed resume and/or application form. If you have related experience or specialized training, elaborate on the details that would be of special interest to the employer. Be as specific as you can about your qualifications. Explain to your reader where and how you developed these qualifications. Your goal here is to match your skills to the employer's needs; explain how you would fit into the position and the organization. Be sure to stress accomplishments and achievements rather than job duties and responsibilities. Make sure you only *highlight* items on your resume, not reiterate the entire document.

**3<sup>rd</sup> Paragraph (Request for action)** – Close your letter by briefly restating how your qualifications match the position. Express your interest in further discussing your background and the position with the employer. Write when you will be calling to ensure your application materials were received. Finally, include a statement expressing your appreciation for the employer's consideration.

Sincerely,

(Signature)

Name

# Drafting your *Targeted* Cover Letter – A Standard Outline

Your Name  
Address  
City, State, ZIP Code  
Date

Name  
Title  
Company  
City, State, ZIP Code

Dear Mr./Ms. \_\_\_\_\_

**1<sup>st</sup> Paragraph (Purpose)** – State why you are writing and the type of position or field of work in which you are interested. Indicate how you learned of this position. If there is not a specific position available, indicate how your interest originated. Demonstrate briefly your knowledge of the specific company.

**2<sup>nd</sup> Paragraph (Link your skills to the position)** – This paragraph should answer the question: “How does this candidate match the skills I need for the position.” Your goal is to review the job postings and identify the top 4-6 skills requested in the position. Bullet the first skill and then provide 2-4 sentences demonstrating how you have used these skills in the past.

Skill one:

Skill two:

Skill three:

Skill four:

**3<sup>rd</sup> Paragraph (Request for action)** – Close your letter by briefly restating how your qualifications match the position. Express your interest in further discussing your background and the position with the employer. Write when you will be calling to ensure your application materials were received. Finally, include a statement expressing your appreciation for the employer’s consideration.

Sincerely,

**NAME**

Street Address, City, State, Zip  
E-mail/Phone

I learned of your opening for a Client Solutions Division Manager position (Career Code: 4895BR) advertised on your web site. I have years of experience in the industry and am interested to transfer my skills to a position in market research.

I am pleased to highlight how my skills meet your needs:

- **Bachelor's degree in Marketing or related fields:** I have a BS degree from Lehigh University with a marketing major. I also recently received certification in marketing research by the University of Georgia to further enhance my skills.
- **Project/account management experience:** From 2001 to 2006 I managed all operations of accounts for Fortune 500 clients such as Sears, Berwick Offray, and Nestle Waters. During this period, my employer's stock value has grown by 600% (Dow Transports grew 163%, UPS grew 139%). My accounts earned over \$1 million in revenue and over \$139,000 profit in 2005.
- **Experience in the consumer packaged goods (CPG) industry:** I have extensive experience servicing CPG clients such as Wal Mart, Proctor and Gamble, and Nestle Waters.  
**Strong analytic and quantitative abilities, aptitude for numbers.** My position required extensive analysis and dissemination of quantitative data, requiring accuracy and attention to detail.
- **MSWord, Excel and PowerPoint skills.** I have over five years of experience using Word, Excel, and PowerPoint.  
**Excellent communication skills.** My experience includes extensive daily communication by phone and e-mail to diverse groups including clients, employees, management, and vendors.
- **Sales and service orientation.** My position was intensely service-oriented and time-sensitive. Clients required service to be on schedule at least 98%. I also have over 4 years of sales experience as an account representative with Washington National Insurance.
- **Strong organizational skills. A high level of initiative.** I can demonstrate these skills in person as well as discuss specifically how I can help your client and your organization.

I look forward to meeting with you to personally discuss how my qualifications meet your needs. Thank you for your careful consideration.

Sincerely,

Name



# Developing your Transition Statement

Your transition statement should answer this question: “Why are you looking for a new position?” It is a thoughtfully prepared statement that you will use to tell your prospective employer about your transition.

An effective transition statement is brief, non-defensive and positive. Always avoid speaking negatively about your current or previous employer and manager. When applicable, it lets others know that your departure was not due to any fault of yours.

You will use this statement when networking and interviewing, so practice saying your statement to become more comfortable in answering the question of why you are job searching.

Sample Transition Statements:

## Sample #1

*“As a result of the merger of ABC Industries and XYZ Corporation, 400 positions were eliminated, including the position of \_\_\_\_\_, which I held. I am now exploring opportunities that will utilize my management experience, as well as my \_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_ background in the \_\_\_\_\_ industry.”*

## Sample #2

*“The recent acquisition of \_\_\_\_\_ company by \_\_\_\_\_ company created a number of duplicate functions and positions. Because of these duplications, a number of positions have been eliminated, including the position of \_\_\_\_\_ which I held. I am now looking to join the marketing team of a company in the \_\_\_\_\_ industry and look forward to bring my five years of experience in \_\_\_\_\_, \_\_\_\_\_, and \_\_\_\_\_ to a company.”*

## STEP THREE: TARGET COMPANIES

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# What is a Marketing Plan? – The Foundation of your Job Search

In order to conduct an effective job search, you must know what specific employers or organizations you are trying to reach. Think of your job search as similar to your college applications. Your first step was to determine what colleges/universities fit your interests and needs. Once you identified these institutions, then you applied. Similarly, you want to focus your search so the time that you spend job searching is time well spent. This phase of your search will take time; however, it will enable you to conduct a more proactive, time-efficient search.

Steps to defining your target market:

- Your target market is defined by four factors: industry or type of organization, size, location and the culture of the organization.
- Your target market must be large, but manageable. Research indicates that the average person in a job search speaks to 20-30 different hiring managers at 20-30 different companies. For this reason, it is suggested that you target 40-50 companies.
- If your target market is too specific, you reduce your odds for success. On the other hand, if your target market is too large you conduct a search that is difficult to manage.
- Consider where you will be happy working. As you define your target market, ask yourself two important questions: What organizations are most likely to be interested in someone like me? What organizations most interested me?
- The development of your target list is clearly one of the most important steps in your search. This step will focus your job search, maximize your networking meetings and also allow you to evaluate if your search is realistic (i.e. – is your search too specific or too broad; again aim for 50 companies or organizations).
- Your target list of employers is a central topic of conversation during all networking meetings. What do you say to when speaking to your contacts? I'm looking for a marketing position, do you know of any openings? Most likely, your contact's answer is no. Simply telling your contacts that you are unemployed and looking for a position, can make them uncomfortable. However, making your target list the central topic of your conversation puts your contacts at ease. Ask your contacts some of the following questions: *What companies are most open to someone with my background and skills? Which organizations have cultures that are most compatible with my values?*
- Your target list can lead to additional referrals. One of the best outcomes of these conversations is that they can lead to introductions to new people – expanding your search.

Adapted from "Managing Your Search Project," Lee Hecht Harrison

# Guide to Researching Companies

Employers value job seekers who know key information about the company because that knowledge demonstrates your interest and enthusiasm for the company and for the job.

## Step 1: When to do research

For most job seekers, there are three critical times to conduct research:

- When you are just starting your job-search and looking to identify key companies in your profession or industry, or even in a specific geographic location.
- The second critical time is when you are applying to an employer.
- When you have been invited to a job interview.

## Step 2: Determine what information you want

You are usually conducting research on two levels:

- The first level of research deals with general company information. The types of information you might gather here include: products and services, history and corporate culture, organizational mission and goals, key financial statistics, organizational structure (divisions, subsidiaries, etc.) and locations (main and branch).
- The second level of research deals with employment issues and includes such things as career paths and advancement opportunities, benefits, diversity initiatives and other human resources functions.
- Lastly, you may also research the industry, key competitors and countries where the company has offices.

## Step 3: Starting points

A number of media have already done the research for you – and have produced various “best” lists – best companies for women, best private companies, best employee-owned companies, etc.

Go to Quintessential Career’s [The Best Companies for Job-Seekers](#) section to take advantage of these short cuts.

## Step 4: Where to find company information

The single best resource of company information is the company’s Web site.

Sometimes the information you’ll find on a company’s Web site is limited. While the trend is certainly for companies to place more and more information on their sites, private companies (not traded on any stock exchange) tend to have less need to provide sensitive information. What can you do in these situations? The next best solution is to read outside reviews and profiles of companies.

Among the two best sources for gathering information on public companies are [BusinessWeek Online: Company Research](#) and [Hoover’s Online](#). Through *Experience Alumni* you have a subscription to Hoover’s.

If you are interested in working for a nonprofit organization or association, the best research tools to use include Quintessential Career’s [Volunteering and Non-Profit Career Resources](#) and [General Professional Organizations and Associations](#).

Finding information about private companies – and the vast majority of companies in the U.S. are private – is a bit trickier. Two good sources are the [Forbes Largest Private Companies](#) list and [The Inc. 5000](#) list of America's fastest growing privately-held companies.

Another great source of company information comes from articles and stories published in various media outlets. There are literally thousands of media outlets, from national news and business publications to specialized industry-specific publications. A good source for finding media that cover your industry is [NewsLink](#).

### **Step 5: Getting industry information**

The next level of sophistication in conducting research is getting a handle on the competitive nature of the industry (or industries) within which your list of companies operate. It is within the competitive environment that you might be able to spot trends that are either opportunities or threats for your prospective employers.

The best Web-based source for industry information is [Hoover's Industry Snapshots](#), where you'll find profiles, resources, headlines and more for major industry and service sectors. Another good source is [Industry Portals](#), a listing of links to many different industries.

The best print source is a U.S. government publication: *U.S. Industrial Outlook*, from the Bureau of Industrial Economics.

### **Step 6: Gathering country and place-of-living information**

The final step in your research process may be to gather information about specific parts of the U.S. or other countries – to help you decide if you want to relocate to where a prospective employer is located.

For conducting research within the U.S., try [Sperling's BestPlaces](#), where you'll find a wealth of data, statistics and comparisons about U.S. cities and counties.

For developing a better understanding of locations outside the U.S, we recommend the [CIA World Factbook](#), which contains detailed snapshots, compiled by the U.S. government, of just about every country in the world.

# Marketing Plan Template

## PROFESSIONAL OBJECTIVE

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## Preferred job titles

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## PROFESSIONAL SUMMARY

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## Skills

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## TARGET MARKET

Geographic location: \_\_\_\_\_

Size of organization: \_\_\_\_\_

Industry or type of organization: \_\_\_\_\_

Industry:

Initial Target List

Industry:

Industry:

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# Sample Marketing Plan

Name  
Address  
Telephone Number  
E-mail address

## Senior Environmental, Health & Safety Manager

Regulatory Affairs                      Internal EH&S Consulting/Advising  
Compliance Auditing                  EH&S Management

### Professional Summary

Experienced in advising management, directing programs and personnel, managing national and international remediation projects, and conducting corporate-wide compliance audits in both Fortune 500 companies and small consulting firms. I have managed projects and departments, conducted acquisition and divestiture reviews, set direction for EH&S policy and delivered results affecting the bottom line. Competencies include:

<u>Management</u>	<u>Auditing</u>	<u>Remediation</u>	<u>Training</u>
Internal/external staffing	ISO 14000	Site assessment	EH&S program leader
Communication	Corporate program development	Regulatory agencies program	Audit team leader
Group productivity	Corporate program tracking	Consultant bid process	Site audit program
Coaching	Corrective action	Investigative technologies	Site instructor
Leading teams	Follow-through	Testing lab issues	

### Target Market with Sample Target Companies

Geographic area: NJ, NY and CT within a radius of 35 miles from zip code 07013.  
Types of industries: chemical and pharmaceutical manufacturing; consulting firms  
Size of organizations: manufacturing – over 1,000 employees; consulting – any size.

#### Pharmaceutical

Aquatics Pharmaceuticals Corp.  
Berringe Laboratories, Inc.  
Creskill, Inc.  
Forum Laboratories, Inc.  
Garden State Laboratories, Inc.  
Merris Limited  
OrganicTron, Inc.  
Patson, Inc.  
Pharmaceutica Corporation  
Rounder & Cole, Inc.  
R.P Sloan Corporation  
Source: Lee Hecht Harrison LLC 2001

#### Chemicals

Alpha Corp.  
Amaroco Incorporated  
B & J Biosciences  
BAK Gases Inc.  
Croton, Inc.  
EcoBioSphere Corp.  
Exact Chemicals, Inc.  
General Chemical Corporation  
Hartford Specialty Chemicals  
ITC Specialty Products  
Matthews Gas Products, Inc.

#### Consultants

Chemicals Management, Inc.  
Concurrent Medical Centers  
Cybertechnical Group, Inc.  
Edgarson International  
Gomez, Koffman, P.C.  
Henry Drabble Associates  
IZ Radiation Protection, Inc.  
L. Bonifanti Engineering, Inc.  
Larriff Associates  
McCauley Associates, Inc.  
New Environmental Assoc.

# Proactive vs. Passive Job Search Strategies

Strategy	Passive Job Search	Proactive Job Search
<b>Hours per week</b>	2-3 hours	20-25 hours when unemployed 5-8 hours if working full time.
<b>Job Boards</b>	Use large job boards only, such as Monster.com & Careerbuilder.com.	Regular use of large job boards plus 2-3 “niche” job boards that focus on industry/geo preferences.
<b>Search Firm</b>	Wait for firms to contact you.	Research & identify 6-8 firms that focus on your functional & geographical preferences.
<b>Networking</b>	Minimal time is spent connecting with people – more time spent applying online.	75% of job searching time is spent identifying & reaching out to networks.
<b>Networking online</b>	Joined LinkedIn.com, but don't know how to use it.	Network online for 2-3 hours/week. Create your profile, invite & search contacts.
<b>Focus</b>	Randomly apply to positions.	Focus your search by industry, job title or geographic area.
<b>Targeting companies</b>	Randomly apply to positions online.	Research & identify a target list of 30-40 employers. Refer to the target list when networking.
<b>Professional Associations</b>	Listed on your resume.	Attended and/or present at annual conferences to raise your profile. Build contacts and utilize membership directory for networking
<b>Temporary Agencies</b>		Submit your resume to 2-3 firms. Many firms will do temp to perm hiring.
<b>Volunteering</b>		Allows you to gain experience while making contacts in the field. Check out <a href="http://idealist.org">idealist.org</a> .

## STEP FOUR: NETWORK

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### Sample Introductory E-mail – Request for a Networking Meeting

Dear \_\_\_\_\_,

*I am a fellow Lehigh graduate (Degree, Major, Year of Graduation) with \_\_\_\_ years of career experience in the \_\_\_\_\_ industry and I am looking for feedback on transferring my experience into a career in the \_\_\_\_\_ industry. Most of my background is in the \_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_ areas and currently I serve as a \_\_\_\_\_ (title) in a \_\_\_\_\_ firm which serves \_\_\_\_\_ clients.*

*I would appreciate 20 minutes of your time on a phone call to explore whether my skills and experiences match the requirements of the \_\_\_\_\_ industry.*

*I have attached my resume for your reference. Please call me at the number below or reply to this e-mail suggesting a convenient day and time for me to call.*

*Thank you very much!*

#### Important tips:

1. This email short and to the point! A longer email could result in your potential contact deleting your email.
2. Make your request specific and ask for a brief phone call. Avoid a vague request such as “Any guidance you can provide would be appreciated.” Your contact doesn’t know what this means and most likely won’t respond.
3. When networking with alumni, cast a wide net. Do not e-mail 5 alumni and expect all 5 to respond to you.



# How to Structure and Maximize your Networking Meetings

The **S.M.A.R.T.** meeting includes five steps:

**S**ummarize your message (2 minutes) – Use your professional summary and professional objective from your *Marketing Plan*. Describe your professional objective – give two or three examples of typical positions in your field. State why you believe you are qualified.

**M**arketing Plan (3-4 minutes) – Introduce the key elements of your marketing plan. Move to a description of your targeted industries, your geographical and organizational size preferences and explain why you have made these decisions. Introduce the list of targeted companies that meet your criteria. “Some of the organizations that I am particularly interested in are \_\_\_\_\_, \_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_. The \_\_\_\_\_ industry particularly interests me. I’ve prepared a list of organizations I want to investigate as possible employers. Would you be willing to review this list with me and see if you know anything about my target organizations?”

**A**sk Questions (10-15 minutes) – Move from identifying target companies to asking questions about them and discussing each category. Prior to the meeting, make a list of questions in order to direct the conversation and collect information about target organizations, including the names of any relevant inside contacts, as well as the company’s strengths, problems and people.

**R**eferrals (3-6 minutes) – Once you have asked the questions you came to ask and gathered information, you may specifically request referrals. This is easier if your contact has already mentioned names. You can now repeat some of those names and ask for an introduction. Always ask for introductions to others who might have more information on the organizations you discussed. And ask for introductions to target company insiders, including hiring managers, when possible. (Aim for two referrals per conversation).

**T**rade Information (2-3 minutes) – Always try to give your conversation partner useful information. Throughout the conversation be on the alert for opportunities to trade the information you have for information your contact has. You may know about the industry, other organizations, solutions other organizations have found to problems mentioned by your contact, contacts with professional groups, suppliers and other resources.

## **Closing the meeting**

Conclude the meeting with your thanks and leave at or before the agreed upon time. If you stay beyond the agreed upon time, your contact may allow it out of courtesy, but may feel less inclined to give you referrals. Arrange any necessary follow up. Explain that you will inform your contact of what happens in the referral meetings and make sure you send a thank you note or email.

Source: Lee Hecht Harrison LLL – 2001

# Sample Informational Interview Questions

## Preparing for the position

- What credentials or degrees are required for entry into this kind of work?
- What types of prior experience are absolutely essential?
- How did you prepare yourself for this work?
- Is an advanced degree, such as an MBA, useful in your company?

## Understanding the industry

- What trends affect your company's direction?
- Who are the company's competitors and how are their actions predicted or handled?
- What are the professional organizations in the industry?

## Learning about the function

- Describe how you spend your time during a typical work week.
- What skills or talents are most essential for effective job performance in this job?
- What are the most satisfying aspects of your work? What are the most frustrating?
- What are some of the challenges and decisions you face in your position? And what skills are required for handling them?
- If you were to leave this kind of work, what factors would contribute to your decision?

## Balancing work/life

- What obligations does your work put upon your personal time?
- What hours do you normally work? Is overtime common and, if so, is it regular, seasonal or sporadic? Is there flexible scheduling?
- How often do people in your line of work change jobs?

## Managing your career

- If things develop as you'd like, what are your career goals?
- How rapidly is your present career field growing?
- How would you describe or estimate future prospects?
- If the work you do was suddenly eliminated, what different types of work do you feel that you could do?
- What types of employers hire people with your background; what are some representative job titles?

### **Searching for positions in the field**

- How do people find out about available positions? Are they advertised on Web sites (which?), by word of mouth, by the human resource department?
- If you were to hire someone to work with you today, which of the following factors would be most important in your hiring decision and why? Educational credentials; past work experience; specific skills, talents; applicant's knowledge of your organization, your department, your job; other \_\_\_\_\_.

### **Advising professionals new to the field**

- How well suited is my background for this type of work?
- Can you suggest other related fields?
- What educational preparation do you feel would be best?
- What types of experiences, paid employment or otherwise, would you most strongly recommend?
- If you had it to do over again, what would you do differently to prepare for this occupation?

### **Networking in the field**

- Based on our conversation today, can you suggest other people who may be able to provide additional information?
- Would you suggest a few of these people who might be willing to see me?
- May I have permission to use your name when I contact them?

### **Learning about the employer**

- What is the size of the organization/geographic locations?
- What is the organizational structure?
- Explain to me what the organization does.
- How would you describe the work climate?
- What is the average length of time employees stay with the organization?
- What types of formal or on-the-job training does the organization provide?
- How often are performance reviews given?
- What are the arrangements for transferring from one division to another?
- Is the company planning to expand, maintain or downsize?
- How does it compare with its competitors?
- What new product lines/services are being developed?

# Speaking to Hiring Managers

Lee Hecht Harrison, one of the largest outplacement firms in the country, recommends a particular approach when speaking to or meeting with hiring managers: The **S.E.L.L. Approach** is designed for use with contacts inside your target companies, especially hiring managers and those above that level.

**The S.E.L.L. approach includes the following four steps:**

**S**ummarize your message – Use your professional objective, professional summary. (When necessary, use your transition statement.)

**E**xplore their needs – Collecting further information about the needs of the targeted organization and of this particular hiring manager is central to this discussion. This information will enable you to be even more effective in your continuing pursuit of the organization, both in this meeting and after it.

**L**ink your benefits to their needs – Highlight the competencies you have that fit the need of the organization.

**L**everage a next meeting – Use information obtained in this meeting to arrange a follow-up call or meeting.

# Types of Interviews

## **Traditional Interviews**

The traditional job interview uses broad-based questions such as, "Why do you want to work for this company" and "Tell me about your strengths and weaknesses." Employers are looking for the answer to three questions: does the job seeker have the skills and abilities to perform the job; does the job seeker possess the enthusiasm and work ethic that the employer expects; and will the job seeker be a team player and fit into the organization.

## **Behavior-based Interviews**

The behavioral job interview is based on the theory that past performance is the best indicator of future behavior and uses questions that probe specific past behaviors, such as: "Tell me about a time where you confronted an unexpected problem," or "Tell me about an experience when you failed to achieve a goal," and "Give me a specific example of a time when you managed several projects at once." Job seekers need to prepare for these interviews by recalling scenarios that fit the various types of behavioral interviewing questions. Expect interviewers to have several follow-up questions and probe for details that explore all aspects of a given situation or experience.

## **Case Interviews**

The case interview is used primarily by management-consulting firms and investment-banking companies and is increasingly being used by other types of corporations as part of the job-interviewing process. Some firms use case interviews only for MBA-level job candidates, while others use them for undergraduates, as well.

MIT's Career Handbook defines a case interview as an interview in which "you are introduced to a business dilemma facing a particular company. You are asked to analyze the situation, identify key business issues and discuss how you would address the problems involved."

Case interviews are designed to scrutinize the skills that are especially important in management consulting and related fields: quantitative, analytical, communications, listening and interpersonal skills; the ability to problem-solve, think quickly under pressure and to synthesize findings; creativity, flexibility, business acumen, keen insight, professional demeanor and powers of persuasion.

## **Group/Panel Interviews**

A group or board style interview involves more than one interviewer questioning a candidate. Your goal is to establish a rapport with each interviewer by using direct eye contact. A group interview will require you to adopt more of a presentation style to your questions and answers. Group interviews are conducted for a variety of reasons: to allow all people involved in the hiring to interview you at the same time; to get a cross section of opinions; to see how you fit into a particular group; and to see how you handling speaking with several people at the same time.

# What is Behavioral Interviewing?

It is estimated that 80 percent of all organizations now use a mode of interviewing called Situational- or Behavioral-based Interviewing. Behavioral interviewing is a technique employed by interviewers to evaluate your past behavior in order to predict your future behavior in a particular position.

Employers use the behavioral interview technique to evaluate a candidate's experiences and behaviors so they can determine the applicant's potential for success. Employers who use BBI prepare extensive analyses of their positions. The interviewer identifies job-related experiences, behaviors, knowledge, skills and abilities that the company has determined are desirable in a particular position.

The employer then structures very pointed questions to elicit detailed responses aimed at determining if the candidate possesses the desired characteristics. Questions (often not even framed as a question) typically start out: "Tell about a time..." or "Describe a situation..." Many employers use a rating system to evaluate selected criteria during the interview.

Answering behavioral questions can be challenging, however thorough preparation will assist you in answering them successfully. Utilizing the S.T.A.R. model, found on page 29, will help you construct an organized, specific, thoughtful and concise answer.

# How to Prepare for a Behavioral Interview

1. Analyze the position you are being interviewed for; determine the skills required.
2. Evaluate and reflect upon your background to identify your skills and experiences related to the position.
3. Identify six to eight examples from your past experience where you demonstrated top behaviors and skills that employers typically seek. Think in terms of examples that will highlight your top selling points.
4. Half your examples should be totally positive, such as accomplishments or meeting goals. The other half should be situations that started out negatively but either ended positively or you made the best of the outcome. Vary your examples; don't take them all from just one area of your life. Use fairly recent examples. If you're a college student, examples from high school may be too long ago. In fact, Accenture specifies that candidates give examples of behaviors demonstrated within the last year.
5. Describe your examples in story form or "S.T.A.R. stories" (see page 28) prior to your interview that demonstrate your leadership, teamwork, communication, initiative, etc. Each "story" should explain the situation, task, action and a positive result (S.T.A.R.).
6. Be specific in your stories. Giving generalizations will not help the employer understand and evaluate your behavior and skills. Employers want to know what you *did* do rather than what you *would* do in a given situation.
7. Be prepared to provide examples of occasions when results were different than expected. Your skill in handling failure as well as success will be probed.
8. Be prepared for questions asking for more detail than you've already given.
9. Identify three to five top selling points – attributes that set you apart from other candidates – and be sure to make the opportunity to point them out during the interview.
10. Your task is to identify qualities relevant to the position and identify/prepare relevant and effective behavioral stories.

## S.T.A.R. Interview Technique

<p><b>S</b>ituation and <b>T</b>ask</p>	<p>Describe the situation that you were in and the task that you needed to accomplish. You must describe a specific project or situation, not a generalized description of what you have done in the past. Be sure to give enough detail for the interviewer to understand. This situation can be from your current position, a previous job, from a volunteer experience or any relevant event.</p>
<p><b>A</b>ction you took</p>	<p>Describe the action you took and be sure to keep the focus on you. Even if you are discussing a group project or effort, describe what you did – not the efforts of the team. Don't tell what you might do, tell what you did.</p>
<p><b>R</b>esults you achieved</p>	<p>What happened? How did the project end? What did you accomplish? What did you learn?</p>

Adapted from Quintcareers.com

# Sample Behavioral Interview Questions

## **Communication**

- Tell me about a time when the ability to communicate effectively was critical to the success of a task or project. How did you handle it?
- Describe a situation you observed or were a part of where you feel communication was handled particularly well by someone else. What did they do? Why do you think it was effective?

*Interviewer will evaluate your bias for written or oral communication and match this to the needs of the position. Interviewer will observe the role of listening and your description of effective communication. Interviewer will assess your ability to communicate in a clear, concise and understandable way.*

## **Initiative**

- Describe a situation where initiative on the part of yourself or someone else was critical. Why was it important? How was it handled?
- Tell me about a situation where your own initiative made a difference in the outcome.  
*Interviewer will determine how you value pro-activity over re-activity. Interviewer will assess judgment in the selection of the situation calling for initiative and the activities used to respond to it. Interviewer will determine your willingness to go beyond a given parameter if that is what is required to do the job.*

## **Behavioral Flexibility**

- Describe an example of a time when you had to approach several people for support or cooperation, whom you considered quite different from one another. What did you have to do differently with each person? How did you know what to do differently?
- Describe a situation in which your first attempt to sell an idea failed. How did you react to this? What other approaches did you try?

*Interviewer will assess your ability to cooperate and negotiate with different personalities.*

## **Leadership/Influence**

- Tell me about one of the toughest groups you have had to get cooperation from. Did you have formal authority? What did you do?
- Of the people you have encountered or know about in public positions of leadership, who do you look to as a model and why?

*Interviewer will assess your ability and willingness to influence and be influenced by others. Interviewer will determine your willingness to confront issues honestly. Interviewer will determine to what degree you model the behaviors expected from others.*



### **Planning/Organizing**

- Describe a task or project you were in charge of and tell me how you set it up and followed it through.
- Tell me about a situation you observed or were a part of where there were time and/or resource constraints. What happened? Why?
- Describe a situation that required things to be done at the same time. How did you handle the situation? What was the result?

*Interviewer will assess your recognition of the need to plan. Interviewer will determine your effectiveness in gathering and organizing information. Interviewer will assess your willingness and ability to prioritize. Interviewer will assess your identification of potential obstacles and ways of dealing with them. Interviewer will assess the candidate's effective use of time and resources.*

### **Problem Solving/Decision Making**

- Describe a situation where a prompt and accurate decision on your part was critical. What did you consider in reaching your decision?
- Describe two examples of good decisions you have made in the last six months. What were the alternatives? Why were they good decisions?
- Tell me about a decision you made in the past that later proved to be a wrong decision. Why was it wrong? What would you do differently now, if anything, in making that decision?

*Interviewer will assess your willingness and ability to gather and analyze information. Interviewer will determine your anticipation and consideration of potential problems/opportunities. Interviewer will assess your judgment and logical assumptions in light of what was known prior to the decision. Interviewer will assess your readiness to make a decision and act on it.*

### **Sales Ability/Persuasiveness**

- What are some of the best ideas you have sold to others? What was your approach?
- Describe a selling experience you have had. Give me a specific example of a successful or unsuccessful sale. Why was it successful or unsuccessful?

*Interviewer will assess the candidate's ability to select the appropriate style for the situation. Interviewer will assess your ability to gain agreement or acceptance of his/her idea or plan.*

### **Sensitivity/Team Effectiveness**

- When dealing with individuals or groups, how do you determine when you are pushing too hard?
- Tell me about a team where you were the leader. How did you promote the effectiveness of your team? What were the results?
- Describe some situations where you wished you had acted differently with someone at work/school. What did you do? What happened?

*Interviewer will assess your consideration of decisions on other team members. Interviewer will consider your objectivity in looking at different points of view and a willingness to confront difference of opinion from other team members.*

## **Work Standards**

- Is there a particular experience that stands out as one you never want to repeat because you did not meet your normal standards of performance? What and why?
- What is the best job you have ever done on an assignment, the standard of your own performance that you used as a benchmark? (The candidate should be specific about the task; the interviewer will not settle for a general discussion of what is good.)

*Interviewer will determine the degree to which poor performance is unacceptable and will determine your motivation to do a good job consistently. Recruiter will assess work habits and methods to achieve results. Interviewer will assess the effectiveness of the candidate's critique of his/her own performance as the means of self-improvement.*

Below is a list of additional behaviors that employers may evaluate during a behavior-based interview:

Adaptability	Analysis	Attention to detail
Control	Decisiveness	Delegation
Development of subordinates	Energy	Entrepreneurial
Equipment operation	Financial/Analytical	Impact
Independence	Influence	Innovation
Insight	Integrity	Judgment
Listening	Management	Motivation
Negotiation	Participative	Process orientation
Rapport building	Resilience	Presentation skills
Risk taking	Strategic analysis	Tenacity

# Best Questions to Ask on your Interview

Toward the end of the interview, the interviewer will give you the opportunity to ask questions. You **MUST** ask a least three questions; if you are unprepared with questions this signals the interviewer that you aren't interested in the position or the company. On the other hand, do not ask questions where the answer is obvious or readily available – or when the topic has already been thoroughly discussed in the interview. We recommend preparing 10-15 questions prior to the interview. This way, you will have way more than you need and will not have a problem asking at least three. Finally, never ask about salary and benefit issues until those subjects are raised by the employer.

## **Questions for HR professionals**

- How do you describe the philosophy of the organization?
- How would you describe the work environment?
- Can you tell me about the people with whom I'll be working most closely?
- If I were hired for the position, what would be my priorities during the first 6-12 months?
- What are my prospects for growth? If I do a good job, what is a logical next step?
- I have enjoyed the opportunity to interview you with you and your team and I am very interested in this opportunity. I feel my skills and experience would be a good match for this position. What is the next step in the interview process?

## **Questions for hiring managers**

- What are the organization's three most important goals?
- What are the department's goals and how do they align with the company's mission?
- Can you explain the company's organizational structure?
- What do you see as the most important opportunities for improvement in the area I hope to join?
- What attracted you to working for this organization?
- What are the major concerns that need to be immediately addressed in this position?
- What is currently the most pressing business issue or challenge for the company/dept.?
- What is the organization's plan for the next five years, and how does this department or division fit in?
- Will we be expanding or bringing on new products or new services that I should be aware of?
- What is the company's policy on attending professional development activities such as seminars and workshops?

## **Questions about the hiring manager's management style**

- How would you describe your own management style and the type of employee who works well with you?
- What are the most important traits you look for in a direct report?
- What personal qualities or characteristics do you most value?

### **Questions about general business objectives**

- What are the organization's primary financial objectives and performance measures?
- What metrics are used to monitor the planning process as well as the results?
- What kinds of strategic planning systems, if any, are in place?
- Is the company more of an early adapter of technology or content to first let other companies work the bugs out and then implement a more mature version of the technology?
- How does this position contribute to the company's goals, productivity or profits?

### **Questions for headhunters, recruiters and staffing agencies**

- How did you find me?
- Are you dealing with the client's HR people, or do you have direct contact with the hiring manager?
- When will I find out the name of the principal or client company?
- May I have a written job description?
- Where is the position located?
- Where is the company headquartered?
- To whom does the position report?
- Why is the position open?
- What can you tell me about the person who will be interviewing me?
- What is his or her position, title, management style?
- Who will make the final hiring decision?
- After you present my resume, when can I expect to hear from you regarding the status of this position?

### **Questions for private companies**

- How is the company funded? Who are the investors?
- How are corporate decisions made?
- Has the company considered filing for an IPO (initial public offering?)
- Has the company been approached for a merger or acquisition?

### **Questions about information technology**

- Do developers have little contact with the business unit or significant contact?
- What are the biggest technical challenges ahead for this department/company?

Source: "201 Best Questions to Ask on Your Interview" by John Kador

# Sample Follow-up Thank You

Your Name  
Address  
City, State, ZIP Code  
Date

Name  
Title  
Company  
City, State, ZIP Code

Dear Mr./Ms. \_\_\_\_\_

Thank you for taking the time to speak with me about the corporate engineering position at \_\_\_\_\_ company. I have a better understanding of the expectations, performance, and culture at \_\_\_\_\_ company after breakfast and our meeting at the end of the day.

I like to reaffirm my interest for this position. I think this is a challenging and unique position and I am excited for the potential opportunity. In addition to my design experience, I also have over 8 years of HYSYS simulation experience and I am very familiar with data gathering software similar to the PI system. I have been exposed to both Six Sigma methodologies and model predictive control using Aspen's DMC+. I feel I also have a strong aptitude in learning processes quickly, adapting to technology, challenging the status quo, and focusing on cost reduction and optimization.

Once again, thank you. I look forward to hearing from you in the upcoming weeks.

Sincerely,

## Key Negotiation Techniques

1. Delay salary and benefit negotiations for as long as possible in the interview process.
2. You'll have the greatest negotiation leverage between the time the employer makes the original offer and the time you accept the final offer.
3. Don't negotiate at the time the initial job offer is made.
  - Thank the employer for the offer.
  - Express your strong interest and enthusiasm in the job.
  - State that you'll need time to evaluate the entire compensation package.
4. Do your research.
  - The greatest tool in any negotiation is information.
  - Determine your fair market value for the job you are seeking.
5. Negotiate to your strength.
  - Extravert – call the employer and ask for a follow-up meeting to discuss a counter proposal.
  - If you communicate better in writing, draft a counter proposal letter.
6. Consider asking for a higher salary (within acceptable limits) than you are willing to accept so that when the employer counters your proposal, the salary should be near your original goal.
7. When possible, try and show how your actions will recoup the extra amount (or more) that you are seeking – through cost savings or increased sales revenue, productivity, efficiencies.
8. If the salary you're offered is on the low end – and the employer has stated that salary is not negotiable (due to corporate salary ranges or pay grade levels), consider negotiating for:
  - a signing bonus
  - higher performance bonuses;
  - a shorter time frame for a performance review and raise.

Always negotiate base salary first and then move on to other elements of the job offer.

9. When presenting a counter proposal to the employer, be sure and include a few benefits that are expendable so that you can drop them in a concession to the employer as negotiations continue.

10. Remember that even if all salary issues are “off the table,” there are still numerous other benefits you can negotiate, such as moving expenses, paid vacation or personal days, professional training, etc.
11. Continue to sell yourself throughout the negotiation process.
  - Remind the employer of the impact you will make, the problems you will solve, the revenue you will generate.
  - Continue expressing interest and enthusiasm for the job and the company.
12. If you have no intention of accepting the company’s offer, don’t waste your time or the company’s by entering into negotiation.
13. If you have multiple job offers, don’t put the companies into a bidding war for your services.
14. Enter negotiations with the right attitude.
  - Win-win situation – you want to get a better deal, but you also need to let the employer feel as though they got a good deal as well.
15. Some employers simply will not negotiate for one of a variety of reasons:
  - strength of the economy.
  - the size and vitality of the company.
  - supply of job candidates with similar qualifications.
16. Keep the tone conversational, not confrontational.
  - Never make demands.
  - Instead, raise questions and make requests during negotiations.
17. Be prepared for any of a number of possible reactions to your counter proposal.
18. Be willing to walk away from negotiations.
  - If you don’t have a strong position (a good current job or one or more current or potential job offers), it will be harder for you to negotiate.
  - If you really need or want the job, be more careful in your negotiations.
19. Always be sure to get the final offer in writing.
  - Be wary of companies that are not willing to do so.
  - Note: One advantage of writing a counter proposal letter is that you list the terms of the offer in your letter.

Source: Adapted from Quintessential Careers, *Job Offer Too Low? Use These Key Salary Negotiation Techniques to Write a Counter Proposal Letter* by *Randall S. Hansen, PhD*

# Responding to Requests for Salary Requirements and/or Histories: Strategies and Suggestions

You've found the ideal position for an excellent company, but either the job posting or your contact from Human Resources has asked you to forward your salary requirement and/or your salary history. What do you do? There are a number of strategies, each with its own level of risk:

**Provide your salary requirement.** Provide the employer with what the company wants, but realize that you run a strong risk of being screened out if you are too far above or below the range the employer has in mind for the position.

**Ask for a wide salary range.** Even with some basic research, you should be able to determine a salary range for the position. As long as part of your range overlaps with the employer's range, you should be OK. But what if your highest amount matches their lowest amount? Yes, you will be stuck at the bottom of their pay scale. But, assuming you give a range that is acceptable to you, you should be okay.

**State that you expect competitive or fair compensation.** Put the ball back in the employer's court by informing the company in your cover letter that you expect a competitive salary. The danger? If the employer doesn't offer a competitive salary – or is a stickler for having an actual salary request – you've eliminated yourself from being considered for the position.

**Express your salary flexibility.** Similar to the last strategy, simply state in your cover letter that you are flexible about salary. The danger is again not providing an actual salary request – and that alone could eliminate you from consideration for the position.

**State that you would prefer to discuss salary in an interview,** but make sure to add that you don't think salary will be a problem. The danger is again not providing an actual salary request – which could eliminate you from consideration for the position.

**Give your salary history.** Ignore the request for a specific amount and simply show your salary history – with the idea that your next job offer should be reasonably higher than your current salary. The problem here is that you have not provided the information the employer seeks and you may be eliminated.

**Ignore the salary request.** Many people believe that employers have no right making a salary request so early in the process and simply ignore the request. The most likely result? If you ignore the request, your application will most likely be ignored as well.

**Do not volunteer information about your salary history** or your salary expectations or requirements in your cover letter, resume or during a job interview. Information is power in job-hunting and your goal should always be to hold on to your power as long as possible by delaying discussions about salary as long as possible.

Source: Adapted from Quintessential Careers, Job Offer Too Low? Use These Key Salary Negotiation Techniques to Write a Counter Proposal Letter by *Randall S. Hansen, Ph.D.*

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# Resources to Research Salary Information

## Salary Surveys

[Salary.com](#) -- a comprehensive site to determine the value of a job offer or your worth in the job market. Free basic salary report, more detailed reports are fee-based.

[PayScale](#) -- a salary assessment site that matches job-seekers job profiles with expected compensation through comparisons to compensation packages of job-seekers with similar skills and experiences -- rather than through comparing simple job titles or zip code comparisons. Basic report is free, while more detailed reports are fee-based.

[SalaryExpert.com](#) -- a comprehensive salary site offering salaries, benefits, and cost-of-living information for 30,000 positions in more than 45,000 locations. Job-seekers can find accurate salary data -- the site even shows its sources for the information. From Baker, Thomsen Associates Insurance Services, Inc. Free to job-seekers.

[International Salary Calculator](#) - Search for salaries by job titles and international cities.

[Glassdoor.com](#) – This site offers real salary information for real positions.

## Salary Negotiation Strategy

[SalaryNegotiations.com](#) -- a great resource from Jack Chapman, the author of one of the best books on salary negotiation. Take the salary negotiation quiz and see if you know enough about negotiating.

## Additional ways to research salary information

- Trade and Professional Journals – usually once a year, such journals publish a salary issue
- Trade and Professional Associations – Find them through *Encyclopedia of Associations*, Gale Research, Inc
- Recruiters or employment agencies often publish surveys in their area of specialty.
- Government Publications Occupational Outlook Handbook The Bureau of Labor Statistics covers salary information in the [Occupational Outlook Handbook](#)
- Reference Books – American Salary and Wages Survey, Gale Research Inc.
- National and Local Newspapers (Wall Street Journal)
- Person-to-person research

# Writing the Counter Proposal Letter

We suggest that you negotiate to your strength. If you communicate better in writing, draft a counter proposal letter to maximum your likelihood of successful negotiations. The letter allows you to carefully outline your requests and you'll be more confident with your negotiations. If you communicate better in person or over the phone, you can use this format to help organize your thoughts, but may choose not to send it in writing.

**First Paragraph:** Statement of interest and enthusiasm for job/company; key selling factors

- This paragraph is critical in setting up the tone and direction of the negotiations. Be direct and sincere in expressing your interest for the company, thanking the employer for the job offer. Be sure to follow-up with your key selling points –how you will make a direct and immediate (and longer-term) impact on the organization.

**Second Paragraph:** Negotiating Item #1 – Offer and Counter Proposal

- Restate the particular point from the original offer that you wish to negotiate, followed by your counter proposal – ideally supported through research, a desire to be fairly compensated or reinforced by the value you will bring to the company.

**Third Paragraph:** Negotiating Item #2 – Offer and Counter Proposal

**Fourth Paragraph:** Negotiating Item #3 – Offer and Counter Proposal

**Concluding Paragraph:** Conciliatory comments with strong moving-forward statement

- Stress that your requests are modest and that your potential impact is great – and that you look forward to accepting the job offer and getting a jump-start on the position as soon as possible.
- You can also include paragraphs for items of the original proposal that you completely agree on – doing so makes the letter seem more balanced and that you are not picking apart the entire offer.
- You can also include paragraphs for any items in the offer that you need clarification – or where you are seeking more information, typically for complex issues such as confidentiality and non-compete agreements or bonus plans.

Source: Adapted from Quintessential Careers, Job Offer Too Low? Use These Key Salary Negotiation Techniques to Write a Counter Proposal Letter by *Randall S. Hansen, Ph.D.*

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# Sample Counter Proposal Letter

Mr. Frank Ian  
Director, Industrial Systems  
General Electric Company  
41 Woodford Avenue  
Plainville, CT 06062

Dear Frank:

I am excited about the offer you extended on \_\_\_\_\_ and look forward to accepting it. I feel confident I will make a significant contribution to the growth and profitability of General Electric's Industrial Systems division over the short and long term. The terms you have described in the offer are acceptable; however, I would like to propose the following:

**Base Salary:** \$55,000 per annum

The research I've done on comparable salaries and cost of living differences between Clemson and Plainville show that a base salary of \$75,000 would be the market value of my experience for this position. The current offer of \$55,000 would result in a dramatic reduction in living standard. Based on the above, I would like you to consider as a compromise a base salary of \$65,000.

**Bonus Opportunity:** 3% of quarterly team results above stated quotas

Because I expect to have an immediate impact on both cost-savings and increased sales revenues, I would like to suggest increasing the bonus percentage 6% of results above quota.

**Relocation Package:** GE will compensate up to \$10,000 for your reasonable costs incurred for relocation to Plainville, CT. Furthermore, GE will provide temporary living assistance and reimburse for any commuting for up to 6 months from date of hire. As far as relocation is concerned, I feel your relocation package is quite generous and I appreciate the company's policy.

**Stock Option Plan:** developed and implemented after 1 year of service

If this policy is standard for all employees, I can accept it, but again, I am convinced that I will make an immediate impact on a key division of GE, and I would like to see the stock option plan developed in the first six months of employment.

**Benefits Package:** standard employee benefits package

In discussing the standard benefits package with Jim Cline in HR, I am quite pleased with the GE benefits package. I would only ask that the waiting period for these benefits be waived.

**Start Date:** July 15, 2006

I am actually available to start to telecommute as early as next week -- as soon as we agree on the final aspects of the offer.

I look forward to discussing the above terms with you personally. I am confident we can reach a mutually agreeable offer. I am prepared to hit the ground running as part of the GE Industrial Systems team.

## Evaluating Your Offer

Congratulations! Let's say after several months, much preparation and hard work you have received a job offer. You've invested a lot of time and effort to get to this point and now it is time to evaluate the position and company. This is an important decision and one that you will want to take your time in thinking through. As you evaluate this opportunity, here are several factors to consider:

- Reputation of the company
- Corporate culture
- Work/Life balance
- The work itself (in terms of interest, challenge, etc.)
- Promotability
- Quality of community (life, schools, safety, etc.)
- Salary
- Relocation expenses
- Dependent care
- Overtime/Comp. time policies
- Professional memberships
- Bonus/Raise policies
- Vacation time
- Paid holidays
- Sick/Personal days
- Work hours, including flex-time
- Telecommuting options
- Tuition reimbursement
- Profit sharing
- Employee stock ownership plan (ESOP)
- Employee Assistance Program
- Parking, commuting, expense reimbursement

## How to Resign with Professionalism

You have received that long-awaited job offer and now you are ready to announce your resignation. Not sure how to resign professionally while transitioning from your current position into your new position? Consider the following:

**Timing** – Give enough notice. The standard notice has traditionally been two to four weeks, but you should consult your employee handbook in case your employer expects more advance warning.

**Writing** - Take the time to write a letter of resignation to your current employer. It's best to have written documentation of your resignation and planned last day of work.

**Negotiating** - Be sure to get a fair settlement for any outstanding salary, vacation (and sick and personal) days, and commission payments or other compensation due to you.

**Hiring** - Offer to help your current employer find your replacement.

**Training** - Volunteer to train or work with your replacement.

**Working** - Continue to be a productive member of your team and while working your normal work day. Resist the temptation to arrive late, take longer lunches or leave early.

**Completing** - Do your best to complete current projects and leave detailed progress reports for your supervisor and co-workers.

**Leaving** - Before walking out the door for the last time, be sure you have contact information for key supervisors and co-workers that you want to keep part of your network of contacts -- and be sure to thank them again for their support.

Source: [quintcareers.com](http://quintcareers.com): How to Resign with Professionalism

# Writing a Professional Resignation Letter

What should you do once you've made the decision to take a job with another employer? You should take the time to write a letter of resignation to your current employer. It's best to have written documentation of your resignation and planned last day of work.

The most important thing to remember when writing your letter of resignation is to be professional. Regardless of whether you loved or hated your job or your employer, the outcome should be the same: a concise and professional letter stating your intention to leave.

People leave their jobs for all sorts of reasons, and you certainly do not need to provide any details on why you are leaving the company. Resignation letters are a courtesy to your employer, so you simply need to state that you are leaving your current position to pursue other opportunities. As you are composing your letter, please remember that your job history follows you. You never want to leave on bad terms with any employer -- mainly because doing so could come back to haunt you later in your career.

When should you submit your letter of resignation? And to whom? You should submit your resignation two or more weeks before your planned resignation date (depending on company/profession policy). And you should submit the letter/memo to your direct supervisor, with a copy to your human resources office.

What exactly should you say in your letter of resignation? Here's a basic outline:

**First Paragraph:** State your intention of resigning your job and leaving the company. Give a specific last day of work.

**Second paragraph:** If you feel comfortable, give a reason why you are leaving -- relocating, better job, career change, graduate school, etc. Or, reinforce your value by mentioning your key accomplishments with the employer (though doing so may trigger a counter offer).

**Third Paragraph:** Thank both your supervisor and the company for the opportunities you had working for them. Be sure to end the letter on a positive note.

Source: [quintcareers.com](http://quintcareers.com): How to Resign with Professionalism

# Issues to Consider Once You've Announced Your Resignation

## **A counter-offer to entice you to stay**

- Be very wary of counteroffers. No matter how good it makes your ego feel to have your current employer respond with a counteroffer, most career experts advise against taking it because studies show that the vast majority of employees who accept counteroffers from current employers aren't in those jobs for very long. Whether the employer admits it or not, your dedication will be questioned, and once that happens, your time on the job is limited. It's better to tactfully decline the offer and focus on your new job with your new employer.

## **Guilt from co-workers or your boss**

- If you are leaving an unpleasant work environment, your co-workers may be a bit envious and try to make you feel guilty. And no matter how great your boss may be, s/he may also make you feel a little guilty for "deserting" the team. Focus on making the final weeks/days positive and professional.

## **An exit interview**

- Some employers like to have all departing employees meet with someone from the human resources department for an exit interview. Be careful -- but be professional. Some employers want to know the "real" reason you are leaving. Again, remember not to burn any bridges by saying anything negative.

## **Escorted out of the building**

- In some industries (such as finance) and with some professions (such as sales), once an employee resigns, the employer asks the person to leave on the spot. Be prepared for this scenario by clearing personal files and removing personal software from your computer, removing personal information and belongings, and getting your workspace organized.

# Sample Resignation Memo

To:

From:

Date:

Subject:       Resignation

It is with mixed emotion that I am submitting my written notice of resignation from \_\_\_\_\_ (company) effective two weeks from today. My last day of employment will be \_\_\_\_\_.

Thank you for the opportunities you have provided me during the last (insert how long you worked for the company). I appreciate the consideration you and everyone at (company name) have given me during this important time in my life.

This was not an easy decision. I am proud to be part of this team and enjoy my work as a (insert your title). As I wrap up my duties, I will do my best to smoothly transition any projects I am unable to complete.

I wish (company name) continued success, and I want to thank you for allowing me to be a part of your team. Please feel free to contact me at any time if I can be of further assistance.