

JOB QUEST WORKSHOP

Hosted at Salem First Presbyterian Church

Basic Materials Packet

**Edition of
October 2, 2011**

The group meets most Saturdays, 9-11 a.m., at
Salem First Presbyterian Church
770 Chemeketa Street NE
Salem OR 97301
(503) 363-9234

The group is faith-based but open to all persons wanting to become better equipped for seeking employment or more suitable employment, regardless of faith connections

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Basic Materials Packet
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Our purpose is to provide faith-based assistance to unemployed, underemployed, or unsatisfactorily employed persons in our community to equip them to confidently seek opportunities to honor God and our community with their labors.

INITIAL HOMEWORK PREPARATION PACKAGE

Your Personal Assessment

Before you construct your resume or start filling out applications, it is essential that you spend some effort assessing your own skills, interests, goals. We offer an excellent process based on other successful programs and publications of recognized experts. Job hunting is hard work and learned skills will benefit you greatly. Like walking into a Starbucks, the experience is better when you know the language and the culture.

The '5x5x5' Process

Start your personal assessment by taking time to write out three lists:

- 5 elements of a job you would like to have
- 5 elements of a job you would like to NOT have
- Up to 5 job titles or general job positions you would like to have

This could be an iterative process that you come back to and repeat as you understand more about yourself and your target job market. Keep looking at the items in your lists and asking 'why?'

Transferable Skills List

'Transferable skills' is one of the **most important concepts** in your job search. This is the value you, as a human being, add to the community of human endeavor. Adept citing of transferrable skills pervades all phases of job hunting as a key factor in your resume, cover letter, networking, and interviewing.

Transferable skills are simply abilities you have acquired during any activity in your life – from jobs, school, parenting, family responsibilities, volunteer projects, hobbies, sports – that are applicable to what you expect to be doing in your very next job.

If you have time gaps in your work history, for instance, we recommend you truthfully identify something you were doing and what it taught you. Focusing on your transferable skills is the vital strategy to distinguishing your application from the hundreds sent in by those that simply filled their previous jobs.

You will want to craft the skills you list in a resume or cover letter to each specific job. But for now, look over the list on the second following page and **make your own prioritized list of 12 to 15 transferable skills** that you believe you best present and want to offer to an employer. You may have some applicable abilities that are not in our list.

This also may be an iterative process that you come back to revisit as you understand more.

Elevator Speech

There are many times and places where you want to be ready to give a quick synopsis of who you are, the abilities you offer, and what job you want. You will say this in 2-3 sentences at the beginning of your resume. You might begin an interview with a 2-minute version.

This is the single most indispensable networking tool. When you talk with someone after church, on a bus, or waiting for an elevator, they might ask who you are and what you do. You should have rehearsed this several times so you have it in your mind can give a natural, easy-flowing, interesting, understandable response to anyone on any occasion. Any one you meet may know someone where you want to be. When you are looking for work, networking is your life.

Start with about a 30-second speech about yourself so someone you meet will be interested in learning more or in referring you to other people he/she knows. Some ideas:

My name is _____ I am a(n) _____
My specialty is / I most enjoy / I am best at _____
I would like to find a job in _____ (industry) or at _____ (company)
Do you know someone I could contact / you could tell about me?
May end with: Would you be interested in learning more?

Example: My name is Merry Goodlady. I have been a volunteer and part-time paid instructional assistant in our local elementary schools. Put me on a floor with kids and I am happy and they feel comfortable and safe and ready to learn. I have taken some time off to bring myself up-to-date with early childhood development courses, so I am ready for my next opportunity. Do you know any openings that would fit my background?

Example: Hello, my name is Angel Mercy. I am a human resource consultant that companies bring in when they want to terminate several employees. They hire me to tell the workers they are unemployed, explain all the assistance packages, and basically help them out the door. I am looking for a different kind of work where I can use the communication skills I have learned in these difficult situations to manage project teams in emerging growth markets. If you know any opportunities like that, please let me know. Here is my card...

These do not have to be long or extravagant. Put some thoughts together and be ready at the next coaching session to just comfortably tell us about yourself.

D.A.R.E. Survey

Take a few minutes to go through the 50 questions on the third following page. Then tally up the numbers of D's, A's, R's, and E's. The total should equal 50. Bring the results to a coaching session. We will explain how the results indicate your communication styles working with other people. This can help you understand your skills, respond to difficult interview questions, or even design your career.

TRANSFERABLE SKILLS / AREAS OF EXCELLENCE CHECKLIST

Account planning and management	Extracting important information
Accounting	Facilitating
Administering	Flexibility
Analysis	Following procedures
Being sensitive	Forecasting
Brand management	Foreign language (reading, writing, speaking)
Budget management	Fundraising
Business planning	Gathering information
Change management	Grant writing
Coaching	Handling details
Colleague support	Hardware systems design and/or installation
Communications	Human resources
Compensation and benefits administration	Implementing
Complaint management	Identify and manage ethical issues
Conflict management	Identifying problems
Conveying feelings	Imagining alternatives
Coordinating	Individual responsibility
Counseling	Interviewing
Creating and maintaining databases	Leading
Creating and implementing new ideas	Learning, growing individual
Crisis management	Listening attentively
Cross-functional leadership	Logistics
Customer-focused	Maintaining and expanding client relationships
Customer service	Managing
Decision-making	Marketing
Delegating	Merchandising
Design buildings, interiors	Motivating
Developing and evaluating strategies	Multi-channel strategies
Developing rapport	Multi-tasking
Diplomacy	Negotiating
Diversity	Office management
Editing	Operations management
Effectively interviewing to gain further insight	Operations process improvements
Employee relations and coaching	Organizing
Enforcing policies	Organizational development
Engineering (list specific area(s))	Payroll
Enlisting help	Perceiving feelings and situations
Event planning	Persuading
Explaining complex concepts	P&L management

TRANSFERABLE SKILLS / AREAS OF EXCELLENCE CHECKLIST continued

Pragmatic	Risk analysis and management
Presentations	Sales planning
Problem solving	Selling ideas or products
Process design	Setting and meeting goals
Procurement	Science (list specific area(s))
Product creation	Sharing credit
Project management	Software design and/or implementation
Promoting change	Speaking effectively
Providing support for others	Statistics
Quality control	Strategic planning
Quality-focused	Supply chain management
Quality management	Systems analysis
Records maintenance	Talent development
Relationship-building	Teaching
Repair equipment	Teamwork
Reporting information	Time management
Representing others	Training design
Research	Trainer
Responsible	Trouble shooting
Results-focus	Workforce planning and staffing
Retail operations	Working independently
	Writing and editing — concisely and effectively

Understanding Yourself and Others
D.A.R.E. Communication Style Assessment

Directions: Make a light pencil mark next to one word in each row that best describes you. Keep the column to the right covered as you complete the survey.

1.	kind	non-resisting	confident	respected	__RADE
2.	determined	organized	manageable	persuasive	__DARE
3.	not dependent	soft-spoken	patient	fun-loving	__DRAE
4.	contemplating	servicing	joyful	adventurous	__ARED
5.	adaptable	concerned	emotional	like to disagree	__ARED
6.	unselfish	responsive	stubborn	strict	__READ
7.	eager	willing	agreeable	funny & playful	__DRAE
8.	convincing	aggressive	disciplined	possessive	__EDAR
9.	sweet	stubborn	attractive	avoid confrontation	__RDEA
10.	daring	objective	obedient	participative	__DARE
11.	critical	bold	charming	loyal	__ADER
12.	precise	modest	enthusiastic	direct	__ARED
13.	cheerful	like new ideas	ready to do favors	stick to decisions	__EDRA
14.	attentive	friendly	forceful	devout	__REDA
15.	contented	trusting	peaceful	positive	__AERD
16.	affectionate	outspoken	consistent	mild	__EDAR
17.	expressive	satisfied	daring	diplomatic	__EADR
18.	assertive	conforming	kind	playful	__DARE
19.	talkative	controlled	decisive	systematic	__ERDA
20.	loyal	social	self-reliant	perfectionist	__REDA
21.	restless	popular	neighborly	abide by rules	__DERA
22.	jovial	inquisitive	logical	contented	__EDAR
23.	cautious	determined	convincing	good natured	__ADER
24.	eager	accurate	generous	popular	__DARE
25.	give in easily	lively	don't give up	well-disciplined	__REDA
26.	calculating	willing	talkative	leader	__ARED
27.	easy on others	organized	powerful	good mixer	__RADE
28.	sympathetic	optimistic	persistent	exacting	__REDA
29.	aggressive	easily fooled	indecisive	life of the party	__DRAE
30.	cordial	restless	cautious	earnest	__EDAR
31.	take risks	like involvement	sincere	not extreme	__DERA
32.	firm	cairn	considerate	carefree .	__DARE
33.	respectful	inspiring	want to please	willing to try new ideas	__AERD
34.	competitive	joyful	quiet	agreeable	__DEAR
35.	tenacious	gentle	humble	creative	__DRAE
36.	<i>Others see me as displaying:</i>				
	accuracy	directness	dependability	enthusiasm	__ADRE
37.	<i>Under pressure I feel the following:</i>				
	need for logic	challenged	calm	smooth and poised	__ADRE

D.A.R.E. Communication Style Assessment, Continued

38. *I am known for my:*
 systematic approach self-reliance generosity positive attitude __ADRE
39. *My greatest fear is:*
 hurting others' feelings change being criticized being taken advantage of __ERAD
40. *I like others who are:*
 friendly accurate direct loyal __EADR
41. *At times I may be:*
 blunt slow to give answers overly strict in my interpretations very subjective in my description of things __DRAE
42. *I am sometimes accused of:*
 being tentative not listening talking too much procrastination __RDEA
43. *My greatest need is to be:*
 with others given time to adjust to change encouraged given frank directions __EARD
44. *I function best in an environment that:*
 allows me autonomy includes other people is well organized is pleasant __DEAR
45. *I feel good when I am:*
 listening to others following an agenda giving directions smooth and poised __RADE
46. *Most people think of me as:*
 results oriented a good talker a good listener a perfectionist __DERA
47. *I think of myself as being:*
 cautious optimistic satisfied impatient __AERD
48. *When getting others to do things I:*
 want to be involved am patient want quality want action in a hurry __ERAD
49. *I do my best when:*
 working in a group working by myself doing what I am told following the rules __EDRA
50. *I think of my life as:*
 an exercise in patience a step by step process helping others competitive __RAED

Scoring instructions: Match the order of each of your responses to the order of the D.A.R. and E. at the end of each row. For example:

1. kind **X** non-resisting confident respected **R** RADE

Then, count the number of D.A.R.E. responses, and total them below. The category with the highest number of responses is your dominant communication style.

TOTALS:

D _____ **A** _____ **R** _____ **E** _____ (Total should = 50)

PERSONAL JOB SEARCH TOOL CONSTRUCTION PACKAGE

The Essential Tools for your Job Search

After you have gone through the personal assessment process of the Initial Homework Preparation Package, you are ready to assemble the essential tools for your own job search adventure.

In this package, we give you our guidance for preparing:

- Personal business cards
- Resumes
- Networking resumes
- Cover letters
- References

Personal Business Cards

Offering a simple personal business card to people you meet is an excellent networking tool. You can use them with your elevator speech or dozens of other imaginative ways. Print a card that shows your name, basic contact information, a LinkedIn address if you have one, and a brief quote or a key skill (from your transferable skills list!) that describes you. Some people also use the back side to summarize a number of qualifications – like a mini-resume.

George H. Ruth

Widely-known baseball skills. Ability to teach newer recruits. Ready to manage your team to a championship season

216 Emory Street H: (690) 342-2873
Pigtown MD 21203 C: (690) 714-2217
sultan@swat.com www.linkedin.com/bambino

Qualifications for G. H. Ruth

- 714 Baseballs never returned
- Known for unique interpersonal skills
- Experienced in community revitalization
- Willing to learn Word, PowerPoint
- Highest slugging percentage in history

No one expects you to pay for expensive graphics. Some pre-designed templates may have basic patterns. Keep it simple. Before you finalize or print your card, be sure to proofread. Ask someone else if there are any errors.

The web is awash with sites offering free business cards and further advice (www.vistaprint.com, www.freebusinesscards.com). Local copy shops offer inexpensive basic orders. Or, you can print them yourself. Use business card stock from a stationery or office supply store. Many brands come with instructions for downloading free templates. MS Word and other word processing programs come with easy to use templates for designing your own card.

RESUME PACKET

Employers want to know what you can do for them. In order to catch their attention, you must create a resume that is easy to read, focuses on what they want and shows what you have accomplished in the past.

Suggested resume format:

Name _____ Home Phone _____ Cell Phone _____ Email Address _____

Objective or Career Profile

Mini-elevator speech, tailor to each job opening, 2-3 sentences on who you are and what you want

Highlights of Qualifications/Transferable Skills/Identify what makes you unique

Describe Relevant Results, Skills and Experience (Customize for each job)

- Identify functional categories from the job posting and highlight each category (Account Management, Training, Project Administration, etc.)
- Use applicable key words from the job posting
- Identify appropriate accomplishments or successes that relate to the job
- Use SOAR: **S**ituation, **O**bstacle/**O**pportunities, **A**ction, **R**esults
- Use “action” words: Developed, Implemented, Lead, Initiated, etc.

Work History

- Company Name, Location
- **Job Title (in bold)**, list dates of employment for each job held
- Brief job description of role (not a list of tasks performed)

Education

Degree
School, City, State

Training, Certifications

Professional Organizations, Volunteer Work, Awards, etc.

Include any that could establish credibility for your qualifications

You may find it helpful to create a “master” resume that lists everything you have done as an employee or volunteer over the years. Be sure to list training, awards, certificates, workshops, etc. This gives you a historical reference to pull from as you customize a resume for each job.

Resume Tips:

Many hiring officials recommend a 1-2 page resume. If you use a 2-page resume to capture all your relevant skills and work history, it is suggested that your work history, education and training, etc., be listed on the second page. This becomes the “historical” part of your resume. The front page can then be more easily customized to each job for which you apply.

Published books/articles on resumes describe three basic types:

A **chronological** resume lists your employment history starting with the most recent. This is followed with a brief list of your most important accomplishments. Remember, employers want to see what you’ve done so focus on your results rather than job functions.

A **functional** resume focuses on your skills and experience and is a good format when changing careers or if you have gaps in your work history. This style allows you to highlight skills and accomplishments that relate specifically to the position you are applying for and downplays your work history.

A **combination** style resume lists job-related skills and accomplishments first and then your work history.

You may also want to develop a fourth type: A **networking** resume is a targeted, 1-page resume to have on hand as you conduct informational interviews with others in fields that you want to find more information about. This can be a useful addition to your portfolio of job hunting tools. There is more about how to use a networking resume in the Informational Interviewing section.

Over the next few pages, we show you:
 a 2-page resume sample in a combination format, and
 a sample 1-page networking resume

Avoid words that are obviously unsupported claims of greatness. Effective communicators advise that such words are completely ineffective. Here are ten words that look great on cereal boxes but NOT on your resume:

Outstanding	Strong	Good	Driven	Seasoned
Effective	Exceptional	Excellent	Motivated	Energetic

Action words, however, can light up the eyes of hiring authorities. Here are ten you can use:

Created	Reduced	Developed	Accomplished	On time
Increased	Improved	Researched	Won	Under budget

Some useful sources we have found for resume information if you wish to do further research:

Riley Guide: <http://www.rileyguide.com/resprep.html>

Purdue Online Writing Lab: <http://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/section/6/>

Too much research can give you “analysis paralysis.” If you are overwhelmed, set materials aside and use what you have learned in this packet to simply enjoy a creative adventure of marketing yourself.

FIRST PAGE of a 2-Page Resume Sample

Courtesy of Lake Grove Presbyterian Church, Job Seekers Program

Pat Pauly (*fictionalized name and information below*)

One phone contact number · email address · LinkedIn profile address

CAREER FOCUS (*optional*): *adapt wording to specific job opportunity*

CAREER PROFILE:

An innovative sales and management professional with over twelve years of high tech industry and telecommunications background. A proven track record of consistently increasing profit and exceeding annual revenue objectives. Highly experienced with identifying revenue opportunities, targeting markets and potential clients. Strong ability to build both long-term customer relationships and motivated internal company teams.

AREAS OF EXCELLENCE (or **EXCELLENCE IN**):

- Account Manager
- Market Planning
- Problem Definition and Solution
- Quality Assurance
- Financial Management
- Sales Execution
- Communications
- Presentations
- Teamwork
- Administration

PROFESSIONAL ACCOMPLISHMENTS:

New Business Development...

- Doubled sales of Tango Systems from \$2.0 million to \$4 million by development of Mango as a new client.
- Grew accounts at Bell Southwest an average of 9% per year in a declining market. Took advantage of negotiated pricing to increase “wallet share” of 5%.
- Developed 18 new blood drive chair people in six months at American Red Cross.
- Started and completed eleven new blood drives at American Red Cross.

Account Management:

- Managed account growth and turned challenges into results with a balanced approach that increased company net profits and the met the delivery needs of the client.
- Responsible for growth and retention of \$20 million of a \$60 million Signature Client for Bell Southwest (Top 10 Client).
- At Red Cross, Superstar of Month for July and September for goal and number of 100% drives (a measure of efficiency).
- Developed and implemented large-scale installation projects with live cutovers at Bell Southwest, Bingo Systems and Diversity NW. Resulting new sales of \$30 million first year.

Market Planning and Execution:

- Planned, implemented and prioritized multiple successful projects to meet client’s needs; developed strategies and followed through on all details to ensure timely implementation.

Problem Identification and Resolution:

- Skilled in identifying areas of concern, conducting research and creating solutions to achieve resolution.
- Used many techniques from these systems to problem solve within sales teams including CEDAC, system dynamics illustrations, Total Productive Maintenance (TPM), and Total Quality Maintenance (TQM).

SECOND PAGE of 2-Page Resume Sample

Courtesy of Lake Grove Presbyterian Church, Job Seekers Program

Pat Pauly

PROFESSIONAL HISTORY:

American Red Cross, Portland, OR

Apr 2006-Jul 2008

Territory Representative, Blood Services

Maintain and grow current blood supply in east Portland. Troubleshoot and ease conflict between volunteers and Collections Staff.

Bell Southwest, Phoenix, AZ

May 2003-Mar 2006

Signature Client Group (SCG), Sales Specialist

Sold data & voice services to key Signature Clients.

Diversity Northwest Inc., Portland, OR

Apr 1999 - Apr 2003

Marketing Manager

Selling Voice Response Units (phone menu systems, database calls, and natural language) to school districts around the country.

Bingo Systems, Portland, OR

Mar 1996 - Mar 1999

Account Executive

Selling localization (foreign translation and graphic layout) of technical documentation, software, on-line applications, multi-media output, training materials and business systems to Fortune 500 companies.

Synergy Systems Inc., Portland, OR

Jan 1993 - Feb 1996

Account Executive

Sold phone system VRU's to North American Companies and also through the Bell Southwest Sales Channel.

EDUCATION

B.S. Business, Purdue University

M.B.A., University of Minnesota

Certification in QA processes through Productivity, Inc.

Completed Dale Carnegie Sales Course

Completed Effective Communications Course

Also add professional organizations and/or community volunteer areas, if any, which could help establish 'areas of excellence/excellence in' credibility.

NETWORKING RESUME SAMPLE *Courtesy of Lake Grove Presbyterian Church, Job Seekers Program*

Pat Pauly *(fictionalized name and information below)*

One phone contact number . email address . LinkedIn profile address

Profile: A leader strongly motivated to provide energy, guidance and support to a creative growing organization. A collaborative people and team manager offering exceptional presentation skills and coaching to foster and expand results. A hands-on doer and delegator who welcomes diverse opportunities and challenges.

Excellence In (or Areas of Excellence):

- Strategic planning
- Business operations management
- Lean manufacturing
- Communications
- Financial regulations
- Global cultures

Change Management:

- Drove strategic action placing a privately held retail company on sustained profitability track.
- Led process improvement teams achieving \$2MM 25% bottom line improvement in 12 months.
- Restored working relationship between employees and an influential investment group.

Financial Leadership:

- Managed financial operations resulting in strongest rate of profitability increase in industry.
- Obtained over \$500 million of financing at favorable terms in a constrained economic environment.
- Led successful efforts with financial regulators to assure company viability under stress.

Continuous Improvement:

- Initiated and managed several successful enterprise-system initiatives reducing costs by 25%.
- Improved internal and external reporting time by 30% and reduced audit costs by 25%.
- Managed successful process and procedure optimization projects.

Chief Operating Officer Acme, Inc. Austin, Texas 2004-2010

High-tech tablet global manufacturing company.

Chief Financial Officer, Able Corp, Sunnyvale, CA 1994-2003

Privately held global leader in the design, manufacturing and distribution of computer chips.

Prior to 1994: Through a series of increasingly responsible individual and management assignments with successful Silicon Valley start-ups acquired experience in manufacturing, worldwide supply chain operations, logistics and business operations environments as well as project management and interdisciplinary' team leadership.

Education:

- MBA University of Southern California Los Angeles, CA
- Bachelor of Science, Computer Technology University of California Berkeley, CA

Certifications:

- Certified Public Accountant
- Certified Six Sigma Black Belt Quality Management

Community Volunteer:

- Organizing committee, Race For The Cure Portland, OR
- Instructor, Lake Oswego Adult Community Center Computer Lab

COVER LETTERS

A cover letter is your introduction to let an employer know what you are applying for and how you fit the specifics of the position. You must understand that *first impressions matter!* This is critical because in many organizations someone else reviews cover letters and resumes for basic qualifications before the actual hiring official ever sees any of them.

Think of your cover letter as a sales letter; you are selling yourself and your skills. You want to show how you can help the employer, not how the employer can help you. Applications may be reviewed in several stages. First impressions may not be everything ... but sometimes they are the only thing.

In this section, we provide you with:

- Cover letter tips
- A common cover letter format – with two examples
- How to explain a work gap in a cover letter – with two examples!
- A sample career-change cover letter

Cover Letter Tips

Things to Remember:

- Use white, cream or light gray 8.5” x 11” high-quality bond paper and envelopes
- Many employers scan documents; print on one side of the paper and consider investing in 9” x 12” envelopes in order not to fold your documents
- Use bullet points to highlight accomplishments specifically related to the job posting
 - Try building two columns: one that lists several of the employer requirements and one that reflects your experience in meeting those requirements
- Use quantifiable achievements using percentages, dollars, numbers, statistics
- Focus on what you can do for the employer; why should they hire you?
- Customize each cover letter
- Project confidence and credibility
- Proofread, proofread, proofread!

Some Things to Avoid in Your Cover Letter:

- Poor overall appearance
- Poor grammar, punctuation and spelling
- Rambling, lack of focus
- Self-focused instead of employer-focused
- Bland, boring text
- Embellished qualifications, bragging
- Aggressive, pushy tone
- Do not lie!

Here is a common cover letter format:

Name
Address
City, State, Zip Code

Date

Name
Title
Company
Address
City, State, Zip Code

Dear Mr. /Ms. Last Name, (leave out if you don't have a contact)

Body of Cover Letter:

The body of your cover letter lets the employer know what position you are applying for, why the employer should select you for an interview, and how you will follow-up.

First Paragraph:

The first paragraph of your letter should include information on why you are writing. Mention the position you are applying for and where you found the job listing. Include the name of a mutual contact, if you have one.

Middle Paragraph:

The next section of your cover letter should describe what you have to offer the employer. Mention specifically how your qualifications match the job you are applying for. Remember, you are interpreting your resume, not repeating it.

Final Paragraph:

Conclude your cover letter by thanking the employer for considering you for the position. Include information on how you will follow-up.

Complimentary Close:

Sincerely yours,

Signature (Handwritten for a mailed letter or typed for electronic distribution)

Phone Number

Email Address

Adapted from <http://jobsearch.about.com/od/coverlettersamples/a/format.htm>

MARIANNE FAITHFUL

500 East Broadway
South Bend IN 46064
(765) 524-0467

May 9, 20__

Scotty's Homes, Inc.
245 West Washington Street
Indianapolis, IN 46220

Attention: Human Resources Department

My letter is in response to your advertisement in the *Indianapolis Star and News* on April 1 for an Office Manager. I have listed below my qualifications that parallel your requirements for the position posted:

YOUR REQUIREMENTS

MY QUALIFICATIONS

Minimum three years experience in office management.

Served five years as Office Manager for medical practice with six physicians and three years for real estate brokerage firm with ten brokers.

Supervision skills

Currently supervise staff of four clerical and two accounting professionals.

Word processing skills: Microsoft Word, Excel

Prepare reports, presentations, documents using Word, Excel, PowerPoint, and Lotus.

Proficient in E-mail/Internet

Utilize Microsoft Outlook daily to communicate with staff and remote sites.

Customer Service oriented

Direct patient/client relations and resolve unusual, difficult service situations.

Because of the size and reputation of your organization, I am confident that your compensation range will be commensurate with my experience. I am enclosing my resume for your review, and would like the opportunity to discuss my qualifications further in person.

Sincerely,

Marianne Faithful

From: Career Consultants, OI Partners, Indianapolis, IN

MICHAEL C. FINE
774 West Main Street
West Lafayette, IN 48002

March 4, 20__

William C. Benjamin
1005 Taylor Road
Fishers, IN 46002

Dear Mr. Benjamin:

I am greatly interested in the position of senior financial executive, advertised in the *Wall Street Journal* on October 7.

For the past decade, I have been directing financial and administrative functions in a rapidly growing subsidiary of XYZ Industries, Inc. I have held the titles of Controller, Director of Accounting and Internal Auditing Manager.

I have experience and accomplishments which relate to your requirements:

- Saved the company 20% in overhead costs.
- Created a more efficient system for tracking procedures within the office.
- Improved employee morale resulting in less absentee time.
- Initiated a system for billing clients which decreased unpaid balances.

My experience is further enhanced by a Master's Degree in Finance from Xavier University. I am also a Certified Public Accountant.

I would welcome a personal interview to further discuss my potential contribution to your organization.

Sincerely,

Michael C. Fine

From: Career Consultants, OI Partners, Indianapolis, IN

How to Explain a Work Gap on a Cover Letter

By Jessica Cook, *eHow* Contributor

If you have a gap in your work history for any reason, it doesn't have to keep you from getting a new job. Use your cover letter as a tool to explain your work gap and demonstrate your willingness and ability to return to the workforce. Keep your explanation simple and focus on the positives to reduce the damage a break in your work history could cause.

Write Your Way to a New Job

Be honest. Do not lie about the reasons for your gap in work history; your prospective employers might discover the truth from some other source, and your dishonesty will not help you land the job. Whether your work history gap was due to a family decision, an illness, or even a bad economy, it is best to just state the reason for the gap and move on. Lying on your resume or cover letter is a grave mistake that can cost you a job even after you are hired, so never do that.

Avoid wordy explanations. If you chose to stay home with your children for a few years, your prospective employers don't need to know all of your reasons for doing so. If you were out of work due to an illness, they do not need to hear about your lengthy recovery period. Simply tell them why you stayed home and then focus on all the other things you have done in your past career history that have prepared you for this job.

Highlight previous work experience, even if it was a few years ago. Explain how your past experience has prepared you for this job in specific ways (e.g., "When I worked for X company I performed Y skills that prepared me for the Z requirements of the job with your company."). You can refer to jobs that you held years ago, as long as the experiences you had there were relevant to the job for which you are applying.

Explain other skills you have. While you were out of work, you may have still been building your career skills. Maybe you volunteered with an organization and you can apply the skills you used there in your new job. Maybe you took a class or performed research that will apply to your new position. Try to find a way to make your work gap useful to you by explaining what you did during that time.

Show what you know. Make sure to mention all of the job training, skills and knowledge you possess that will apply in this position. Your lifetime has been more than just a work history gap; demonstrate this by singing your own praises in a factual and efficient manner. Make sure that the cover letter mentions and explains the work history gap without turning it into the focus of the letter.

The next pages show samples of cover letters for those with career gaps:

ROBERT E. MCGEE

435 Mountain Way | Colorado Springs, CO 80919
H: 719-555-1212 | C: 719-545-8245 | mcgee@worldnet.att.net

September 24, 20—

DOUGLAS B. MRAZEK
Managing Director
Columbus Equity Partners
40 North Main Street
Columbus, Ohio 43215

Dear Doug,

I retired several months ago, and it is no fun! Not being a productive part of the world of work is driving me crazy! So I am in the job market again. (And please don't suggest volunteerism, because it is not the same thing.)

Career counselors tell me that with more than 15 years of solid property management under my belt, my experience and skills should make me very marketable. They have also suggested that the best place to start is with former acquaintances and old friends like you who might have some ideas about who I should be seeing in my job search.

Enclosed is a resume that will bring you up to date on my employment over the past 20 years. Please take a look at it, and expect a phone call from me in the next few weeks.

Aside from having the opportunity to brainstorm with you about my situation, it will be especially pleasurable for me to be able to catch up with you and your family after so long a time.

I hope this letter finds you in good health and enjoying life.

With kindest personal regards,

Robert E. McGee

--from www.cover-letters.com

Your Contact Information

Address
City, State, Zip Code
Phone Number
Cell Phone Number
Email

Employer Contact Information

Name
Title
Company
Address
City, State, Zip Code

Dear Mr. Smith,

I was excited to read about the unfilled position of Office Manager at XYZ Corp posted on Jobsearch.com. I have an extensive background in business administration, and while being a stay at home mother, I have gained invaluable experience in the areas of time management and organization.

For seven years I worked as an office administrator at ABC company. During that time I revamped their filing system and gained a significant amount of experience in inter-department communications, as well as customer service.

Moreover, as a stay at home mom, I became a proficient “home manager,” where my ability to set an agenda, manage my time, organize large quantities of information and objects, and multi-task were all put to the test.

In short, I feel I have a lot to offer your company.

I have attached my resume for your perusal. I look forward to hearing from you to schedule an interview or discuss my application.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

Your name, both typed and signed

--from www.suite101.com

Sample Career Change Cover Letter

By Alison Doyle, About.com Guide

When writing a career change cover letter (you are looking for a job in a different industry or career field) focus on the transferable skills you have that you can use in the new position, rather the specific skills you have that are related to your current position.

Your Name
Your Address
Your City, State, Zip Code
Your Phone Number
Your Email

Company Name
Address
City, State, Zip Code

Dear Hiring Manager:

This letter is to express my interest in discussing the Senior Customer Service Manager position posted on the XYZ Company web site. The opportunity presented in this listing is very appealing, and I believe that my experience and education will make me a competitive candidate for this position.

The key strengths that I possess for success in this position include, but are not limited to, the following:

- Provide exceptional contributions to customer service for all customers.
- Strive for continued excellence.
- Strong communication skills.
- I am a self-starter.
- Eager to learn new things.

You will find me to be well-spoken, energetic, confident, and personable, the type of person on whom your customers will rely. I also have a wide breadth of experience of the type that gives you the versatility to place me in a number of contexts with confidence that the level of excellence you expect will be met. Please see my resume for additional information on my experience.

I hope that you'll find my experience and interests intriguing enough to warrant a face-to-face meeting, as I am confident that I could provide value to you and your customers as a member of your team.

I can be reached anytime via my cell phone, 555-555-5555. Thank you for your time and consideration. I look forward to speaking with you about this employment opportunity.

Sincerely,

FirstName LastName

--from <http://jobsearch.about.com/od/coverlettersamples/a/careerchange.htm>

REFERENCES

When you are seriously being considered for employment, a potential employer will want to contact people that can verify your information – and perhaps answer some other questions the employer hopes will help determine if you are really the right person to hire.

Years ago, before modern communications enabled employers to receive dozens or hundreds of qualified applications, it was a common practice to simply include a list of references with your application or on your resume. An employer would call – or even write – people you listed, and have an honest candid discussion about you. Nowadays, there are more stages to a hiring process and checking references happens at a late stage. Employers do not need your references initially. There was an intermediate time when it was fashionable to end a resume with “references are available upon request.” Current thinking is that this no longer serves a purpose and can clutter up valuable space in your resume or cover letter.

Further, our planet now has so many attorneys that many employers refuse to give any information except to confirm the dates of your employment and perhaps a job title. Others will not say anything unless you sign a legal release form! Hence, it has now become essential that you contact the people you would like to use as references. If a former employer/client will only give dates but you believe that particular experience is vital to your qualification for your next job, you should still include that employer in your list of references but you should try to find others that will speak more openly about your strengths. This could be a coworker, a retired manager, or even a customer.

When you talk with your references, you can tell them about the position you are trying for so they will be prepared to focus on your strengths and abilities that are relevant to that prospective employer. It is a common practice nowadays for prospective employers to ask your references who else they should talk with about you. When you speak to your references in advance, talk candidly about this and remind them about people you enjoyed working with so these people will be first on their minds when asked.

Begin your list with an appropriate heading, such as: Professional References for (*your name*). Then list:

Reference Name (*the actual person*), Title
Name of Employer/Agency/Organization
Address
Phone number
e-mail address

Add two or three sentences below each listed reference describing your relationship with the person and what part of your work he/she would know best about. If the best person for a former employer has retired or changed jobs, give the **current** contact information then explain where you knew that person.

You might be asked for your references at any time, but usually not until you have at least been invited for an interview. That would be a good time to review your list, make any calls to refresh information, and to be certain the contact information is current. You do not want the employer to be unable to find someone that is important to you for this late stage of the process.

JOB SEARCH PROCESSES PACKAGE

When you have worked through your assessment exercises and assembled your tools, you are ready to begin your actual job search in earnest. This is difficult work but enriching because you can devote yourself to following your hopes and passions. You want to toss yourself into this wholeheartedly. Starting your next job should seem like going on vacation. Let us give you a little guidance.

Your physical condition is important. You are like an athlete. See a physician for a physical exam if you have not done so recently. Get a good sleep each night, rise up early, get a healthy breakfast so you can function at your best right from the start each morning. Be dressed and ready by the start of what would be your normal work day.

Two of the most common myths of our time: “I do not need eight hours sleep” and “I am not a breakfast person.” If you tell yourself either of those things, you may be creating your own obstacles. Realize that you are competing against well-rested freshly energized super people!

We must mention first impressions again. Ask some of our coaches if you are not sure how you should dress. Standards may vary by type of job, company culture, and age group. How you dress needs to show respect for yourself, respect for people you meet, and respect for where you are. Yes, the R-word. You do not want your appearance to say the opposite thing.

How you speak or write is important. Poor grammar is so pervasive today that just speaking the way your grade school teacher taught you will put you far ahead in most interview situations. You are even more likely to have people listen to your elevator speech! The kindest first impression you are likely to get for your bad grammar is that you paid no attention in school, so you are not likely to pay attention to what your employer tells you, either. You are toast. There are exceptions to this, of course, if you have developed communication skills that show a sound mind and a grasp of matters essential to the employment. Talk about this in a coaching session if you fear your grammar may be weak.

Now that we have given you the advice your grandmother asked us to, let us see if we can get you excited about eagerly launching into your job search effort and making progress each and every day.

In this package, we will equip you to understand:

- Networking is your life
- The astonishing power of the Informational Interview
- How to interview confidently for good results
- Internet resources can come to your aid

Networking

You already know something about networking from trying out your elevator speech. We hope you have a business card and are ready to give people you meet a feeling of confidence in what you offer. You should understand by now that nearly everyone you come across during your day will know someone that could be useful to you. Perhaps the person sitting by you on a bus is a senior executive for your next employer. We live in a world where those things happen. People of faith give grateful thanks, but are not surprised.

Your life is networking. Networking is your life. Networking is not begging for a job from everyone you meet. You are **asking for advice**. Who should I be talking with? Where should I be looking? Have I described my background well enough for you to understand? Who else might give me good advice?

There are several aspects to “networking.” You might find a job by sending in an application in response to an announcement and being chosen simply on your merits. Hiring processes are rarely that simple. What you want is for Obi-Wan Kenobi to enter the employer’s office, calmly point to your application and say: “This is the application you are looking for. You can ignore the others. This is the application you want.” As he exits quietly, the human resource minion is preparing your job offer. Obi-Wan lived long long ago in a galaxy far far away so is not available. But much the same thing happens when someone you have talked with simply says: “Oh, I know that person. His background could be a good fit for us.” That simple comment becomes validating information the hiring authority does not have about the other applicants. Your resume will get noticed while all the hundreds of others still just look alike.

Many job openings are not advertised or posted anywhere. If you have been talking with people, one of them may learn of an opening in his company and suggest they call you.

If that is you we see jumping up and down, you may have begun to understand how important networking is to you. You do not want to leave these helpful interactions with people to chance. You want to be intentional about making it happen. Besides your barber and others you come across, start thinking of people you know and people they might know. Include family, friends, friends of family, former co-workers, people you see in church, former teachers, neighbors, members of any organizations you are in, or even that state legislator that came knocking on your door.

Sit down right now and make an actual list of a dozen or more: Name _____ phone or email _____. Then get to them today. Tell these people about your job search (your elevator speech again) and what you are looking for. Ask if they know of any jobs like that and if they can refer you to someone that might know about something that would be of interest to you. Then call each of those secondary connections, explain who referred you and why. Settle in and prepare for good honest conversations.

You might reconnect with people in your network as time goes by. “You referred me to A and he said I should talk with B. Do you know B? Could you send him an e-mail and let him know I will be calling?” Also, networking moves in multiple directions. Be prepared to offer mutually beneficial ideas and refer your contacts to people you know, too. The benefits of networking can continue throughout your career and beyond. By the time you connect with your first dozen and their secondary suggestions, you will

have easily thought of another dozen. The geometrical dimensions can become vast. Give thanks – and give the Spirit lots of room to work wonders.

When you are job hunting, social events need to become networking events. You are not just attending another meeting. Tell people you are vigorously job searching. Build connections. Ask for recommendations or advice. Ask people what they like about their work, what is new in their business, what the challenges are, and what distinguishes them from the others.

Internet networking:

There are internet services that promote networking as well. **LinkedIn** is well established. Some people also like to use **Google+**. Facebook now has a '**BranchOut**' application for networking. Effective use of these online tools works much like old-fashioned networking described on the previous page. You connect with people you know that are on the service. (The services can look through your email directory and find matches for you if you like.) You ask them which of their connections you should know and ask for introductions. When you begin, you set up a profile so people can find you. LinkedIn lets you upload a resume and it will use it to fill in a suggested profile. You can change the several fields to be short and inviting to create the impression you want people to see. Enrich what you see there with action verbs, unique personality traits, and highlights of your principal accomplishments. You want strangers to look at this and get a proper introduction to you.

If you want to do online networking, which online service is best for you may depend on your career choices and just who you might happen to reach. For now, you should perhaps start with LinkedIn. You might also try the others later when they become more developed. For a tutorial: <http://learn.linkedin.com>



If you have done all this and the world is still not beating down your door – or at least politely nibbling, we might dare to unleash the beast of fearlessness, the unbridled power of most effective guerrilla networking tactic for job hunting ever devised. Get ready to put your foot through the door and shake it all about!

Informational Interviewing

You can contact someone inside a target company or in an industry you like and ask if you can come in and seek information. The primary purpose has been to explore a prospective career. A corollary result, however, is that you become known to that contact person and inside that place of employment. Informational interviewing is one of the most effective forms of networking.

How effective is this strategy? A recent statistic demonstrated that sending 256 "cold" resumes per year would generate the same results as conducting two informational interviews per week for 12 weeks.

There are many reasons to do Informational Interviews:

- » Explore careers and clarify career goals
- » Discover unadvertised opportunities
- » Expand your professional network
- » Build confidence for job interviews
- » Access up-to-date career information
- » Identify your strengths and weaknesses

Important: You are not asking for a job. You are collecting information in order to understand the realities of an occupation. You also hope to expand your network within that profession or industry.

Steps to follow:

1. *Identify the Occupation/Industry you wish to learn about:* Assess your interests, abilities, values, skills and evaluate labor conditions and trends to identify the best fields to research.
2. *Identify people to interview:* Start with lists of people you already know in that industry or profession. You might have someone in your network already. Professional organizations, yellow pages, organizational directories, and public speakers are also good resources. You may call an organization and ask for the name of the person by job title. LinkedIn lets you search by employer name and finds your first and secondary contacts there. Any of your networking tools may connect you to someone.
3. *Arrange the interview:* Send a letter or an e-mail introducing yourself or you may have someone who knows the person send an introduction. Then, contact the person by telephone to set up that interview. Identify yourself, your purpose for the interview, and discuss how much time you might be allowed.
4. *Prepare for the interview:* Based on your research, decide what information you would like to obtain about the occupation/industry and prepare a list of questions you want to discuss.

Topics for discussion (be sure you phrase these in your own words):

- » Basic prerequisites for this field
- » Certification or degrees necessary
- » Kind of pay range expected
- » Future trends in this industry
- » Training required for this field
- » Making myself a better candidate
- » The most challenging part of the job
- » List of references
- » Special advice about entering this field
- » Best and worst aspects of this job
- » Experiences that have been invaluable
- » Job titles of the positions that I would most likely be applying for
- » Opportunities for advancement
- » Types of training company offers
- » Permission to use the name of the professional
- » The path of the professional that led to this field/job

5. *Conducting the interview:* Dress appropriately, arrive on time, be polite and professional. Refer to your list of prepared questions; stay on track, but allow for spontaneous discussion. Be considerate of the professional's time. Before leaving, ask your contact to suggest names of additional contacts.

Follow up after the Informational Interview:

» When you arrive home, immediately compose a short thank-you note and get it in the mail that same evening. (*Guerrilla tactic tip: take a note card and a pre-addressed stamped envelope with you. Before you leave the parking lot, write a few sentences mentioning some highlights of your time and expressing your appreciation. Mail it on the way home.*) Include your contact information.

» Analyze the information gathered. What did you learn? What do you still need to know? Adjust your job search, resume and career objective if necessary.

» If you gleaned further references, call the people mentioned, make appointments with them, and follow the same plan.

Additional suggestions:

Take your resume with you. You might ask your contact person to review and critique it for you.

Remember: Never ask for a job. You want to remain apart from those that have asked and been told 'no'. That makes it easier for an employer to say 'yes' later.

Exchange business cards with your contact. If appropriate, consider leaving your networking resume.

The fact is that people are willing to share their information when you show respect for their time, interest in their line of work, and appreciation for their help.

[Much of the above adapted from "Damn Good Resume" <http://www.damngood.com>]

Keep in mind that this process works. One of our group leaders was considering teaching community college courses a few years ago. He recognized a former neighbor listed as an instructor on the college website and called to ask if he could sit in on a class. That contact then introduced him to the department head. A few months later, he was asked to be an adjunct instructor. If he had simply sent in a resume, it might have just been put aside and lost forever!

Interviewing Skills

If you have been making proper use in the right places of the tools we have presented, you will be hearing from employers wanting to speak with you directly. This will mean you have gotten past all the preliminary screening and the employer has found some reason to believe you are among those deserving serious consideration. This is a time to confidently harness all you have learned about presenting yourself well. Fear not. We have more advice to help you.

An interview is the opportunity you have been waiting for to show your abilities and present your qualifications in full light. In short, this is your time to seriously market yourself. You want to be well prepared and at your best. We feel some tips coming on the steps you should take:

1. Advance Preparation

The employer will probably ask you to confirm the interview appointment, indicating by phone, e-mail, or letter. When you do, ask if you need to bring specific information or documents. Do take your resume.

Learn all you can about the organization. Thoroughly explore its website. Do internet searches about it and some of the key people. Learn the mission, history, and culture. If you are literate with financial statements, they may give you further insights. If the employer is publicly traded, market value is a part of the culture so you should check Yahoo/finance or other sources for stock prices, analyst reports, company histories, etc.

Review the job announcement for criteria and be ready – even rehearsed – at describing how your experience and abilities fit.

Go over answers to the open general questions (“Tell us about you.” “What are your strengths and weaknesses?” “Why should we hire you?” “Why does this job appeal to you?”). Ask someone to listen to you. Come to our mock interview sessions for the best practice!

Make sure your references are up to date. Refer to our section on References. If you have not yet been asked to provide references, you should take your list with you anyway. If you offer your list before being asked, you might appear overanxious. If they ask and you have your list ready, you look prepared.

2. Actual Interview

Dress appropriately, slightly better than you would expect to dress on the job. Be well groomed, with clothing in proper place. Ask one of our coaches if you need further advice on this. Do NOT smoke or chew gum. Do not leave home until you are ready to make your grandmother proud.

Plan to arrive early. If anything holds you up, you might still be on time. If you are more than a little early, use some parking lot time to rehearse a little more. But arriving late – you might as well wear your pants backwards. If there is a train derailment, you might repair the damage a little with a prompt phone call.

Use respectful manners with everyone you meet. A discourtesy to anyone on the premises can be an eyebrow raiser. Listen carefully for the name of your interviewer, if you do not know it in advance. Greet him/her with a firm confident handshake. Do that again when you leave.

Nonverbal language is important. Do not slouch. Make naturally interested eye contact. Your body language should show that you are comfortable there and this is where you belong. You know how politicians are always waving at people? They are not really waving at anyone in particular. You should be less theatrical, but act with some of the same “these are my people” confidence without arrogance.

Use proper English. Remember, bad grammar says you paid no attention in school so you probably will not listen to what your employer tells you, either. If you make a brilliant impression otherwise, you might be able to overcome this damage, but you will be running uphill.

If you are well prepared, you should be able to stay calm and answer each question concisely. If you do not think you understand the whole meaning of a question, you can ask to have it repeated or rephrased. You can use some thoughtful pause or buy more thought time with a comment like “That’s an interesting question” or by offering your own rephrasing to show your understanding of the question. Admitting that you have things to learn about the position and describing your strategy for finding information is a better response than an outright fabrication. If the question had many parts, ask if you answered them all.

These days, human resource people often insist that interviewers ask all candidates the same questions. They may give you these questions in advance, perhaps just a few minutes to get your mind on the right page before beginning the interview. Interviewers are able to ask follow-up questions in response to your answers.

You will usually have an opportunity to ask questions after the interviewers have asked you theirs. Ask about the position and about the organization, but avoid asking things you should know from the job announcement or could easily find on the website. **Do NOT ask about salary** until you actually receive a job offer. That is when you discuss terms.

Follow up with a thank you note. (Same guerrilla tip as for the informational interview: Take stationery and a pre-addressed stamped envelope with you. Before leaving the parking lot, write a few sentences about highlights of the interview and expressing your appreciation. Mail it on your way home.)

Difficult questions

“*Tell us a little about yourself.*” This one usually comes early. The interviewer thinks he is breaking some ice and giving you a chance to gather your wits. Actually, this is full spotlight. Take a breath. Put a smile on. You can include a little biographical background – your hometown and perhaps something from your upbringing that makes you especially proud, some brief highlights from your education or early jobs. But move on quickly to the really relevant experiences and everything about your background that most strongly prepares you for this position. Include your **strongest skills, greatest areas of knowledge, best personality traits, key accomplishments**. This is your chance to get their interest and hold it through the whole interview. Respectfully seize it.

“Why do you want to leave your current job?” or “Why did you leave your last job?” Be positive about this one. A key word is “more.” You wanted more responsibility, more challenge, more opportunity, or more money (do not dwell on that at this stage). If you were fired, stress what you learned from it. Be as positive as you can. Never lie. Never speak badly of your former employer or supervisor – your interviewer will wonder “what will he say about us?” DO make the job you are interviewing for the primary objective.

“What are your strengths and weaknesses?” You do need to be ready for this one. It is very common. You have probably already mentioned your best strengths. If so, emphasize them again. If not, here is your chance to make sure you describe strengths that promote you as a candidate for this job. You can also mention attributes such as meeting deadlines, perseverance, and good communications.

You want to put whitewash on the weaknesses. This is not a confessional. Do not be foolhardy with a full list of shortcomings. Mention a ‘good’ weakness and what you have done to make sure you avoid that failure in the future. A ‘good’ weakness could be: you take on too much work (you learned to delegate more); you get impatient with delays (you are working to understand processes to anticipate hold-ups); or you have been a workaholic (you are reading books on time management). Avoid some ‘bad’ weaknesses: procrastination, laziness, lack of concentration. Try to find a weakness from early in your career that would seem unrelated to your performance today.

“What is the greatest failure you have had in your career? Tell us what you did about it and how you learned from it.” This one is also very commonly asked. Again, try to pick a failure that occurred early in your career so it will seem like you learned your lessons early and it is not a factor for your performance today. Be honest, but you can play your strengths. Be positive about the eventual outcomes and lessons learned. Be ready to describe what could have been done better.

There are several books with more questions. There are no innocent questions (even ‘how are you?’) and no throwaway questions. The minute you walk in (or answer the phone), you should exhibit the qualities the employer is looking for: confidence, intelligence, energy, enthusiasm. Answer carefully – avoid opening controversies. This is a job interview – stay focused on responses that help you get the job, not on your tangential idiosyncrasies.

Questions you can ask

How long has this position been open? What happened to the previous person? How soon are you looking to fill this position? What are some skills and abilities you see necessary to succeed in this position? What would be a positive contribution a new person could do in the first 90 days?

Why do you enjoy working for this company? What is the philosophy/mission? What is the plan for the next five years and how does this department fit in?

What do you consider to be the organization’s strengths and weaknesses?

If I do a good job, what are the logical prospects for advancement? Is there a career path structure? Do the most successful people tend to come from one area of the organization? What is the most important thing expected from employees?

What are the major problems you are facing right now in this department/position? What challenges might I encounter? What attributes of the job would you like to see improved? What are the success factors you will use to decide if hiring me was the right decision?

Please tell me a little about the people with whom I would be working most closely. What makes my closest coworkers great people to work with? What committees would I be expected to participate on? If I stood outside at five o'clock, what would I see? Would people be smiling? Staying late or leaving early?

What is the policy on attending seminars, workshops, educational opportunities? Does the organization promote personal and professional growth? Are there rewards recognizing exceptional work?

Have there been layoffs in the past ___ years? Can you explain why they were necessary and how they were handled?

How much freedom would I have to determine my objectives and deadlines? Will this job involve significant amounts of overtime or work on weekends?

Do you have any concerns about my experience, education, skills, or ability to do the job? Do my qualifications lack something compared with your ideal candidate? Can I elaborate on anything else to give you a better understanding of my qualifications?

Other types of interviews

We have been hearing about group interviews, where many candidates are interviewed together. They may be given a group problem to discuss or just each one allowed a minute or so to give an elevator speech. We believe there are two reasons for such methods. Some employers may already know who they want to hire but are required to interview a number of applicants so they just do it all at once. If this is the case, you can still use the occasion to gain experience and to network with the rest of the group. The other possible reason is the employer truly wants to see how the applicants function in group situations. In such case, you should have an advantage if you have worked with all the tools we have been presenting to you. In particular, the D.A.R.E. assessment should help you better understand how with whom you should best communicate in a group. (If you did not complete the D.A.R.E. Survey, now would be a good time to go back there.)

There are even Webinar formats for interviews, where anyone in an organization can log in and ask questions. State agencies are reported to be using this, at least for senior administrative positions. The egalitarian motives probably do not apply to clerical or professional/technical positions. If you do come across this situation, realize that not all the participants will be experienced interviewers. Stay focused on your objectives for the interview.

