

SO! YOU ARE LOOKING FOR WORK?

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The following remarks about the job search are presented in no special order. Pick and choose the remarks that apply to you.

BACKGROUND READING

The following information resources will help you prepare for the job search, anticipate obstacles, and prepare solutions. There are two books in addition to *What Color Is Your Parachute?* that discusses the job search. They are *Job Finding Fast, or Getting the Job You Really Want* by Michael Farr and Howard Figler's book, *The Job Search*. These books will offer examples, formats, sample cover letters, various styles of resumes, such as traditional, functional, scanable/electronic, and more. These books will also discuss pre-employment application forms and the entire job search process. A number of books were placed on Reserve at the SRJC Plover Library under Counseling 61. With respect to preparing resumes, the only method of figuring out how to do the resume and cover letter is to prepare the documents. Then and only then seek out feedback. You will shortchange yourself by avoiding this task.

CONFIDENTIALITY

Never, submit personal information to any WEB site (or via the telephone) unless you can identify and trust the recipient of the information. With respect to career exploration you should never need to submit bank account number, driver's license number, and Social Security number. (CAL-JOBS, The State of California Job Bank, will ask for a Social Security number. This site is secure.) If you register on a site that has a fee you will need to use a credit card. With respect to the job search and career counseling, with some exception, you should not need to pay any fees, especially for resume services. Never submit original documents to an employer such as transcripts, certificates or degrees, social security card or drivers license.

DISTANT RESEARCH

Most SEARCH ENGINES, Newspaper Networks, City and County WEB Sites, and the Chamber of Commerce are the best place to start to check out a distant city to search for work. Of course, a family member or personal friend living in the geographic commute area of interest would offer an excellent link.

EMOTIONAL ISSUES

Workers, who experience a job loss, may display acute (short term) dysfunctional behavior such as panic attacks, disorientation, a feeling of being overwhelmed, a threatened self-esteem, withdrawal, misplaced anger, medical symptoms, and mild depression.

Smart job seekers will seek out resources to assist them in the job search, accept the intervention of a counselor / consultant / coach (with experience), and then do the work that is recommended. The counseling interventions must go far beyond vocational tests, temperament profiles, trendy phrases, and concepts.

Many individuals who call themselves “coaches” use that term because they have no professional training in “counseling.” Professionally trained counselors are no more qualified to do career or vocational counselor than a “coach” unless they are experienced. Many “coaches” with no professional counseling training are very qualified to help individuals weave their way through a career change. So! Buyers beware.

FINANCIAL PLANNING

If financial matters are a major concern, prepare an 18 (not 9 or 12 months) month projection of all essential living costs and expenses (everything-assume your car will break down, the roof will start leaking, and you kid breaks their front teeth or leg). It is reasonable to assume you will need 18 to 24 months to replace your lost income from the earnings and compensation experienced on your last job.

Be prepared to take short-term, temporary jobs to keep a roof over your head, food on the table, and gas in the tank. If you have a severance pay or savings, do not rely on this income, especially in the short term. Do not wait until your severance pay runs out.

Seeking work in a tight economy takes twice as long as estimated. Consider part-time, project work, consulting work to keep you foot in the industry and out of the house.

It is often helpful to review your calendar of activities completed over the past weeks to develop a baseline behavior, and then prepare an action plan of daily activities listed in your calendar for the next twelve to 18 weeks. Inept job seeking occurs when there is no plan.

Looking for work (marketing skills) can be an extremely difficult task for some people and an exhausting experience for most people. The job search often requires substantial physical and psychological or emotional labor. Most individuals who are seeking employment underestimate the physical and emotional labor these tasks require. Consequently, an effective job search plan must build in a schedule that includes family activities, domestic activities, and leisure activities.

Your written plan must include measurable goals that are assessed daily and weekly. If you do not want to prepare a written plan and follow that plan, stop reading this material now since you are wasting your time.

YOUR JOB IS TO WORK THE PLAN NOT TO OBTAIN A JOB. YOU HAVE NO CONTROL OVER THE HIRING DECISION. YOU DO HAVE CONTROL OVER HOW MANY EMPLOYERS YOU CONTACT. SEEKING EMPLOYMENT IS A NUMBERS GAME. THE MORE EMPLOYERS YOU CONTACT, YOU WILL GET MORE INTERVIEWS. MORE INTERVIEWS MEANS MORE JOB OFFERS. MORE JOB OFFERS MEANS A HIGHER LIKELIHOOD OF FINDING THE RIGHT JOB FOR YOU.

The topics on this page provide information, resources, pragmatic advice and suggested achievable actions steps that are needed to counteract the potential gravity toward the state of mind of the “job beggar.”

Certainly, the job seeker should read a few books on the process, such as *What Color Is Your Parachute*, and books by Kranich, Figler, etc.

In Sonoma County the candidates for job must contact at least four or five Temporary Staffing firms, CAL-JOBS, register with MONSTER.COM, and register with JOB LINK. Many companies use Temporary Staffing firms to screen all new hires for all position levels, including professionals. If you do not want to contact Temporary Staffing firms- then, you must like staying broke.

BUILD YOUR PORTFOLIO

Preparation for the job search requires that you know your skill set, how you could add value to a company, and that you are able to anticipate all obstacles to the search, including employer objections and job retention issues. The job search preparation includes preparing for the first promotion before you end the final interview.

Update your portfolio with each job. Keep records of all training that you complete. If you volunteer for an organization obtain a letter from the agency documenting your participation. Collect as much information as is practical and keep your file up to date. Keep your portfolio in a safe and secure location.

Again, please pay extra attention to how you can add value to a company’s bottom line.

RESUMES

Resumes are like selecting a wardrobe- they are very personal and subjective. If you speak with ten “experts” about a resume, you will get fifty opinions. Job seeking, including interviewing and using resumes, is like dating- one person is turned on and another is turned off- but you are the same person.

Resumes do not get jobs. At best they get interviews. Unfortunately, many employers may select an applicant based on a resumes. These are the employers who do not know how to value their company and do not know how "employees" add value to the company.

Do not spend excessive time or become pre-occupied with the resume preparation. While it makes sense to meet with someone to help you “think through your job search and think through the resume preparation” do not pay more than \$ 150 to \$ 200 to have a resume prepared. It is more important to pay an expert to help you with the “thinking through” activity. An expert should be someone who has knowledge of the local employment market.

If you follow Richard N. Bolles advice, resumes should be left behind after your initial contact with a prospective employer. This means you should have done your research on the company before approaching the company.

None-the-less, the resume must be prepared. All resumes should be targeted to the position that you want. There are situations however, where you want a general document that highlights key skills. Let's call this resume a QUALIFICATIONS BRIEF.

QUALIFICATIONS BRIEF

This resume has no objective statement and is recommended during the exploration phase since it does not need to be directed towards a specific position title- this document lists your key skills the way you want to list them.

The Qualifications Brief is not targeted on a specific occupation or employer. It is your business card listing your full name, mailing address, telephone number and e-mail address.

E-RESUME & SCANABLE RESUME

Most often you will be sending your resume to an employer via facsimile transmission (FAX), E-mail, or pasting it to a WEB site. (So, you need to know how to copy & paste on your word processor.)

Once you prepare a simple straight-forward traditional resume, edit the document to highlight keywords. “Keywords” are the technical terminology in your field of expertise. Do not prepare a resume with excessive formatting, indentations, and unnecessary spaces between text lines. Save this resume to a file. Then save the resume as a TXT or RFT document. E-mail this resume to yourself. FAX a resume to yourself. Take a look at these documents- this is how they will look to the employer.

SANTA ROSA JUNIOR COLLEGE CAREER CENTER

Go to the CAREER CENTER WEB PAGE. Then go to LINKS for the URL's of the following WEB SITES. These sites offer assistance (free) to help you prepare a RESUME. The Career Center computer lab has resume tutors.

RESUME TUTOR <http://www1.umn.edu/ohr/ecep/resume/index.htm>

This is an interactive workbook designed to make resume writing less of a pain in the neck and hopefully a bit more fun according to the developer, the University of Minnesota. This WEB site will not write a resume for you but will help you. It will show you how a resume is structured and how to write difference sections.

MONSTER.COM and CAL-JOBS has a resume builder/tutor. Other sites are:

Damn Good Resume
<http://www.damngood.com>

Electronic Resumes
<http://www.eresumes.com/>

Resume Information
<http://tbrnet.com/>

Jobsmart-Resumes
<http://jobsmart.org/tools/resume/>

Resume Pointers
<http://careercenter.sfsu.edu/student/resume.html>
<http://www.jmu.edu/career/resume.html>

Creative Job Search-Resumes
http://www.des.state.mn.us/cjs/cjs_site/resume.htm

Career Web-Resumes
<http://www.cweb.com/library/resumes.html>

OFFICE OF PERSONNEL MANAGEMENT - OPM

The OPM is the Human Resources or Personnel Department for the Federal Government. Go the Federal WEB site at <http://www.usajobs.opm.gov/>. This is the job board for seeking employment with the FEDERAL GOVERNMENT. It lists employment with most FEDERAL AGENCIES. In some cases you must go to the FEDERAL AGENCY to complete the employment search registration. There are two options available for On-line Application.

(1) You may use the On-line Application to create a résumé for applying for Federal jobs that you can print for your use and save to the system to retrieve and edit for future use. For some jobs, you may be able to submit your résumé electronically. Please look for the specifically marked positions in the Current Job Openings area.

2) You may electronically file your responses to an Occupational Questionnaire when doing so is part of the application process identified in a vacancy announcement.

CALIFORNIA STATE PERSONNEL BOARD

If you are interested in seeking employment with the State of California you need to become familiar with this WEB site. The SPB guides the civil service system to ensure that employment with the State of California is based on merit and free from patronage.

Some State Departments do not post to this site. Follow the suggested links to these departments. Some departments require that you E-mail your resume.

AMERICA'S JOB BANK

America's Job Bank is the biggest and busiest job market in cyberspace. Job seekers can post their resume where thousands of employers search every day, search for job openings automatically, and find their dream job fast. Employers can post job listings in the nation's largest online labor exchange, create customized job orders, and search resumes automatically to find the right people fast.

Guided by the vision of America's Labor Market Information System, the U.S. Department of Labor (DOL) has developed America's Career Kit in partnership with the states and private sector organizations. This powerful suite of Web-based tools includes AJB, America's Career InfoNet (ACINet), America's Learning eXchange (ALX), and America's Service Locator (ASL). Each product offers a unique solution to the increasing demands of today's labor market to meet the specialized needs of job seekers, employers, workforce development professionals, and the training and education community.

THE NORTH BAY BUSINESS JOURNAL

This is a very important publication for job seekers. Most job seekers do not read this publication. Your job is to do what your competition is not doing. By reviewing past issues the job seeker can learn about the local job market and economy, and detailed information about individual companies. Most major metropolitan regions have a local Business Journal. Business Journals offer an excellent source of information on local companies. Most libraries will hold this publication

1. In each edition an industry group is featured with the names of the major companies in the group. Each year most journals publish a book of lists of all the major employers in many industry categories.
2. In each edition a calendar of events- meetings, training seminars, and organizational meetings are published. These events are excellent opportunities for networking.

JOB SEARCH AGENTS and RESUME POSTING WEB SITES

There are many free job search agents and web sites to post your resume. You complete a profile and/or post your resume and the "agent" will automatically e-mail you a note when a job opening is found. The value of these sites depends on the number and variety of employers that post job openings. There are fee based job agents and resume posting services. Many trade organizations offer this service to their members.

VAULT, The Insider Career Network <http://www.vault.com/index.html>. A private web site that offers free posting of resumes. This site also offers free e-mail alerts when employer postings match your career interests. This site also offers for free information on industries and companies.

JOB SLEUTH, Fast, Free, Internet Job Detection <http://www.job sleuth.com/index.cfm>. The Job Sleuth performs a Job Search of the Internet for jobs to match your profile.

MONSTER BOARD. Go back to the MONSTER BOARD and review "My Monster" a free metasearch agent.

JIST CARD

The JIST Card is a 4 x 5 index card summarizing your key skills. The Card is useful during the exploration and especially during the job development stage. A video, Telephone Skills, is available at the Media Desk, explains this tool. A JIST Workbook is available on RESERVE.

JOB DEVELOPMENT

If you are seriously seeking employment, complete the following Steps.

Step 1 – Job Lead Resources. Identify a job goal and then identify three position titles related to this goal. A position title is the exact title used by a company.

Step 2 – Your Prospect List. Compile a list of 100 names including everyone you know, know about, know of, come into contact with, do business with, etc., etc. Yes, I know you cannot do it. But! How do you know if you have not sweated over the assignment for an hour or two? If you cannot list 100, you certainly can list 25 names.

Step 3 – Network for Employment. Prioritize this list beginning with close family, friends, and business associates. View the video presentation on *Using the Telephone to Develop Job Leads* at Plover Library Media Desk under my name/course. This video will show you how to contact leads. Begin contacting your contact list and ask for job leads.

Step 4 – Your Preferred Employers. List the employers in your commuting range that interest you. Review the North Bay Business Journal's Book of Lists. Contact the hiring manager of the company. Tell them you are exploring job openings and you would like to send them your JIST card and/or resume. If this employer does not have any job openings ask for two names of employers they know that may have job openings.

THE ORAL INTERVIEW

Practice an oral interview with a friend. It is worthwhile to role-play the part of the employer to give you some insight in to the challenges of the interviewer- Videotape to the interviews if you have a camera.

REJECTION LETTERS

Rejection letters are the best proof of your productivity in the job search. If you are contacting employers and interviewing for positions that are at the higher end of your skill range or slightly higher, you will receive rejection letters. If you are not receiving rejection letters your job search is mediocre.

THE JOB SEARCH PLAN

A job search plan is not rocket science. Once you are prepared, seeking employment is a numbers game. You must prepare a daily plan, follow the plan, record your results, and stick to it. The plan must permit you to measure your progress on a daily basis. You have little control over the employer's decision but you have maximum control over the number of employers you attempt to contact. Consistency and persistence is the key. If you are seriously seeking employment, complete the following Steps:

Step 1 - Are You Job Ready?

Can you list one specific job objective?

Can you list three employers who staff this objective?

Can you list the names of the respective hiring managers?

Can you outline the minimum hiring requirements?

Can you confirm the salary range for these positions?

Can you estimate the employer's anxieties?

Can you help the employer resolve these anxieties?

Can you estimate the employer's problems?

Can you tell the employer how you would be able to solve these problems?

Can you prepare a targeted resume for these positions?

Do you know the employers method of recruiting for open positions?

Are you ready to start work within five days if offered a job?

Step 2 – The Daily Plan

If you plan to seek employment, prepare a daily and weekly job search plan. Your job is to execute your plan.

Step 3 – Make Contact

Prepare list of 50 individuals and sources of job lead information you know who you can call to obtain information of potential job leads. Contact these individuals and sources and ask for or identify job leads. Set a goal for the number of your employers you will contact each day to identify job leads and openings. Begin contacting the hiring authority at each targeted employer in your commute range- your job is to schedule an interview not interview for the job over the telephone.

Step 4 - Prepare for the Job Interview

Research the position and the employer. Visit the employer's place of business prior to the interview if possible. Anticipate questions. Know everything there is to know that you can obtain prior to the job interview.

Step 5 – Analyze the Rejection Letters

Rejection letters is the best proof of your productivity in the job search. If you are contacting employers and interviewing for positions that are at the higher end of your skill range or slightly higher, you will receive rejection letters. If you are not receiving rejection letters your job search is mediocre.

Richard Bolles, in *What Color Is Your Parachute?* notes that of the ten reasons you did not get a job, nine of the reasons had nothing to do with you or your performance. Call the employer back and thank them for the notification- many employers do not notify job applicants if they do not get the job. Then ask the employer for one or two job leads. Also, ask the employer if you can contact them in a few weeks in the event there may be an opening.

Step 6 – Follow up

Follow up with everyone you contacted. Send thank you letters to individuals who interviewed you or gave you information. Keep your network warm.

THE ACID TEST

Once more! The acid test of measuring a job seekers job search effort is to count the rejection letters. If there are no rejection letters there has been no job search. Rejection letters demonstrate that you have invested time in the process and interviewed for jobs at the top of your skill set. The efforts to perform the research to answer the questions that follow separate the ‘interpreneurs’ from the beggars.

Job interpreneurs (they are like entrepreneurs, who are self-employed) intuitively seek information that answers the questions that follow especially those questions that pertain to their job search. The counselor’s job is to perform “excuse-ectomies.” If you are working with a support group, take turns sharing your answers and call each other on fuzzy thinking. Each question and comment is designed to zero in on a particular job search behavior peculiar to the special context of the job seeker.

Therefore, the questions and comments will be somewhat repetitive and overlapping. You should add additional questions. Furthermore, the questions and comments are written in the first person; and they are not listed in a particular order or grouping. Pick the questions that make sense to you.

If you cannot answer these questions, you may not be job ready. You heard this before. Stupid job seekers (job beggars) will sit in a counselor’s office and tell the counselor how much they know about seeking work and how much the counselor does not know about seeking work- yet the unemployed job seeker is still unemployed. Smart job seekers always seek out advise, mentoring, and feedback. However, the stupid job seeker cannot produce notes about their employer contacts or answer the questions listed below.

Stupid job seekers (job beggars) are individuals who are not aware that when they are opining in the counselor’s office, that they are in an office that is not their office. They are living on disability payments, unemployment compensation, and/or their spouses/parents earnings, not their earnings. They are unemployed and the counselor is employed. They are broke.

Some job beggars also become “homeless” by choice because they choose to drop out or slack off perhaps due to discouragement, frustration with the current substantial economic dislocations, delayed adolescence, or misplaced anger.

(Many chronic homeless individuals are experiencing physical, mental, or emotional impairments.) One final point, there are individuals who seek professional services from counselors or placement agencies. (It does not matter whether they are paying clients or clients who have third party support who say they would pay for your services if they could -they won't) for the sole purpose of getting that famous list of employers just waiting for them to call.

This is no joke. There are job seekers (job beggars) who expect that a counselor will have that list of employers who are on the edge of their seats waiting for the job seeker to call. If anyone has this list, please send it to me.

This mindset is why so many individuals visit employment agencies; get the job offer through the employment agency (or through a placement office of a school) and then complain that the agency/counselor did nothing.

This is the mindset of the person, after securing employment through the agency or following a period of support, question why the agency/firm is charging them a percentage of the salary or a fee, after they start work.

These are the individuals who will say the agency or counselor did nothing to help them.

DANGEROUS QUESTIONS!

If you are seriously seeking work, you should be able to provide the information to many of the following questions. If you can answer these questions, you are ready, armed and dangerous:

What is the preferred geographic area (commute range) within which you will accept employment?

What are your top three primary job objectives and top two secondary objectives?

How do you know you are qualified?

First, what are the essential requirements asked for by the employer?

How did you find out about the essential hiring requirements?

Connect each of the minimum hiring requirements or expectations of the employer with your specific job content skills and/or previous experience listed on your resume.

Are you prepared to negotiate?

What information do you have to prepare for negotiating your salary and working conditions?

What are the names and locations of three employers who staff each of your primary and secondary job objectives?

What are the names of the position titles used by the prospective employer?

What will employers pay you if you were selected to fill each of these positions in the labor market where you are seeking employment?

What are the employer's anxieties in the hiring process?

How can you help reduce these anxieties?

If a manager or supervisor (an employee) interviews you, what are his/her anxieties?

List each anxiety, and write out employer questions that might address each anxiety. Then write out your response.

Are you prepared to explain why you are leaving your present job?

Are you prepared to explain why you are currently unemployed?

If you are interviewing for a job that is different from your last job, are you prepared to explain the change? (Or interviewing for a job that pays substantially more or less than your last job?)

Remember that the person interviewing you left a job to fill the one they now have. He or she may be earning substantially less than what you were paid in your last job. The issue is not that you left or you will be leaving a job. The new employer wants to make sure he/she is not hiring another employer's problem.

Make your reasons make sense.

How does the position contribute to the employer's bottom line? How will you contribute to the company's bottom line? Please do not assume the person interviewing you knows what the bottom line is! AND

Remember the employer or the manager (employee) may not know how the position influences the bottom line.

YOUR BOTTOM LINE

Can you schedule daytime hours to contact employers in person and on the phone every day during the next four weeks?

Take out your calendar and schedule in the time. How much time can you schedule to complete employment research assignments at home, the Library, or Career Center?

If you are serious about seeking employment, have you prepared a list of 100 contacts—friends, associates, co-workers, anyone that you come into contact with during the day—when you are shopping, your landlord, casual friends, enemies, friends of friends, former employers. Scan the yellow pages, and identify a person that you know as you scan the list of businesses.

You can work this list to develop leads. Contact a sample of this list to prospect for job leads. Scan the classified ads for the past twelve weeks - usually one weekday edition and the Sunday edition. Many employers who use the classified, Help Wanted, section of the newspaper, always use them; and many people who accept job offers do not stay on the job. You can cross check phone numbers with the Yellow Pages.

Do you have a pet? Does the pet ride in your car? Would you offer to drive a prospective employer in your car? Do you smell like your pet?

Do you smoke? Do your clothes telegraph the odor of smoke?

Remember your close friends and co-workers or associates will not come to your aid when you are unemployed. They will wait for you to ask for assistance. You must ask them for assistance in a business/professional manner. Treat them as if they were the employers. Do not assume friendship will substitute for their professional judgment.

If you are serious about securing employment quickly, register at the EDD CAL JOBS. Make contact with ten to twenty major employers (with over 20 employees in one location) and visit at least five temporary agencies.

Temporary agencies in many communities handle the new hires of many firms. Remember Temporary Employment Agencies want to talk to individuals who are job ready and prepared to fill slots and ready to produce. They do not fill training positions. Consequently, the position objective you use with a temporary agency may be “taxi” position- a position that gets you in the door. Once hired, you can search out lateral or promotional positions.

Contact temporary agencies will help you practice speaking about yourself and increase your network of contacts.

Always visit these agencies as if you were prepared for the interview. Have resume in hand. Dress appropriately -always.

Seeking employment is a numbers game. Your job is to contact as many potential employers face to face in the shortest time cycle possible and follow-up, follow-up, follow-up.

At the end of each day, your calendar and notebook will tell you how busy you have been. The sooner you contact 100 people, make 50 employer calls, and complete 10 interviews, the better. Each day, you must add names to your contact list.

Remember that the employer is not in business to hire employees. In fact, the employer's job is to decrease operating costs and increase productivity.

Employers fill positions and each position contributes to the bottom line. There are always changes in the company.

Do you have an answering machine? Call yourself and listen to your greeting. Would you hire the person who made this greeting? Employers have reported calling an applicant to schedule an interview, and after listening to the greeting, hung up!

What is the salary paid by employers in your targeted labor market area for the position you are seeking?

Are there any significant differences between public and private sector employers, large employers, medium-size employers, and small employers? Usually, public sector employees have substantially better compensation packages than employees in the private sector- regardless of what you hear.

If the information is available, factor in the cost of fringe benefits.

For the position you are seeking, compare the salary schedules of a community college, County, and City Government with a mid-size, established private sector employer.

Do you have a current copy of your DMV printout and credit report?

Get a copy of each, and make sure it is accurate.

Did you contact each of your references and give them a copy of your resume? What about your landlord? Physician? Previous employers? Parole or Probation Office? Instructor/School Official?

It is always a good idea to speak with anyone that might be contacted by an employer before that employer speaks with him or her.

Do not list physicians, attorneys, parole and probation officers unless you need to have one of these references help you explain a significant employment related problem.

Did you contact your last three employers to confirm the name of the person in charge of personnel records, verify your job title, duties, wage rate, and ask what they will report with respect to your attendance / punctuality?

Have you practiced completing a variety of pre-employment application forms? How is your printing? Use a black, thin tipped, felt pen, and use block style printing with impeccable spelling.

Practice job interviews. Practice answering tough questions. Practice, practice, practice! Record the facts.

Be honest. Do not give employers inaccurate information. Do not lie? Nevertheless, do not offer any more information than what is asked. Make sure the information you do offer is always related to the position you are seeking. Interviewing is not an informal conversation- people are taking notes.

Have you toured the job site of the employer where you will be seeking work? Good idea, especially before the interview.

Did you visit the Social Security office and order a record of your previous covered employment history for the past five years? (Your employer will!).

Spend about two hours sitting in the job service office or the personnel office of a large company where you would not be noticed- and just watch, observe, and listen. Who would you hire and why? "There, but for the grace of God, you go!"

One factor that separates successful job seekers from unsuccessful job seekers is the quantity of employer contacts.

If you were looking for work this week, how many face-to-face contacts (informational interview, inquiries, submitting applications, interviews) did you make this week? How many per day?

Is your number greater than ten? If not, how does it feel to be broke?

Remember that securing employment is the beginning of a relationship that is built on mutual trust. Employers want to feel comfortable supervising and correcting.

Employers do not want to become your counselor, mother, or confidant. Leave your problems at the door.

After you start work keep in touch with your profession, industry and competitors. Keep your resume up to date. Employment is not a long term parking lot. Always prepare for the next job.

Finally, you do not own the position. The employer, with some exception, can hire and fire at will- just like you can quit at will. You have no control over the destiny of the employer and the employer's industry. Everything is always changing.

Be prepared, financially, emotionally, to seek employment with another employer without any notice. Keep your powder dry (your skills up to date.)

BACKGROUND CHECKS

Set up a file to collect information on your background. A list of topics covering information that may be relevant to your situation follows. Thinking through these questions will help you in the job search process. Preplanning will help you learn how to evaluate and minimize the impact of negative information.

The employer has a right to ask your permission to conduct a background inquiry to obtain information that is related to assessing your skills and candidacy for the position for which you are seeking.

There are legal guidelines to what information the employer can request and the timing of the request. You may volunteer information about a medical impairment that you believe would require accommodation.

Always attempt to obtain or to learn in advance any negative information that the employer will discover before you submit an application or interview for the position.

You must always provide truthful information but you do not have to provide information that is not relevant to the employer's need to know. It is important to tell the truth. Do not lie, misrepresent, exaggerated or withhold information that is essential.

However, do not blindly disclose personal information to just anyone and do not provide nor volunteer information that is not essential.

There are multiple stages in a recruitment effort. Until you are offered a job, there is certain information that is not relevant. The employer should be able to explain the reasons and/or rationale for the information requested. Smart employers conduct thorough employment interviews and background checks.

Companies want employees who can perform the job and who will fit into the work team. Your job is to help the employer obtain the essential and necessary information to help the employer make a reasoned judgment.

Official Degree Check

If you have attended one or more colleges including military training, but do not have a degree, schedule an appointment with a counselor. It may be possible to have the Registrar evaluate your work towards an AA/AS degree and evaluate your progress towards completing undergraduate degree requirements. The school that grants the degree or certificate may be able to give you credit for previous work accomplished. It also helps to know this information so you can speak with conviction.

Verification of Employment

Send a letter to your previous employers for the past five years, and request a verification of employment, including dates of employment job title, and salary. You can telephone the employer and request the name of the person to whom you should mail your letter. This project will help you identify the contact person of your present employer. Follow up by telephone within a week.

Credit History

Contact major credit reporting companies and obtain a copy of your credit report. I suggest you check out TRW, CBI, or a local reporting agency. This report is worth the small charge. Contact and alert your landlord/property manager so they are prepared to respond to pre-employment inquires. Give your resume to your landlord and other individuals you use as references. Share information about your job objective. This will help these references talk about you. If you provide them with information, they will be prepared to respond to questions. It is important that you convey that their responses should be limited to there sphere of involvement.

Degrees, Certificates, and Licenses

Obtain photocopies of all documents supporting degrees, credentials, certifications, and registrations available in your file, but do not send them or give them to the employer. Do not volunteer them until you are in the interview, and then ask the employer if they are needed first. Do not provide original documents. You should know the exact terminology, especially the name of the issuing agency of any piece of paper. If any certificates have expired, you must know what to do in the event you may need to reinstate the certification? With respect to transcripts it is preferable to give the employer a verification of a degree without the details of a transcript.

Periodically, at least once per year, obtain a copy of your DMV record and check it for accuracy. If the employer should request one or more of these certificates give the employer a copy of the original. If the employer wants an original document, suggest that you can contact the issuing agency and request that the agency mail a copy direct to the employer.

Do not leave originals of documents with the employer. Do not give an employer a copy your documents unless the employer has stated that you are in consideration for the position and/or the employer is offering you the job subject to verification of background information. With respect to transcripts, if the employer wants verification of your degree, request that the school just send verification of the degree, not the details of the transcript. If the employer wants details of certain courses, request that the school just send verification of the courses requested.

You should not give the employer too much personal information or documents unless you are being seriously considered for the job- and that would certainly mean you have had at least one good interview.

Remember, information has value and you can negotiate what information that you will send to the employer. If the employer requires, complete information, than evaluate that request and respond accordingly. The employer may not need your grades in unrelated courses.

What evidence does the employer have that shows grades are correlated with job performance. Actually, attendance is the best predictor of job performance for most semi-skilled jobs. If the employer wants verification of grades in courses unrelated to the job requirements you will have to evaluate that request. If the employer wants your grades, ask the employer to specify the courses and provide information that grades are positively related to successful performance on the job.

Why does the employer want grades? Would the employer know what to do with the information? Most employers do not need grades. They just need to know if you are making satisfactory progress, including good attendance and punctuality.

Information is negotiable—the employer should give you valuable information for each piece of information you give the employer. If the employer is asking you for more very detailed background information, then ask the employer if you are being offered a job subject to verification of the information requested.

(I think we have beaten this issue to death.)

Medical History

If you have a significant medical impairment, obtain an exact medical diagnosis of the impairment, learn how to discuss and describe the condition in lay terms, and learn how to explain restrictions that may interfere with a job or work functions. You need to know how to relate a medical impairment to vocational restrictions. You must be prepared to show the employer how you can perform the job tasks using your residual capacities.

You must be prepared to explain to the employer how your impairment can be accommodated. Focus on ability and capacity, not impairment or disability. Contact your physician or a RN Nurse when you need help in explaining medical conditions that you may have to discuss with an employer.

Remember, when completing ‘forms’ check off only those conditions on a medical form for which you have received a medical diagnosis. You are not a licensed physician. Do no self-diagnostic evaluations. Avoid noting minor strains, aches, kinks, etc. This is not the time to speculate or guess. The information in these forms can follow you for life. Ask your physician about his/her policy about providing medical information to third parties, such as employers. Ask your treating physician to help you complete the questionnaire.

You may want to notify your physician in writing not to release any information unless you are consulted first even if you signed a release. Read your chart notes when you have the opportunity. Even when you call the physician on the phone, notes are recorded about the conversation.

During your employment physical exam, do not volunteer any information that is not relevant. Answer relevant questions. This is not a chat session. A physical examination is not a psychological examination so politely request an explanation for any questions that you believe exceed the purpose of the physical examination.

Some positions do require a psychological evaluation in addition to a “medical” examination. I would confirm that the individual conducting the ‘psychological evaluation’ is a trained mental health evaluator or licensed (in your state) psychologist or psychiatrist.

The medical examiner may be a nurse with no particular expertise in mental health or psychological assessments. You are also being observed, such as how you are able to bend over to take off your shoes, sit on the examining table, and turn over on the table, all of which demonstrates your agility.

Your demeanor, grooming, and appearance are also being observed and evaluated. Attend the physical exam dressed as if you were attending the job interview. Show up for the examination dressed like a job applicant- talk like a job applicant. The medical examination is part of the job interview.

Be careful of open-ended questions during the exam such as, “Is there anything you would like to tell me about your family life or personal situation?” The answer is “nothing that I can think of.” “Everything is fine.”

Ask the employer to discuss the information they receive about you from this medical examination. You have a right to ask. The evaluator may decline but there is no law preventing you from asking questions. Your health is always excellent—do not attempt to diagnose your health. Leave that to the medical examiner.

If you rate yourself less than “excellent,” such as “good” be prepared with a good explanation for checking “good” and not “excellent.” Your interviewer may employ silence as a tool to get you to talk too much. Many individuals begin jabbering away whenever there is period of silence (5 to 10 seconds- that is all it takes). Respond to questions not silence.

Finally make sure the physician who exams you is the physician who signs the report.

Fingerprinting/Drug Screening

A prospective employer may be required to include fingerprinting.

Psychological Testing and Interviews

If you will be scheduled for a “psychological” interview, make sure you get the name and qualifications of the psychologist or the examiner. Confirm and verify that the psychologist is licensed in the State. Obtain the names of any instruments (tests) that you complete, and find out how they are scored and who scores them. Make sure the examiner who sees you face to face is the person who signs the report.

If someone else administers the tests, get their name and experience. (You could schedule an appointment with a psychologist of your choice for an hour to obtain some education about this type of interview if a psychological interview is essential in the job search. You should respond to questions honestly but at the same time it is important to be on guard about incompetent evaluators and evaluations. (There will be a fee.)

Some employers will administer a personality test and/or a “lie detection” examination. Ask many questions. How do the results of this test prove a person is qualified for the job? If the employer is not willing to discuss the results with you, determine if you want to work for the employer.

The employer should be able to explain the specific job related purpose of this testing. The employer may ask if you can perform the essential job demands. You need to know what those demands are before you can answer that question. “Based on my knowledge of the job I see no problem with performing the job tasks.”

The employer may employ a graphologist (handwriting analyst) and ask you to provide a writing sample. They may not inform you that the written writing sample will be evaluated by a graphologist. Ask for information that was provided by the graphologist, the graphologist’s name and expertise. These psychological instruments are useful tools when employed by a trained professional in the context of comprehensive evaluation.

One-shot assessment where the interviewer relies on commercially prepared tests that are mailed to the assessment company, with the “magic” number or results mailed back to the employer are questionable.

Felony Record

If you have a criminal record of felonies and/or misdemeanors, find out exactly what your record would report. Obtain a copy your record- contact the Police Department or County Courthouse. Seek expert consultation on how to handle this situation with employers if you need to handle this situation.

For instance, it is important to know the relationship of the recorded code violation with the type of work you will perform or the type of employer. Some positions require certification that precludes certain types of convictions.

Under what circumstances is a discussion of your record required and pertinent to the job? Under what circumstances is a discussion of your record unnecessary?

Be alert to off-the-shelf application forms that ask for this information such as your arrest record that you may not need to provide. Generally, avoid giving this information in writing unless the employer has confirmed that you are seriously being considered for a job. You can always note N/A in that the information is not applicable at the time you are completing the form. It is applicable when you believe the employer is making a job offer and has a need to know the information.

Most important you want to respond to all employer inquiries that are may be legal and/or reasonable honestly. Do not lie, misrepresent information, or exaggerate information on an application form, on a resume, or in an oral interview. You may defer information, however.

Identification and Proof of Citizenship

Employers must and should ask you to prove your identity, your citizenship status, and complete the I-9 Form. Illegal immigrants should not work in this country- even though most US employers encourage and recruit illegal immigrants. Be prepared to produce your social security card and Drivers License- do not give original or copies to the employer. The employer may not take possession of the original documents. You are not required to photocopy these documents, especially documents including your picture before the job offer. Remember information is negotiable- the employer gives information – you give information—“tit for tat.”

References

Contact three to five individuals and get permission to use their names as personal references. Give each individual a copy of your resume; discuss the type of work you are seeking- and follow-up after an interview to find out if they were contacted. Send each person a thank you card.

Investigations

In some instances, the employer may have an investigator perform a background check-- which may include a contact with your neighbors and property manager/landlord to name a few. Let these people know you are seeking employment and give them a copy of your resume. Follow-up and find out if they were contacted.

If you are concerned about background checks (really concerned), contract with an agency of your choice to perform a standard employment background check for you. There are WEB sites that provide this service for a fee. Remember, for a fee you can authorize a background check on yourself.

Clothing, Uniforms, and Tools

Are you prepared to meet dress requirements of the industry in which you will seek work and/or provide the uniforms and/or tools that the employer may require? Do you know that the employer may be required to pay you extra wages if you are required provide your own tools and uniforms?

Contact the Industrial Welfare Commission (Farmers Lane in Santa Rosa) and obtain a copy of the Hours, Wages, and Working Conditions Document.

The only way you can determine the fairness of paying for these items yourself is to contact other employers to learn about the local practices. If you are working for wages, it is in your interest to have the employer provide everything. For each item you provide on your own, what do you get in return. Negotiate!

Drug Screening

Make sure you have prescriptions for any medications you must take. Avoid medications if they are not essential, especially during the job search. It may take about sixty to ninety days or more to remove traces of medications. Some foods can produce a positive result. You should first receive a job offer subject to the drug screening. There is nothing to prevent you from going to a lab and ordering a panel yourself.

Automobile, Pets, Smokers, and Drinkers:

Clean your car. If your car looks like a Junker, do not let the employer see it. If you have pets in your house and if you let them in your car, make sure you are not carrying their odor with you. With respect to smoking, remember that non-smokers can always tell if another person is a smoker or has been in the presence of smokers (restaurants, etc). Even if you do not smoke but you live with someone who smokes in your car or home, your clothing will smell of smoke.

Eliminate the odor from your clothing and avoid smoking before the interview. Avoid drinking alcohol before a job interview and during your active job search activities. Non-smokers who interview you in a closed room can usually notice the odor of alcohol if you have been drinking a few hours before the interview.

If you are a frequent or heavy drinker, non-smokers can often tell if you were drinking within the past 24 hours especially if you drink on a regular basis. It comes out of the sweat glands. (Also works for Garlic.) In a small office, job seekers leave their presence with the employer after they physically leave the building.

Liability Insurance

It is not only the law, but it is important in the job search, to be covered by auto liability insurance if you drive a car. Employers may want you to drive from time to time. Make sure your Drivers License is valid even if you do not own a car.

Grooming Standards

Are you prepared to demonstrate the grooming standards expected of job applicants for the type of work you are seeking. What are the standards such as hair styling and length, sideburns, mustache, jewelry- on your clothing and attached to your body parts? Can you presently demonstrate those standards? Do you know how to find out the employer's standards? Regardless of the law, do you want the job?

Workers' Compensation Claims

The employer has no need to know you have had previous workers' compensation claim. If you are discussing the reason for leaving your last job because of an industrial injury, the employer does not need to know about the details of your workers' compensation claim (permanent disability rating or settlement) and should not be asking questions about your claim in the first place.

You were laid off because your physician did not recommend that you perform certain job tasks- and the employer was not able to modify the job or offer a different job. You did not want to leave but you were given no choice.

You must be prepared to discuss the medical impairment and whether or not you can perform the job. Would the employer want you to remain on the job if your physician did not recommend the activity? At the appropriate time, the employer can ask about your ability to perform the job in question. Just ask, "How is this information related to the job requirement so I can answer your question intelligently?"

Most people do not know much about the details or technicalities of workers' compensation claims so you can just state, "I'm sorry, but I just do not know much about the details. If they are essential to your decision about my employment here, I'll try to get the information. But, I will need to know why this information would influence an employment decision."

Wages & Working Conditions

Confirm the wage rate, overtime rate, working hours and days, policy on rotating days/shifts if pertinent, the supervisor's name, where you will be working, policy about using your car on company business and reimbursement rate, pay period, when salary/wages is reviewed, how performance is evaluated, who evaluates, and when you qualify for any company fringe benefits.

Remember the employer must deduct payroll taxes. If you are paid cash, make sure the employer gives you a statement of deductions. Otherwise the employer is probably not covering you. In 90% of the situations, you are NOT an independent contractor. If you are offered and you accept a job, send the employer a memorandum confirming these details. Now is the time to discuss the pay period, payday, how you will receive your check, performance standards for determining increases, the person charged with evaluating your performance, and wage or salary increases (how and when).

Independent Contractor Status

If the employer pays you in cash, you must receive a payroll receipt, showing required deductions. The employer must POST information that you are covered by Workers' Compensation Insurance. You can contact the Employment Development Department if you need to confirm that payroll deductions are being deposited. Make sure you give your employer the name of your choice of physician in the event you need medical treatment due to an on-the-job injury.

If payroll taxes are not deducted then you are not covered for unemployment insurance, state disability insurance, workers' compensation insurance, and social security benefits. The IRS may hold you responsible for your share of the payroll taxes if the employer did not deduct these taxes or if the employer deducted the taxes but did not deposit the money.

Bonding

A prospective employer may need to cover you with a BOND. This will often involve a credit check and other background inquiries. Usually employees are not aware that they are covered by a Bond.

COMPANIES THAT OFFER BACKGROUND CHECK SERVICES

If you are interested in paying a service to do a background check on yourself explore the following examples of WEB services that provide this service for a fee: (There are other WEB sites on the INTERNET. Use these services with extreme caution. This activity is not required nor is it recommended. The information is provided to just inform you about this type of service.)

The WEB site www.tsci.com offers a service to confirm background information. The WEB site www.badreferences.com offers services to find out what employer say about you.