

# THE ESSENTIALS YOU NEED TO KNOW FOR JOB SEARCH SUCCESS



Job Search Strategies,  
Effective Résumés,  
Nailing a Job Interview  
and Staying Sane

**Carolyn Smith**

# **The ESSENTIALS you need to know for Job Search Success**

## **Job Search Strategies, Effective Résumés, Nailing a Job Interview and Staying Sane**

By Carolyn Smith

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## About the Author

Carolyn Smith helps countless job seekers like you, around Australia get their dream job, promotion, or pay rise.

She offers:

- Books
- Reports
- Online training resources
- Free articles
- One-on-one career marketing and job search services for managers, professionals and executives across a wide range of industries.

Since 2003, Carolyn has successfully assisted thousands of clients, including working with prominent clients including former Senators, Members of Parliament, Entrepreneurs, General Directors and Fortune 500 executives.

### From the Global Corporate World to Career Specialist

Carolyn's original background was in law as a corporate solicitor in New Zealand and the United Kingdom. From there she moved into marketing and business development. In early 2003, after a three-year stint working for the largest law firm in the world with clients such as the World Bank, International Finance Corporation, Citibank and ABN AMRO, Carolyn started her online business.

Move forward to today, and Carolyn has assisted thousands of senior job seekers, delivered training seminars to organisations such as the Fair Works Commission; developed training materials for job service training providers, written and developed job search training resources, published books and provided support and mentoring to other career professionals.

Carolyn is a top 50-globally ranked career professional, a Certified Master Résumé Writer, Certified Expert Résumé Writer and Certified Employment Interview Consultant. Carolyn is only one of a handful of international career professionals to gain these elite qualifications globally.

Originally from New Zealand, Carolyn met her Australian husband Neville, while roaming through the Middle East and Africa, and moved to Australia with her husband in 1996. Carolyn has a son called Samuel, and lives outside of Brisbane on acreage on the Brisbane River. In her spare time Carolyn is a jazz lover, an avid reader, news and current affairs addict and a gym junkie.

### Why this resource?

I've worked with thousands of job seekers over the years and I know first hand the frustrations experienced by job seekers from both the public and private sector.

If you have experienced job search rejection, you are not alone and I see countless highly qualified job seekers disheartened by the modern job search. When talking with job seekers and working one-on-one with clients, what strikes me is that most job seekers are still in the dark about the reality of the modern job search, in spite of the proliferation of free career resources online. So I sat down and compiled a list of topics of all the key areas that could make a major difference to your job search.

I've split the topics into 4 key areas:

- Job Search Strategies

- Career Marketing Documents
- Job Interviews
- Job Search Mindset

Each is of equal importance to the other, as without nailing each area, your job search will be more difficult and having the right mindset is essential (in particular for your sanity). My goal is to simply outline the most critical things you need to know and if need be, you can explore each topic in more detail.

Good luck with your job search!

Take care and all the very best

*Carolyn F Smith*

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# **PART ONE**

## **JOB SEARCH STRATEGIES**

## **Have a target job in mind**

If you already know what your job target is, congratulations. If however, if you are one of the many, that doesn't know exactly what sort of jobs you are going to applying for, then read on, because you NEED to know, BEFORE you start applying for jobs.

Now I know what you might be thinking – I need a job, any job, so I'm just going to apply for jobs – PERIOD! However, before you take this path, hear me out, because this is one of the major mistakes a lot of jobseekers make. You see the 'apply for anything approach' is not effective. Why?

Well, the first is, that applying for any job is going to be a recipe for job search stress, rejection and failure. If you apply for anything that comes your way, you are going to be applying for jobs where you are not necessarily a good fit and you need to make sure your skills and experience, match the exact requirements of the employer. If they don't - you are going to get a whole lot of rejection letters, or worse still, no acknowledgement that you even exist. This is the LAST thing you need, as a ton of rejection letters will turn into a vicious cycle of stress and fear. This stress and fear from constant job search rejection, will lead to you applying for more jobs and looking at just anything to secure a job, leading to more rejection letters and more stress and more fear. Don't get into this needless cycle of stress and fear. You need to get purposeful and targeted when applying for jobs.

The second reason, why you should not apply for anything that comes your way, is because if you are going to have any success using this approach, you will need to adapt your resume for each and every job. (And I don't know any job seekers that do this effectively). This is not only time consuming, but you are spreading yourself way too thin in terms of research and networking and might even miss out on opportunities.

Finally, if you don't know 'what you want to do' – you are not going to sound convincing to employers. Employers want someone who not only has the skills and experience for a specific job - they want someone that is committed and passionate about what they do. Coming to interview, with, 'I need a job', is not commitment and passion – it is desperation and employers don't want to hire desperate people (hence more rejection).

Look, even if you are at the point in your job search when you feel you can't take much time defining the job you want, because you are running out of money, or just need a job fast, still take some time out, even for a few hours to determine target jobs or sectors. Plus remember, this is your life. If you don't take the time to figure out what your dream job would entail, you might find yourself in a job that you get stuck in and that makes you bitterly unhappy. So give yourself the gift of working out what you want.

**Have a defined job target before you commence a job search!**

## **Don't use job boards as your primary method for securing a new job**

Yes, you can secure a job on the Internet by submitting your resume onto online job boards, such as SEEK and CareerOne, but this method is one of the worst ways to find a job. I'm sure you have found out first hand and might already have a bunch of rejection letters, or worse still are getting no response.

The reason why major job boards are so ineffective?

***Advertising on job boards is often the last resort for employers (not the first).***

***AND Major job boards are generally ineffective, because they are popular.*** The job board whether we like it not have transformed the recruitment landscape. In the days prior to the Internet and the job board, employers advertised in the local newspaper and received a dozen or so applicants. Today, an employer advertises and will be inundated by job applicants, because let's face it – finding jobs to apply for is so easy for the jobseeker!

What this means to you, is that your competition has just expanded at an unprecedented rate. More competition, and the lower the chances of success – unless you take the steps necessary to outshine the competition!

Plus keep in mind, if you use the major job boards:

### ***The gatekeeper is in charge***

For the bulk of jobs advertised online, your resume will end up in the lap of the gatekeeper, namely HR personnel. The gatekeeper is exactly that, what stops your resume from being placed directly into the hands of real decision-makers.

Think of them as the bouncer in front of an exclusive nightclub. They have complete discretion over who comes to the party or not and will stop letting people through, once the room is full. They might let a few people through, if they like the look of them, but the majority don't get to come to the party.

You have to keep in mind that HR's job is to simply 'weed out' job candidates and the less applicants they have to deal with face-to-face the better. So if possible, avoid HR altogether and get your resume directly in front of the real decision makers.

### ***On job boards - automated processes rule***

Due to their popularity, employers now receive hundreds of applications from jobseekers. To cope with the overwhelming influx, many employers have turned to technology to process applications, or Job Boards themselves (such as CareerOne), use data matching to process job applicants resumes.

What this means to you, is that your resume won't even get read, unless it passes the keyword search and is scannable. So you might be the perfect candidate, but that machine won't know you are the perfect candidate, unless your resume contains all the optimal key words.

Then when you pass muster on the keyword search, your resume will be quickly 'eyeballed' by a recruiter or HR. If you don't make the cut during the 30-second review time, kiss goodbye to the job.

### ***The 3<sup>rd</sup> reason is that because it is relatively cheap to advertise, many companies and recruiters are advertising to update their databases and talent pools, rather than doing any recruitment***

Today - it is not an uncommon practice for companies to solicit resumes for jobs that are not open yet. The practice by HR is to stock their databases with potential jobs in the future, not for current jobs. Some employers' update their job postings with a few minor changes to keep them high in the search results, even though the job is not a 'fresh' genuine job posting. What that translates to, is that you could be applying for jobs were your resume is designated for a HR database.

So for all their popularity, job boards have massive limitations for the job seeker.

Job boards are inherently tools built for employers and recruiters, rather than serving the needs of job seekers. This is driven by the fact that job board revenue is generated by employers and recruiters advertising, not specifically by job seekers.

The reality is that the majority of job seekers don't get their jobs from the major job boards (although the marketing



from branded job boards would make you believe otherwise).

**The typical success rate for this type of job search process can be as low as 4%.**

**SO - the lesson?**

- Don't spend hour's job surfing job boards (you are wasting your time).
- Broaden your job search strategies to include methods such as networking
- If you apply for jobs on the major job boards and don't have any success, don't feel like there is something wrong with you, or your qualifications. Job boards are the worst way to find a job for everyone (even the most qualified and talented amongst us)

## **Don't rely on a recruiter and don't waste any time with recruiters if changing careers.**

If you are changing careers, or have no experience in the type of jobs you are targeting, don't waste your time with recruiters. There are better alternatives out there, including the hidden job market and networking.

If however, you have specific job target in mind with prior experience and a track record of success in this job target, then recruiters are a good bet. For example, you are an experienced project manager in the field of construction and aiming for another project management position within construction.

The first thing you need to know is that the recruitment sector, by its very nature, is very competitive and cut throat, recruiters rarely talk to each other, little training is required of recruiters i.e. there are no mandatory education or training prerequisites and the industry is very fragmented

The second thing you need to understand is that:

**Recruiters are working for themselves, not you!**

That is, recruiters are working for the company (or rather themselves, as they get paid a commission for placement) and the company is their client – and you are essentially the candidate (product) they are offering the client.

Because of the way the industry is structured, recruiters will be looking to work with the candidate **most likely to get hired by the client.**

What this means to you, is that they won't be recommending you, if you don't meet the client's specific requirements – so don't rely on a recruiter to nail you that job – besides recruiters should only ever by one aspect of your overall job search strategy.

Because the recruiter has to meet the client's exact requirements, a recruiter is NOT the best job search strategy, if you are starting out, or looking to change career direction.

**Basically a recruiter is the perfect tool, if you bring the following to the table:**

- No more than 3 jobs in 3 years.
- A solid education.
- You have a successful record in the industry that they specialise including a list of achievements and accomplishments.
- You possess a solid personality and you present well in person, including expressing yourself well.
- You bring enthusiasm and you are excited about the company and opportunity.

## **For future career success, you need to be proactive, not reactive**

The world of work is changing rapidly during the past decade due to increased globalisation, the proliferation of online social media and technological advances.

*‘Change is the law of life. And those who look only to the past or present are certain to miss the future’.* John F. Kennedy, 35<sup>th</sup> President of the United States

Combine these changes (the online revolution) with the fact that competition for senior jobs can be INTENSE. Take these few facts:

- The average length of time a person stays in a job has decreased, for example the average tenure for many of the top executives and professionals is under 3 years.
- There is less job security today with globalisation and lower rates of loyalty (from both employers and employees).
- With great mobility and remote working patterns comes reduced visibility for professionals and executives.
- Change in organisations has accelerated.

What these accelerated changes mean, is you need to think of your career in a different way. Shaping your career is something that is an ongoing activity. It is not about updating a resume when a new job arises, or networking only when you are shown the exit door or your current position become untenable to you. It is something you work on as an ongoing activity and the best time to work on it is when you are fruitfully employed, (not when you are looking for a new opportunity). Ways to be proactive:

- Keep your LinkedIn profile up-to-date and proactively engage in groups and forums.
- Position yourself as an expert (important if you are a senior executive) such as writing a blog, contributing to Pulse (LinkedIn) submitting articles to relevant magazines and having an online website showcasing your expertise.
- Network outside of LinkedIn. This is particularly important if you have more than 150 connections, as once you go over this number, you have something more akin to a poor client relationship management tool, than a genuine networking tool. With numbers over 150 it is difficult to engage and develop meaningful business relationships.

# **PART TWO**

## **CAREER MARKETING DOCUMENTS**

## **A LinkedIn profile won't work for you, unless you have an effective profile**

### **In LinkedIn's Own Words:**

LinkedIn is the world's largest professional network with millions of members and growing rapidly. We can help you:

- Establish your professional profile and control one of the top search results for your name.
- Build and maintain a broader network of professionals you can trust.
- Find and reconnect with colleagues and classmates.
- Learn about other companies.
- Leverage powerful tools to find and reach the people you need.
- Tap into the knowledge of your network.
- Discover new opportunities.

There is NO downside to LinkedIn if you are a professional, manager, consultant, business owner or executive. If you are one step up from low paying, low-skilled jobs and one-step down from the CEO level (jobs between \$50,000 and \$250,000) a year then you need to be on LinkedIn!

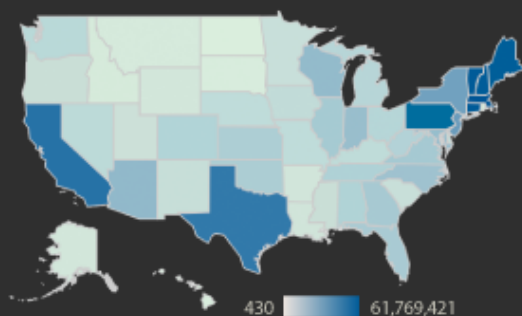
It is NOT a social network site for creating fun, such as Facebook. It is also not a 'contact manager' but some people do use it this way (if you do use this way, make sure you backup your contacts regularly).

**LinkedIn was launched in 2003 and it is rapidly eclipsing all other tools used by recruiters and company hiring managers.**

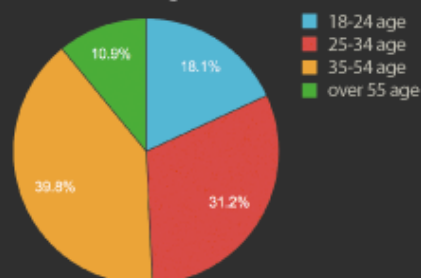
The success of LinkedIn in generating revenue from recruiters and hiring managers - is reflected in their share value. While much has been said about Facebook and their share price, very little is being said about LinkedIn's share price, reflecting the increased profitability and success of LinkedIn.

# in Who Really Uses LinkedIn?

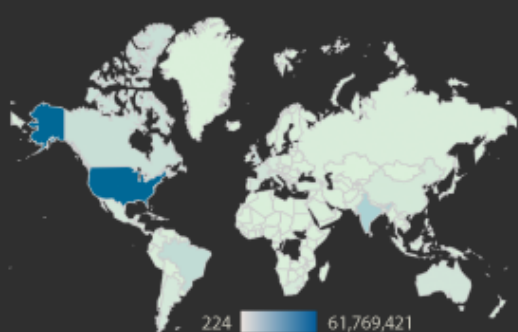
61,527,573 registered users from USA



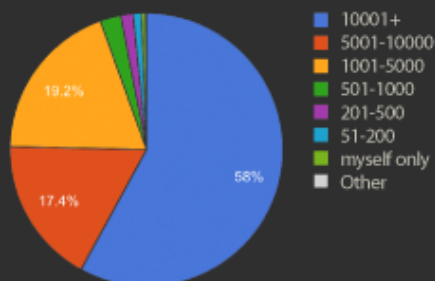
Age of users



157,526,652 registered users in all



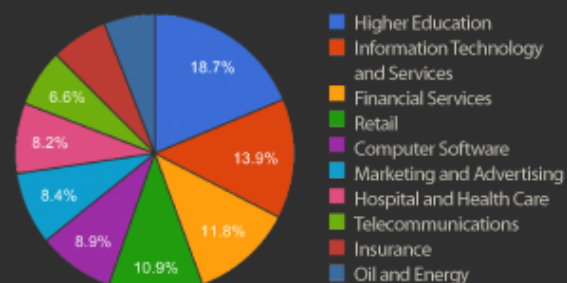
Company Size



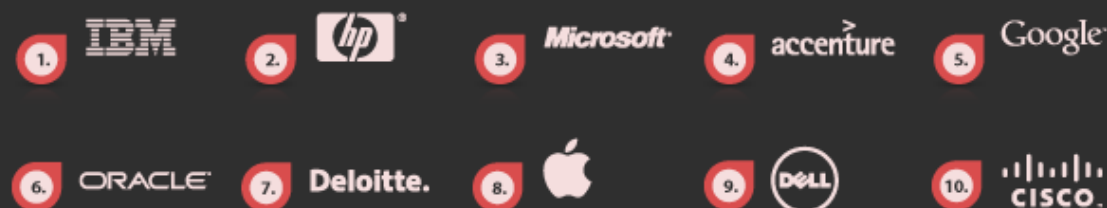
Gender of users in USA



Industry



Companies they care most about



**However, LinkedIn will only work effectively if you:**

- Set up an effective profile.
- Use it on a regular basis effectively.

**Make sure your profile is 100% complete**

If your profile is not complete in LinkedIn, then you are significantly less likely to generate interest for your profile. It is worth the time to get a 100% complete profile, as it will help improve your results. LinkedIn states that your profile will be 40 times more likely to be viewed, if it is 100% complete.

To have a 100% profile, you need to be an All-Star (this status will appear on your profile home page).

In order to get a 100% profile, make sure you complete all the following items:

- An up-to-date current position, with description
- Two past positions
- Education
- Your skills (minimum of 3)
- Your industry and location
- A profile photo
- And have at least 50 connections

**PROFILE STRENGTH**



**You need to have an understanding of SEO**

SEO = Search Engine Optimisation

What most LinkedIn users aren't aware of is that the results displayed for searches (by recruiters, employers and all other users of LinkedIn) aren't random.

LinkedIn uses an internal set of algorithms, on which to base any searches, which is where SEO comes in. Basically, you need to determine keywords that people use to find you with and then place these keywords strategically in your profile. For example: If you include the keyword 'Financial Controller' and if someone searches LinkedIn for a 'Financial Controller' you might come up in the search (depending on the competition).

The more often that word or phrase shows up in your profile, the more likely that you will appear in people's searches (including recruiters and hiring manager searches).

So in order to be found, you need to what they call **optimise your keywords**, otherwise you won't be found. (Keywords won't guarantee that your profile will appear at the top of searches, but without keywords, your profile will never get to the top of the search pile).

To optimise your keywords, take a step back and determine what keywords other people might use to search for your type of skills, qualifications and knowledge.

### **You need to be attractive to potential employers**

By attractive, I don't mean a picture showing off your physical beauty, by attractive I'm talking about showcasing your work history effectively.

Under each job title you have over 2,000 characters, so make sure you describe what you accomplished and achieved under each job and what sets you apart from others.

## **If applying for a government job, you need to use the right methodology and be suitably qualified.**

If you want to try your hand at government jobs then this is great, as there are so many opportunities out there. BUT, before you go down this road, you need to understand the following:

- If you don't meet the agency's requirements' relating to knowledge, experience and qualifications, then it does not matter whether you think you could do the job blind folded, you simply don't meet their requirements, so you won't be selected for interview.
- **The merit process is by its very nature competitive** and your application will be assessed against other candidates, many of who will be more suitably qualified than you. Depending on the position, panel members will assess anything from 1/2 a dozen candidates through to 1,600 candidates or more.

So make sure you are sufficiently qualified for the position, BEFORE applying for any government job (otherwise you will be wasting your time).

Once you have decided that you are a suitable candidate - then you need to stick with some basic rules and use the right sort of selection criteria methodology.

### **Tip Number One – Stick to the basic rules (or face elimination)**

Before you get started on addressing selection criteria, **I have listed some basic rules you must adhere to.**

## Rule One

**You must address ALL the selection criteria, including desirables!** This might seem like stating the ‘bleeding obvious’, but a significant number of candidates fail to address one or more selection criteria. By failing to address all the selection criteria, including desirables, it will make it difficult, if not impossible for the selection panel to assess your suitability against that criterion or criteria. That will make it unlikely you will be selected for interview.

Remember, the **onus is on you** to demonstrate your suitability against the selection criteria. It is not the responsibility of the panel members to second-guess your suitability, or to refer to your other documents such as your résumé to check that your qualifications and experience meet their requirements.

## Rule Two

**Do not refer the selection panel to your résumé, or any other part of the document when addressing criteria.** Instead, treat every criterion as a separate short essay and if necessary, repeat information. Remember, each criterion is scored and weighted and a selection panel member won’t have the time, or the inclination to search through your documents trying to locate the paragraph, or information you were referring to.

*For example:*

- Instead of ‘refer to résumé for list of relevant courses’, insert a heading under the criterion and list the courses.
- Don’t state, ‘refer to selection criterion 3’ – simply repeat the relevant information contained in selection criteria. Alternatively develop another evidence-based example that can be utilised specifically for the criterion.

## Rule Three

**Make sure you address all part of the criterion, if the selection criterion is made up of several parts.** Too often candidates, fail to address all parts of the criterion, hence significantly weakening their application.

## Rule Four

**Make sure you follow the agency’s directions, relating to page limits, word counts, layout and presentation.** Not all agencies list these requirements, but if they do, make sure you follow their directions **EXACTLY**.

### Tip Number Two – Use a Selection Criteria Model

The key to addressing selection criteria is to provide an **evidence-based response** to each of the selection criteria. Although it is evident to you that you possess these relevant skills and knowledge, you need to convince panel members that you actually possess them.

**It is vital you avoid writing statements that claim that you meet the selection criteria, without providing any evidence.**



Consider the following *Before* and *After* examples. The *Before* example simply makes a statement, without any examples to demonstrate the soft skill relating to communication and interpersonal skills. The *After* example provides tangible evidence of communication and interpersonal skills, and more importantly, how these soft skills contributed to the company.

### **Before**

*I have excellent communication and interpersonal skills, evidenced throughout my long career. At all times, I communicate appropriately, write clearly and ensure that I get on with people from all walks of life.*

### **After**

*I have excellent communication and interpersonal skills, including communicating effectively with people from all walks of life, through positive lines of communication.*

*In my role as Markets & Purchasing Manager, I was responsible for sales and business development for new markets at S.A. McKenzie. Within this role, I nurtured a wide range of contacts and strategic alliances with clients and publishers. This included responding to feedback from clients to improve service delivery, taking the time to talk and listen to others, and communicating information in an effective and timely manner.*

*As a result, I successfully recorded the largest sales growth within the company, with up to 45 new customers within a 12-month period, including domestic and international institutions.*

*As Assistant Manager/Saturday Manager at Mart Books P/L, I was responsible for the day-to-day operation of the bookstore, including dealing effectively with a wide range of people – from senior managers, customers, through to the supervision of casual staff members. Within this role, I exhibited strong interpersonal skills by being willing to consult and listen, I ensured that staff valued team work, including treating all people with respect and courtesy, and I provided constructive feedback to colleagues, as well as allocating sufficient time for training and instruction.*

*Within this position, I also liaised extensively with a diverse range of people from all walks of life. This involved resolving customer complaints, providing advice and recommendations and ensuring that colleagues, customers and other stakeholders received and understood the information communicated to them, including written reports and memorandums. At all times, I considered the sophistication and information needs of other and matched the level and complexity of communications to the skills, knowledge and experience of the particular individual or group.*

*As a result of my effective interpersonal skills, I was able to engage with people from all levels, and I established a very strong team, reflected in an extremely low turnover of casual staff members.*

A large number of agencies suggest candidates use a selection criteria model when addressing selection criteria. The two major selection criteria models utilised across agencies in Australia at federal, state, territory and local level are **STAR** and **CAR**.

**STAR** is the acronym standing for:

- **Situation**
- **Task**
- **Action**
- **Results**

**CAR** is the acronym standing for:

- **Circumstances**
- **Action**
- **Results**

When utilising a selection criteria model make sure you focus on **accomplishments and achievements**

It is a universal fact that the overwhelming majority of candidates find it difficult to talk about their accomplishments and achievements. I would go so far to say that 99% of the clients I work with don't think sufficiently about how they contributed to their employer.

Yet a major difference between an OK candidate and an outstanding candidate is accomplishments and achievements. WHY – because through accomplishments and achievements, YOU can demonstrate your worth to a potential employer, by driving an effective message to panel members that you can make a difference or contribute to the functional area and in turn the agency.

So make sure a large focus of your application relates to the 'R' of the CAR or STAR, namely the result.

## **Résumés are marketing documents, NOT a record of your employment history**

Companies invest time and bucket loads of money into developing persuasive copy and advertising material to sell their services and products. Yet the average job seeker pays scant regard to the most important marketing document they possess, namely their résumé. Your résumé is the ONLY physical, tangible representation of who you are, both before and after an interview.

Even in times of economic prosperity, the difference between a successful job seeker and a less successful job seeker, is that the successful job seeker spends a great deal of time, or money into developing a résumé, that captivates the essence of the VALUE they offer, and in a way that will differentiate them from their competition.

**An outstanding résumé will ensure your ultimate success:**

- You will get invited to more interviews
- You will position yourself above your competition (even above other candidates that are more qualified than you)

- You will get the readers interest, so the potential employers are eager to meet you in person
- You will create a strong framework for a higher level of remuneration, or better working conditions

Having worked with candidates at all levels from both the public and private sector, I see countless qualified job seekers, churning out lousy résumés, that screams under-par, lack of intelligence and lack of experience, which in turn is detrimental to their job search and career aspirations.

**However, the good news is** - that with just these 7 tips below, you will have a better understanding of how to create a sizzling résumé, that could **double** your chances of being selected for an interview.

### **Tip 1 - Say good riddance to the career objective**

In the past, career objectives were the ‘hot item’ in résumés and were incorporated in almost every career document around town. This tradition is still evidenced in countless résumés I receive, along with the continuing use of career objectives within résumé templates that you can find online at job search sites.

While a good career objective provides YOU with a fantastic focus, **it does absolutely nothing to sell you to a potential employer.** Why? The simple fact is, that a career objective is usually bland, broad and uninspiring and the focus is on YOU, not the employer’s needs. Take this career objective for example:

#### ***Objective***

*“To have a successful career within a strong and stable corporate organisation, and to be engaged in a new and challenging role that offers job satisfaction, whilst allowing me to advance and become an effective and valued team member”*

When you read this, do you actually know what industry or sector this candidate is from or more importantly, why is the focus of the statement on the need of the candidate, rather than the employer?

In short, make sure you understand the following:

**Résumés are marketing documents and to market yourself effectively you need to focus on the employer’s needs!**

So while your objectives and career aspirations are important, they are only important to YOU. Quite frankly most employers don’t give a toss about your career aspirations, unless they happen to marry up perfectly with their requirements. **The reality is that they are after a recruiting solution** and employers are really not that interested in your career ambitions.

And let’s face it everyone wants to work for a “dynamic employer, with a great atmosphere, plenty of perks, challenges galore and a stack load of cash, after a few cold beers on a Friday arvo”. But your wants and the wants of almost every job seeker out there have nothing to do with what the employer requires.

So instead of inserting a career objective - put the space to better use, by inserting a strong profile that provides an overview of what **‘VALUE’** you can provide any future employer.

### **Tip 2 - Use the first person narrative**

Avoid using the third person narrative. Use the first person narrative, omitting the “I”. For example:

**Before:**

- *I managed the office and workshop, including 6 staff comprising of 4 technicians and 2 office administrators.*
- *I was instrumental in increasing sales by 20%*

**After:**

- *Managed the office and workshop, including 6 staff comprising of 4 technicians and 2 office administrators.*
- *Instrumental in increasing sales by 20%*

**Tip 3 - Incorporate key words**

Keywords are those words that signal to the employer that you have the relevant skills, knowledge and experience to match the job requirements. By incorporating those words most relevant to the position, when employers scan your résumé, they will make an appropriate connection between your keywords and requirements of the position, which in turn will identify you as an appropriate candidate.

Key words are also **VITAL in relation to computerised job searches**. If you are going online and using your résumé in the private sector, make sure you incorporate key words into your résumé, so databases and other electronic selection methods will identify you as a relevant candidate.

The most common types of keywords that signal to employers that you have the relevant background are:

- Job titles
- Skills related to the position
- Jargon/Technical terms

**Tip 4 - Choose the best presentation format**

There are quite a few options available when choosing a résumé format, the most common being the chronological, functional and combination.

**Chronological Résumé**

This format presents your employment history in reverse chronological order, with the most recent position first, followed by previous positions. This format is the most common one utilised and is usually preferred by employers, including selection panels in the public service sector.

The advantage of this type of formatting is it enables you to show steady progression in your career.

The disadvantage of this formatting is that it highlights unstable careers, job-hopping, employment gaps and over and under qualified candidates (hence its popularity with recruiters and employers).

## Functional Résumé

A functional résumé categorises experience under skill-based sections in order to highlight your relevant skills.

Brief example:

### Organisation / Time Management

- Complimented by clients and management alike for ability to meet the challenges of a busy and complex work environment.
- Juggled multi-faceted tasks, simultaneously responding to client enquiries, managing an office environment and meeting statutory requirements and deadlines.

### Customer Relations / Communications

- Developed outstanding client relationships, through a commitment to client service and ensuring ongoing improvement in service delivery
- High-level skills in negotiating agreements, resulting in the communication of information relevant to the area in an effective and timely manner.

### Problem Solving

- Re-engineered inefficient work practices relating to timesheets and billing, resulting in new streamlined process.
- Keep abreast with new knowledge to increase efficiencies, along with making decisions that reflected a balance between resource requirements and customer needs.

The advantage of a functional résumé is that all the disadvantages of the chronological résumé are removed. It disguises unstable careers, job-hopping, employment gaps and over and under qualified candidates (hence its unpopularity with recruiters and employers).

This is an obvious disadvantage. Employers and panel members trying to use your résumé as a chronological guide to your work history when reading through your responses to selection criteria, find it almost impossible to do so.

My recommendation is to **only use this format if you are a chronic job hopper.**

## Combination Résumé

A combination résumé, as its name suggests, is a combination of the chronological and functional résumé. Usually the opening page is in the functional format, followed by your chronological work history.

The obvious advantage of this formatting is that it highlights your core skills in the opening page, followed by the chronological work history that agencies, recruitment consultants and HR personnel favour.

When choosing a format, bear in mind that many agencies and organisations specifically request certain information that must be included in a résumé. This usually requires candidates to submit a chronological work history. If you fall into the chronic job hopper, or return to work mum category, then the combination resume format is the perfect solution for you.

### **Tip 5 - Develop a stunning profile**

Instead of inserting a career objective, use this space to incorporate a stunning profile, or qualifications summary. Within the profile, highlight how you meet the needs of your employer. Information you should consider including are:

- Your core competencies relating to the position
- Number of years experience in the sector
- Highlights of your achievements and accomplishments
- Management style
- Affiliations to professional organisations
- Relevant language skills

**Note the emphasis is on competencies that are relevant to the position.** This is really important - as the most effective profiles are those that provide a summary of all the skills and attributes you possess that the employer is looking for in a candidate.

### **Tip 6 – Avoid long lists of soft skills**

When I talk about soft skills, I am talking about your **personal skills**, such as communication and interpersonal skills, team work, attention to detail, analytical skills and so on.

While these are attributes that employers are looking for, they get so overused by job seekers, that they don't actually mean anything and there is nothing else in the document to back up a candidate's claim to their various soft skills.

The reality is, if you asked 10 people what their most valuable personal skills were, I bet you would find that "9 out of 10" would state that they have good communication and interpersonal skills and they are reliable and honest. (Does this sound like YOU?). So when it comes to a recruiting agent, human resource officer, or selection panel member viewing such a claim in your document, and **this claim is made by pretty much everyone else submitting an application** those long lists of soft skills don't actually mean much and are not taken at face value, even if they are true.

That is not to say soft skills are not important – they are. What I am saying is, if you use them in your résumé make sure you back up your claim by providing evidence of the relevant soft skill.

### **Tip 7 - Focus on achievements, not long lists of duties and responsibilities**

One of the biggest mistakes candidates make is providing long lists of duties and responsibilities, without providing any tangible evidence of achievements.

**Achievements / accomplishments should always be included and should be the major factor highlighted in your résumé.**

While a brief list of your responsibilities should be included, don't include everything; otherwise you risk having your résumé sound like a boring list of duties, without providing any tangible evidence of the VALUE you can provide to an employer.

Finally if you have had several positions that involve exactly the same duties, don't reiterate the same duties. Instead, distinguish each position, by emphasising different elements and focus on the contributions you made to each and every employer.

### **Forget the advice on very short résumés (if you live in Australia and New Zealand)**

If you undertake a search on how to prepare a résumé, so often you end on career sites that make a strong suggestion as to the length of your résumé. **Please IGNORE those sites that advise you to limit your résumé to 1 or 2 pages**, as usually these are American sites where the recruiting practices are different from Australia.

Instead, focus on a résumé that truly reflects your skills and experience and even if this takes 4 pages, so be it (unless a page limit is imposed by the organisation or agency). HOWEVER, make sure you don't waffle, and don't include information that is not required, repetitive, or irrelevant.

Note: The average length of résumés I professionally prepare for clients is usually anything between 3 and 4 pages. This length is more than adequate, even at the very senior level. So if your current résumé runs into 6 or more pages, (not including your cover page, if you have one) it is time to refine your current document.

## **You need an effective cover letter**

Considering our modern digital world in which millions of people send their resumes, the question has to be asked as to whether the cover letter continues to be valuable. The answer in short is YES:

If you fail to write a cover letter, you risk not being invited to interview.

Employers and recruiters prefer their resumes with cover letters.

Take these statistics after a national survey of employers (*The 100 Best Companies to Work for* (Plume/Penguin Books)):

- A well-written cover letter can improve the odds of a less-qualified applicant obtaining an interview (75% agreed, 25% disagreed)
- An applicant who has done research on your company or the position they're applying for will receive greater consideration than those who send a generic cover letter (92% agreed, 9% disagreed)
- Addressing a letter to the appropriate individual will improve an applicant's chance of getting an interview (70% agree, 30% disagree)
- A cover letter with resume is welcomed even when no job openings are available (88% agree, 12 disagree)
- Applicants should ask for an interview in the cover letter (53% agree and 47% disagreed)
- Applicants who follow up with a phone call will improve their chances of getting an interview (37% agree and 63% disagreed)
- Resumes with cover letters receive preference over resumes without cover letters (53% agree and 47% disagree)

**However, unless the cover letter is worth reading, it does not add value:**

## **What a cover letter MUST include**

### **It must meet the needs of employers**

- It must include your understanding of the company
- Convey your enthusiasm and passion for the job
- How you can help solve their problems, make money or save money for them

### *Questions to ask yourself when drafting and reviewing your cover letter*

- What problem does the employer need solved?
- How can I prove I can be of help to the employer?
- Is what I am assaying relevant to this particular employer's concerns?
- Am I putting the employer's needs above my needs?

## **The segments of a cover letter**

### **The opening:** An interesting and relevant introduction

It is important that your opening grabs immediate reader attention. For example:

‘Thank you for your time on the telephone today. It appears that my background may be the perfect fit for your new opening. I’m also very excited about making a contribution to your organisation, as your firm is conducting breakthrough research in an area that I have specialised in’. *(Conveying passion and enthusiasm and linking up the company requirements with what the job candidate can offer them)*

‘Since I can remember I wanted to make a difference to children’s lives. A recent graduate from the University of Queensland, I’m excited about your entry-level openings at Woodridge Catholic School.’ *(Passion and enthusiasm about the opportunity)*

‘As a marketing professional with over 10 years experience in your sector, an extensive network of contacts and a degree in marketing, I’m confident that my credentials meets your exact requirements.’ *(Becoming the solution to making more money as a result of the job candidates experience in the sector and extensive network of contacts)*

### **Compare these openers with what the bulk of job applicants’ use:**

In response to your recent job posting for a registered nurse, advertised in SEEK, please find enclosed a copy of my resume. *(Yawn)*

Please accept this letter and resume for marketing manager position as referenced on your company’s Web site. I’m confident that my work history and education background will benefit your company. *(Dull and boring)*

### **In your opening, make sure one or more of the special ingredients are incorporated, namely:**

- An understanding of the company
- Your enthusiasm and passion for the job
- How you can help solve their problems, make money or save money for them



The bulk of job applicants don't incorporate one or more of these ingredients in their cover letter openings, which is why they are not interesting or relevant.

**The Corroboration:** Content that shows an intelligent understanding of the employer's needs and confirmation that how you fill those needs. **To do this, you need to interpret the Job Advertisement.**

Most employers and in particular executive search firms put a lot of effort into enticing candidates to apply for jobs and use hooks in order to encourage the right applicant to apply. If you carefully read a job advertisement, you will be able to determine the overall job, type of organisations (even if the organisations name is not specified) and specific type of person they have in mind.

When reading job advertisements use a pen to mark up the key elements of the job, and their requirements (if looking online, print out a physical copy). When interpreting the various advertisements, keep the following in mind:

- If you don't meet the greatest majority of their requirements, then there is usually little point in applying for the position.
- Don't hesitate to respond to advertisements that are a little above the position you are seeking, as sometimes a job is a sign of change within a company, so you could be tapping into the hidden job market within the company.
- If you do meet their requirements, then you need to ensure that your cover letter and resume addresses their EXACT requirements.

**Example:**

**Financial Controller - up to \$170 000 package on offer**

You will be joining this **stable Australian owned company** as a Divisional Controller. In a **newly created role** within a rapidly evolving organisation you will be an integral part of the Senior Management Team. This **well known household brand name** is synonymous with striving for excellence and are now expanding their operations globally. This company only employs **high calibre individuals** who are dedicated to the cause of maintaining their status of market leaders.

You will be required to **partner with the business in all financial, strategic and operational matters**. You will have **demonstrated an ability to improve profitability** and strong desire to impact a **growing business by having a continuous improvement approach**, whilst **maximising business efficiencies**. **This role requires financial modeling of retail outlets** and a candidate that **adds value at a strategic and operational level**. You will be responsible for driving the **business direction into new market places**.

You will be an exceptional individual that **wants to work as part of a dedicated team of professionals with a strong vision to drive the business forward**. You will have a **proven track record of commercial achievements and operational management expertise**. You will be a **qualified accounting professional who ideally has extensive retail experience**. Your **strong business acumen** will hold you in good stead to secure an opportunity that rarely becomes available.

Like to know more?

To submit your application, in strict confidence, please apply online using the appropriate link below. Alternatively, for a confidential discussion, please contact Sara-Jane in our Parramatta office on (02) 8836 0236, quoting Ref No. 2G/05536.

Your interest will be treated in the strictest of confidence.

**This example of the job advertisement above** tells as about the type of person (background, personal characteristic and experience). It also provides some solid clues as to the type of organisation.

**Person Specification:**

Experienced financial controller and qualified accounting professional, with prior retail experience. They state ideally extensive retail experience, which usually means, that unless you have a retail background it is unlikely that you would be a good match for this position.

Prior extensive experience across operations is essential, including financial strategic and operational, as well as experience in financial modeling of retail outlets

The candidate must have a record of achievement, in particular in the areas of improving profitability, increasing business efficiencies, with sound business acumen (preferably with experience in new market places)

Must be a team player, as you would be partnering with business stakeholders on all matters

**Company and Job Specifications:**

A newly created position

A well-known Australian brand that is expanding operations

Operation within the retail sector (interestingly they note that it is a stable brand, which is probably indicative that the brand is long established, and won't be detrimentally affected by any retail slump)

Now that you understand what the employer wants, you now can use this information to shape the content to demonstrate that you understand the employer's needs as well as provide evidence of how you fill these needs.

Key strategies to ensure that you meet the exact needs of employers:

- Utilise and mirror the language used in the job advertisement. If they require someone that is energetic, use the word energetic or a similar word to describe your soft skills.
- Outline your work history that is relevant to the position.
- Talk about your achievements and quantifiable successes.
- Use a checklist to ensure that you have addressed the bulk of their requirements listed in the job advertisement.

**The close:** A confident finish that invites the reader to take further action or your follow up.

Be positive and use the closer so that you can either invite action, or set the framework/opportunity for your follow up: For example:

I look forward to hearing from you and I'll email you early next week to coordinate a time to talk that's convenient for you.

Thanks for taking the time to review my resume. I'll telephone you next week to answer any questions you may have, and I look forward to the opportunity to meeting with the selection panel.

I'm excited about this opportunity and I'll email you early next week to organise a time to talk about this opportunity further.

**Compare these closers with what the bulk of job applicants' use:**

I believe I could make a valuable contribution to your team. I have attached my resume and look forward to discussing the position with you further.

Thank you for your consideration of my application. I look forward to discussing the position with you further.

You will find my resume attached and I look forward to discussing the position with you further.

The difference is that the later examples are all dependent on the employer taking action. The first set of examples sets the stage for a follow up, where you can be proactive and can follow through on a specific job. If you do follow through, then you will stand out from the mediocre job applicant.

# **PART THREE**

## **JOB INTERVIEW**

## Job interviews are about making a connection

While the purpose of a job interview may seem fairly obvious (namely looking for qualified candidates to fill a specific position), the reality is way more complex.

In my experience the job interview is about finding the right person that is going to fit in with the culture.

Experience, education, and professional skills are all important, but typically a candidate will get an interview, because they do possess these, as presented in a resume. **However whether a qualified person gets the job comes down to making an interpersonal connection.**

**The key questions on an employers mind while interviewing, is:**

- Will you mesh with current staff?
- Will you excel in the culture (for example, the culture might be stressful, unstructured, rigid, new-age, or a technology savvy work culture)?
- Do you actually want the job and are enthusiastic about the opportunity being offered (or are you indifferent and just after a pay check)?
- Have you got the right interpersonal and communication skills, enabling you to work effectively with others?

If employers were only after a particular skills set, then they could easily just read a bunch of resumes and hire someone without spending hours interviewing potential employees.

But they are not just after a particular skills set, they are after someone with whom they can make a connection with and someone that they are confident will do the job effectively.

You also need to know that hiring people is a VERY expensive process.

- There is the cost of recruiting (advertisements, the cost of internal recruiter, time cost in reviewing resumes and performing other recruitment-related tasks, background checks and other pre-employment tests).
- There is the cost of training the person.
- There is the cost of salary and benefits.
- There is the cost of workplace integration.

Statistics show that these costs to the employer can be as high as 3 x that of your salary!

With all of these costs involved in hiring, employers want to make sure they are making the right decision, hence their risk aversion and the job interview.

So as the job candidate, it is your job, to demonstrate that you are not a RISK, you will fit into their culture, you have the right interpersonal skills, along with the skills set.

**Please note:** Making a connection is more important for the private sector, but still keep in mind in the public service sector, how you connect with panel members can still make a difference (as you are talking to humans, not robots and the process can never be 100% objective).

## Performing at the Interview

### Getting the basics right

This is the obvious stuff, but you need to get these things right, to ensure that you are not eliminated from the process.

#### Arrive on Time

It is imperative that you arrive on time – or rather never arrive late. If an emergency comes up and you cannot get there in time, call the agency as soon as possible to make them aware of the situation. However don't arrive so early, that you are sitting in the corridor or reception area more than 15 minutes. Arriving 5 minutes early is more than sufficient, besides, who wants to get more nervous sitting in unfamiliar surroundings.

To ensure that you do arrive on time and that the process of getting to the interview is not too stressful, do some research and learn where the agency or interview building is located, the nearest parking, or public transport drop off point, as well ascertain how accessible the building is.

#### Dress Appropriately

First impressions are essential. Are you dressed appropriately? Is your hairstyle, appropriate, your fingernails clean and trimmed? Are your shoes clean and not scuffed? Have you shaved? Although the whole process is based on merit, first impressions do count.

As a general rule of thumb, it is best to be too formal, rather than informal, and get rid of the junky jewellery, overpowering perfume, or aftershave, and body piercing. While the panel should not be judging you on your appearance, the reality is, they consciously or sub-consciously do, which could be detrimental overall to you securing the role if you don't dress the part.

#### Be Professional

Professionalism is highly valued at all levels and everything you do will be judged in some form by the selection panel. Omit behaviour that might exclude you from further consideration, such as chewing gum, smoking, tapping your pen on your portfolio, using slang, or light swearing, no matter how comfortable you feel during the interview. I also strongly recommend that you switch off your mobile.

#### Body language

A significant amount of communication is nonverbal and although it is unlikely that you will be interviewed by a trained professional, that will be able to tell that you are lying when you tug on your ear, or fail to make good eye contact, you still need to be aware of your body language in the interview room.

- Offer a firm handshake, but don't squeeze the hand so tight that it is knuckle breaker.
- Maintain eye contact when you're talking, but don't stare. When speaking to the panel, direct your eye contact across to all panel members, (apart from the person or scribe, taking the notes)
- Sit facing the interviewer, not off to the side
- Lean slightly forward, so you look attentive and interested in the process
- Keep your hand out of your pockets and avoid excessive gesticulation (remember how annoying it is when people gesticulate widely, when being interviewed on television)

## **Stress Reduction**

Some people breeze through interviews with calm confidence, but if you are like the majority of candidates, you will have some jitters, particularly if you are not experienced in presenting in public forums, or are not skilled in the art of 'self promotion/. Below I have listed my top four tips in reducing stress.

### **Bach Rescue Remedy**

Some of my clients 'swear' by Bach's Rescue Remedy, which is a homeopathic formula designed to calm the most frazzled person. Whether it is placebo, or it genuinely works, I cannot comment, but I know that it has got some of my clients through some very stressful interview situations.

### **Positive Affirmations**

Affirmations are based on the theory that every thought has an impact on actions. If you believe you are going to 'stuff the interview up', then this becomes a reality. If you believe you are going to be successful, then this too becomes a reality. Obviously it is far more complex than this and there are countless books and research papers on the subject area, based on how the mind works consciously and subconsciously.

Put simply, affirmations are a way to help re-program the mind, in which you start to believe in yourself, through positive statements and putting your intentions in writing to help you to focus on a goal. "Affirmations imprint thought upon the subconscious mind" says behavioural psychologist and educator Gene Schirmer. "By nature the subconscious mind accepts everything it's told by the conscious mind and services as an automatic pilot in guiding our conscious behaviour, sharpening focus and reinforcing commitment".

As a candidate you can use affirmation statements to help you achieve your goal. Prior to your job interview, write an affirmation statement to bring your objective into focus. For example:

'My unique qualifications and solid experience have prepared me to be the new Team Leader at (insert organisation)'

'I will perform like a star in the interview'

'I'm the perfect person for the role and I will get this job'

### **Challenge irrational thoughts**

Sometimes we get so worked up about the interview that it becomes a 'do or die experience', where we get so nervous and stressed about the process and the need to succeed that we become almost irrational. Yes this interview is important, (today and perhaps this week) but keep it in perspective. It might be emotionally difficult, but if you don't get the job, you won't starve, there will be other opportunities around the corner, and the more pragmatic you are about the process, the more likely it is that you will perform better in the interview.

### **Reduce anxiety by being prepared**

If you are prepared, you are more likely to perform better at interview and in turn this will reduce stress during the interview.

### **Types of interview questions**

The four major types of interviewing questions that interviewers use are:

**Closed ended questions**, which are used to confirm or verify information:

*You have a Bachelor of Business Degree from the University of New South Wales. Is that correct?*

**Open-ended questions**

*What kind of work environment do you prefer?*

**Theoretical questions**, which provide hypothetical situations

*How would you react if you saw co-worker disagreeing?*

**Behavioural questions**, which focus on your past experience and behaviours:

*Describe a time when you were under pressure to make a decision. Did you react immediately or take time in deciding what to do?*

Behavioural based questions are becoming increasingly popular, as the interview can be structured to concentrate on areas that are important to the interviewer; instead of allowing you to concentrate on areas that you think are important. When addressing these questions, the T-Account you prepared, will give you sufficient background to address the needs of the selection panel.

**A list of possible interview questions**

This list is not exhaustive, but it does give you an overview of questions you might encounter during the interview.

Remember, it is usually the easy questions that trip people up, so ensure that you have answers prepared and have done your research.

*What are your long-term career objectives?*

*Why do you want this job?*

*What do you consider to be the attributes of a good leader?*

*Have you ever had difficulty with a member of staff? How did you resolve this conflict?*

*How long do you think it would take for you to make a meaningful contribution?*

*What do you consider to be your greatest strengths, or conversely your great weaknesses?*

*How do you manage conflict?*

*How do you react to unwarranted criticism by your manager?*

*How do you work under pressure?*

*What are the most important attributes of a good manager?*

*What are the most important elements to managing change? How would you manage change?*

*How do you delegate tasks?*

*How do you adapt to new situations?*

*How do you deal with difficult people?*

*What qualities or traits do you feel could be improved upon?*

*Where do you see yourself in 5 years time?*



*List the two most important things that you would like to accomplish in this role?*

*What sort of environment do you enjoy working in?*

*Why did you choose to apply for this particular role?*

*How do you work within a team environment?*

*How would you describe your management style?*

*Do you have any plans to study in the future?*

*How do you adapt to new situations?*

*Can you describe a situation when you did not meet your manager's expectations? What did you do?*

*Are you a member of a committee/professional organisation? What contributions have you made to these groups?*

*How would you characterise your working style?*

*What do you believe is the most challenging area in supervising / managing people?*

*How would you describe your 3 major accomplishments?*

*What were some of the problems you encountered in your current/previous job and how did you handle these?*

*What do you feel most confident in doing?*

*What aspects of your current position could be better performed and what kind of improvements could you make?*

*What are the three things would you most like to change about yourself to improve your overall effectiveness and why?*

*What have been your last three performance evaluation ratings?*

*What basic values and beliefs do you feel are important to this role?*

*If you caught one of your most valued employees doing something dishonest, what would you do?*

## **Dos and Don'ts at interview**

### **DO:**

Do be enthusiastic, but don't go overboard

Do be prepared to qualify and or give reasoning behind your answers

Do practice and prepare responses in front of family and friends – even the mirror

Do listen carefully to what the interviewer is saying and if uncertain, get the interviewer to reiterate, or rephrase the question

Do provide a sound response to the question, but don't ramble on with a long, repetitive and boring response

Do focus on the needs of the employer or agency

Do make a connection with the interviewer

### **DON'T:**

Don't put yourself down, or minimise your experience

Don't speak ill of former employers or colleagues

Don't come unprepared

Don't exaggerate or lie about your experience

Don't ask about working conditions that could be established beforehand

# **PART FOUR**

## **JOB SEARCH MINDSET**

## Rejection is just part and parcel of finding a new job (in particular if using the job boards)

Before you get started down this journey, it is important to embrace these two key facts about the job search process:

- **It is rarely the best qualified who will win the position**
- **Rejection is a fact of life when you are job-hunting**, not just once, but sometimes dozens, if not hundreds of times.

These fundamental truths about job hunting tend to get glossed over in websites promoting career related services or on job search sites. (I mean the 'seek you shall find' catch phrase from SEEK, does not mention anything about seek and you shall be rejected time and time again, before you, and if you succeed).

To top it off, when you first lose your job, you think that is a case of simply scratching together a couple of pieces of paper and waltzing into an office and 'viola' – another job!

**However, nothing could be further from the truth.** For the overwhelming majority of job seekers, you will encounter barriers (both perceived and real), receive rejection letters and worse still, not even get an acknowledgement that you even exist.

The **fundamental truth about job-hunting is that it 'sucks'!** I mean it is hard to stay positive, when you get another rejection letter, and job-hunting, is a really stressful experience.

No wonder so many of us, stay put in less than satisfactory jobs, as we don't want to deal with another 'rejection letter'. Does that sound like you?

Or perhaps you have started a job search, with good intentions, but you give up your job search before you really get started, or settle for anything that comes your way, because you just don't want to cope with that ugly word called rejection.

But you need to keep in mind, that job search rejection is just a reality of the modern job search, in particular if you are only using job boards.

Nobody likes rejection - I mean rejection is really hard to take, especially if it is a job you really wanted. But you have to remember, you are not alone as even the most famous amongst us, were rejected, or faced obstacles before they succeeded.

Take these examples from history:

*Beethoven composed his greatest works after becoming deaf. George Washington was snowed in through a treacherous winter at Valley Forge. Abraham Lincoln was raised in poverty. Albert Einstein was called a slow learner, retarded and ineducable. If Christopher Columbus had turned back, no one could have blamed him, considering the constant adversity he endured.*

*As an elementary student, actor James Earl Jones (a.k.a. Darth Vader) stuttered so badly he communicated with friends and teachers using written notes.*

*Itzhak Perlman, the incomparable concert violinist, was born to parents who survived a Nazi concentration camp and has been paralysed from the waist down since the age of four.*

*Chester Carlson, a young inventor, took his idea to 20 big corporations in the 1940s. After seven years of rejections, he was able to persuade Haloid, a small company in Rochester, N.Y., to purchase the rights to his electrostatic paper- copying process. Haloid has since become Xerox Corporation.*

*Thomas Edison tried over 2,000 experiments before he was able to get his light bulb to work. Upon being asked how he felt about failing so many times, he replied, "I never failed once. I invented the light bulb. It just happened to be a 2,000-step process."*

*Franklin Delano Roosevelt, elected President of the United States for four terms, had been stricken with polio at the age of 39.*

*Persistence paid off for General Douglas MacArthur. After applying for admission to West Point twice, he applied a third time and was accepted. The rest is history.*

*In 1927 the head instructor of the John Murray Anderson Drama School, instructed student Lucille Ball, to "Try any other profession. Any other"*

*Buddy Holly was fired from the Decca record label in 1956 by Paul Cohen, Nashville "Artists and Repertoire Man." Cohen called Holly "the biggest no-talent I ever worked with."*

*Academy Award-winning writer, producer and director Woody Allen failed motion picture production at New York University (NYU) and City College of New York. He also flunked English at NYU.*

*Helen Keller, the famous blind author and speaker, said: "Character cannot be developed in ease and quiet. Only through experience of trial and suffering can the soul be strengthened, vision cleared, ambition inspired and success achieved. Silver is purified in fire and so are we. It is in the most trying times that our real character is shaped and revealed." - (Source Harvey Mackay)*

**The point is, there are two ways which you can handle rejection.** The first is to never do anything that could possibly get you rejected. Stay home and wait for the phone to ring, or simply put up with your lot. The alternative is to accept that rejection is part of the job search journey and to use rejection as an opportunity to learn.

Now I know if you are currently job searching and you already have a couple of rejection letters, then you are going to think I'm mad if I tell you it is not rejection, but an opportunity to learn. But hear me out on this one, as changing your mind set could be crucial to your job search strategy and long term career aspirations.

You see, our minds are programmed to believe that a rejection letter is a rejection of us, as an individual. It is so challenging to our self confidence, that whether we acknowledge it or not, we take it very personally and the natural tendency is for us to believe that we're not as good as the next guy, that we are not one-of-a-kind and that, dare I say it, not deserving on a sub-conscious level.

But we are deserving of that job, promotion, higher salary level and new opportunity. We just need to re-program our mind and use the rejection letter as an opportunity to learn, improve and even an opportunity to test the waters.

You see at school, if we didn't get it right, we 'failed' the exam and were a complete flunk. But in job-hunting, if we don't get it right, then we simply need to **LEARN**, so we do get it right!

**Identifying areas you need to learn and improve upon**

- Are you networking effectively?
- Are you tapping into the hidden job market?
- While looking for new work, are you volunteering so you can maintain, or hone your skills and potentially meet key industry contacts?
- Are you setting aside significant time EVERY day to find work?
- Have you sent your resume to all relevant recruiters and employment agencies?
- Have you set up a Google Alert and job alerts on relevant job-search boards?
- Are you following up with recruiters and agencies weekly?
- Are you spending time everyday making cold or warm calls to prospects?
- Are you applying for appropriate jobs that match your skills and qualifications?
- Do you need to learn new skills, or gain new qualifications to secure a new job?
- Are you following up with employers after the interview?
- Does your resume or CV sell you effectively, by outlining the VALUE you offer to potential employers?
- Are you submitting an effective cover letter with your resume to employers?
- If applying for government jobs, are you writing effective selection criteria?
- How well are you performing at interview?
- Do you follow up an interview, with an appropriate thank-you note?
- These are just a few areas that job seekers just like you, can improve upon.

## The importance of goal setting

One of the most critical elements to finding new work is **goal setting and motivation**.

Without the critical mind set and motivation, then in this very competitive job market, it is highly likely you will fail.

Take this great American success story.

*"I will come to America, which is the country for me. Once here, I will become the greatest bodybuilder in history. While I am doing this I will learn perfect English and educate myself. I will get a college degree so I can get a business degree. AT the same time, I will make whatever money possible from bodybuilding and invest it in real estate where I will make the big money. I will then go into the movies as an actor, producer and eventually director. By the time I am 30 I will have starred in my first movie and I will be a millionaire. I will collect houses, art and automobiles. I will see the world. Along the way, I will learn to impress people and I will hone my mind to outwit all of them. I will marry a glamorous and intelligent wife. By 32, I will have been invited to the white house..."*

"If you didn't figure it out yet, this list of achievements belongs to none other than Arnold Schwarzenegger."

"But here's what's striking about this story, is that it looks like this is a biographical sketch of a man so famous that his first name alone, is a household word."

"But this is not looking back at history...**This was looking forward** to the future!"

"You see this was Arnold's list of goals which he created BEFORE any of these things happened... while he was an unknown body builder from Austria".

George Butler, a long time friend of Arnold, said that this vision of the future was a very calculated "Master Plan." "As I remember," recalled Butler, "It was a campy mix of Nietzschean philosophy and a Soviet Five-year plan. But before I dismissed it as one more weird thing we heard on a California beach, we scratched our heads in awe because Arnold, as we could see with our own eyes, was actually beginning to make it work." - (Extract from Tom Venuto – How to Set Powerful Compelling Goals That Will Propel You Forward and Charge You Up with Unstoppable Motivation)

You see Arnold every year sets a goal and makes a plan and then implements the plan. Arnold did not succeed by accident or good luck. His success was a direct result of setting goals and planning!

So when you are job-hunting and creating your own career success and future, you need to:

### Set Goals

In order to obtain career success, you need to look at where you are ultimately headed. **What is the job you really want?** If you just want a part time job that will fit in with family, or you want to head up the entire operations branch, then both of these goals are perfect goals, so long as it is something that **you specifically want and have chosen!**

"Most people", says Denis Waitley, author of The Psychology of Winning, spend more time planning a party, studying the newspaper, or making a Christmas list than they do planning their lives", including their careers.

Yet by setting written goals it is more likely that you will succeed.

### **Focus on what you want to achieve**

A goal provides you will focus on what you want to achieve, not on what you want to avoid. I know this one sounds like semantics, but it is a very important distinction. If I ask you to close your eyes and NOT to think about monkeys, you mentally” see monkeys everywhere. as you can’t NOT think about something! You either think about something or you don’t.

*So instead of*

I can’t get a job, no matter what I do.

Why can’t I get that promotion?

I wish I could get a higher paying job

I don’t have the stomach for another rejection letter

*Replace this with*

What can I do today that will take me closer to my idea job?

I can do it

How great am I going to feel today, after making 5 calls to decision makers?

I have time to set aside everyday to achieve my dream career

### **How to set a goal**

When setting a goal, use the SMART strategy. SMART is the acronym that describes the five important characteristics of goal setting, namely:

**Specific** – Make sure your goal precisely spells out your desired result

**Measurable** – The goal states your target in measurable terms so you will know when you have arrived, as well as where you are at any specific moment

**Achievable** - The goal is possible to complete

**Realistic** – Your goal can be accomplished within the specified time and with available resources

**Timed** – There is a calendar date by which you plan to achieve your goals

### **Establish the emotional reason behind the goal**

When using this framework, make sure you establish the emotional reasons why you want to achieve your goals. There will be days when you feel lousy after not securing that job, or promotion. The secret to staying motivated at times like these is not having a goal, but it’s establishing the reasons why you want that goal, or rather the purpose behind the goal. Determining the reasons you want to achieve a goal adds emotion to it. The more emotion you stir up, the more motivated you’ll be to go after it.



## **Produce Action**

Once you have a goal, you need to break this goal down into tangible actions. If you need new qualifications, then set your goal to start this new training course. If you want a new job, then set your goals for the month. Perhaps you could aim for 2 new networking appointments, revamp your resume, or undertake some research on a sector that you would like to break into.

The point is that you need to establish what you want, create a plan, and then take ACTION!

You can have the greatest qualifications, credentials and résumé on the market place, but unless you get out there and put yourself in front of decision makers, follow up with phone calls and recognise that a rejection letter is part of the job search process, then you won't succeed. It is therefore important that you find the time to look for a job.

If you want to succeed, then you need to:

- Commit to a job search campaign and then schedule time to implement the campaign.
- Stop making excuses and putting the job search task off. If you think procrastination is the problem, rest assured it isn't. Procrastination is always the symptom, not the problem! So if you are procrastinating, you need to get to the root of your procrastination and resolve it.
- Getting a job is like anything else - **it can take time**. Even if you are doing temporary work to pay the bill, before you find a more ideal job, I'm willing to bet that you have time in the evening. So instead of watching TV, spend that time job hunting. If you set aside just a few evenings a week, just imagine how much progress you would make.

## **Reward yourself for efforts, not just results**

Job seeking is really unpredictable. Sometimes you will do everything exactly right and still don't get the results you want when you want them. So reward yourself for not only the results, but the challenging work that lead up to the result, otherwise you might feel as though you aren't getting anywhere. So if you make 10 cold calls to HR Personnel, then even if all the cold calling did not reap a result, reward yourself for the effort anyway.

## **Understand that you are responsible for the choices you make**

If you want a new job, or career success, then you have to accept personal responsibility for it. If you are not prepared to accept that your life today, is the product of the choices you have made so far, and/ or that you are responsible for how you react to circumstances, then it will be difficult to succeed.

Once you understand both of these concepts, then you will consciously shift from the blame game, to taking control of your daily actions in order to achieve your career goals and getting a new job.

For example: You need to accept responsibility for selling yourself at interview. That is taking action for establishing rapport with decision makers, following up with a thank-you note, communicating effectively, turning up on time for the interview and learning interview techniques, such as successfully addressing behavioural questions.

## **Realise that rejection is part of the job search process**

Life can sometimes be tough and we all face many challenges. It's very easy to use the challenges as an excuse not to set goals, plan, or take action.

As previously outlined, you need to understand that rejection is just part and parcel of the job-search process. But instead of wallowing in self-pity, you need to continuously plan, take clear daily action, and use rejection, as an opportunity to constantly improve and learn.

### **Power of Positive Thought**

Goal setting provides you the framework for the power of positive thought that will enable you to get that promotion and new job. I'm not saying you can simply "think yourself into a new job, or career", as no amount of positive thinking will work without action. But, what I'm saying is the goal will enable you to ensure that you don't "sabotage" the job search, by giving up on yourself. I mean there will all ways be times in lapses and breakdowns in "willpower", or you despair when you get a rejection letter, or you perform like an idiot at interview. But with a strong goal, you will change the negative thought into a positive thought, which in turn will result in positive ongoing daily actions.

When job-hunting, you can also remain positive by:

#### **Smiling - even when you don't feel like it.**

Try it, as when you smile, you use different facial muscles and even your voice sounds different, including on the telephone. So when you are in the lift making that trip to that interview on floor 10, or you are just about to make another cold call, instead of frowning, SMILE. Smiling will also impact on your demeanor. I mean it is difficult to be stressed, or unhappy, if you are physically smiling.

### **Avoiding negative people**

Initially those "pity parties" with ex work colleagues that have also been made redundant will be cathartic. However such negative poison will drain your time and energy and all the complaining and bemoaning about your lot won't solve any problems and will only make you negative. So try to avoid this negative company.

### **Confronting the down days head on**

The day will come during your prolonged job search and mounting pile of rejection letters when you feel that you have had enough and you won't want to deal with it all. Realise that these emotions are completely normal, but you can still make a conscious decision as to how you deal with your emotions.

By all means have a day out and go to the park, the movies and spend time with family and friends. But then turn that negativity on its head and move forward with positive action. Seek further advice, speak with an expert, use positive affirmations, or rethink your job-search strategy. EVERYBODY, including the most famous and rich in the world have negative, I've had enough days. The difference is how you deal with those down days.

### **Going on a low media diet**

Information about job loss is everywhere. Headlines scream out job-losses, the growing threat of technology on jobs, how ageism impacts on your job success.

With such news stories, it is pretty difficult to remain positive about your own job prospects. So my suggestion is to go on a media fast. Avoid newspapers, magazines, radio, or news websites altogether.

By avoiding the news, your world won't come to an end (on the contrary, life will continue as normal), and you have successfully put yourself on an information diet that will enhance your mood and outlook. PLUS, as a bonus, you will have loads of extra time on your hands, which can be utilised to find a new job.

## Final Word

Looking for a job, whether employed, or unemployed, is stressful.

To successfully get a new job, you need to overcome a range of obstacles, but the **largest obstacle is overcoming your emotions and overcoming your fears.**

Instead of wallowing in self-pity, see this time in your life, as a window of opportunity. Remain positive, because even when things appear bleak, your persistence will eventually pay off.

Surround yourself with support, stay focused, think positive, stay healthy and remain social. And remember that by staying motivated and positive after job loss, you can accept rejection as a fact of life, and you will be able to regard **every 'no' as a 'not today' and a step closer** to success.