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Job Hunting 101 : Finding the Light Beyond Graduation

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Just Graduated...What's Next?

(XXX) XXX-XXXX | Please@hireme.com | By Michaela Tanne

It's pretty ironic that I am writing this article. I just graduated, I have no job, no boyfriend, and no clue what I want to do with my life. To make matters worse, I'm living in my parents' basement. Woohoo! This wasn't exactly the plan I had for post-graduation. For us graduates, we've gone to school since we were five years old, and now suddenly we are done with school. What a crisis! It can be shocking, freeing, exciting, and stressful all at the same time. While I am no expert, I have recently been doing a lot of job-hunting. I have decided to share what I have learned from my career counselors and personal experiences for those of you who are in the job-hunting stage.

1. Finding a job

The first step is to find a job to apply for. Some favorite websites for job postings are Handshake.com, LinkedIn, Glassdoor and Indeed.com. Handshake and LinkedIn are great for seeing mutual connections and alumni connections. Networking is a must! Having a mutual connection doesn't guarantee a job but it is valuable for learning more about a company's atmosphere and job openings. Then, with an employee referral there's a "50% chance of getting an interview and a 20% chance of getting hired."¹

Whenever I find a company I'm interested in, I like to see if I know anyone that works there so I can learn more about the position and company. I recently reached out to a friend that worked at the business I was interested in. He went out of his way to learn about the position I was applying for, invited me to tour the facility, introduced me to his coworkers, and even sent a kind email about me to the recruiters. Use networking to your advantage and always take time to build relationships. You never know who will enter your life again and make a positive impact in it.

2. Creating a resume

Recruiters receive 250 resumes on average per position.² Of those resumes, 4–6 applicants will be invited for an interview, and only one will receive the job.³

Here are some more recruiter statistics:

- Recruiters spend an average of 5–7 seconds looking at resumes.
- The chance of a cover letter being read is 17%.
- Just one spelling or grammar mistake can send your resume to the trash.
- An unprofessional email address causes 76% of resumes to be ignored.
- One in three recruiters reject candidates based on things posted online.
- Having a photo on a resume results in an 88% rejection rate.⁴

Since recruiters receive so many resumes and go through them quickly, make sure you spend time creating a strong resume that will stand out. Here are some tips to build a good resume:

Create a master resume. List every accomplishment you’ve ever made, every job you’ve ever had, and all your skills Throughout your life, continue to update your master resume. Then you can create resumes as you apply for.⁵

Keep your resume classic. Candilyn Newell, a career counselor at BYU, likes to compare resumes to ice cream. “Your resume is like vanilla ice cream. Classic. Yet easily tailored. You should ask yourself “what will appeal to my target audience?”⁶ Formatting matters. Keep your resume easy to read and navigate, and *always* keep it to one page.

Invite many eyes to see your resume. It’s easy to miss your own mistakes. Ask friends, family members, or a career counselor to look at your resume.

Let the resume show a glimpse of your personality. Resumes need to look professional and show your skills. However, your resume doesn’t need to be stuffy or identical to every other resume. Under the “Awards and Interests” section, let your personality shine through. Maybe you have a hobby that’s different, or you’re very passionate about a foreign food. “This conveys not just your professional skills, but who you are.”⁷I had a recruiter recently comment to me that she loved my resume because I wrote that I liked puns. She explained that of all the resumes, she chose to interview me because I was probably a fun and interesting person. What does that teach you? Be creative and let your personality shine through!

Show your accomplishments. When writing about professional experiences at a company or as a volunteer, it can be tempting to make a bullet list of daily tasks in the description. However, show the difference you made for organizations you worked for. You accomplished [X] as measured by [Y] by doing [Z].⁸ Quantify impact anytime you can and show what actions you took to reach results using strong action verbs.

Examples of strong action verbs⁹

Developed	Directed	Managed
Performed	Created	Presented
Trained	Assisted	Implemented

There are many ways to create a professional resume. For the latest and greatest tips, try visiting a career studio or meeting with a career counselor. Those services are usually offered at universities for free.

3. Creating a Cover Letter

A cover letter is an opportunity to show how your qualifications match the job description. Explain how your skills and talents can help the employer meet their needs.¹⁰ When beginning the letter, show your genuine excitement for the position and “write with the employer’s needs in mind.”¹¹ In the body of your cover letter, make it persuasive and include your most convincing information by illustrating your experiences and stories.¹² End the letter by addressing the reader with gratitude and a call to action.¹³ An example would be, “I’m grateful for your consideration

to hire me as an intern for ABC company. I look forward to hearing from you about a possible interview.”

4. Interviewing

One of the most exciting parts of searching for a job is when you get a phone call or email inviting for an interview—a chance to show that you’re more than your resume and cover letter. While interviews can be fun, they still require practice and preparation.

Research the Company

Candilyn Newell says that one of the biggest problems for recruiters is that people don’t know enough about the companies they are applying for. A common question asked in interviews is “Why do you want to work here?” They ask this to figure out how you would fit in and see what your motivations are for the position.¹⁴ This question can be frustrating or tricky to answer if you don’t even understand what the company does. To be more comfortable answering this and to stand out from other candidates, research the employer. This help you not only understand the company but also what qualities they look for in candidates.¹⁵ Some things to research include:

- 1) Skills wanted for the position
- 2) The latest news and events for the company
- 3) The company’s mission, culture and values
- 4) Clients, products, and services¹⁶

Prepare to Answer Questions

Every company that you interview with will be different. Keep your answers “informative, interesting and convincing”¹⁷ to make yourself more memorable. A way to make yourself memorable is to tell PAR (problem, action, result) stories. These stories consist of a problem that came up in your life, an action you took, and the result from your actions. Make a list of your skills and abilities and create PAR stories for each. When the interviewer asks questions, you’ll have an array of stories to choose from to exemplify your strengths and experiences.¹⁸

Another common line you can prepare for is “Tell me a little about yourself.” According to Big Interview, “this question is an opportunity—an opening for you to set the tone of the job interview and emphasize the points that you most want this potential employer to know about you”¹⁹ Using energy and concision, tell your story: who are you, what moments define your skills and experiences, and why you want the position.²⁰

Ask Questions

Job interviews aren’t only for interviewers to see if you’re qualified for a job, they are also an opportunity for you to see if it’s a job you want. The interview will always end with “do you have any questions for us?” Before you interview, come up with two to three questions to ask.²¹

Phone Interviews

When interviewing over the phone, it's important to create a professional environment and to dress professionally, even though no one will see you. "Being professionally dressed will help you remember to act professionally and to speak at an appropriate level of formality."²² This phenomenon is called "enclothed cognition." When we are dressed well, it induces desirable psychological states and enhances performance.²³ Some other ways you can prepare for a phone interview are to have a pen and paper close by to take notes, set out some water to take sips while the interviewer is talking, and have notes in front of you with information about the company, position, and experiences you can share.²⁴

Online Interviews

Many companies conduct job interviews over skype, Hirevue and other video platforms. Online interviews are similar to interviewing on the phone; however, the environment matters this time because it will be seen. To prepare for the video interview, check your environment and take a picture of yourself from your laptop to see how you will be seen. Check your lighting, check your room, set your laptop at eye level, and check your internet and audio connection.²⁵ One of Candilyn's favorite tips when interviewing online is to set up three stick people on top of your laptop near your camera. During your interview, make eye contact with the stick figures like they are interviewers to help you look natural on the video.²⁶

Tip for Post-interview

Within 24 hours of your interview, send a thoughtful and gracious thank you note to the people that interviewed you. "An effective thank you message is a great way to differentiate yourself from your competition"²⁷

Conclusion

My career counselors both told me that finding a job after college is a fulltime job within itself. I definitely believe them now. A good job won't fall into your lap because you are a good person or student. It takes time to create a professional resume, write specific cover letters, and prepare for interviews. Searching for a job can be stressful and even heartbreaking at times—especially when you are excited about a position that falls through. The biggest thing is to keep your confidence high. Sometimes you just need to wait for the right job to come along. It will. "If you keep being generous, gracious, and enthusiastic, life is going to send amazing things your way."²⁸

¹ "Employee Referrals - Your Ticket to Your Next Job [Updated]." Career Pivot, December 27, 2018.

<https://careerpivot.com/2017/employee-referrals-ticket-next-job/>.

² "Resume Screening: A How-To Guide For Recruiters." Ideal. Accessed August 27, 2019.

<https://ideal.com/resume-screening/>.

³ "50 HR & Recruiting Stats That Make You Think: 50 HR & Recruiting Stats That Make You Think." US | Glassdoor for Employers, December 21, 2018. <https://www.glassdoor.com/employers/blog/50-hr-recruiting-stats-make-think/?nabe=6392912005562368:0&utm>.

⁴ "8 Useful Recruitment Infographics." Recruiterbox Blog. Accessed August 27, 2019.

<https://recruiterbox.com/blog/8-useful-recruitment-infographics>.

⁵ Newell, Canilyn. "Vanilla Resumes." Provo, UT, February 2019.

⁶ Ibid.

⁷ Horton, Anisa Purbasari. "Three Ways To Add Personality To Your Resume (And Three Ways Not To)." Fast Company. Fast Company, October 2, 2017. <https://www.fastcompany.com/3069245/three-ways-to-add-personality-to-your-resume-and-three-ways-not-to>.

⁸ Newell, Candilyn. "Vanilla Resumes."

⁹ Baker, William H. "Communicating and Writing for Employment." In *Writing & Speaking for Business*. 4th ed. Provo, UT: BYU Academic Publishing, 2013. 111-130.

¹⁰ Ibid.

¹¹ Ibid.

¹² Newell, Candilyn. Interview by Author. Provo, July 2019.

¹³ Baker, William H. "Communicating and Writing for Employment."

¹⁴ Skillings, Pamela. "How To Answer: Why Do You Want to Work Here?" Big Interview - Job Interview Training. Big Interview, August 20, 2018. <https://biginterview.com/blog/2013/03/why-do-you-want-to-work-here.html>.

¹⁵ Huhman, Heather. "7 Things to Research Before Any Job Interview." Glassdoor Blog, July 26, 2018. <https://www.glassdoor.com/blog/7-research-job-interview/>.

¹⁶ Ibid.

¹⁷ Baker, William H. "Communicating and Writing for Employment."

¹⁸ Ibid.

¹⁹ Skillings, Pamela. "How To Answer: 'Tell Me About Yourself' (with Sample Answers!)."

²⁰ Ibid.

²¹ Baker, William H. "Communicating and Writing for Employment."

²² Ibid.

²³ "Encloded Cognition: Put On Your Power!" Positive Psychology News. Accessed August 27, 2019. <https://positivepsychologynews.com/news/emily-vanssonenberg/2012052122126>.

²⁴ Newell, Candilyn. Interview by Author. Email. Provo, July 2019.

²⁵ Ibid.

²⁶ Ibid.

²⁷ Baker, William H. "Communicating and Writing for Employment."

²⁸ Bailey, Adam. Interview by Author. Email. July 2019.