

# **CAREER Building TIPS**

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## 25 RESUME-WRITING TIPS

1. Absolutely no spelling, grammar, punctuation, or typographical errors.
2. Know your audience before you begin to prepare the document. Then write the resume for your defined audience.
3. The resume must match your skills and abilities to a potential employer's needs.
4. A resume must address your *market value* and, in 20 seconds or less, answer the question, "Why should I hire you?"
5. Key in on accomplishments, credentials, or qualifications.
6. *Sell features and benefits.* What skills do you possess and how will they contribute to the organization's goals and objectives?
7. Avoid fluff. Ambiguities and generalities represent fluff; they render a resume inept.
8. Be different, courageous, and exciting. Boring resumes lead to boring jobs.
9. Package the resume in an exciting way.
10. Be sure the resume is well organized.
11. The resume must be professionally presented, consistent with the industry you are pursuing.
12. Your resume can have a distinct personality to it. Choose your language carefully; it can make a world of difference.
13. A chronological resume format emphasizes employment in reverse chronological order. Begin with your most recent job and work back, keying in on responsibilities and specific achievements. Use this format when you have a strong employment history.
14. A functional format hones in on specific accomplishments and highlights of qualifications at the beginning of the resume, but does not correlate these attributes to any specific employer. Use this format when you are changing careers, have employment gaps, or have challenges to employing the chronological format.
15. A combination format is part functional and part chronological and is a powerful presentation format. At the beginning of the resume you'll address your value, credentials, and qualifications (functional aspect), followed by supporting documentation in your employment section (chronological component).
16. A curriculum vitae is a resume format used mostly by professions and vocations in which a mere listing of credentials describes the value of a candidate. Examples include actors, singers or musicians, physicians, and possibly attorneys or CPAs.
17. The five major sections of a resume are: 1) Heading, 2) Introduction, 3) Employment, 4) Education, and 5) Miscellaneous sections.
18. Miscellaneous sections can include Military, Publications, Speaking Engagements, Memberships in Associations, Awards and Recognition, Computer Skills, Patents, Languages, Licenses and Certification, or Interests.
19. Write the resume in the third person and avoid using the pronoun "I."
20. Salary history or compensation requirements should not appear in the resume. The cover letter is made for this purpose if it needs to be addressed at all.
21. Always include a cover letter with your resume.
22. If you are a graduating student or have been out of the workforce for a while, you must make a special effort at displaying high emotion, potential, motivation, and energy. Stress qualitative factors and leadership roles in the community, on campus, or elsewhere. By employing a degree of creativity and innovation in your career design campaign, you are communicating to a hiring authority that you can be resourceful, innovative, and a contributing team member.
23. Employment gaps, job-hopping, and educational deficiencies can be effectively handled by using the combination format (or functional format).
24. The resume should be a positive document. It must tell the truth, but not necessarily the whole truth. Don't lie, but you need not tell all, either. Keep negative thoughts and concepts out of your resume.
25. The shorter the better—one to two pages in most cases.

## 25 TIPS FOR WRITING COVER LETTERS

1. Use customized stationery with your name, address, and phone number on top. Match your stationery to that of your resume—it shows class and professionalism.
2. Customize the cover letter. Address it to a specific individual. Be sure you have the proper spelling of the person's name, his or her title, and the company name.
3. If you don't wish to customize each letter and prefer to use a form letter, use the salutation "Dear Hiring Manager." (Do not use "Dear Sir." The hiring manager may be a woman.)
4. The cover letter is more informal than the resume and must begin to build rapport. Be enthusiastic, energetic, and motivating.
5. The cover letter must introduce you and your value to a potential employer.
6. Be sure to date the cover letter.
7. An effective cover letter should be easy to read, have larger typeface than the resume (12 point type is a good size), and be kept short—4 to 5 short paragraphs will usually do the job.
8. Keep the cover letter to one page. If you are compelled to use two pages, be sure your name appears on the second page.
9. The first paragraph should ignite interest in your candidacy and spark enthusiasm from the reader. Why is the reader reading this letter? What can you do for him/her?
10. The second paragraph must promote your value. What are your skills, abilities, qualifications, and credentials that would meet the reader's needs and job requirements?
11. The third paragraph notes specific accomplishments, achievements, and educational experience that would expressly support the second paragraph. Quantify these accomplishments if possible.
12. The fourth paragraph must generate future action. Ask for an interview or tell the reader that you will be calling in a week or so to follow up.
13. The fifth paragraph should be a short one, closing the letter and showing appreciation.
14. Demonstrate specific problem-solving skills in the letter, supported by specific examples.
15. Unless asked to do so, don't discuss salary in a cover letter.
16. If salary history or requirements are asked for, provide a modest window (low to mid thirties, for example) and mention that it is negotiable (if it is).
17. Be sure the letter has a professional appearance.
18. Be sure there are no spelling, typographical, or grammatical errors.
19. Be sure to keep the letter short and to the point. Don't ramble on and on.
20. Do not lie or exaggerate. Everything you say in a cover letter and resume must be supported in the eventual interview.
21. Be careful not to use the pronoun "I" excessively. Tie together what the company is doing and what their needs might be. To come full circle, explain how you fit into their strategy and can close potential gaps in meeting their objectives.
22. Avoid negative and controversial subject matter. The purpose of a cover letter and resume is to put your best foot forward. This material (job hopping, prior termination, etc.) can be tactfully addressed in the interview.
23. If you are faxing the cover letter and resume, you need not send a fax transmittal form so long as your fax number is included in the heading along with your telephone number.
24. To close the letter, use Sincerely, Sincerely yours, Respectfully, or Very truly yours.
25. Be sure to sign the letter.

## 25 INTERVIEWING TIPS

1. Relax. The employment interview is just a meeting. And although you should not treat this meeting lightly, don't forget that the organization interviewing you is in need of your services as much as, or perhaps more than, you are of theirs.
2. The key to successful interviewing is rapport building. Most people spend their time preparing for interviews by memorizing canned responses to anticipated questions. Successful interviewers spend most of their time practicing the art of rapport building through the use of powerfully effective communicating techniques.
3. Prepare a manila folder that you will bring to the interview. Include in the folder:
  - \* company information (annual reports, sales material, etc.)
  - \* extra resumes (6-12) and your letters of reference
  - \* 15 questions you've prepared based on your research and analysis of the company
  - \* a blank legal pad, pen, and anything else you consider helpful (e.g., college transcripts)
4. Dress appropriately. Determine the dress code and meet it. If their dress is business casual, you still need to be dressed in business professional. Practice proper grooming and hygiene.
5. Shoes, of course, must be polished.
6. Wear limited jewelry.
7. Call the day before and confirm the appointment—it will set you apart.
8. Be certain that you know exactly where you're going. Arrive in plenty of time. You should be at the receptionist's desk 10-12 minutes before the scheduled interview.
9. Prior to meeting the receptionist, check your appearance. Check your hair, clothing, and general image. Test your smile.
10. Secretaries, administrative assistants, and receptionists often have a say in the hiring process. Make a strong first impression with them.
11. Look around the office and search for artifacts that disclose the personality and culture of the company—and possibly the interviewer. This information will be helpful in initially breaking the ice, when you first begin discussions.
12. Be aware of your body language. Sit erect, with confidence. When standing and walking, move with confidence!
13. Your handshake should be firm, made with a wide-open hand, fingers stretched wide apart. Women should feel comfortable offering their hand and a firm and friendly handshake. A power handshake and great smile will get you off to a great start.
14. Eye contact is one of the most powerful forms of communicating. It demonstrates confidence, trust, and power.
15. During the interview, lean forward toward the interviewer. Show enthusiasm and sincere interest.
16. Take notes during the interview. You may want to refer to them later in the interview. If you are uncomfortable with this, ask permission first.
17. Be prepared for all questions, especially uncomfortable ones. Before the interview, script out a one-page response for each question that poses a problem for you, and practice repeating it until you're comfortable with it.
18. Communicate your skills, qualifications, and credentials to the hiring manager. Describe your market value and the benefits you offer. *Demonstrate how you will contribute to the bottom line.* Show how you can 1) improve sales, 2) reduce costs, 3) improve productivity, or 4) solve organizational problems.
19. Key in on *specific accomplishments*. Accomplishments determine hireability. They separate the winners from the runners-up.

20. Listening skills are priceless! Job offers are made to those who listen well, find hidden meanings, and answer questions in a brief but effective manner.
  21. Let the interviewer bring up salary first. The purpose of an interview is to determine whether there is a match. Once that is determined, salary should then be negotiated.
  22. There is no substitute for planning and preparation, practice and rehearsing—*absolutely none*.
  23. Practice interviewing techniques using video technology. A minimum of five hours of video practice, preferably more, guarantees a stellar performance.
  24. Close the sale. If you find you want the position, ask for it. Ask directly, “Is there anything that would prevent you from offering me this position now?” or “Do you have any reservations or concerns?” (if you sense that). At the very least, this should flush out any objections and give you the opportunity to turn them into positives.
  25. Always send a thank-you note within 24 hours of every employment meeting.
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## 25 SALARY NEGOTIATING TIPS

1. From the moment you make initial contact with any company or organization you wish to work with, you are in negotiation. You may not be discussing money openly, but you are making a permanent imprint on the mind of the hiring authorities.
2. Delay all discussions of salary until there is an offer on the table.
3. You are in the strongest negotiating position as soon as the offer is made.
4. Know your value. You must know how you can contribute to the organization. Establish this in the mind of the hiring manager.
5. Get employers enthusiastic about your candidacy, and they will become more generous.
6. There is no substitute for preparation. If you are well prepared, you'll be confident, self-assured, and poised for success.
7. Prior to going into employment negotiations, you must know the average salary paid for similar positions with other organizations in your geographical area.
8. Prior to going into employment negotiations you must know, as best you can, the salary range the company you're interviewing with will pay, or what former employees were earning.
9. Prior to going into employment negotiations you must know your personal needs and requirements, and how they relate to numbers 7 and 8 above.
10. Remember, fringes and perks, such as vacation time, flex time, health benefits, pension plans, and so on have value. Consider the "total" salary package.
11. Salary negotiations must be win-win negotiations. If they're not, everybody loses in the end.
12. Be flexible; don't get hung up on trivial issues, and always seek compromise when possible.
13. Listen carefully and pay close attention. Your goals will most likely be different from the goals of the employer. For instance, the firm's main focus might be "base salary." Yours might be "total earning potential." So a win-win solution might be to negotiate a lower base salary but a higher commission or bonus structure.
14. Anticipate objections and prepare effective answers to these objections.
15. Try to understand the employer's point of view. Then plan a strategy to meet both the employer's concerns and your needs.
16. Don't be afraid to negotiate out of fear of losing the offer. Most employers *expect* you to negotiate as long as you negotiate in a fair and reasonable manner.
17. Always negotiate in a way that reflects your personality, character, and work ethic. Remain within your comfort zone.
18. Never lose control. Remain enthusiastic and upbeat even if the negotiations get a little hot. This might be your first test under fire.
19. Play hardball only if you're willing to walk away from, or lose, the deal.
20. What you lose in the negotiations will most likely never be recouped. Don't be careless in preparing for or conducting the negotiation.
21. Be sure to get the offer and final agreement in writing.
22. You should feel comfortable asking the employer for 24 to 48 hours to think about the deal if you need time to think it over.
23. Never link salary to personal needs or problems. Compensation should always be linked to your value.
24. Understand your leverage. Know if you are in a position of strength or weakness and negotiate intelligently based on your personal situation.
25. End salary negotiations on a friendly and cheerful note.

## 25 NETWORKING TIPS

1. Two-thirds of all jobs are secured via the networking process. Networking is a systematic approach to cultivating formal and informal contacts for the purpose of gaining information, enhancing visibility in the market, and obtaining referrals.
2. Effective networking requires self-confidence, poise, and personal conviction.
3. You must first know the companies and organizations you wish to work for. That will determine the type of network you will develop and nurture.
4. Focus on meeting the "right people." This takes planning and preparation.
5. Target close friends, family members, neighbors, social acquaintances, social and religious group members, business contacts, teachers, and community leaders.
6. Include employment professionals as an important part of your network. This includes headhunters and personnel agency executives. They have a wealth of knowledge about job and market conditions.
7. Remember, networking is a numbers game. Once you have a network of people in place, prioritize the listing so you have separated top priority contacts from lower priority ones.
8. Sometimes you may have to pay for advice and information. Paying consultants or professionals or investing in Internet services is part of the job search process today, as long as it's legal and ethical.
9. Know what you want from your contacts. If you don't know what you want, neither will your network of people. Specific questions will get specific answers.
10. Ask for advice, not for a job. You cannot contact someone asking if they know of any job openings. The answer will invariably be no, especially at higher levels. You need to ask for things like industry advice, advice on geographic areas, etc. The job insights will follow but will be almost incidental. This positioning will build value for you and make the contact person more comfortable about helping you.
11. Watch your attitude and demeanor at all times. Everyone you come in contact with is a potential member of your network. Demonstrate enthusiasm and professionalism at all times.
12. Keep a file on each member of your network and maintain good records at all times. A well-organized network filing system or database will yield superior results.
13. Get comfortable on the telephone. Good telephone communication skills are critical.
14. Travel the "information highway." Networking is more effective if you have E-mail, fax, and computer capabilities.
15. Be well prepared for your conversation, whether in person or over the phone. You should have a script in your mind of how to answer questions, what to ask, and what you're trying to accomplish.
16. Do not fear rejection. If a contact cannot help you, move on to the next contact. Do not take rejection personally—it's just part of the process.
17. Flatter the people in your network. It's been said that the only two types of people who can be flattered are men and women. Use tact, courtesy, and flattery.
18. If a person in your network cannot personally help, advise, or direct you, ask for referrals.
19. Keep in touch with the major contacts in your network on a monthly basis. Remember, out of sight, out of mind.
20. Don't abuse the process. Networking is a two-way street. Be honest and brief and offer your contacts something in return for their time, advice, and information. This can be as simple as a lunch or offering your professional services in return for their cooperation.
21. Show an interest in your contacts. Cavette Robert, one of the founders of the National Speakers Association, said, "People don't care how much you know, until they know how much you care." Show how much you care. It will get you anywhere.

- 22.** Send thank-you notes following each networking contact.
  - 23.** Seek out key networking contacts in professional and trade associations.
  - 24.** Carry calling cards with you at all times to hand out to anyone and everyone you come in contact with. Include your name, address, phone number, areas of expertise, and/or specific skill areas.
  - 25.** Socialize and get out more than ever before. Networking requires dedication and massive amounts of energy. Consistently work on expanding your network.
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## **25 "WHAT DO I DO NOW THAT I HAVE MY RESUME?" TIPS**

1. Develop a team of people who will be your board of directors, advisors, and mentors. The quality of the people you surround yourself with will determine the quality of your results.
2. Plan a marketing strategy. Determine how many hours a week you will work, how you'll divide your time, and how you'll measure your progress. Job search is a business in itself—and a marketing strategy is your business plan.
3. Identify 25 (50 would be better) companies or organizations that you would like to work for.
4. Contact the companies, or do some research, to identify hiring authorities.
5. Define your network (see Networking Tips). Make a list of everyone you know including relatives, friends, acquaintances, family doctors, attorneys, and CPAs, the cleaning person, and the mail carrier. Virtually everyone is a possible networking contact.
6. Prioritize your list of contacts into three categories: 1) Strong, approachable contacts, 2) good contacts or those who must be approached more formally, and 3) those who you'd like to contact but can't without an introduction by another party.
7. Set up a filing system or database to organize and manage your contacts.
8. Develop a script or letter for the purpose of contacting the key people in your network, asking for advice, information, and assistance. Then start contacting them.
9. Attempt to find a person, or persons, in your network who can make an introduction into one of the 25 or 50 companies you've noted in #3.
10. Spend 65 to 70 percent of your time, energy, and resources networking because 65 to 70 percent of all jobs are secured by this method.
11. Consider contacting executive recruiters or employment agencies to assist in your job search.
12. If you are a recent college graduate, seek out assistance from the campus career center.
13. Scout the classified advertisements every Sunday. Respond to ads that interest you, and look at other ads as well. A company may be advertising for a position that does not fit your background, but say in the ad they are "expanding in the area," etc. You have just identified a growing company.
14. Seek out advertisements and job opportunities in specific trade journals and magazines.
15. Attend as many social and professional functions as you can. The more people you meet, the better your chances of securing a position quickly.
16. Send out resumes with customized cover letters to targeted companies or organizations. Address the cover letter to a specific person. Then follow up.
17. Target small to medium-sized companies. Most of the opportunities are coming from these organizations, not large corporations.
18. Consider contacting temporary agencies. Almost 40 percent of all temporary personnel are offered permanent positions. Today, a greater percentage of middle and upper management, as well as professionals, are working in temporary positions.
19. Use online services. America Online, Prodigy, and CompuServe have career services, employment data bases, bulletin boards, and online discussion and support groups, as well as access to the Internet. This is the wave of the future.
20. If you are working from home, be sure the room you are working from is inspiring, organized, and private. This is your space and it must motivate you!
21. If your plan is not working, meet with members of your support team and change the plan. You must remain flexible and adaptable to change.
22. Read and observe. Read magazines and newspapers and listen to CNBC, CNN, and so on. Notice which companies/organizations are on the move and contact them.

- 23.** Set small, attainable weekly goals. Keep a weekly progress report on all your activities. Try to do a little more each week than the week before.
- 24.** Stay active. Exercise and practice good nutrition. A job search requires energy. You must remain in superior physical and mental condition.
- 25.** Volunteer. Help those less fortunate than you. What goes around comes around.