

NEGOTIATING THE JOB MARKET:
RESUME WRITING
JOB SEARCH TECHNIQUES
INTERVIEWING TECHNIQUES
SALARY NEGOTIATIONS
NETWORKING
MENTORING



Editor: Dorceta E. Taylor
With Editorial Assistance From:
Sarah Lashley
Nisha Kapadia
Latonia Payne

Minority Environmental Leadership Development Initiative (MELDI)
University of Michigan
School of Natural Resources and Environment (SNRE)
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MELDI

University of Michigan - SNRE
440 Church Street
Ann Arbor, MI 48109-1115
Phone: 734-615-2602
<http://www.umich.edu/~meldi>
<http://www.sitemaker.umich.edu/meldi>

MELDI STAFF

Dorceta E. Taylor
Program Director

Latonia Payne
Program Coordinator

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The Kenian Group

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OVERVIEW OF MELDI

The Minority Environmental Leadership Development Initiative (MELDI) began in January 2003 at the University of Michigan's School of Natural Resources and Environment. Since its inception, MELDI has developed a website that has a plethora of resources and information on careers in the environmental field, diversity issues, and minority affairs. The site is used by thousands of people each year.

MELDI's staff undertook a series of studies to examine the status of minority students in academic environmental programs, study the work experiences of workers in the environmental labor force, and collect data on the demographic characteristics of environmental organizations. Preliminary results from these studies were unveiled at the National Summit on Diversity in the Environmental Field. The Summit on Diversity was organized by MELDI and held from August 28-30, 20005 at the University of Michigan's School of Natural Resources and Environment.

PROGRAM AND CONFERENCE SUPPORTERS

We would like to thank the Joyce Foundation for its generous support that made it possible to start MELDI. Without funding from the Joyce Foundation, this project would not have come to fruition. We would also like to thank the Rackham Graduate School at the University of Michigan for providing matching funds to support the MELDI fellowships, and the School of Natural Resources and Environment for providing office space and technical support for MELDI. We are also grateful for the matching funds provided by the Offices of the Provost and the Vice Provost. The faculty, staff and students of the School of Natural Resources and Environment, Michigan Sea Grant, as well as the Center for Afroamerican and African Studies have also been very supportive of our efforts, and for this we are grateful.

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CHAPTER 1. RESUME WRITING

How to Prepare an Effective Resume

Resume Essentials

Before you write, take time to do a self-assessment on paper. Outline your knowledge, skills and abilities (KSAs) as well as your work experience and extracurricular activities. This will make it easier to prepare a thorough resume. Resumes must contain all the basic information listed below.

The Content of Your Resume

1. *Contact Information: Name, address, telephone, e-mail address, web site address*

All your contact information should go at the top of your resume.

- Avoid nicknames.
- Use a permanent address. Use your parents' address, a friend's address, or the address you plan to use after graduation.
- Use a permanent telephone number and include the area code.
- If you have an answering machine, record a neutral greeting.
- Add your e-mail address. Many employers will find it useful. (Note: Choose an e-mail address that sounds professional.)
- Include your web site address only if the web page reflects your professional ambitions.

2. *Objective or Summary (optional)*

An objective tells potential employers the sort of work you're hoping to do.

- Be specific about the job you want. For example: To obtain an entry-level position within a financial institution requiring strong analytical and organizational skills.
- Tailor your objective to each employer you target/every job you seek.

3. *Education*

New graduates without a lot of work experience should list their educational information first. Your most recent educational information is listed first.

- Include your degree (A.S., B.S., B.A., etc.), major, institution attended, minor/concentration.
- Add your grade point average (GPA) if it is higher than 3.0.
- List your academic honors
- Mention research experiences you have had or projects worked on. Say what your role was.
- List the title of your thesis with a short (no more than a paragraph) description of the thesis.

Work Experience

Give the employer a brief overview of work that has taught you skills. Use action words to describe your job duties. Include your work experience in reverse chronological order—that is, put your last job first and work backward to your first, relevant job. Include:

- Title of position,
- Name of organization
- Location of work (town, state)
- Dates of employment
- Describe your work responsibilities with emphasis on **specific skills** and achievements.

Scholarships and Fellowships

- List the name of the fellowship or scholarship, the organization awarding it and the year it was awarded.

Awards and Recognition

- List the name of the award or recognition, who awarded it, for what purpose, and the year it was awarded.

Other information

- A staff member at your career services office can advise you on other information to add to your resume.

You may want to add:

- Key or special skills or competencies (in languages, computing, etc),
- Leadership experience,
- Conferences attended, made presentations at, or organized
- Publications
- Media (radio or television interviews, newspaper articles)
- Study abroad
- Participation in sports.

Ask people if they are willing to serve as references before you give their names to a potential employer.

Do not include your reference information on your resume. You may note at the bottom of your resume: "References furnished on request."

3. Resume Checkup

You've written your resume. It's time to have it reviewed and critiqued by a career counselor. You can also take the following steps to ensure quality:

Content:

- Run a spell check on your computer before anyone sees your resume.
- Get a friend (an English major would do nicely) to do a grammar review.
- Ask another friend to proofread. The more people who see your resume, the more likely that misspelled words and awkward phrases will be seen (and corrected).

Design:

These tips will make your resume easier to read and/or scan into an employer's data base.

- Use white or off-white paper.
- Use 8-1/2- x 11-inch paper.
- Print on one side of the paper.
- Use a font size of 12 to 14 points.
- Do not use line or borders
- Do not use bold print, italics, or underlining
- Use Large and clear typestyle
- Leave large margins all the way around the resume
- Be sure to center your name, address and phone at the top.
- Choose one typeface and stick to it.
- Avoid italics, script, and underlined words.
- Do not use horizontal or vertical lines, graphics, or shading.
- Do not fold or staple your resume.
- If you must mail your resume, put it in a large envelope.

The quality of the resume is likely to be poor, if the above criteria were not followed precisely. Many resumes, once scanned, are impossible to read.

4. Action Words

Use power or action words to describe your experience and accomplishments. For every skill, accomplishment, or job described, use the most active impressive verb you can think

of (which is also accurate). Begin the sentence with this verb, except when you must vary the sentence structure to avoid repetitious writing. Examples of action words you can use:

| | | | | | |
|--------------|----------------|---------------|---------------|--------------|---------------|
| ability | compiled | doubled | guided | mature | purchased |
| accelerated | complete | drafted | halved | measured | purchased |
| accomplished | completed | earned | handled | mediated | pursued |
| achieved | completely | edited | helped | met | qualified |
| acquired | composed | educated | hired | minimized | raised |
| adapted | computed | effected | identified | modified | rank |
| addressed | conceived | effective | implemented | monitored | rated |
| administered | conceptualized | effectiveness | improved | motivated | realized |
| advised | concluded | efficient | incorporated | moved | received |
| allocated | condensed | eliminated | increased | named | reconciled |
| analyzed | conducted | endorsed | increasing | nationwide | record |
| answered | considered | enforced | indexed | navigated | recruited |
| anticipated | consistent | enlarged | influenced | negotiated | reorganized |
| appeared | consolidated | enlarging | informed | observed | repeatedly |
| applied | constructed | enlisted | initiated | obtained | reported |
| appointed | constructed | ensured | innovated | opened | researched |
| appraised | consulted | entered | inspected | operated | resolved |
| approved | continued | equipped | installed | ordered | resourceful |
| arranged | contracted | established | instituted | ordered | responsible |
| assembled | Contributions | estimated | instructed | outstanding | results |
| assessed | controlled | evaluated | insured | oversaw | reviewed |
| assigned | converted | examined | interpreted | participated | selected |
| assisted | coordinated | excellent | interviewed | perceived | separated |
| assumed | corrected | exceptional | introduced | performance | set up |
| assured | counseled | executed | invented | performed | significant |
| audited | counted | expanded | invested | persuaded | significantly |
| awarded | created | expanding | investigated | persuaded | simplified |
| budgeted | critiqued | expedited | involved | planned | solved |
| calculated | cultivated | experienced | issued | positive | sound |
| capability | cut | experimented | joined | potential | specialist |
| capable | dealt | explained | kept | prepared | stable |
| capacity | decided | explored | knowledgeable | presented | staffed |
| cataloged | defined | expressed | launched | prevented | substantial |
| caused | delegated | extended | launched | processed | substantially |
| centralized | delivered | filed | learned | procured | successful |
| chaired | demonstrated | financed | leased | produced | supervise |
| changed | described | focused | lectured | productive | surveyed |
| clarified | designed | forecast | led | proficient | taught |
| classified | determined | forecasted | licensed | profitable | tested |
| closed | developed | formed | listed | programmed | thorough |
| collaborated | developing | formulated | logged | prohibited | thoroughly |
| collected | devised | found | made | projected | trained |
| combined | diagnosed | founded | maintained | promoted | used |
| commented | directed | gathered | major | proposed | versatile |

| | | | | | |
|--------------|-------------|-----------|----------|------------|---------------|
| communicated | discovered | generated | managed | proven | vigorous |
| compared | discussed | global | marketed | provided | well-educated |
| competence | distributed | graded | matched | publicized | well-rounded |
| competent | documented | granted | mature | published | |

5. *The Presentation of the Resume*

The resume should be visually enticing

- Simple clean structure.
- Very easy to read.
- Symmetrical. Balanced.
- Uncluttered.
- As much white space between sections of writing as possible; use sections of writing that are no longer than six lines, and shorter if possible.

Uniformity and Consistency

- Be consistent in the use of italics, capital letters, bullets, boldface, and underlining.
- Absolute parallelism in design decisions. For example, if a period is at the end of one job's dates, a period should be at the end of all jobs' dates; if one degree is in boldface, all degrees should be in boldface.
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No Errors

- No typographical errors.
- No spelling errors.
- No grammar, syntax, or punctuation errors.
- No factual errors.

Target Your Resume to the Job

- Target the resume to job advertisement.
- Highlight the key skills that match the job.
- Highlight key qualifications for the job.

Strengths and Weaknesses

- Highlight your strengths - place most of your focus here.
- De-emphasize your weaknesses.

Show you are results-oriented

- Wherever possible, prove that you have the desired qualifications through clear strong statement of accomplishments, rather than a statement of potentials, talents, or responsibilities.
- Indicate results of work done, and quantify these accomplishments whenever appropriate. For example: "Initiated and directed complete automation of the Personnel Department, resulting in time-cost savings of over 25%."
- Preface skill and experience statements with the adjectives "proven" and "demonstrated" create this results-orientation.

Concise, Clear Writing

- Keep sentences as short and direct as possible.
- Eliminate any extraneous information.
- Use phrases rather than full sentences when phrases are possible.
- Start sentences with verbs, eliminating pronouns ("I", "he" or "she").
- Vary words.

- Don't repeat a "power" verb or adjective in the same paragraph
- Use commas to clarify meaning and make reading easier.
- Remain consistent in writing decisions such as use of abbreviations and capitalizations.

Printing

- Use a laser or ink-jet printer to print your resume. The results are best with laser printers.

Sources: Adapted from JobWeb.com, 2004; the Rockport Institute, 2004.

Unprofessionalism

By Max Messmer

The following excerpt from the book *Job Hunting For Dummies*®, 2nd Edition appeared on the Resumania.com website.

Your resume, above all, must look professional. Consider the following:

Using paper or ink in unusual colors (such as pinks and blues) and paper in unusual sizes (anything other than 8 1/2 x 11) demonstrates that you are not a candidate to be taken seriously. You want your qualifications, not your choice of paper or ink, to stand out.

It should be printed in black ink on 8 1/2 x 11, preferably white bond, paper. (Ivory and light gray are okay, too, but stay away from light pinks and blues.) The margins should be at least 1 inch all around.

You should use one of the most commonly recognized resume formats. See Chapter 6 for more information about resume formats.

The typeface should be simple, unadorned, and easy to read. It should not look like calligraphy - the typeface people use for wedding invitations. Although it's okay to use graphic flourishes such as bullets and boldface for emphasis, remember to keep them to a minimum and avoid them altogether in resumes that are destined for optical scanners (see Chapters 7 and 8). Stick to a single typeface in a single size.

The information in the resume should be presented in short, easy-to-read paragraphs.

Make sure that no extraneous pen or pencil marks or correction fluid appear on the resume - and please, no gravy stains.

Carelessness

The fact that your resume is marred by typos, misspellings, and grammatical mistakes may not be an accurate reflection of how qualified you are for a particular job (unless, of course, the job is proofreader). As a rule, though, employers are neither patient nor forgiving about these flaws. A single typo in an otherwise well-organized and professional-looking resume may not necessarily sink you, but if the resume is riddled with misspellings and grammatical errors, you send the message to would-be employers that you don't pay attention to details.

Cuteness and cleverness

Cute is for babies and kittens, but not for resumes. So play it straight. Forget puns and clever plays on words; they don't belong in a resume, and they don't belong in a cover letter, either. People who read resumes are not looking to be entertained. And what you might consider clever, most people - even those who may be amused by the cleverness - will not consider appropriate.

Irrelevance and fluff

The people who read your resume are interested in one thing above all: whether, based on what they read, you deserve serious consideration as a candidate. Given this priority, any information in your resume that doesn't contribute an answer to this basic question is irrelevant. If you're a college graduate, you don't have to mention the high school you attended. And go easy on your hobbies and interests. The fact that you are a low-handicap golfer or have one of the world's most extensive beer can collections may make for interesting conversation at a dinner party, but it's of no interest to a would-be employer - unless you're applying for a job as a golf pro or at a company that markets beer cans.

Vagueness or jargon

Vagueness occurs when you mention a job title, task, or set of abbreviations that nobody other than you and the person you used to work for are going to recognize, such as Asst. VP, RTP Div. of Corporate Reclassification of ETY Documents. It also rears its ugly head when you fail to mention specifically what you were responsible for in your last job, the number of people you supervised, the size of the budget you controlled, and so on. Don't assume that the people who read your resume will figure out for themselves what you did. They won't.

Misrepresentation

Don't lie. It's that simple. And don't be tempted to embellish the truth. Of course, you would be foolish to include in your resume anything remotely unflattering. (It's one thing to be honest and another thing to be suicidal!) But the risks of fudging the truth in

your resume far outweigh the benefits, particularly when it comes to specific facts, such as credentials and titles.

If you were not a vice president of whatever in your last job, don't anoint yourself with that title simply because the company you used to work for is out of business. The issue here goes beyond ethics; it's practical as well. If, in checking your references, a would-be employer discovers that you misrepresented yourself in your resume - even if the misrepresentation is inconsequential - your credibility will take a beating and you stand a good chance of losing an offer. If your employer discovers a lie after hiring you, you could lose the job that you worked so hard to get. And you might find yourself in over your head if you inflated prior titles or responsibilities - obviously counterproductive.

Overkill

Overkill is the excessive use of superlatives, regardless of who or what those superlatives modify. There's nothing wrong with tooting your own horn in your resume, as long as the notes you toot are actual accomplishments and not simply adjectives that proclaim to the reader how wonderful you are.

For example, instead of calling yourself a "dynamite salesperson" (which you shouldn't do unless you really did sell dynamite, because adjectives like dynamite don't belong in a resume), report that you were Salesperson of the Month for six months running.

Underwhelming

As you can come to appreciate in Chapter 7, you need to do more in your resume than simply list the specific functions you performed in your previous jobs. What you did is obviously important. More important to an employer, though, is the impact of what you did - your accomplishments. The fact that you were the purchasing agent for a doughnut-making company is nice, but of more interest is the fact that you reduced purchasing expenditures by 15 percent during your first year.

Longwindedness

The extent to which a resume is "longwinded" has less to do with how long it is - whether it's a one-pager or a two-pager - and more to do with the language you use to describe your

past experience. Don't fall victim to the misconception that the best way to make a mundane task appear more important is to dress it up in lofty language.

If one of your responsibilities in your last job was to check the accuracy of invoices, think twice before you write, "Ensured the numerical veracity of documents sent to customers in order to effect the collection of funds due for purchases." If you were a short-order cook, say so. Don't say, "Assisted in daily preparation of large quantities of consumable items in a fast-paced setting."

Editorializing

Your opinions on matters such as why a particular project didn't work out or why you had to leave a job don't really belong in a resume. In other words, don't write, "Project would have been much more successful if the birdbrain I had for a boss had let me do it my way," or this gem that actually appeared: "Reason for leaving: Boss was as twisted as a pretzel." Keep your views and sentiments to yourself, as valid as they might be.

Overpersonalizing

Apart from the basics - your name, address, and phone number - don't include in your resume any information that relates to your personal life. Don't mention your age, your height, your weight, the color of your eyes, the kind of dog you own, your marital status, the number of children you have, the condition of your health, or how many push-ups you can do. Don't talk about your hobbies (unless they are career-related or reveal some aspect of your personality that could shed positive light on your personal qualities - the fact that you run marathons, for example). Don't mention your favorite author or favorite food; an employer who spends seconds looking over your resume isn't going to care.

Resumespeak

The most effective resumes are written in plain, simple language. Yes, the writing style you use in your resume should be professional and businesslike, and yes, you should avoid slang and trendy words. But be equally wary of business jargon and go easy on "businessese": words and phrases such as "assisted in the facilitation of" and "optimized."

Five Ways to Really Screw Up Your Resume: Avoid these mistakes if you want to make a good impression

By Laura Lyjak

Career Focus, Fall 2003, Vol. 6 #2:16

Yes, your resume is just a piece of paper. Although it might not seem fair that the job of your dreams is riding on the piece of paper, it's your first opportunity to impress the person with the power to hire you.

There are more rules to writing a resume. The more you know about applying these rules, the better your chance of writing a resume that will lead to phone calls, interviews and eventually a job that makes you very, very happy.

Sometimes perfectly good job candidates are eliminated because they chose the wrong keywords. Other times, important qualifications are overlooked because they're in the wrong place. Or it may be the little details of spelling and grammar that take a resume out of the running. Here are five common mistakes that can send your resume to the bottom of the stack, and leave you wondering why no one calls, no one writes and all your fine talents are going to waste.

Mistake One: Ignore technology

It used to be that there was one way to write a resume. You got some nice cream-colored paper and typed up all your education and experience. Maybe you added a tasteful graphic, a fancy headline font, or some bullet points for interest, and you sent your resume off with a cordial cover letter. Sometimes you can still do that and get good results, but now many large corporations scan resume to keep in a searchable database. This creates a whole new set of rules for resume writers. The best resumes are simple and easily deciphered by a scanner. Forget the cream-colored paper; stick to plain white paper. Forget the fancy fonts; use a simple sans serif typeface throughout the resume. While it's alright to use action words like "developed," "trained" and "spearheaded," be sure to choose specific searchable keywords to describe your education and experience, such as "bachelor's in computer science," and "five years network experience."

The Internet has added yet another dimension to resume writing. In her book *Electronic Resumes and Online Networking*, Rebecca Smith says "Traditional resumes focus on visual aesthetics and content set off by many action verbs. The goal is to capture attention. Online, a resume must grab a computer's attention by conforming to some electronic standards." These days many corporations actually prefer to receive resumes as e-mail. That's even more bare bones than a scanned resume: one font, one type size, just the facts.

Mistake Two: Say too much (or too little)

Your goal is to convey your qualifications for the job as clearly as possible. Details about why you left your last position, where you hope to be in 10 years or your passion for windsailing are best left out.

On the other hand, details about your specific accomplishments and skills should be included. Yana Parker, author of the *Damn Good Resume Guide*, advises resume writers to list accomplishments that demonstrate their skills. Were you an employee of the month? Did you save your

department money? Did you win an award? Did you master the latest software? Do you have a 3.8 G.P.A. from Harvard? Make sure your resume mentions facts such as these.

Mistake Three: Put good information in a bad place

You probably have heard of functional and chronological resumes. In a chronological resume you list your employment from present to past. In a functional resume you create a description of your skills based on your experience and education. Each has its merits and it's up to you to decide which way to go.

But be sure you put the most important information where it's most visible. Brad Karch of Jobbound.com estimates that your resume will get a 20 second scan to determine if it's a keeper. "Everything, yes everything, on that resume needs to be just right. From what goes on it, to how it's written, to where it's written, has to be perfect, or you won't get a second look. In fact, it's just like an ad. Think about flipping through a magazine. Do you stop and read every word of every ad in every magazine? Didn't think so. The only ones you read are the ones that are appealing and relevant to you."

Mistake Four: Stick out rather than stand out

One word: Proof-read. Careless errors can be a resume's downfall.

Your resume should be correct and professional. Of course, that means grammar, spelling and punctuation are meticulous, but it also means knowing the etiquette of resume writing. Just like you wouldn't think of wearing a T-shirt to a job interview, slang, humor and sloppiness don't belong on your resume. Resumania.com has thousands of examples of resumes faux pas. Their advice is to avoid "personal information, attempts at humor, misusing or omitting words, extraneous or inappropriate information and awkward phrasing. It pays to carefully proofread all resumes and cover letters before submitting them to potential employers - just one typo may knock you out of the running for a job!"

Mistake Five: Trust the system

If you believe that job hunting means simply searching the job boards and classified ads, and then sending your resume to the human resources department, you're going to be disappointed.

Even a flawless resume won't help you if it doesn't get into the hands of the person who can hire you. That means skirting the human resources bureaucracy whenever possible. One way to do this is to network with others working in the field where you'd like to have a job.

Says Katharine Hansen of *quintcareer.com*, "Only 5 to 25 percent of jobs are advertised, so you can find out about all the unadvertised openings only through talking to as many people as possible and telling them you are looking for a job."

CHAPTER 2. JOB SEARCH TECHNIQUES

Focus on the Needs of the Decision Maker

By Don Straits, CEO, Corporate Warriors

All too often the job seeker is focused on what he or she is looking for in a job (i.e. income, benefits, location, function, responsibilities, title, stature, drive time, industry, and corporate culture). On the other hand, hiring executives have an entirely different set of standards for what they are seeking in candidates. If you, as a job seeker, fail to recognize the difference, you will be history in terms of being the candidate of choice.

Let's explore the minds of decision makers and find their hot buttons. When you focus your search on these factors through your resume and through your interviews, you are more likely to be successful.

What are employers looking for in a job candidate?

1. Ability to do the Job.

Sounds simple enough, but you would be amazed how many people apply for jobs for which they are not qualified. Before the decision makers dig deep into a candidate's background, or invite him or her in for an interview, they must first confirm this very basic criteria. Establish your ability through your resume or resume portfolio by placing your emphasis on accomplishments, results performance and insights into emerging trends, opportunities and challenges.

2. Initiative.

Unless you are entry level, most decision makers are looking for someone who can "hit the ground running." They do not want a long learning curve that requires costly training and where the new hire cannot produce quick results. Today's decision makers have very little patience. Demonstrate how you quickly identified a problem or need project, initiated an action plan, and produced bottom-line results.

3. Job Growth.

Decision makers look for people who go beyond their defined "job description." Show that you are adaptive and willing to take on additional responsibility and that you will go the extra mile to achieve success. You don't want to be perceived as someone who is stuck in the comfort zone and always content with the status quo.

4. Self-Confidence.

Decision makers want to know that they can totally put their trust in you to perform the job and produce the desired results. They develop this trust by seeing your confidence. Confidence can be displayed in numerous ways. Here are just a few of the things that decision makers look for: A) Speak with authority. Use phrases like "I can," "I will," and "I know." Avoid phrases like "I think," "In my opinion," and "I feel that." B) Demonstrate a commanding presence by your appearance, posture, eye contact, and body language. C) Show your track record of ongoing success. Decision makers will not have confidence in you if they can only see a few accomplishments scattered over several years.

5. Leadership.

Leadership is not reserved for senior executives or managers. For example, a janitor can show leadership by finding a better way to do his/her job, by setting a great example for his/her peers, or by finding ways to cut costs through more effective cleaning equipment or a new supplier for less expensive cleaning materials. Leadership is a rare commodity. Show decision makers that you have the courage to take a leadership role, regardless of your level or function.

6. Compatibility.

Much to the regret of some people, decision makers look for a certain amount of conformity. This does not mean you must be the quintessential "Dilbert." Rather, organizations seek people whose personality style and behavior match the requirements of the job and the corporate culture. For example, we all know about the employee who is never happy with anything, is a continual whiner, and always finds fault with everyone else. During your interviews, avoid criticizing your former employer or placing blame on others for why things didn't get done. Always demonstrate your positive mental attitude (PMA).

7. Attitude.

OK, we wrapped up number six by mentioning your PMA. Let's build on that. If you want to be the standard by which all others are measured, then walk in the door with a high energy level, tons of enthusiasm, a zest for living, and the determination to be the very best at whatever you do. Enthusiasm is infectious. Others feed on it. It is motivating and drives others to higher levels of productivity and success. Show your enthusiasm every chance you get and you dramatically increase your chances of being hired.

8. Social Skills/Interests/Involvement.

In today's business world, it seems that professional courtesy and conduct are from another era. You can never say please and thank you enough. Give credit and praise to others. During your interview talk about the team's performance and the contribution that everyone else brought to your projects or your job. Show your interest in what others were working on and how you were willing to help. Show your involvement in organization activities—both social and professional.

9. Integrity.

Over the past few years we have witnessed the tragic abuse of authority and total lack of integrity by many of our nation's top senior level executives. Many have gone to jail and others will probably soon follow. Needless to say, this is a powerful message to everyone. Demonstrate your uncompromising integrity, professional ethics and personal morals. If a decision maker wants you to "wink" at laws or professional conduct, you don't want to work for that company.

10. Communication Skills.

We can't ever communicate too much. I admit that companies often have too many meetings, but I don't equate those meetings to communication. A good communicator possesses outstanding written and oral skills and knows how to use them

effectively. Demonstrate to the decision maker how you continually use communication skills to achieve your goals. There is a lot of information here to absorb and it is difficult to hit all of these hot buttons through your resume and interviews.

But by being aware of these hot buttons you can consciously try to touch on as many as possible. Instead of focusing on what you want, focus on what the employer wants and you will land that next job.

Pesky Interview Questions That Keep Coming Up

By Carole Martin

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Those same questions keep coming up -- in every interview. They can be tough ones because they are about you and your thinking process. Preparing for them ahead of time can save you some grief during the interview.

What are your weaknesses?

The most dreaded question of all. Handle this question by minimizing the weakness and emphasizing the strengths. Stay away from personal qualities and concentrate on professional traits:

"I am always working to improve my communication skills so that I can be a more effective presenter. I recently joined Toastmasters which I find very helpful."

Why should we hire you?

Prepare and know your product -- YOU! Summarize your experiences:

"With five years' experience working in the financial industry, and my proven record of saving the company money, I could make a big difference in your company. I am confident I would be a great addition to your team."

Why do you want to work here?

The interviewer is listening for an answer that indicates you've given this some thought, and are not sending out resumes just because there is an opening. Doing research should give you plenty of reasons why you want to work there. As an example, "I've selected key companies whose mission statements are in line with my values, where I know I could be excited about what the company does, and this company is very high on my list of desirable choices."

What are your goals?

Sometimes it's best to talk about short-term and intermediate goals, and not lock yourself into the distant future. Something like, "My immediate goal is to get a job in a growth-oriented company. My long-term goal will depend on where the company goes. I hope to eventually grow into a position of additional responsibility."

Why did you leave (are you leaving) your job?

This question is almost a certainty. If you are unemployed, put you're leaving in a positive context: "I managed to survive two down-sizings, but the third round was a 20% reduction in force, which included me." If you are employed, focus on what you want in your next job: "After two years, I made the decision to look for a company that is team-focused, where I can add my experience."

When were you most satisfied in your job?

The interviewer wants to know what motivates you. If you can relate an example of a job or project when you were excited, the interviewer will get an idea of your preferences. "I was very satisfied in my last job because I worked directly with the customers and their problems; that is an important part of the job for me."

What can you do for us that other candidates can't?

What makes you unique? This will take an assessment of your experiences, skills and traits. What makes you stand out? After your assessment, bring it all together in a concise manner: "I have a unique combination of strong technical skills, and the ability to build strong customer relationships. This allows me to use my knowledge, and break down information to be user friendly."

What are three positive things your last boss would say about you?

It's time to pull out your old performance appraisals and boss's quotes. This is a great way to brag about yourself through someone else's words: "My boss has told me that I am the best designer he has ever had. He knows he can rely on me, and he likes my sense of humor."

What salary are you seeking?

It is to your advantage if the employer tells you the "range" first. Prepare by knowing the "going rate" in your area, and your bottom line or "walk away" point. One possible answer would be:

"I am sure when the time comes we can agree on a reasonable amount. In what range do you typically pay someone with my background?"

There is no way of predicting which questions will be asked in an interview, but by reviewing some of the "most common" questions you will begin to focus on how to present yourself in the most positive manner.

Carole Martin is a thoroughbred interview coach. Celebrated author, trainer, and mentor, Carole can give you interviewing tips like no one else can. Subscribe to her free email newsletter, "Interview Fitness Training," at www.interviewcoach.com. Her workbook, "Interview Fitness Training - A Workout With the Interview Coach," has sold thousands of copies world-wide and she has just released her latest book, "Boost Your Interview IQ," both available on Amazon.com.

Net a New Job: Successful job searches combine high-tech internet and old-fashioned networking

By Vicki Lawrence

Career Focus, Spring/Summer 2004.

Over four million people go online every day looking for job information, according to a recent Pew Internet and American Life study. Many of them are using the huge national job boards, such as Monster, Career-Builder, and HotJobs. At such locations they can see job postings in a wide range of occupations from around the country. Users can apply for individual job openings and post their resumes online, where they can be viewed by recruiters after being sorted by relevant keywords.

In fact, the national job boards have become so popular in the last couple of years that they are becoming victims of their own success. Monster has boasted of 15 million resumes in its active database, but what is any individual's chance of being the one discovered in that ocean of applicants? Not surprisingly, job seekers are reporting growing frustration and decreasing results from the large boards, as documented in the annual reports on the state of Internet job-hunting conducted by the online service Quintessential Careers.

Quintessential Careers reports that the career sites created and contained by individual companies – usually large national corporations – are now the “hot spots for Internet job-hunting.” The pharmaceutical giant, Pfizer, Inc., for example, strongly encourages all applicants to submit their resumes electronically. “The days of dropping off a cold resume have passed away,” says Richard T. Chambers, a Pfizer spokesperson. “The online resume is the most effective way to apply. If you're interested in Pfizer, get into our database.”

So is this the way to find the job of your dreams? Well, maybe.

Better to target than to broadcast

Using the Net to research careers and opportunities makes sense. It's a great way to get information. And if you're interested in working for a large corporation or in a distant location, posting your resume on a job board, either national or corporate, is a quick and simple way to apply for many positions and to make your resume available to recruiters even before a position is posted.

But there are pitfalls. On the big national boards, according to Quintessential Careers, some jobs might be bogus or misrepresented, listed by companies or employment agencies eager to see who's out there but without much to offer. Advertisers and spammers are another hazard. To counter a flood of e-mails offering get-rich-quick schemes, some applicants recommend listing a separate e-mail address for online applications. More serious privacy concerns have also arisen, including identity theft.

The corporate boards seem to be a better choice for many people. But even so, some boards have rigid formats that may not do a good job of reflecting your actual experience or abilities. If the site will not allow you to post your resume substantially intact, you might want to see if you can post a link to your own Web site, where you can display your version of your résumé, along with any other relevant information.

If that option isn't available, and you feel that you cannot present yourself in the format you have to use, it might be wise to evaluate how important that company is to you. There are a lot of sites out there, and there should be a limit to how much time put in at a place that won't let you give it your best shot.

Choose your words carefully

In any case, be sure to pack your resume with the keywords that signify your level of education, experience, and achievement. Remember, a machine will be deciding which stack your resume goes into. Don't expect it to read between the lines. Use action words and list concrete accomplishments that will be meaningful to employers in your field.

Another potential problem can be the need to update. Resumes are usually sorted in reverse chronological order – the most recent submitted is the first one pulled up. Some experts recommend updating your file once a week, just so that it will appear near the top of the stack. But Chambers disagrees. “It's more important to update when the resume needs updating – a new degree, new duties or accomplishments. It behooves the recruiter to look through the stack at who's available. You want to hire the best person for the job.” He's right, but at the very least, check in often enough to keep your resume in the active database.

If you know what part of the country you want to be in, you should check out a local online board in that area. Another good source that is often overlooked are sites listing jobs in a particular field or profession.

From Net to network

But remember to watch how much time you spend at the keyboard. Job boards are one tool, not the only tool. Eighty percent of Americans work for companies with fewer than 100 employees, and those companies are unlikely to have a large Internet presence. In fact, according to studies reported in Quintessential Careers, online applications account for only 21 percent of company hires, while over 50 percent of hires come from some form of networking.

Networking is still the most effective way by far to land a job, and it is all the more important now that the online process is making applying for a job ever more impersonal.

Don't just post your resume, use the Internet to research that company or to track down names and contact information. Then get up from your desk and go out and meet people.

Along with advising you to get your resume into the system, Chambers urges job hunters not to underestimate the power of networking. “Even students – especially students – should get involved with professional organizations in their fields,” he says. “Even local professional groups are good. Or service groups. Get involved with the Rotary. The knowledge of who's doing what and where there's an opening is always important.”
–CF

CHAPTER 3. INTERVIEWING TECHNIQUES

Interviewing Tips

Introduction

An interview is an opportunity for both you and the organization to determine if there is an appropriate fit between your skills and interests and the needs of the organization. It is a two-way street as it allows the employer to provide information about the organization to you while providing you with an opportunity to discuss your qualifications.

Getting Ready ¹

Be prepared: It is important that you know as much as possible about the position and organization. Request a copy of the organization or company's annual report/catalogue/job description. Ask friends and colleagues for any information they may have about the organization.

Know yourself: Be familiar with your own strengths, weaknesses, work style, skills, accomplishments and goals. Review your resume and be prepared to provide any additional information or answer any questions regarding information that is presented on your resume.

Dress appropriately: Dress in attire that befits a person employed within the organization with which you are interviewing. It is recommended that men wear a suit and tie. For women, a skirt and jacket are appropriate. Jewelry, cologne/perfume and hair styles should be kept simple.

Be prompt: It is important to be on time. Make sure that you know precisely where you are headed. If you are unsure, call and ask for directions ahead of time. Take into account traffic, parking, and other unforeseen difficulties when determining your travel time. If you are going to be late it is essential that you call and let someone know. It is recommended to plan to arrive approximately ten to fifteen minutes early. This allows you time to hang up your coat, catch your breath and review your resume.

Be conscious of body language: Nonverbal communication provides interviewers with information. Be sure to maintain eye contact as it demonstrates confidence and honesty. Slouching back in your chair, crossing your arms or twiddling your thumbs may convey messages of boredom, hostility or nervousness.

Types of Interviews ²

Regardless of the type of interview utilized by your potential employers, interviewers will judge your responses based on two factors: content and style. The content refers to the information that you provide or clarify about your qualifications. The style is your delivery and mannerisms.

• Traditional Interview

This is the most common type of interview. It is composed of a series of questions which the employer asks of you, followed by the expectation that you will ask articulate, well-formed questions of the interviewer. The best preparation for this type of interview is to research the employer and the industry prior to the interview.

Sample Traditional Interview Questions

Tell a little about yourself.
Why did you choose University of Michigan?
Why did you choose your major?
What would you like to be doing five, ten years from now?
What has been your greatest accomplishment?
Describe your greatest strengths and weaknesses.
Would you rather be in charge of a project or work as part of a team?
What have you learned from the jobs you've had?

• Behavioral Interviewing

This interviewing technique has been growing in popularity. It is based on the premise that the best way to predict future behavior is to determine and evaluate past behavior. In this technique, employers will ask open-ended questions designed to stimulate recollection of a situation that would lead to a desired behavior. For example, if looking for leadership within a candidate, the employer might ask: "Describe a situation in which your efforts influenced the actions of others." The interviewer may ask follow up questions such as "What did you say?" or "What did you do?"

The acronym "STAR" provides guidance for answering questions in a behavioral interview.

S = Describe the **Situation** in which you were involved.

T = Describe the **Task** to be performed.

A = What was your **Approach** to the problem?

R = What were the **Results** of your actions?

It is especially important to make sure that your answers are honest, concise and reflect positively on you, even if the event did not have a positive outcome.

Sample Behavioral Interview Questions

Describe the best/worst team of which you have been a member.

Tell me about a time when your course load was heaviest. How did you get all of your work done?

Give me a specific example of a time when you sold someone on an idea or concept.

Tell me about a time when you were creative in solving a problem.

Describe a time when you got co-workers or classmates who dislike each other to work together.

Tell me about a time when you made a bad decision.

• **Case Method Interview**

Case Method Interviews will ask you to solve a hypothetical industry-related problem. These problems will be similar to ones such as the organization encounters one a regular basis. Interviewers are not necessarily seeking the "correct" answer to the problem, but rather are attempting to evaluate your problem-solving, analytical and reasoning skills. Be prepared to justify your answer and walk your interviewer through the step-by-step process which guided your decision. You may also need to ask questions of your interviewer if you feel you need more information to reach an adequate solution. Case Method Interviews are primarily used by investment banks and consulting firms. It is not prevalent in other industries.

Sample Case Interview Questions

A chain of grocery stores currently receives its stock on a decentralized basis. Each store deals independently with its suppliers. The president of the chain is wondering whether the firm can benefit from a centralized warehouse. What are the key considerations in making this decision?

A magazine publisher is trying to decide how many magazines she should deliver to each individual distribution outlet in order to maximize profits. She has extensive historical sales volume data for each of the outlets. How should she determine delivery quantities?

• **Stress Interview**

The Stress Interview tests a candidate's ability to be articulate, graceful and perform under pressure. The interviewer is likely to speak quickly and aggressively. The interviewer may begin with the question: "Why should we hire you?" When responding to Stress Interview questions, it is most important that you project self-assurance.

Sample Stress Interview Questions

What kinds of people do you find it difficult to work with?

What are some of the things that you find difficult to do?

How would you evaluate me as an interviewer?

What interests you least about this job?

How do you handle rejection?

What is the worst thing that you have heard about our company?

See this pen I'm holding? Sell it to me.

• **Group/Panel Interview**

As organizations move towards a more integrative and teamwork focused style of management, group interviews are increasing in popularity. The panel often consists of three to ten people and occurs at the employer's location. Each member of the panel has likely been assigned a specific area of questioning. It is important to remember to make eye contact with each member of the panel, focusing special attention on the panel member that asked the question.

- **Serial Interview**

The Serial Interview is a variation of the traditional interview. The interview is actually a series of sequential interviews with several interviewers. The interviewers often have hiring authority and may be your future manager. Each person must be treated as a key player in the decision-making process, even administrative assistants. A negative impression left on any interviewer will be reported in the evaluation phase.

- **Interviewee Questions**

As an interviewee, you will be expected to ask questions of your interviewer. This is your opportunity to exhibit your preparation and interest in the company as well as gather information that helps you to ascertain whether or not the opportunities offered by this organization match your needs. If you fail to ask anything of the interviewer, s/he is likely to assume that you are not particularly interested in the position or organization.

Sample Interviewee Questions

- Can you tell me how success in this position is measured?
- Who would I work with most closely on a day-to-day basis?
- What do you consider the most challenging aspect of this position for someone new to your organization?
- What areas need the immediate attention of the person you hire?
- Describe a typical day.
- What kind of training would I receive?
- What activities could I engage in now that might help me on the job if I'm hired?
- What are the avenues for advancement?
- What is the turnover rate?

Illegal Questions³

Legal Issues and Pre-Employment Inquiries

When conducting a job search it is important to recognize that Federal Legislation prohibits interviewers from using information gained through asking illegal questions to make hiring decisions. Examples include questions concerning age, national origin, race, ability, gender, religion, sexual orientation, citizenship and certain physical data. Employers cannot exclude individuals from employment consideration solely on the basis of any factors listed above.

Please refer to the list of Appropriate Pre-employment Inquiries developed by legal representatives from professional associations in career planning and employment. You will note that each inquiry area provides a proper and improper questioning format. Before any interview, become familiar with these legal areas of inquiry.

Responding to Illegal Questions

An appropriate response to the above question could be: "With all due respect, I don't feel that your question is relevant to the challenges and responsibilities of this position." "Is it possible to move on to another question?" or "I can't see how this question relates to the qualifications for the position or its responsibilities. If you could explain how it is related, I would be able to respond." Try to avoid being confrontational.

Appropriate Pre-Employment Inquiries

| Acceptable | Subject | Unacceptable |
|---|---|---|
| Are you over the age of 18? If hired, can you furnish proof of age? | Age | What is your date of birth? How old are you? |
| If hired, can you provide papers that show you're legally able to work in the U.S.? | Citizenship | In what country were you born? |
| Can you perform all of the duties outlined in the job description? | Physical Condition or Disability | Do you have any physical disabilities? Other questions on general medical condition. |
| Have you ever been convicted of any crime? | Character | Have you even been arrested? If so, when, where and the disposition of the case. |
| What languages can you read, speak, write fluently? | Ethnicity or National Origin | What is your native language? |

Additional Sample Questions⁴

Frequently Asked Questions

Tell me about yourself.
What are your strongest skills?
How would you describe yourself?
How would a supervisor or colleague describe you?
Tell me about the most difficult experience you've faced and how you've handled it. How do you define success in this field?
What are the most important qualities for success in this field? Which of these qualities do you possess?
What did you like least/best in your graduate school experience?
How did you motivate a resistant student/client to comply with your instructions?
What are your strengths/weaknesses?
Why are you interested in working for us?
What gives you the most satisfaction in your work? Why?
What two or three things are most important to you in your job?
I see you are changing career fields. Tell me about how your business background relates to education?
What do you think is the most significant problem in education today?
What do you see as the major issues facing us in the future?
What do you enjoy doing when you're not working?
How do you relieve stress?
What would you do if...?
Describe to me the best/worst supervisor you have ever had.
What are your salary requirements?
Why should we hire you?
How did you learn about our organization?
What do you know about our organization?
I see you received a low grade in XX. Why?
What contributions could you make to our organization?
Why do you want to work?
What do you expect from a job with us?
On what grounds would you dismiss someone?
Would you consider relocating?
How much do you think you will be earning in ten years?
Do you like working with people? Is this an important factor?
Why do you want to work for us?
Do you plan to go to graduate school?
You strike me as graduate school material. Why are you applying for jobs?
Is there anything that could potentially interfere with your performance?
Of what accomplishment are you most proud? Least proud?
You don't seem to have done as well academically in college as you did in high school.
Why? Who else are you interviewing with? What do you think of those organizations?
How do you get people to do things they don't like to do?
Are you more interested in program development or implementation?

Challenging Questions

Describe yourself in three adjectives.
What do you think of our organizational structure?
Would you prefer to work independently or part of a team? Why?
How much traveling would be ideal in a job?
What have you learned from your mistakes?
What makes you tick?
What question do you wish we had asked?
What don't you do well?
Tell me about a time when you failed at something.
You work in a library and a book has been mis-shelved. How do you find it?
What would your enemy say about you?
If you could be a fruit, what type of fruit would you be?
Let's pretend that the first 25 minutes of the interview have passed. What were you planning to tell me in the last five minutes?
How do you feel about working with numbers? What is 12% of 69? How did you figure that out?
How do you feel about work without direct supervision? Are you prepared to work right now without direct supervision?
What is one of your weaknesses. Now, I know you had one prepared, so give me another one.
What major problem have you encountered and how did you handle it?
Highlight the one thing on your resume that separates you from everyone else at University of Michigan.
Why should we hire you rather than one of the other 200 applicants?
You are very qualified. Why would you want to work at a small company like ours, when you could work in a larger company?

After the Interview⁵

It is necessary to promptly write a thank you letter to the person who organized the interview. The purpose of the letter is to highlight portions of the interview and reiterate your interest in the position. The letter should be mailed within 24 hours of the

interview. Within the letter, you may want to reference others with whom you spoke that day. It is best to personalize the letter by mentioning something specific that you talked about during the interview.

Sources:

(Adapted from the University of Pennsylvania Career Services Website, Texas A&M University, Career Center Website Career services at the University of Wisconsin, Green Bay and The Wharton School of the University of Pennsylvania, Career Services Website).

¹University of Pennsylvania, Career Services Website. <http://www.vpul.upenn.edu/careerservices/sw/sswinterview.html> (July 7, 2004)

²Texas A&M University, Career Center Website. <http://careercenter.tamu.edu/Students/S1/S1B1D.shtml> (July 7, 2004).

³Career services at the University of Wisconsin, Green Bay. http://www.uwgb.edu/careers/Interviewing_Handout.htm (July 13, 2004).

⁴The Wharton School of the University of Pennsylvania, Career Services Website. http://www.vpul.upenn.edu/careerservices/wharton/intguide_faquestions.html (July 7, 2004) .

⁵Ibid.

CHAPTER 4. SALARY NEGOTIATIONS

Important Salary Related Links

- **The Salary Calculator**
<http://www.homefair.com/homefair/calc/salcalc.html?type=to>
A nifty tool featured on Realtor.com that is used to compare the cost of living in hundreds of U.S. cities.
 - **JobStar Central: Salary Information**
<http://jobstar.org/tools/salary/index.cfm>
With an emphasis on employment opportunities in California, this national job search engine features resume advice, career advice and salary information.
-

Negotiating Your Salary: Getting Prepared

There is still much work to be done even after you have completed a one or more several good job interviews. If you get a job offer, you have to decide whether to take it and what salary is appropriate. This process can be both stressful and time-consuming. Negotiating your salary can be difficult – especially for job seekers with little experience. This process is easier if you know what to do and are able to avoid the pitfalls.

Determining your Salary Range

Before doing an interview, decide on a desired salary range for that job. To do this you need to find out about the organization and industry. Do research to find out what someone with your education and experience typically earns in the industry. Also determine the median salary and ranges. If at all possible, find out what your predecessor earned. This will help you support any salary requests you make. www.jobsmart.org is a great website to help you do research on salaries in different industries. Consider also the normal salary progression for someone in your position.

- Health insurance
- Dental insurance
- Vision care
- Disability insurance
- Life insurance
- Paid vacation time
- Paid sick leave
- Paid holidays
- Child and day-care services
- Company car
- Cost-of-living adjustments
- Desirable office
- Education and training programs
- Expense accounts
- Flexible work schedule
- Maternity/Parental leave

Consider Your Basic Needs

Think about what kind of income do you need? Determine what your basic expenses are. That is, how much do you need for housing, transportation, utilities, food, and healthcare. Will you be able to save (for emergencies and the future) while on the job? This will help you to determine the lowest salary you can accept.

Consider Other Benefits Too

Think about all aspects of your compensation. Consider what the company pays for benefits such as medical, optical (vision) and dental plans; vacation package; retirement benefits; stock options; signing bonus; reimbursement for education; flexible working hours; and other fringe benefits. If your salary offer is not as high as you might like, see if the fringe benefits make up for the loss in wages. For instance, some companies offer stock options in addition to wages. Here is a list of benefits that may come with a job offer:

- Parking
- Professional membership dues
- Profit sharing plans
- Relocation expenses
- Retirement plans
- Savings plans
- Special equipment (i.e. computer)
- Research expenses
- Paid business-related travel
- Stock Options
- Supplementary pay plans
- Termination agreement (severance pay)
- Unpaid leave time
 - Bonuses
 - Fellowships and scholarships
 - Housing
 - Sabbaticals

The amount and kinds of benefits offered depend on the company and the position being applied for. Many entry-level positions will have fewer benefits and perks than more senior positions. So, before you interview with a company, determine what you want to earn, the minimum you need to live on, and the minimum you are willing to settle for.

The Negotiation Process: Understanding the Negotiation Process

Salary negotiations are sometimes like a chess game. You need to figure out the other person's intention and limitation without playing all your cards. You are sometimes asked on job applications, or by interviewers or company representatives to name your desired salary. If you find yourself in this position, avoid giving a specific number by all means. You might be pressured to do so in an interview, so be prepared for the

question and have a plausible response ready.

When asked a question such as, "What kind of salary are you looking for?" You can respond by saying something like, "I will consider any reasonable offer," or "I am sure that if I do receive an offer, it will be fair or reasonable." If you are prompted to be more specific, then provide a salary range. The bottom of your range shouldn't be lower than your minimum acceptable salary and the top should be a bit higher than your ideal salary. Never say, "I need a minimum of ___ dollars." (That's probably what you will end up getting.)

The amount and kinds of benefits offered depend on the company and the position being applied for. Many entry-level positions will have fewer benefits and perks than more senior positions. So, before you interview with a company, determine what you want to earn, the minimum you need to live on, and the minimum you are willing to settle for.

Other salary related questions and possible responses:

- If asked: "What are your salary requirements?" Summarize the requirements of the position as you understand them, and then ask the interviewer for the normal salary range in his/her company for that type of position.
- If asked: "How much did you earn on your last job?" Tell the interviewer that you would prefer learning more about the current position before you discuss compensation, and that you are confident you will be able to reach a mutual agreement about salary at that time.
- If told: "The salary range for this position is \$44,000 to \$55,000, is that what you were expecting?" Tell the interviewer that it does come near what you were expecting, and then offer a range which places the top of the employer's range into the bottom of your range (i.e., I was thinking in terms of \$55,000 to \$64,000). Remember: be sure that the range you were thinking about is consistent with what you learned about market rate for that position.
- If told: "The salary is \$2,400 per month." Try not to look excited or disappointed. Simply repeat the salary, look up as though you were thinking about it, and pause. Don't worry about the silence; give the employer an opportunity to increase the offer. If the interviewer does not change the offer, try the response suggested in #3 above.

Remember you will need to strike a balance between knowledgeable, confident, professional, and interested. You don't want to appear overly competitive and greedy. Employers are likely to respond positively to a salary request based on fact, rather than on the mere wishes of the job seeker.

Be aware that there is less room to negotiate entry-level salaries than mid-career and senior executive salaries.

Knowing When You've Had The Best Offer

In some cases the person making the offer does not offer you the highest salary at the beginning of the negotiating process. This is where your research comes handy. If you know the firm's or industry's minimum and median salary for someone with comparable education and experience, then you will have an idea whether your offer is a good one and how much negotiating room you have. If you think the salary offer is too low, thank the firm for the offer, express a strong interest in the job, let them know you want to work for them, and politely request a higher salary. Provide a brief rationale for your request. There is no guarantee you will get your request, but if you don't ask, you won't know if you will get it.

On the flip side, the employer will probably assume that you are starting from the highest salary request once you have stated one. The employer might try to lower that request. If you start reasonably high, there is a good chance you will end up with an acceptable salary offer.

In stating your salary request, remind the employer of what you bring to the table. Restate the special qualifications, experience, educational background and skills you have that

will benefit the company. Remind them of your accomplishments. Most importantly, state what you hope to contribute to the company, and your vision of the future for the position in question (or the company). Presenting it in writing helps you. Remember that some employers operate within tight fiscal constraints. It is not only your needs that should be met, the employers have needs that they want to meet also. Find out what these are and how you can best meet them. For instance, if the employer really wants to hire you but is concerned about departmental costs and pay equity within the unit, think about that, discuss it with the company, and consider it in your decision. At What Point Do You Discuss Salary?

You should not bring up the salary question. Never discuss the specifics of salaries till you have a job offer. Getting into a discussion about salaries too early in the process might leave you under pricing or "low balling" yourself. If pressured to get into discussions about wages early on, tell the company representatives that you would like to find out more about the company and the job before determining your salary.

What If You Are Set On A Salary Figure?

If you have a specific wage in mind and the company does not

meet it, try to negotiate some of the benefits. For instance, if your spouse has an excellent health plan that covers your family and you will not need your company's health insurance, see if they will give you a higher salary in lieu of paying for hour health benefits. Depending on the amount of vacation time you have, try negotiating taking less vacation for a higher salary.

You can also ask for a shorter performance review or probationary period. If the company typically reviews new employees after a year, you may consider asking for a quicker review. Earlier reviews can translate into faster pay raises.

Even when an acceptable offer is made, ask for it in writing and

take some time to think it over. Do not say yes right away. Do your research and know the norms of your industry for the "mulling it over" period. In some industries the norm might be one day, but it can be two weeks or even several months depending on the position. Find out what the appropriate mulling period is, thank the company for their offer and ask for some time to think it over.

Once you have decided to take a job, get the final offer and details about bonuses, performance reviews, job expectations and requirements, etc. in writing. If the company balks at putting your offer or "promise" in writing, think seriously about the company before going to work for them.

Try to avoid the following:

- Avoid disappointment and bitterness in the outcome of negotiations, even if you win. Remember you are not bargaining for what you've heard your friends and family make, you are bargaining based on your qualifications, experiences and abilities.
- Be persuasive, and convincing but avoid being demanding and annoying. Do not argue with your employer about the salary offer. Try to use the aforementioned techniques to make a persuasive case for increasing the offer.
- Avoid telephone negotiations, unless you are calling to accept the offer letter. Even then, be sure that you put it in writing.
- Avoid thinking that you are indispensable or irreplaceable to an employer when you might not be.
- Don't try to play "hard to get" when you have little or no bargaining room or skills to leverage.
- Don't lie about your past salary, experience, educational attainment (grades, courses taken, etc.), or skills.

Finding Out More About Salaries and Information About Employers

- Search job sites like www.jobsmart.org, CareerBuilder.com, or Jobstar.org.
- Check with the relevant professional association.
- Look at trade publications like *InfoWorld*, *Ad Age*, *Working Woman*, and the *Wall Street Journal*, *National Business Employment Weekly* for salary updates and surveys.
- Look at the Sunday newspapers. In particular, look at local and regional papers in the area you are thinking of working. These papers can provide you with information about salary scales and cost of living (rent or purchase price of homes, etc.).
- If the company is large enough to have a Human Resources Department (HRD) contact them. You can get specific job descriptions, job expectations, salary ranges, performance reviews, etc. from HRD.
- Go to the company's website.
- Try the state employment office also.
- If the company has a union, talk to a union representative.
- If you know employees of the company, you can also check with them.

Sources: *CareerBuilder.com*, 2004; South-Western College Publishing, 2000; The Career Services Center, 2004; Gordon, David, 2004; *Impact Publications*, 1998.

CHAPTER 5. NETWORKING

The 10 Golden Rules of Networking

By Spherion Staffing

Job Dig Weekly Employment Newspapers, March 22-29, 2004, Vol. 1 # 46:1

"It's not what you know, but who know."

It's a common cliché uttered often to those in search of a job. What the person offering that helpful advice is most likely referring to, is your need to establish a network of contacts. To date, networking is still the number one job search method and accounts for 70 to 80 percent of job offers, according to the University of Iowa.

Networking is however, something of an art. It requires some time and a little luck to meet the person holding the key to your dream job. To help you learn the art of networking, here are some tried and true tips:

1. [Be prepared](#) - Any Time, Any Place Keep your business cards and copies of your resume with you all the time. You never know whom you might meet.
2. [Talk with Your Personal Contact First](#) - Start with the people you know personally – friends and family, and those you know professionally – teachers, professors and former bosses. Proactive selling yourself to those who are close to you before you try your new sales technique on people you don't know quite as well.
3. [Go Beyond Personal Contact to People You Don't Know](#) - Begin contacting those people to whom your personal contact referred you. Initiate each conversation by stating how you received their name. Work to establish a relationship by showing an interest in what they have to say, not just what they have to offer.
4. [Ask for Information, Not a Job](#) - This is referred to as the "information interview" because it is an opportunity to learn about the industry, job opportunities and local businesses. This is not the appropriate time to ask for a job. Instead, discuss companies you are targeting and ask if the person knows

anyone else in the industry whom you could speak with. Get permission to use their name and always say thank you.

5. [Focus Your Conversations](#) - Use each conversation to get the most information possible. Give your contact a brief summary of your career objective, major strengths and accomplishments. Then ask specific questions that will provide you with helpful information.
6. [Look for Opportunities to reciprocate](#) - Offer something of value to those who are taking time to help you. Make your conversations two-way communication. As you ask question and listen to answers, respond with helpful information of your own.
7. [Keep Your Promise](#) - If you promise to call back, do it. If the person is difficult to reach, keep trying. It is your responsibility to make the connection happen.
8. [Stay in Touch](#) - Keep your contacts informed about the progress of your job search through brief phone calls or short, handwritten notes. Send a thank you letter within 24 hours after every informational interview. To keep the relationship beneficial for you and your contact, keep communication consistent.
9. [Professional Organizations](#) - Gathering information from people in the industry can be made easier by visiting or joining a local professional organization. Many members are eager to help job seekers and often know companies with open positions.
10. [Get a Mentor](#) - Find someone with experience in your field and build a relationship with them. Get their advice and use them as a sounding board for discussing your thoughts and ideas. Ask for an opportunity to shadow them for a day in order to get a better picture of what they do.

Test Your Networking IQ

By Donald Straits, CEO, Corporate Warriors

The answers are at the bottom of the quiz. Good Luck!!

1. When meeting someone at a networking function, you should begin the conversation with:

1. casual conversation about the weather, sports, movies, pets or common interests.
2. a brief background on your career and the type of new position you are seeking.
3. questions about his/her career or why he/she is attending the function.

2. If you are having a difficult time getting a conversation started or if you are uncomfortable with networking, you should:

4. wait for someone to approach you to begin a conversation.
5. admit that sometimes these functions are awkward for you and ask the person for tips on how he/she goes about getting to know someone.
6. Try meeting people around the food table and talk about how great the caviar tastes.

3. The best conversationalists are people that can:

7. ask other people interesting questions.
8. can talk comfortably on a wide range of topics.
9. always pick up the conversation when others run out of things to say.

4. The best way to show respect for what someone else is saying is to:

10. compliment him/her on what he/she has said.
11. ask others to join your conversation to hear what he/she is saying.
12. be a good listener, provide responsive gestures, and ask good follow-up questions.

5. When preparing for a networking function, you should:

13. keep up to date on current events, world affairs, emerging business trends and state-of-the-art management or leadership concepts.
14. ask the host in advance for a list of the guests and their backgrounds.
15. bring a small note pad and pen to write down contact information or schedule meetings.

6. After meeting someone, if you feel there is no potential for him or her to help you in your job search, you should:

16. politely excuse yourself and continue to meet other people.
17. not be too quick to judge.
18. continue to talk to him/her, but try to get others to join in your conversation so that you can meet new people.

7. After you have established a common interest and believe you would like to spend more time talking to this individual, you should:

19. suggest he/she excuse himself from the function and go to a restaurant or private room where you can talk confidentially about your career or possible job opportunities.
20. set an appointment to meet at a later date.
21. ask for his/her business card and permission to call in a few days to perhaps find a time when you could meet.

8. If you are networking, and someone latches on to you and follows you everywhere, you should:

22. politely involve him/her in all of your conversations.
23. tell him/her to get lost.
24. excuse yourself from him/her, indicating you have to meet with someone or perhaps visit the restroom.

Answers

- 1. a.** While C is very appropriate after you have begun a good conversation, it is considered rude to immediately ask about a person's career. Begin your conversation with casual talk.
- 2. b.** If you are uncomfortable with networking, admitting that to the person you are talking to is almost always a great ice breaker. People will go out of their way to help to you. They will carry the conversation and frequently introduce you to others to make you feel welcome.
- 3. a.** Surprisingly, some of the best conversationalists do the least amount of talking. While B and C are also characteristics of good conversationalists, being able to draw others into the conversation is an extraordinary skill.
- 4. c.** Being inattentive is the most common characteristic exhibited by people at networking functions. Always display good eye contact with verbal and body language response. Ask good follow-up questions.
- 5. a.** If you want to carry on good conversations, then you must stay contemporary on a variety of subjects. Read, read, read, on a wide variety of topics including current events, business trends, social issues, sports and the arts. It has been said that if you read three books on any subject, you will know more than 95 percent of the rest of the world on that subject. By reading on many topics, you always be able to engage people in great conversations.
- 6. b.** This is the most frequently missed question. Most people view networking as "what can I get from this person," which is the wrong way to view networking. Rather, you should view networking as "how can I benefit or help this person." If you try to quickly judge the contact from a personal perspective, you have made a terrible mistake. The goal of networking should be to meet interesting people, help them whenever possible, learn from them, perhaps make a contact that is mutually beneficial, or maybe just simply make a new friend. Never set your expectations too high.
- 7. c.** Don't be too aggressive in trying to make that contact. A networking function is more of a social event rather than pure business. Meet lots of people spending a few minutes with each. Collect lots of business cards and then a few days after the event, make contacts with people where it would be mutually beneficial to build a business relationship.
- 8. c.** It is easy to get stuck with someone who follows you around everywhere you go. At some point, find a reason to excuse yourself or perhaps introduce him/her to someone and then excuse yourself from their conversation. Don't let another person dominate your time at a networking function.

CHAPTER 6. MENTORING

How Mentors Can Help African Americans

By Dan Woog
Monster.com

When Verna Ford met with a financial services client recently, one man stood out amid the sober suits: An African American in a pink checked shirt. That might be OK in Tennessee where he works, Ford thought, but not in New York. He needs a mentor.

What a Mentor Does

A consultant with Boston-based Novations/J. Howard Associates who specializes in multicultural issues and has authored two books on mentoring, Ford knows how important the role of a mentor can be. "A good mentor wouldn't have told him not to wear that pink shirt," she says. "But she would have helped him see the implications of it."

A mentor -- the "wise counselor" in Homer's *Odyssey* -- "gives logic to organizational values, explains work processes, makes key introductions and teaches the unwritten rules of the game," Ford says.

Ford wishes more African Americans had mentors. "There is a worry that other people think having a mentor is an admission you need help," she says. "But a mentor can give excellent feedback [and] honest advice and open doors that might otherwise stay shut. Who wouldn't want that?"

Getting in on the Conversation

Michelle Matthews calls mentors "absolutely imperative" for African Americans. "We're not always privy to the conversations and unwritten rules of corporate America," the founder of Atlanta-based Matthews Consulting Group says. "A mentor helps maneuver through all that."

"The protocols and politics that help people get ahead are discussed around the kitchen table when parents are executives," Matthews notes. African Americans -- sometimes the first in their family to enter corporate America -- "have not always had access to those conversations," she adds.

Connie Lindsey has had several mentors. The best ones helped Lindsey, now a senior vice president with Chicago-based Northern Trust, navigate her organization, understand subtleties and gain access to new people.

As an African American, Lindsey recognizes the importance of mentors for minority professionals. "We often reach a corporate level at which there is an 'illusion of inclusion,'" she says. "We sit at the table, but may not be privy to the side conversations." Mentors can help make sure their protégés are included.

Mentors and their protégés must understand the time investment needed to create successful mentoring

relationships. For example, one executive vice president mentor spent a week taking his mentoring colleague to business meetings and social events that would otherwise have been inaccessible to him. The mentor then shadowed his colleague for a day, providing feedback to improve his organizational skills, diction and dress.

Finding Mentors

With few high-ranking African Americans or women in banking and finance, most of Lindsey's mentors have been white men. It made no sense to deny herself a seasoned mentor simply because no blacks were available, she says.

White mentors have discussed difficult issues with Lindsey, such as whether she was experiencing racism or simply misinterpreted a business setback. A mentor also helped her "navigate the nuances" of the largely white, male world of golf that is so important to building relationships in banking, she says.

"Most of the time, you're chosen to be mentored because you stand out," Lindsey says. "Most people don't get to choose their mentors."

David A. Thomas, professor of business administration at Harvard Business School, calls mentors "critically important" to the positive development of African American professionals. "You have to put yourself in a position where you have high-quality interactions with potential mentors," Thomas says. "If you sit at your desk, they won't find you."

Thomas's study of executive advancement illustrated differences in the development of relationships in the careers of blacks and whites. Mentors can help African Americans find their way into the peer networks that lead to higher positions, while whites are more likely to join companies already knowing people who can help them.

As Lindsey suggests, human resources departments sometimes match up mentors and their mentoring colleagues. In addition to formal, company-specific mentoring programs, many industry organizations, such as the National Association of Black Accountants or community groups like the Georgia 100, support more informal mentoring programs.

Other mentoring resources include college and university career development offices and alumni associations or professional groups such as the National Association of Black Journalists' Career Mentoring Program.

For more information on the benefits mentors provide African Americans and tips on how to find one, see "Mentors Lead the Way to Success."

Mentoring Tips

Finding a mentor is an important step to becoming a productive, experienced asset to a prodigious company. Mentoring is not only important to the knowledge and skills that are obtained, but also for the many other aspects of professional socialization and personal support are gained. Research shows that higher productivity levels, a higher level of involvement with their departments, and greater satisfaction with their programs have resulted from mentoring. This section of the website will give you information on:

Tips for Locating a Mentor That's Suited for Your Needs⁶

It is common to think of a mentor experience as a one-on-one relationship with a professional. Many people only think of finding one person to act as their mentor. Rather than trying to find one mentor, think of your task as building a mentoring team. Although we use the word "team," you may be the only

To find a mentor you can:

- Check with local businesses or organizations to determine whether they have a formal mentor program .
- Contact businesses or organizations to find out if they can provide you the names of any retired executives who might be willing to act as a volunteer mentor .
- Make an appointment with the student career services at your university to find out if they have a list of volunteer mentors.
- Place an ad in the local newspaper and Internet site requesting a mentor in your area (within 100 miles).
- Use an Internet search engine to find companies and organizations or individuals who are doing what you want to do and determine their interest in helping you.

What You Can Expect from a Mentor²

The role that your mentor depends on your needs as a mentee, as well as on the relationship you have established with your mentor. Sometimes, your mentor may perform in one of the following roles, and in other circumstances, they may perform all roles. Here is a list of ten roles a mentor can assume.

- **Teacher:** As a teacher, he/she may need to teach you the skills and knowledge required to perform the job successfully. Your mentor will teach the fundamentals of the position, which requires them to first determine what knowledge, skills and abilities are necessary to successfully perform the requirements of the position. Once they have identified the requirements for the position, it is now necessary to identify what skills you already have and what needs further development.
- **Guide:** As a guide, your mentor will help you navigate through the inner workings of the organization and decipher the "unwritten office rules" for you. The "unwritten rules" can include the special procedures the program(s) or customer(s) follow, the guidelines that are not always documented, and policies under consideration.
- **Counselor:** The role of counselor requires the mentor to establish a trusting and open relationship. The counselor

person who sees them this way. Members of your team probably won't see themselves as operating as part of a mentoring group.

Carefully selecting a team of mentors that fits your needs increases the likelihood that you will receive the experiences and support you desire. In addition, it is to your benefit to have at least three or four faculty members who are knowledgeable about your work and can speak to its quality. A team can also serve as your safety net in case any one of the professors you work with leave the University, or if irreconcilable issues later develop between you and a faculty member.

Be creative about whom you include on your team. We urge you to consider your peers, more advanced graduate students, departmental staff, retired faculty, faculty from other departments, faculty from other universities, and friends from outside the academy as potential mentors. All of these people can help fulfill your needs and serve as part of your professional network.

- Read biographies of people who have been successful in your interest area; sometimes their biography by itself can act as a mentor.
- Familiarize yourself with professors' work to gain a sense of their past and current interests and methodologies.
- Immerse yourself in departmental academic and social activities. Observe how faculty interacts with colleagues and graduate students.
- Enroll in classes being taught by faculty who most interest you. Attend their public presentations.
- Ask advanced graduate students about their advisors and mentors. Share your interests and ask them for suggestions about whom you should meet.

should also encourage you to develop problem-solving skills. If your mentor is a long distance one, tone of voice is important, but the following would not apply. The following non-verbal gestures can help create an acceptable comfort level:

- a. Eye contact
- b. Gestures (nodding, smiling, or shaking hands)
- c. Open body posture (arms at sides, leaning slightly forward)
- d. Appropriate space (standing at least one and one half feet apart from you, which varies by culture)

- **Motivator:** As a motivator, the mentor should be a highly motivated individual with a thirst for success, who also generates motivation within you. They should frequently provide positive feedback during an assigned task or while

you strive towards a goal. They can also be a motivation by showing support. Ways to show support include making themselves available, especially during stressful periods.

- **Sponsor:** A sponsor creates opportunities for you—opportunities that may not otherwise be made available. Request that your mentor speak to people in other positions to procure projects for you.
- **Coach:** As a coach, your mentor should help you overcome performance difficulties. Mentors need to give different kinds of feedback, as the situation demands. For example, for the behaviors they want to reinforce requires positive feedback; for the behaviors they wish to change requires **constructive** feedback. Constructive feedback involves not using labels such as “immature” or “unprofessional,” not exaggerating, never being judgmental, and phrasing an issue as a statement, not a question.
- **Advisor:** This role requires the mentor to help you develop professional interests and set realistic career goals. These goals should be specific, time-framed, results-oriented, relevant and reachable.
- **Referral agent:** As a referral agent, your mentor should work with you to develop an action plan that outlines what knowledge, skills and abilities you need to meet your career goals.
- **Role Model:** A role model is a living example of the values, ethics and professional practices of a successful person.
- **Door Opener:** The role of a door opener opens up doors of opportunity. You need a chance to meet with other people to spur professional, as well as, social development.

Your Role as a Mentee^{3,6}

It is easy to walk into the experience of having a mentor, expecting the mentor to fulfill all of the responsibilities, and not consider what YOU need to do to be the best mentee possible. The benefits of being a good mentee are endless, but most importantly, **your mentor can be a great reference, and you want to give the best impression possible, so that they have great things to say about you.** Here are just a few recommendations on how to be a great mentee:

- Actively seek to broaden understanding about the profession, work environment, and exams, as well as seek to improve your skills, talents, abilities, initiative and commitment.
- Establish specific goals and objectives for the mentoring relationship.
- Receive both positive and constructive feedback, and implement as appropriate.
- Seek clarification on any points that you don't understand, but be careful not to debate feedback.
- Give feedback to mentor and mentorship committee on mentoring relationship.
- Interact with mentor on a consistent basis (at least quarterly).
- Be proactive in engaging your mentor including scheduling meetings and setting agendas (do not chase mentor down, but be cognizant of mentor's schedule that that mentors tend to lose track of time).
- Use mentor as both a resource for knowledge and sounding board for ideas and issues.
- Be open and honest about concerns about the profession and work environment.
- Seek informal mentors for areas where your mentor is uncomfortable adding value.

Meetings⁶

- Show up for scheduled meetings on time.
- Meetings will be most productive when you accept responsibility for “running” the meeting. Your role is to raise the issues and questions while the professor's role is to respond.
- For each meeting, be prepared with an agenda of topics that need to be discussed—and prioritize them so you are asking your most important questions first.

Recommendation Letters

- Provide updated copies of your curriculum vitae.
- Leave clear written instructions as to when the letters are due and to whom to send them. Attach a stamped and addressed envelope for each letter. If you have several letters, create a calendar for your mentor that lists application deadlines.
- Provide a short description about the fellowship, grant or program for which you are applying, and submit these materials with enough advance time for your mentor to write a letter.

The Value of a Mentor^{4,5}

A mentor is a person who can guide you, help you, take you under his or her wing, and nurture your career quest. What separates a mentor from the average network contact is long-term commitment and a deep-seated investment in your future. A typical network contact might be associated with quick

introductions, exchanges of business cards, and phone calls. Your relationship with a mentor likely involves long lunches and time spent in the mentor's office. A mentor is open a position you'd like to be in and has the clout and connections to guide you to similar position. He/She is someone you probably have

unusually good chemistry with, and will share stories with you of his or her own climb to success. Benefits of mentoring can also include:

- Practical study support and advice.
- Technical, ethical and general business guidance
- Development of interpersonal and work skills
- Help to set and achieve personal/professional goals
- Access to an impartial sounding board
- Increased confidence and motivation
- Insight into other organizations or areas of practice
- Increased networking opportunities

Now That You've Identified a Potential Mentor⁶...

Arriving at the first meeting with a potential mentor can be daunting, and some students are reluctant to take this step. The goals of your initial meeting are to make a positive impression and to establish a working rapport.

The faculty interviewed shared numerous insights about what they look for in a student that they mentor. This list may give you a better understanding of how to present yourself and what

topics to discuss with them. Do not follow this list verbatim; instead, use it to trigger ideas about what topics of conversation are not important to you. Keep in mind that the mentoring relationship is one that evolves over time and often times begins because of a particular need. Don't approach these meetings as if you are asking someone to be your mentor—this initial conversation is simply the first step.

- **Mutual Interests:** Faculty will want to know if you have interests similar to theirs. Share how your prior academic, professional, or personal experiences relate to their interests. Ask about their recent work and discuss with them ways in which these intersect with your interests.
- **Motivation and Direction:** Faculty want motivated students who are eager to move onto the next level of their professional growth. State your goals as you see them right now. Ask about ways you can further explore these goals—what courses you should take and what projects you should link to.
- **Initiative:** Be proactive. For instance, seek further conversations with faculty about issues discussed in class. Ask them for suggestions about other people and experiences that will help you develop your skills and knowledge.
- **Skills and Strengths:** Show them why they should invest in you. Let them know what qualities you bring to this relationship—research or language skills, creativity, analytical techniques, computer skills, willingness to learn, enthusiasm, and commitment.

In addition to telling them about yourself, you need to seek further information about these faculty members. You are choosing to work with them, just as they are choosing to work with you. In order to assess the amount and type of support you can expect to receive from a particular faculty member you will need to familiarize yourself with the following:

Availability

- To understand how much time the professor will be able to give to you, inquire about his or her other commitments. Also find out how much time the faculty member normally gives his or her students. Will that amount of time be sufficient for you?
- Ask about the faculty member's plans at the University. Does the professor anticipate being at the University during the entire time in which you are a student here? Will s/he be away from the department for extended periods (on sabbatical or on a research project) and if so, what arrangements could be made to stay in communication?

Communication

- Are you able to clearly understand the professor?
- Do you feel you are able to effectively communicate your thoughts and ideas?
- Do you think you will be able to work closely with this person?
- Do you think you will be able to accommodate to his or her professional and personal style?

Expectations

- What does the professor consider to be a normal workload? How many hours does he or she think you should be spending on your research or creative project per week?
- How often does the professor like to meet one-on-one?

- Does the professor have funds to support you? Will these remain available until you complete your program?
- Especially for those in the sciences and engineering: Is there potential for developing a dissertation topic from the professor's research project that you would find interesting? Does the professor have appropriate space and laboratory equipment for your needs? What is the size of the professor's research group and is this optimal for you?

Publishing

- Does the professor co-author articles with graduate students? If so, be sure to ask about their philosophy on first authorship.
- Is the professor willing to help you prepare your own articles for publication?
- What publishing contacts do they have that might be of assistance to you? (Presentations for performing and visual arts)
- Does the professor collaborate with students in public performances or exhibitions?
- Does the professor have time available to work with you to prepare your projects for public presentation?
- Does the professor use his or her professional contacts to assist students in presenting their own work to the public? What is his/her reputation with graduate students and departmental staff ?
- Does the professor have a history of giving proper attention to his or her protégés?
- Can the professor provide such things as teaching and research opportunities, access to financial resources, guidance for completing for dissertation, access to professional networks, and assistance in career development?
- Have former students completed their programs in a timely fashion?
- How are the other scholars who have been mentored by the professor, and where do they stand within the field? Ask yourself if this is where you are interested in being.
- Is the professor comfortable talking about issues that are of a personal nature?
- If you are interested in nonacademic careers, what is the professor's attitude about training and funding someone who is not necessarily going into the academy?
- Talk with others in your field both inside and outside the University. What is their opinion about the professor's work?
- Look at reviews of their work.

What To Do If Problems Arise⁶

Occasionally situations arise which hinder timely completion of your work, such as the birth of a child, or an illness to you or to someone in your family. If this happens to you, be sure to take the initiative and contact your mentors. Discuss your situation with them and give them the information you feel they need to know. As soon as possible, get back to them with a new timeline for completing your degree. Be sure the final plan is realistic and that you can meet the new deadlines.

Also, be aware that situations occasionally arise for faculty members that can potentially impede your work and progress. For instance, other demands on your mentor may hinder his or her ability to meet with you or provide prompt feedback about your work. If something like this happens repeatedly, you should talk about this with the following people:

- **The professor:** Your first step is to politely remind the professor of your needs. If you are not getting satisfactory results, we urge you to meet with the faculty member in person at the earliest possible moment. Face-to-face meetings can lead to more satisfactory results than e-mail, since one's tone and message can be easily misconstrued in electronic communication.
- **Peers:** Other students who have contact with a particular faculty member can tell you if this behavior is typical, and may be able to suggest some possible resolutions. Your peers can also explain the norms in your department regarding frequency of meetings, turn-around time for feedback, and general availability of faculty.
- **Departmental Staff:** Staff (e.g., the administrative assistants) can clarify departmental expectations and standards and possibly offer suggestions on how to resolve problems. Administrative staff also usually knows about other people or offices on campus that can assist you.
- **Other Faculty:** Other faculty can give you advice on how to deal with problematic issues that arise with one of your mentors. If you want someone to intercede on your behalf, senior faculty may be in a much better position to do so than junior faculty.
- **Graduate Chair or Department Chair:** If you are not about to resolve issues with your mentor on your own, you may find it advisable to talk to the graduate chair or your department chair.

Sources:

(Adapted from the Peer Resources Website, Coast Guard's Mentoring Manual via the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services Website, International Association of Black Actuaries' (IABA's) Mentorship Program Website, Quintessential Careers

Website, University of Michigan Rackham School of Graduate Studies "How to Get the Mentoring You Want" Manual, 2004)

¹ Find A Mentor, Peer Resources Website
<http://www.mentors.ca/findamentor.html>

² Coast Guard's Mentoring Manual via United States Department of Health and Human Services Website
<http://www.hhs.gov/pharmacy/mentor/MENTORROLES.html>

³ Roles and Responsibilities of Mentors and Mentorees International Association of Black Actuaries' (IABA's) Mentorship Program, International Association of Black Actuaries Website
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⁴ The Value of a Mentor, QuintCareer.com Website
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