

Success! Consulting

Job Placement Assistance Tool Kit

Before you begin your search make sure that you have the necessary materials. Here is a shopping list. If you are on a tight budget local dollar stores may be a consideration.

- Pencils for note taking. You may need to erase.
- Black or Blue Pens. Most job applications request a black pen.
- Paper to print resume and cover letters – if you are using someone else’s computer, it may be an idea to bring your own paper.
- Notebook or folder to fasten your information and keep it organized.
- Highlighter or red pen to mark items on the job description.
- Calendar – sometimes you can find these for free. Some notebooks have these. You can also make your own.
- Paper clips.
- Staples and stapler
- 3 hole punch
- Correction fluid or White-Out. Do not use unless you absolutely have to use on an application. Do not use on resume.
- Staple remover
- Ink cartridge
- A dedicated space in your home or room that no one will bother that is used to safely store information.
- Scissors for cutting out ads and articles in the newspaper.
- Notepad or paper with pen to keep with or near phone for messages.
- Stamps for thank you cards
- Business cards (optional, but recommended)

This form provides a template for assessing whether you have accomplished the preparation necessary to embark on a successful job search.

You have a clear employment goal.			
<input type="checkbox"/>	YES	<input type="checkbox"/>	NO
NOTE:			
You have a clear understanding of the types of jobs for which you should be looking.			
<input type="checkbox"/>	YES	<input type="checkbox"/>	NO
NOTE:			
You have researched at least 5 employers with whom you think you have the best chance for employment.			
<input type="checkbox"/>	YES	<input type="checkbox"/>	NO
NOTE:			
You have the required education, certification, training, and paid experience needed to get the job.			
<input type="checkbox"/>	YES	<input type="checkbox"/>	NO
NOTE:			
You have a copy of your personal data record to use as a guide as you complete paper or online applications.			
<input type="checkbox"/>	YES	<input type="checkbox"/>	NO
NOTE:			
You have at least 2 typed versions of your resume/CV and copies of each version with cover letters.			
<input type="checkbox"/>	YES	<input type="checkbox"/>	NO
NOTE:			
You have 2 current forms of legally-accepted identification, such as driver's license, federal or state ID, or Social Security card.			
<input type="checkbox"/>	YES	<input type="checkbox"/>	NO
NOTE:			
You have addressed potential barriers to employment, such as transportation limitations, childcare arrangements, and backup plans for each situation.			
<input type="checkbox"/>	YES	<input type="checkbox"/>	NO
NOTE:			
You have a complete interview outfit which is appropriate to the specific type of job for which you are applying.			
<input type="checkbox"/>	YES	<input type="checkbox"/>	NO
NOTE:			
You are prepared to answer interview questions by practicing your answers ahead of time. You have considered in depth potential concerns about gaps in employment, criminal background, or termination from last/previous job.			
<input type="checkbox"/>	YES	<input type="checkbox"/>	NO
NOTE:			
You have a typed reference list complete with names, titles, e-mail addresses, and phone numbers which have been verified; you have notified your references.			
<input type="checkbox"/>	YES	<input type="checkbox"/>	NO
NOTE:			
You have an active phone number and a second backup phone number where you can be reached.			
<input type="checkbox"/>	YES	<input type="checkbox"/>	NO
NOTE:			

Like most successful ventures, proper preparation enhances opportunity for the desired outcome!

An IDP will help to identify training, work experience, and other activities needed to attain your career development goals. Consider this your personal action plan for improving job performance and self-development.

SKILLS ASSESSMENT	
STRENGTHS:	WEAKNESSES:

GOALS				
SHORT-TERM CAREER GOALS:				
What do I need to add to my credentials?	How am I going to acquire these skills? (Training, experience, volunteering, classes)	When am I going to start this goal? (Start dates for classes, volunteering, work experience, internship, etc.)	Estimated date of completion	Actual date of completion

GOALS

LONG-TERM CAREER GOALS:

What is important to me in a career?	What skills are required to match the column on the left? (What's important)	How am I going to do this?	When am I going to do this?	Estimated date of completion	Actual date of completion
What type of work would I like to be doing?	What skills or tools do I need to do this?	How am I going to do this?	When am I going to do this?	Estimated date of completion	Actual date of completion
Where would I like to be in an organization?	What skills are necessary to get to this position?	How am I going to do this?	When am I going to do this?	Estimated date of completion	Actual date of completion

OTHER:

Awards & Recognition	
Community Service or Volunteer Work	

ACTION STEPS	START BY:	WHO CAN HELP?	COMPLETE BY:
Create or Update my Resume (Choose a resume style: Chronological, functional, or combination)			
Create a Cover Letter			
Create a Budget that will sustain me until I find employment			
Locate and research staffing agencies to decide whether they can help me. If so, register with them.			
Search the community for workshops on job searching and career advice (Search Jewish Family and Career Services (JFCS), Urban League, Goodwill Industries, newspaper, career one-stops, churches, etc.)			
Register with the Department of Labor			
Register with Career One-Stop			
Create a List of Employers I would like to work for and research their job openings			
Create or expand my network			
Make a list of possible references (someone who can speak to your abilities) Contact 3 to see if they will be my references			
Locate computers or classes in the community (if you do not have one) Check libraries, career and community centers. Check computer classes.			

This form provides a template for a consolidated weekly schedule. Preparing for and conducting a career search takes a lot of effort and includes many activities. This handy planner helps you visualize how those activities can fit into your week—and allows you to make them a priority!

Priority "To Do" List	Weekly Schedule for Career Search Activities for the Week of _____	
1. 2. 3. 4. 5. 6. 7. 8. 9. 10.	Monday	Thursday
	Tuesday	Friday
	Wednesday	NOTES

This checklist presents an outline to assist in determining the job best suited to you.

Tip: Use this checklist in conjunction with the Skill Matching Table

- First, keep an open mind when exploring job options. Sometimes the best opportunities are unexpected.
- Make a list of personal characteristics and interests so you can match jobs to your personality traits.
- Prioritize your skills so you can match jobs using your primary skills at the top of your list.
- Make a list of the jobs you are most interested in and investigate them more closely.
See if they include the things you enjoy doing most of the time or just part of the time.
- Find out what your transferable skills are.
Tip: Many people don't realize what skills they have that transfer to other industries!
- Research companies and jobs that interest you. Talk with people who currently work there and those who used to work there.
Tip: LinkedIn is a great place to find current and prior employees of companies for *FREE*.
- Don't be timid about asking for help! There are many resources available, from friends and family, to nonprofit organizations, to professionals who are happy to help you succeed!
- Join professional groups and networks...*and be active in them!*
Tip: In the Phoenix area, there are nearly 100 networking opportunities each week—most of them *free!*
- Consider continuing your education, whether at a community college, starting a graduate program, or embarking on a career professional certification program.
Tip: Many programs are grant-eligible, meaning you may not have to spend a penny of your own money!
- Consider internships, volunteering, and community service to gain insight into career options.
Tip: This adds to your resume, but also gets you noticed by community and business leaders!

What are the hot jobs and industries in your area? Which employers are hiring? Where do you find salary information? This list will help you zoom in on the most promising job openings. Do your research and you can match your job search to fields where your skills are in demand.

Learn about labor market trends

- **Career Guide to industries.** A guide to the top 42 industries in the U.S., compiled by the department of Labor. This is very useful if you're thinking of changing careers and want an overview of the industry, job prospects and working conditions. <http://stats.bls.gov/oco/cg/home.htm>
- **Career InfoNet.** www.careerinfonet.org: This site is a prime source of information for the job seeker. It has many levels of information but is fairly easy to search. (Try the "Topics A-Z" search box) Here is a sampling of what you'll find:
 - **Occupational Information**
 - Look up profiles for more than 800 occupations
 - Find the top occupations ranked by wages and job growth
 - **Industry Information**
 - Top 50 fastest-growing industries (top three in the U.S.: consulting firms, elderly services and gambling industries)
 - Top 50 industries with declining employment (manufacturing dominates the list)
 - Industries with largest employment (schools, hospitals, restaurants)

Find out about your state

Once again, Career InfoNet is a good bet. The **state information** page is a gateway to detailed information about your state.

- Look at your **state profile**. You'll find demographic data, occupation rankings, the state's largest employers and more.
- From your state profile, search for occupations by the level of education required. For example, you can look up occupations in Arizona with the most openings that require a bachelor's degree. (Top listed: elementary school teachers.)
- Go to the **labor market information** for a comprehensive list of job-related services in your state.

Find tools to help in your search

Career infoNet offers a variety of tools to help you learn more about occupations, skills and qualifications. Among them are useful ones include:

- **Career Videos** give you a visual snap shot of 550 jobs.
- **Education and Training Finder** points you to training programs in your area.
- **Skills Profiler** helps you assess your skills and match them to jobs.

Learn about Employers

- **Company websites.** Once you identify employers you're interested in, go to their website to get a sense of the company culture and to scan available jobs. Look for things like
 - Clear explanations of benefits
 - Training and growth opportunities
 - Examples of corporate citizenship
- **The Riley Guide.** This online guide for job seekers lists dozens of sources for researching employers and locations. <http://rileyguide.com/research.html#top>
- **Career InfoNet.** Offers an Employer Locator which you search by industry sector, state and area within the state for a list of employers near you.

Find Salary Information

- Independent websites such as www.salary.com will let you search by job title and location to see comparable salaries.
- Career InfoNet compares Wages by Occupation and Local Area. (Find it in the section on Occupation Information.) Choose your state and see how wages in your area compare to other localities, to your state overall, and to national. Example: The median wage for a dental hygienist in Fresno, CA, is \$48,900 a year-compared to \$62,800 for U.S as a whole.

This checklist provides methods you may pursue to identify potential employment leads. Some of these are reactive—meaning that you watch for when they are available; some are proactive—meaning they require you to initiate action to seek out the opportunity. The most successful strategies include careful preparation, multiple search methods, and consistent follow-through.

Each locality varies, as are each organization or company. Research your choices as you plan your strategy.

Chambers of Commerce

- These organizations can be contacted to obtain information about employers in their area. Some require a membership but may offer meetings of community events that are open to non-members. Before you pay for membership, make sure the information is worth your cost. *All the Phoenix-area Chambers of Commerce host various events that are open to the public for little-or-no charge throughout the year.*

Company Websites

- Research a company's positions by going to their websites. Jobs are typically posted under either "Human Resources," "Careers," or similar headings.

Conduct informational interviews with prospective employers

- Informational interviews are brief meetings you arrange in order to investigate a position—or multiple positions—within a company or organization for which you are interested in working. The purpose of the interview is not to get a job; rather, the goal is to find out more about the positions and the company. In many cases, employees enjoy providing information about their company to interested parties. *Helpful tip: Making the employee feel important, not just the company, will make the interview more productive!*

Employment Agencies

- Employment agencies or staffing companies match labor needs of corporate clients with prospective employees possessing the skill sets the employer requires. Some agencies focus on a narrowly-defined scope of industries, others serve a broader corporate constituency. Be sure to treat your interactions with the agency as though they were your potential employer—they are the gatekeeper! *Tips: Be sure to find out if there is a fee for using their services; it is helpful to check the company out through the Better Business Bureau and local Chamber of Commerce before signing on as a client.*

Government Personnel Offices

City, county, state, and federal offices have job postings for government positions. Be sure to follow application procedures as stated on the job posting! **Tips:** Use the exact keywords from the job description in your resume to get a keyword match (If it says MS Word, don't put MS Office in your resume); federal jobs are posted on USAjobs.gov; all companies receiving federal funds require an electronic application process by federal law.

Job Fairs

Job fairs provide an opportunity to meet and ask questions of recruiters from companies in various industries all under one roof. Be sure to look over the list of participating companies prior to the event and make it a point to visit those recruiters first. If there are jobs posted that they are trying to fill, bring a resume tailored to those positions to hand to the recruiter at the job fair. **Tips:** Prepare a list of questions to ask—make the job fair an opportunity for a mini-informational interview venue; never leave a company display without a business card and contact information—and be sure they have your information, too!

Internet Job Sites

 Many kinds of these exist on the Internet. Often these sites have jobs that are out of date, but you can cross-reference them with the company's website to check. **Tip:** Some sites allow you to set up alerts to your e-mail or text messaging for job postings matching your criteria.

Libraries

Perhaps the most overlooked resource in the job search, libraries have computer access, tutorials, and are generally free to the public for 30-60 minute periods of time. After school hours are typically the busiest time of day—mornings during the workday are usually least crowded. Libraries also includes resources such as newspapers (yes, there are still classifieds), market information, and job seeking guides. **Tip:** Some libraries have career assistance counselors—most know what organizations are nearby to help!

Newspapers

The *Classified* section of the newspaper is still very important. Even in the age of technology, newspapers use this very same information in their online newspaper versions...many of which require you to subscribe to their paper to access them. Like with other sources, be sure you research the company for which the advertised job is posted before applying. **Tip:** Once a job is posted, you need to apply within 72 hours, even if the end date for the posting is weeks away—when they find two or three possible candidates, they may interview and hire!

Professional Associations

 Joining professional organizations in your field may open up networking and job opportunities not published elsewhere. Participating in professional organizations provide positive visibility that get your noticed in your career field and give you ammunition for your resume/CV.

☐ Targeted Letters

If you know someone in a company who will allow you to use them as a contact, consider sending them a cover letter with your resume expressing interest in working for the company. Indicate you intend to follow up with a phone call...and then don't forget to do it! If you don't hear back right away, don't push the issue—you can wait a month or so and then do another follow up.

☐ Employment Guides

These provide outlines of duties, required education and training, professional associations and related occupations for hundreds of jobs, and other valuable information. These guides may help you gain an overview of trends in your areas of interest, employment prospects, and growth potential in different career fields.

☐ University Career & Employment Services

For students—and often for alumni—campuses have listings of positions available through their career counseling offices. Many institutions have career centers that provide assistance with applications, cover letter formatting, resumes, and other job application processes.

☐ Networking

THE most effective means of getting hired is through networking! You stand a less than 1% chance of getting a job by sitting behind a computer and sending out electronic letters, resumes, and applications without getting up, getting out, and networking face-to-face. Start by putting together a list of people willing to help: relatives, friends, faculty, former employers, teachers, professional contacts, etc. Go to local networking events (networkingphoenix.com, networkingphoenix.com, networkafterwork.com/phoenix, etc.), many of which are free, some of which cost a small fee (under \$15). Take introduction cards or business cards, but do **not** take resumes.

Career Assistance Organizations

☐ Local organizations are available that help career seekers find work. In the Phoenix area, *Career Connectors* (careerconnectors.org) meets weekly around the valley and has helped over 18,000 people find work. A number of career coaches also provide excellent services at relatively low cost.

Targeting potential employers will help you focus your job search. Make a list of employers for whom you would like to work and research them, finding out about job openings, their hiring processes, services/products, and mission. This will help you determine if you are a good match for the company and their open positions. The time you spend preparing will benefit your search in the long run...

NAME & ADDRESS OF EMPLOYER	INDUSTRY, PRODUCTS, SERVICES, MISSION	CONTACT PERSON: NAME, TITLE PHONE, E-MAIL	POSITIONS AVAILABLE; SKILLS/QUALIFICATIONS
NOTES:			

Introduction

This document is intended to assist you in preparing an effective basic resume that provides potential employers with the information they need to know about your qualifications and experience.

The Heading

The heading should be a simple, concise section consisting of 5 elements:

1. Your Name. First, Middle Initial (if desired), Last.
 - a. All capital letters.
 - b. You may add a suffix, if it is of importance, such as:
 - i. Doctoral degree(s). Note: you do *not* use the prefix “Dr.” when using the degree suffix.
 - ii. Master’s degree(s): Only if *directly* relevant to the position, such as MPH, MSW, or fields where a Master’s is the terminal degree level. NOT an MBA, for example, because there are so many of them and not a terminal degree.
 - iii. Certifications: Only important ones *directly* relevant to the position and the highest level of that certification (i.e. PMP, SPHR).
2. City & State. Do not list the entire address ~ the employer only wants to know if you will need relocation.
3. Phone Number. List your best number (often a cellular phone).
4. E-Mail Address. List your best e-mail (the one you pay the most attention to and will not miss a message).
5. Your LinkedIn Profile URL. If you are job-hunting, but not on LinkedIn, you are missing out!
 - a. People who screen resumes are often young (20’s-30’s) and grew up with technology. Having a link to your LinkedIn profile allows them to easily find out more about you.
 - b. Important note: Make sure your profile is up to date before applying for jobs!

The Summary

Much like on your LinkedIn profile, the Summary *sets the tone and provides context* for reading your resume. The summary should contain the following three elements:

1. A headline. This is much like the LinkedIn headline. Use 2-3 keywords that express you as a professional.
2. A *Tag Line*. What is your motto that relates to the position for which you are applying? A brief 4-6 word motto.
3. The most important parts of your *30-second elevator pitch* to set the context.

Key Accomplishments

This should highlight 3 or four of your most significant achievements. They should be results-based or include magnitude of accomplishment (such as size of large budget, large number of people supervised, etc.)

Skills and Expertise

This should be a listing of 9-12 key skills related directly to the position for which you are applying. Each entry should not exceed three words (i.e. *Social Media Marketing* or *Research and Analysis*).

- *Tip: Insert a table to keep columns neatly aligned.*

Professional Experience

This section should contain your experience in reverse chronological order (i.e. current or most recent position first). Each entry should reflect a standard format, so the reader may more easily scan the document:

Formal Title of Your Position

Year – Year

NAME OF COMPANY/ORGANIZATION – City, ST

One or two (max) lines describing what the company/organization does.

➤ One or two (max) lines describing your position/duties.

- 2-4 bullets describing accomplishments. Should be performance/results-based, like the Key Accomplishments section.

Education

List education in reverse chronological order. If you have attended post-secondary education, do not include your high school information. Include the degree and the institution (*Don't include graduation dates*):

Degree Name (Abbreviation), Major, Second Major (if applicable)

College/University Name, City, ST

Professional Certifications

List your professional certifications, with the most relevant ones to the position for which you are applying first.

Name of Certification

Awarding Authority

Professional Affiliations

List your professional organization memberships that are relevant to the prospective job/industry. Use a bulletized list for this section.

Languages

If you speak any foreign languages, list them. *Note*: Don't forget to list English!

One Final Tip...

A resume should reflect your skills and experience as they relate to the position for which you are applying. With this in mind, gather the following things *before* you start writing:

- Complete description and requirements of the position for which you are applying
- A listing of your history of work experience for the last 20 years
- A listing of your education and certifications
- Your written-out *and practiced* 30-second elevator pitch

A template is included in the following two pages so you can see how the final product appears.

FIRST M. LAST

City, ST • Cell: 602.###.#### • e.mail@provider.com • www.linkedin.com/in/yourcustomurl/

<PRIMARY KEYWORD PROFESSIONAL HEADLINE>

Tag Line Goes here

THIRTY-SECOND ELEVATOR PITCH marketing yourself. Never use more than 20 years when summarizing experience, so you do not seem out-of-date right from the start.

Do not make this section of the summary exceed 4-5 lines. Remember, the reader will only take about 30-40 seconds to read it, so you want them to get the full picture!

My passion is ... finishing with a statement about your professional passion may be a good last impression for the summary...

KEY ACCOMPLISHMENTS

- Accomplishment #1
 - Accomplishment #2
 - Accomplishment #3
 - Accomplishment #4
-

SKILLS AND EXPERTISE

- | | | |
|---------|---------|---------|
| • Skill | • Skill | • Skill |
| • Skill | • Skill | • Skill |
| • Skill | • Skill | • Skill |
| • Skill | • Skill | • Skill |
-

PROFESSIONAL EXPERIENCE

Formal Title of Your Position

Year – Year

NAME OF COMPANY/ORGANIZATION – City, ST

One or two (max) lines describing what the company/organization does.

➤ One or two (max) lines describing your position/duties.

- 2-4 bullets describing accomplishments. Should be performance/results-based, like the Key Accomplishments section.
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EDUCATION

Degree Name (Abbreviation), Major, Second Major (if applicable)

College/University Name, City, ST

Degree Name (Abbreviation), Major, Second Major (if applicable)

College/University Name, City, ST

PROFESSIONAL CERTIFICATIONS

Name of Certification

Awarding Authority

PROFESSIONAL AFFILIATIONS

- Organization Name (ACRONYM)

LANGUAGES

- **Language (Proficiency Level)**
- English (Native proficiency)
- French (Conversational)
- Spanish (Studied)

References are people who can confirm your qualifications for the position you are seeking. If an employer asks for references when they are not a standard requirement with the job application, it is a sign the company is interested in you as a potential employee. Your references should be able to confirm your skills and abilities, so be sure to select people who can provide the information important to the position for which you are being considered.

If you do not have strong professional relationships, start developing some as soon as possible. This is important in being able to provide professional (work) references who can attest to your qualifications—and it is important for them, too, in case they need a reference in the future.

Some tips to help your references foster your success:

- ✓ Inform them of your career plans and the types of positions for which you are applying.
- ✓ Provide them with a copy of your resume/CV. It acts as a “cheat sheet” for them and provides talking points when providing a reference for you on the phone or in writing.
- ✓ Stay in touch with your references—don’t use them and lose them! You may need them again...

Unless specifically required by the hiring company, never include your reference list with your cover letter, resume, and application. Bring your reference list to the interview and be prepared to share it with the interviewer if requested.

Be sure to get permission from someone prior to providing their name and contact information as a reference. If they are unwilling to speak on your behalf, it may be as damaging to your hiring process as a person who offers negative information.

Finally, send references a thank you note when you learn they have provided a reference. It is a nice touch that fosters future good wishes and cooperation!

The tracking sheet provided on the next page can help catalog and track your references.

- Don’t send this sheet in as your reference sheet—it is your organizer.

REFERENCES			
REFERENCE 1:			
NAME		TITLE	
PHONE		E-MAIL	
HOW LONG KNOWN?		TYPE REFERENCE? <small>(Work, Personal, Academic)</small>	
BEST TIME TO REACH?		WILLING TO WRITE LETTER OF RECOMMENDATION?	
REFERENCE 2:			
NAME		TITLE	
PHONE		E-MAIL	
HOW LONG KNOWN?		TYPE REFERENCE? <small>(Work, Personal, Academic)</small>	
BEST TIME TO REACH?		WILLING TO WRITE LETTER OF RECOMMENDATION?	
REFERENCE 3:			
NAME		TITLE	
PHONE		E-MAIL	
HOW LONG KNOWN?		TYPE REFERENCE? <small>(Work, Personal, Academic)</small>	
BEST TIME TO REACH?		WILLING TO WRITE LETTER OF RECOMMENDATION?	
REFERENCE 4:			
NAME		TITLE	
PHONE		E-MAIL	
HOW LONG KNOWN?		TYPE REFERENCE? <small>(Work, Personal, Academic)</small>	
BEST TIME TO REACH?		WILLING TO WRITE LETTER OF RECOMMENDATION?	
REFERENCE 5:			
NAME		TITLE	
PHONE		E-MAIL	
HOW LONG KNOWN?		TYPE REFERENCE? <small>(Work, Personal, Academic)</small>	
BEST TIME TO REACH?		WILLING TO WRITE LETTER OF RECOMMENDATION?	

This outline presents possible questions employers might ask when contacting your references. It is a good idea to provide these to people who have agreed to be your references to give them an opportunity to think of what their responses might be.

- Is he/she a team player? Give examples.
- How long did you work with the person?
- What are his/her strengths? Areas for improvement?
- What were some of the duties you know the person performed?
- Would you hire this person again? Why/why not?
- How did their work compare to others in the same or similar positions?
- Did he/she receive any special recognition or awards for performance while working with you?
- What is your assessment of the candidate's written communication skills? Can you give an example?
- How are the candidate's oral communication skills? Can you give an example?
- How good is the candidate with technology? Office programs?
- What do you know about the position he/she is applying for?
- How well did he/she work with other people? What about people from outside their own organization?
- What advice would you give to a new employer to guarantee continued success and development?
- Is there anyone else in your organization who might be able to speak on behalf of the candidate?
- Is there anything else you would like to add that we have not covered?

Many people feel that a job fair is a waste of time. Job fairs or career fairs are great opportunities to meet employers. Where else can you see so many employers in one location, or be seen by them? Participating companies pay for a spot to provide information on their industry and organizations, as well as their current job openings.

Job fairs are also a great educational opportunity because you can find out what employers are looking for in terms of skills. Here is how you should prepare:

- Before you attend the job fair, identify the companies, who will be there, that you are interested in seeing. Go to their website to research the companies and the positions that you are interested in. Prepare to discuss your skills that match those skills listed in the job description.
- Register in advance for the job fair if possible. It may save time.
- Prioritize a list of employers that you want to meet. Place the most popular ones early in the day before the long lines develop.
- Create a 30 second overview of your skills, accomplishments and goals.
- Dress for Success. It may be tempting to dress in jeans and sneakers because you will be on your feet quite a bit but keep in mind that you are meeting a potential employer, an HR manager or at least a recruiter for the company. All are important people.
- Bring many copies of your resume. Telling an employer that you didn't bring a resume to a job fair will probably eliminate your chances of being taken seriously. Carry them in a neat folder so they won't get crumpled and wrinkled. Bring a few extra copies. Don't expect the job fair to provide you with the means to make copies.
- Prepare a list of questions to ask the employers of interest. This will show them that you did your homework and are serious about working for them.
- Arrive early to the career fair. This enables you to map out the locations of the employers that you want to see. Some of these events host 50 to 100 employers. Once the room starts to fill up it may be difficult to locate the booths.
- As you walk around the event you also want to identify employers who are interviewing. It may be a good idea to gather their information and find a corner to read over it before trying to get an interview.
- Before you leave the event, make one more contact with the employers of interest. Thank them for their time and let them know you will be in touch with them. You may want to send a thank you note and remind them of your skills and interest in a job.

To do your best at an interview, anticipate questions you may be asked, then practice what you're going to say. Practice in front of a mirror or with family and friends. You'll need be more relaxed, confident and hire-able.

These 10 questions are examples of ones that might come up.

- **Tell me about yourself.**
Make your answers short and sweet. Stick to experiences and goals that relate to the specific job for which you are applying. Resist the impulse to stress your years of experience. It is more important to talk about your skills and achievements that show you can deliver. Emphasize your flexibility and positive, work-related attitudes.
- **Why are you looking for a job?**
Keep it brief. A straight forward answer is best. For example, "My organization was forced to downsize." Avoid negative statements about yourself, your work or your ability to get along with others. Never criticize former employers or coworkers.
- **You haven't worked in a long time. Why not?**
You may have gaps in employment for many reasons. Be honest. Speak confidently about your experiences during the gaps that could transfer to on-the-job skills. For instance, if you were a caregiver you managed complex financial issues. As a volunteer you might have worked with diverse groups or flexible schedules.
- **What are you looking for?**
It takes a lot of thinking to be ready for this question. Don't speak in generalities. Be prepared to name the type of position you think would be appropriate for you and how your skills translate to this organization.
- **Aren't you overqualified for this position?**
Even though "overqualified" can be shorthand for "age" or "expensive," It's important to stay positive. Express your enthusiasm for the job and pride in your qualifications. Explain what makes you interested in this position at this point in your career – such as wanting to apply your skills to a new field, or to achieve more flexibility and work-life balance.
- **We have state-of-the-art technology. Would you be able to jump right in?**
Show you are adaptable and tech savvy. Give examples of projects you've done which required computer skills and familiarity with electronic media. Emphasize the training you've taken to keep your skills up to date.
- **What is your biggest weakness?**
This is a reverse invitation to toot your own horn. Do it with an answer that puts you in a good light. For example, "I'm too detailed oriented, but I work hard to control that." Keep it simple and---smile.
- **What are your salary requirements?**
Try to postpone this question until a job offer has been made. Prepare by knowing the going rate in your area (sites like www.salary.com can help). If you do not know the range and the interviewer persists, reply, "What salary range are you working with?" The interviewer may very well tell you. *Tip: The first one to say a number loses the negotiation...*
- **Do you have any questions?**
Show your interest and initiative by asking specific questions about the organization and what you can expect in the job. Use your questions to demonstrate how your skills can contribute to the organization. Answering "no" to this question says you're not really interested in the job.

An often-overlooked step in preparing for a job interview is to think about questions you can ask the interviewer.

Asking questions is a way of showing what you can contribute to the employer. When you ask the questions, you help to shape the conversation. Your queries give you the chance to set yourself apart from the competition- and to figure out whether or not you want this job.

Tips Asking Questions

- Respond to the interviewer's cues. Don't ask questions where the answer is obvious or readily available-or when the topic has already been thoroughly discussed.
- Ask questions during the conversation, taking cues from how it is evolving. Don't bunch all your queries at the end of the interview.
- Always have at least one question ready. When the interviewer asks if you have any questions, the worst answer you can give is "No" if you have no questions, the interviewer might wonder how interested you really are in the job.
- Don't expect to ask all your questions in the first interview. Keep more detailed questions for the second interview.

What Questions Should You Ask in an Interview?

The following questions are examples, not a script. Always respond to what the interviewer is saying; don't just ask questions out of the blue.

- Ask for details about priorities and problems that need to be solved.
Examples: "What are this job's priorities for the first few months?" and "What are the most important problems that you'd like the person in this job to solve?"
These questions show that...
 - You're a team player
 - The employer's priorities are important to you
- Clarify the interviewer's questions before answering.
Examples: "Before I answer, can you give me more details on that?" or "As I understand it, the question you are asking is... Is that right?"
These questions show that...
 - You take time to understand a problem before acting
 - You pay attention to what others are saying
 - Anticipate concerns that the interviewer has yet to address

Examples: "Can I explain anything about my experience or background?" or "Do you have any concerns about my qualifications that I can address now?"

These questions show that...

- You are confident and take initiative
- You are willing to respond to the interviewer's concerns

Ask Questions about Work Culture

- Ask about company practices and goals.
Examples: “How will my performance be measured?” and “What do you see as the most important objectives for this position in the next year?”
These questions show that...
 - You’re forward-thinking and proactive
 - You look forward to professional growth

At the End of the Interview

- Ask about next steps and get the interviewer’s contact information.
Examples: “Can you tell me where you are in the process of making a hiring decision?” or “When can I expect to hear from you?”
These questions show that...
 - It’s important to you to follow up effectively
 - You manage your time and expectations
- What if the interview ends before you can ask all your questions? Weave leftover questions into your thank-you note, and follow up within a week or two (depending on the employer’s time frame for hiring, of which you learned during the interview).

Salary Questions

- Unless the interviewer brings it up, a first interview is not the time to ask about salary, hours or special needs, such as flextime.
- Save questions about benefits for Human Resources or until after you’ve been offered a job.

Listen and Adapt

Writing down questions to ask will help to prepare you for the interview. But remember, the questions above are just examples. If you listen carefully and treat the interview as a conversation, you’ll find it easier to ask-and to answer-questions. But remember: don’t treat your questions as more important than those the interviewer is asking.

14 Ways To Determine The Culture

1. Ask to interview an employee or two on what they enjoy about working there.
2. Ask for a walk-through of the office-listen for laughs and look for smiles; that says a lot about the work environment.
3. Ask about previous people who held the position if you are replacing someone-find out what they did right and what they could've done better.
4. Look at sites like Glassdoor.com (<http://www.glassdoor.com/>) for reviews by current or former employees.
5. Keep in mind that there are "pockets" of culture within individual departments, so the overall company culture could differ from your specific work area-that's why it's important to try to do things like #1 and #2 above.
6. Ask what sorts of behavior are rewarded and which are punished.
7. Ask how (or if) news that affects the company is shared-does everyone learn of it at once or is it distributed to managers to trickle down to employees? Are they transparent?
8. Find out what sort of events the company holds for employees-is it a once a year Christmas party or are there monthly opportunities to celebrate with co-workers?
9. Ask if there are known slackers in the office and try to find out why they are still around (good luck with this one, but if you get a straight answer, you will have a leg up)
10. Ask about how difficult it is to get attention or funding for new ideas and initiatives-are they a "we've always done it that way" type of company?
11. Ask what the company's overall mission/vision is. If a random employee can tell you (at least in general terms) it could signify a strong, unified workforce.
12. Ask about the dress code and other abrasive policies/details that, while palatable at first, can end up chafing you down the line
13. Find out if the company offers any sort of reimbursement or support for training, seminars, or college tuition. If they value smart employees who work to better themselves, they probably will.
14. Ask how previous employees who committed ethics violations were held accountable. (General terms are fine to protect any guilty parties, but do they even care about ethics in the first place?)

To clarify, an organization's culture encompasses several elements.

- How do they treat their employees?
- What is management's motivators?
- Is it only the bottom line or is there more?
- What is the work ethic?
- What are the expectations for your time?
- Is it standard that many employees work weekends or do people enjoy life outside of work?

I've had a few clients live this reality. They accepted a [job offer](#) thinking the company culture was in line with their goals, only to discover after being in the new job 6 months to a year, that they misread the culture.

Many times we will ride these situations out to see if it will get better.

Sometimes it does. More often than not, nothing changes and the decision to part ways becomes obvious.

How do we avoid not making this same mistake again and again?

Here are five strategies to help you be prepared and open your eyes to see the culture of an organization.

1. Research

Research is an integral part of your interview preparation. But when it comes to company culture, look at the press releases and the website with new eyes.

Some questions to think through; how does the company represent itself? It is formal, casual, or in-between.

Check sites such as Glassdoor.com. This is a good resources to find out what former employees are saying about their former employers.

2. Network

Ask about this organization to individuals in your network that have either worked there or had business interactions with the company.

Vendors and partners of a company can tell you their take, an outsiders perspective, on the company. That is invaluable.

3. Ask

Ask questions in the interviews. I do suggest asking culture questions but only after the first interview. The first interview can be too soon.

Here are some questions you can ask but be sure to do so in a conversational manner. Remember an [interview](#) is a conversation with a colleague.

Be relaxed but get to what you are there to do – sell them on you and uncover the fit. Uncovering the culture is absolutely necessary for your success and for the success of this new working relationship you will have with this company.

Possible questions to ask (I would suggest asking them in your own words):

- How would you best describe the culture of this organization? Of our department?
- What do you see as the pros and cons of this culture?
- What makes this a great place to work?
- What could be improved?
- What makes the department I would be working for so successful?

4. Observe

While you are at the offices interviewing, watch how people act, respond, and interact. Try to meet as many of your future co-workers as possible.

Be in the offices and get a sense of the pace, how the office is organized and decorated. This will give you a sense of what the company finds important.

5. Decide

After you have gathered all that you can discover and observe, decide if this is a fit for you. The only way you can decide is to know what is important to you.

What are you “must-have’s” in any position? What do you need in a work environment? There are external and intrinsic must have’s.

Here are some areas to get you thinking: commute, colleagues, professional development, honesty/integrity, appreciation, hard work, salary, quality content, time off, respect by colleagues, and so on.

So there you have it: research, network, ask, observe, and decide. Uncover the culture so you know if this is a fit for you.

Read more at <http://www.careerealism.com/tips-uncover-company-culture/#2VsOB3bQ3IDtq7Ex.99>

THINGS TO CONSIDER BEFORE YOU ACCEPT A JOB	5 = FANTASTIC	4 = VERY GOOD	3 = GOOD	2 = AVERAGE	1 = NOT GOOD
Employer					
Industry (Government / Private Sector)					
Size of Organization, Market Potential					
Work Environment—Working Conditions, Dress Code					
Interest in Working there for a period of time					
Distance from Home					
Position Being Offered					
Duties and Responsibilities					
Number of Hours per Day					
Overtime					
Amount of Travel					
Potential for Promotion					
Length of Probation Period					
Number of Opportunities for Promotion					
How is Performance Judged					
Training Programs					

	5 = FANTASTIC	4 = VERY GOOD	3 = GOOD	2 = AVERAGE	1 = NOT GOOD
Compensation Package					
Starting Salary / Frequency of Salary Increases					
Other Benefits - Health Insurance - Tuition Assistance - Car Allowances - Profit Sharing - Bonuses					
Other Considerations					
Can I accept this job for now and continue searching for a better job					

Grading Scale:

- 80-100 This may be your dream job!
- 61-79 This is a good offer.
- 41-60 This job should be considered. Consider working in this position until you find something better.
- 21-40 This offer is mediocre by your standards, so give it some thought and weigh the pros and cons.
- 0-20 This is really not what you are looking for but it does provide a source of income.
If you can wait for something better, do so.