

Job Hunting 101

When you went to college, you received a welcome package and attended orientation to learn the ropes. Now that you're on the hunt for a new job, an equally life-changing event, no one's holding your hand. At best, a friend pats you on the back and says, "Good luck."

To prepare you for your new endeavor, WPRA has put together a job search kit. Here you'll find the tools you need for writing your résumé, interviewing and researching salary information.

Résumé writing

Any writer knows a blank page is one of the most intimidating things in the world. This is especially true when you sit down to write your résumé, the first step to finding a new job. Here are some of the most common mistakes that job seekers make when putting together their résumé.

• Not including a cover letter

The quickest way to halt your job search is to send out your résumé without enclosing a cover letter. For many hiring managers, a résumé with no cover letter is dropped right in the trash can. Use the letter to convince the hiring manager you're a good fit for the job and to set yourself apart from the rest of the applicants.

• Telling your life story

You want to leave the reader impressed with your experience, not with a headache. Don't shrink margins and use a tiny font to list every job you've had and an extensive description of each. Stick to relevant information that will improve your chances of getting the job.

• Making the résumé uninviting

Use bullets for lists instead of lengthy paragraphs, and put in plenty of white space so your résumé is easy to read. Many hiring managers won't even pick up a résumé that's cluttered with text.

• Typos

There's just no excuse to submit a résumé with misspellings and typographical errors. Typos tell readers you don't care about the quality of your work, which is not something you want a future employer to think. Don't assume spell-check will catch every mistake. Proofread it several times and have friends review it, too.

Interviewing

Once your résumé has worked its magic and you've been called for an interview, you've still got work to do. When it comes to interviews, preparation is your best friend.

• Dress the part

If somebody shows up to a barbecue wearing a suit, you know he's either in the wrong place or he just doesn't have the good sense to dress appropriately. Think about what your clothes say when you go for an interview. Are you dressed like somebody who belongs in a professional

environment or like somebody who's ready to grill burgers all afternoon? If you know the office dress code, follow it; otherwise wear traditional business attire to be safe.

- **Know yourself**

You never know exactly what an interviewer will ask you, but chances are most questions will be about you and the information you put on your résumé. Expect to give specific examples of how you handled difficult situations and demonstrated leadership in previous positions. You'll also need to show how your skills will translate to a new position.

- **Know the company**

Few things are as damaging to your interview as not knowing anything about the hiring company. When the interviewer asks what you know about the company and why you want to work there, you need to have a better answer than "Nothing at all" or "I need a paycheck." Go to the company's Web site, and look up recent news in the newspaper and online. Prove that you've done your research, are a good match for the company, and truly want the position.

- **Follow up**

After the interview, you should send a thank-you letter as soon as possible. Not only is it polite, it's also one more chance to remind the interviewer why you're the best candidate for the job.

Salary research

Your interview went so well you've been offered a job. Congratulations! Before you accept the offer, however, make sure you know what you're worth. Your education, experience and even location all factor in to how much you make, so take them into consideration when negotiating your salary.

- **Online resources**

Salary Web sites, such as CBSalary.com, let you see what the median income is for a position in a specific city and across the country. The Bureau of Labor Statistics reports information, such as salary and expected job growth, for specific positions and industries at large.

- **Trade publications**

Look for magazines devoted to your specific industry. These publications report only information that impacts your field, which means anything from job descriptions to salary data to job growth.

- **Friends and colleagues**

How much a person makes is private information, so don't ask to see your friends' W-2 forms. People in the industry, whether friends or acquaintances, might not tell you what they make but they probably have an idea what other professionals are earning in your city or at other companies.