

SCENARIO

You and Ms. Cranshaw, your college career placement counselor, are discussing your upcoming job hunt. “I have one word for you,” she says, “Internet. Get online and look at America’s Job Bank.” You take her advice, and at <http://www.ajb.dni.us/> you find the Bank.

In a preliminary exploration, you find the link to the Career Resource Library. There you find links to career information, job search tips, job banks and city and state guides, and employers.

Following the employer link, you find the corporate profile for Data Instruments, a firm that interests you. You learn, among many other things, that it has 500 employees, sales last year of over \$50 million, and a strong benefits package, including a 401K plan. The profile includes an e-mail address for a human resources executive named Bruce MacDonald.

You follow another link to a guide to posting your résumé online. There you find eleven fee-based databases and thirty-four free ones. Several seem to be a good fit for you.

Following a link to jobs in the computer industry, you find an embarrassment of riches, hundreds—even thousands—of jobs available in every state. You realize that America’s Job Bank is going to be worth hours of your time in exploration. For a more condensed version of some of the same information, we recommend the chapter that follows.

chapter 14

The Strategies and Communications of the Job Hunt

- ▶ Preparation
 - Self-Assessment
 - Information Gathering
 - Networking

- ▶ The Correspondence of the Job Hunt
 - Letter of Application
 - The Résumé
 - Follow-Up Letters

- ▶ Interviewing
 - The Interview
 - Negotiation
 - Before and After the Interview

As a college student or a recent college graduate, you can't, unfortunately, take for granted that you'll get a good job right out of college. In some cases, you may actually be competing with experienced workers for the job you want. To help you in this environment, we cover in this chapter the major steps of the job hunt: preparation, letters of application, résumés, and interviews.¹

PREPARATION

What you can take for granted is that job hunting is nearly a full-time occupation. If you are still in college, it has to be at least a part-time occupation. Most professional jobs require that you follow a regular schedule and work 40 to 50 hours a week. Job hunting also requires that you schedule your time around various activities and that you, if you are still in college, spend at least 15 to 20 hours a week in the hunt. Your first task is to prepare for the hunt. That involves self-assessment, gathering information about possible jobs, and networking.

Self-Assessment

The goal of self-assessment is twofold. First and most important, you want to avoid pounding a square peg (you) into a round hole (the wrong job). You want to determine what jobs among those that are available would suit you the best: What kind of work can you do well, and what kind of work pleases you? Second, in the job hunt, you'll be creating résumés, completing applications, and answering interview questions. Self-assessment will ensure that you list details that you will need about past work and educational experiences—such as dates, names, and job responsibilities.

In your self-assessment you should ask questions such as the following:

- What are my strengths?
- What are my weaknesses?
- How well have I performed in past jobs?
- Have I shown initiative?
- Have I improved procedures?
- Have I accepted responsibility?
- Have I been promoted or been given a merit raise?
- How can I present myself most attractively?
- What skills do I possess that relate directly to what the employer seems to need?
- How and where have I obtained those skills?

To go about your self-assessment in a serious and systematic way, use the questionnaire provided in Figure 14-1.

When you have completed your self-assessment, you will have a good record of past job and educational experiences. You should have a good idea of

what skills you have and what it is you really like to do. If you are uncertain about how your skills and experience match to jobs available, three publications from the U.S., Department of Labor can help you make the match:

- *Guide for Occupational Exploration*. Lists over 12,000 occupations and guides you in relating your skills and likes to possible careers.
- *Occupational Outlook Handbook*. Describes the educational requirements, and salary ranges, duties, job prospects for most occupations.
- *Dictionary of Job Titles*. Describes in detail over 12,000 occupations.

College libraries and placement offices should have these books. In addition, the *Occupational Outlook Handbook* is available online at <http://stats.bls.gov/ocohome.htm>.

What if, at the end of your self-assessment, you either can't decide what you want to do or, worse, decide that your college major is in a field that no longer interests you? In either case you might seek professional job counseling. Many college placement offices offer such help.

If you are reasonably sure of your career direction, your next step is to find where the jobs are that will lead in that direction.

Information Gathering

Two good ways exist to discover and gather information about companies and organizations that offer the jobs you are seeking. You can research on the Internet and in print publications. Both sources contain the information you need about where the jobs are, how to apply for them, roughly how much they pay, and how big a future such jobs have. However, undoubtedly, the quickest and most up-to-date source is the Internet.

Internet The Internet is a rich source of information for the job hunter, so rich, in fact, that we can offer only a sampling of what is available.

- America's Job Bank www.ajb.dni.us offers information on every aspect of job hunting, either directly or through links to other sites. For example, it has links to a career resource library that offers information under four categories:

Occupational: career information and exploring specific occupations.

Job search aids: information on employers, application letters, résumés, and interviewing.

Job and résumé banks: state and local resources and information on posting your résumé online

Relocation information: city and state guides

On America's Job Bank, you can find state and employer profiles, salary information, and lists of the fastest growing occupations. In short, this is a site that will be an invaluable aid in your job hunt.

- *Career Magazine* <www.careermag.com> offers information about job fairs, job openings, and employers. The employer profiles are extensive. An excerpt from the entry on American Express states that

American Express is a great place to build an exciting future. With a growing, global customer base and more than \$17 billion in revenues, we're focusing on expanding our premier brand presence through service innovation; diverse product offerings; and uncompromising commitment to satisfying our customers, shareholders, and employees. By steadily creating and seizing opportunities for international growth, we have become a respected provider of diversified business and financial services. As important, our initiatives as an employer have resulted in American Express being selected by *Fortune*, *Hispanic News*, *Working Woman*, and *LatinaStyle* as a great place to work. . . . American Express is comprised of nine business units, each focused on being a giant company in its market segment. With this much action, is it any wonder that ambitious innovators have plenty of opportunities for learning and career progression with American Express?

The employer profiles offer lists of current job openings with links that tell you how to apply for them.

- *CareerWeb* <www.cweb.com> has a job-search listing and offers employer information; links that allow the posting of résumés are provided in both cases. The site offers articles on how to conduct a job search. The *Online Career Center* <www.monster.com> offers similar information and assistance.
- *Hot Jobs* <www.hotjobs.com> has employer information and job listings. It provides information on developing scannable electronic resumes and your own web site.
- The *Princeton Review* <www.review.com> offers good advice on interviewing, negotiating, and public speaking for both new college graduates and experienced professionals.
- U.S. Government Office of Personnel Management <www.usajobs.opm.gov> has information for those interested in a job with the federal government. You can find here a list of jobs at all levels for which the government is taking applications. For example, when this chapter was being written, this site listed 18 entry-level

engineering jobs with the government and provided a link to apply for the jobs online.

- JobTrak <www.jobtrak.com> has over 800 colleges and universities that post their job listings on this site. If your school participates, you can post your résumé online and even sign up for interviews. JobTrak has an excellent career index that describes career employment outlooks and provides salary ranges. (It provides a salary calculator so you can compare the worth of a salary from one geographic region to another.) City information includes climate and demographic data. JobTrak offers good job-hunting tips, including instruction on designing scannable electronic résumés. Many companies post part-time jobs on this site, an advantage for students looking for work while still in school.
- JobFind <www.jobfind.com/postresume.htm> provides help in posting a résumé online.

Print Sources Following is a list of print sources of job information with brief descriptions of what you will find in them. Most of these sources are available in college libraries and placement offices.

- *National Business Telephone Directory* (Gale Research, Detroit, MI). An alphabetical listing of companies across the United States, with their addresses and phone numbers. It includes many smaller firms (20 employees minimum).
- *The Hidden Job Market: A Guide to America's 2000 Little-Known Fastest Growing High-Tech Companies* (Peterson's Guides, Princeton, NJ). Concentrates on high-tech companies with good growth potential.
- *Dun & Bradstreet Million Dollar Directory* (Parsippany, NJ). Provides information on 180,000 of the largest companies in the country. Gives the type of business, number of employees, and sales volume for each. It also lists the company's top executives. An abbreviated version of this publication also exists, which gives this information for the top 50,000 companies.
- *Standard & Poor's Register of Corporations, Directors and Executives* (New York, NY). Information similar to that in Dun & Bradstreet's directory. Also contains a listing of the parent companies of subsidiaries and the interlocking affiliations of directors.
- *The Career Guide—Dun's Employment Opportunities Directory* (Parsippany, NJ). Aimed specifically at the professional job seeker. Lists more than 5,000 major U.S. companies that plan to recruit in the coming year. Unlike the other directories from Standard & Poor and Dun & Bradstreet, this guide lists personnel directors and gives information about firms' career opportunities and benefits packages. Also gives a state-by-state list of headhunters and tips on interviewing and résumé writing.²

Another useful source, *Hoover's Handbook of American Business*, provides profiles of American Corporations. It is published by Hoover Business Press, Austin, TX.

In addition, numerous employment guides address themselves to specialized audiences. For examples Peterson's (Princeton, NJ) publishes *Peterson's Job Opportunities for Engineering and Science Majors* and *Peterson's Job Opportunities for Health and Science Majors*. Both books contain employer profiles, advice on researching job information, and advice on using the Internet for job searches.

To supplement these sources with the most recent information available, consult magazines and newspapers that regularly carry business news, such as *Forbes*, *Business Week*, and the *Wall Street Journal*. To see what has appeared recently in the business press about a company that interests you, consult the *Business Periodical Index*. For general coverage, see *The New York Times Index* and the *Reader's Guide to Periodical Literature*. Analyze the company to see what it is most proud of and to determine its goals. If you are interested in federal employment, seek out *Federal Career Opportunities*.

We cannot emphasize strongly enough the importance of these information-gathering activities. Many job seekers do not even know such rich information sources exist. Others who do know nevertheless neglect them. You now know what the sources are and where to find others. The rest is up to you.

Networking

Networking is a way of finding both job information and job opportunities. Networking starts with broadcasting the news that you are looking for a job. Whom do you tell? Start with family and friends, including grandparents, aunts, uncles, cousins, and in-laws. Expand to professors, clergy, and favorite high school teachers. Don't overlook family doctors, dentists, lawyers, bankers, barbers, and hairdressers. If there are professional associations that cover fields you are interested in, join them. For information about such organizations, see *Career Guide to Professional Organizations*. If there are local chapters of such organizations within a reasonable distance, attend their meetings.

Call on or phone local businesses or organizations, particularly those that have jobs you might be interested in, and ask for the names of people who have or manage jobs like the ones you want. Phone these people and ask if you can come by for a talk. Make it clear that you are not looking for a job interview but rather an informational interview, to seek advice about looking for work or how to prepare for a certain kind of job.

If you have a name you can use—for example, a relative or teacher—in making the initial contact, it will help. But don't let not having a name deter you.

Try to make the contact anyway. You can expect a lot of people to put you off, but you will likely be pleasantly surprised at how many people will talk to you. People like to give advice in general, and in particular, they like to talk about their occupations. Furthermore, organizations are on the lookout for enterprising self-starters. In calling on the organization, you are showing yourself to be such a person.

In your contacts with local businesses and professional organizations, you are the interviewer. To help people remember you, have business cards made up that look like the one in Figure 14-2. If you have a profession, such as computer programmer, list it on the card beneath your name. To help yourself remember whom you have seen and what you have learned, keep good records as you proceed. Write down names (accurately spelled), addresses, and phone numbers. Record what seems to be important to these people about work in general and the specific work that interests you.

All this may strike you as an informal way of looking for work, and it is. But research shows that most people find work in precisely this way. This is true partly because many jobs are filled, not through a formal search, but through contacts of the kind we are telling you to develop. Also, two-thirds of all jobs are in companies with fewer than twenty-five employees.³ Small companies often don't conduct formal searches such as sending recruiters to college campuses. You have to search them out, and networking is an effective way to do it.

More formally, you can network with organizations specifically set up to help people find work. Foremost among these, if you are a college student, is your college placement office. Many large firms regularly call on college placement offices when seeking new employees. Also, the placement office schedules campus interviews for graduating students, and many offices have job fairs once or twice a year. Job fairs, to which many companies send representatives, are good places to gather information and to network. In addition, the placement office maintains a library of books about how to seek employment and usually has a file of brochures and articles about companies and organizations that might interest you.

If you have already graduated from college, investigate whether your college alumni association offers help in seeking employment. Many do. Other formal possibilities are private employment agencies and public employment agencies.

Hunting a job is a hard job in itself. There is a great deal of help out there, but you can't be passive. You have to actively search out job information and opportunities. Another way to do that is with letters of application and résumés, which we take up next.

THE CORRESPONDENCE OF THE JOB HUNT

In some cases, the first knowledge prospective employers will have of you is the letter of application and résumé that you send to them. A good letter of application, sometimes called a *cover letter*, and a well-done résumé will not guarantee that you get a job, but bad ones will probably guarantee that you do not. In this section we describe how to prepare the letter of application and both paper and electronic résumés. We also tell you about several follow-up letters you'll need to write during the job hunt.

Letter of Application

Plan the mechanics of your letter of application carefully. Buy the best quality white bond paper. This is no time to skimp. Prepare your letter on a word processor, of course, or have it done. Use a standard typeface. Do not use italics. Make sure your letter is mechanically perfect, free of grammatical errors. Be brief, but not telegraphic. Keep the letter to one page. Don't send a letter that has been duplicated in any way. Accompany each letter with a résumé. We discuss résumés later.

Pay attention to the style of the letter and the résumé that accompanies it. The tone you want in your letter is one of self-confidence. You must avoid both arrogance and humility. You must sound interested and somewhat eager, but not fawning. Don't give the impression that you *must* have the job, but, on the other hand, don't seem uncaring about getting it.

When describing your accomplishments in the letter and résumé, use action verbs. They help to give your writing brevity, specificity, and force. For example, don't just say that you worked as a sales clerk. Rather, tell how you maintained inventories, sold merchandise, prepared displays, implemented new procedures, and supervised and trained new clerks. Here's a sampling of such words:

administer	edit	oversee
analyze	evaluate	plan
conduct	exhibit	produce
create	expand	reduce costs
cut	improve	reorganize
design	manage	support
develop	operate	was promoted
direct	organize	write

You cannot avoid the use of *I* in a letter of application. But take the you-attitude as much as you can. Think about what you can do for the prospective employer. The letter of application is not the place to be worried about salary and pension plans. Above all, be mature and dignified. Forget about tricky and flashy approaches. Write a well-organized, informative letter that highlights those skills

your analysis of the company shows it desires most. Here we will discuss the beginning, the body, and the ending of an application letter.

The Beginning Beginnings are tough. Do not begin aggressively or cutely. A beginning such as “WANTED: An alert, aggressive employer who will recognize an alert, aggressive young forester” will usually send your letter wastebasket-bound. If you can do so legitimately, a bit of name dropping is a good beginning. Use this beginning only if you have permission and if the name you drop will mean something to the prospective employer. If you qualify on both counts, begin with an opener such as this:

Dear Ms. Marchand:

Professor John J. Jones of State University’s Food Science faculty has suggested that I apply for the post of food supervisor that you have open. In June I will receive my Bachelor of Science degree in Food Science from State University. Also, I have spent the last two summers working in food preparation for Memorial Hospital in Melbourne.

Remember that you are trying to arouse immediate interest about yourself in the potential employer. Another way to do this is to refer to something about the company that interests you. Doing so establishes that you have done your homework. Then try to show how some preparation on your part relates to this special interest. See Figure 14-3 for an example of such an opener.

Sometimes the best approach is a simple statement about the job you seek, accompanied by a description of something in your experience that fits you for the job, as in this example:

Your opening for a food supervisor has come to my attention. In June of this year, I will graduate from State University with a Bachelor of Science degree in Food Science. I have spent the last two summers working in food preparation for Memorial Hospital in Melbourne. I believe that both my education and my work experience qualify me to be a food supervisor on your staff.

Be specific about the job you want. Quite often, if the job you want is not open, the employer may offer you an alternative one. But employers are not impressed with vague statements such as, “I’m willing and able to work at any job you may have open in research, production, or sales.” As the vice president of one firm told us, “We have all the people we need who can do *anything*. We want people who can do *something*.”

The Body In the body of your letter you highlight selected items from your education and experience that show your qualifications for the job you seek.

Remember always that you're trying to show the employer how well you will fit into the job and the organization.

In selecting your items, it pays to know what things employers value the most. In evaluating recent college graduates, employers look closely at the major, academic performance, work experience, and extracurricular activities. They also consider recommendations, standardized test scores, and military experience, if any.

Try to include information from the areas that employers seem to value the most, but emphasize those areas in which you come off best. If your grades are good, mention them prominently. If you stand low in your class—in the lowest quarter, perhaps—maintain a discreet silence. Speak to the employer's interests, and at the same time highlight your own accomplishments. Show how it would be to the employer's advantage to hire you. The following paragraph, an excellent example of the you-attitude in action, does all these things:

I understand that the research team of which I might be a part works as a single unit in the measurement and collection of data. Because of this, team members need a general knowledge and ability in fishery techniques as well as a specific job skill. Therefore, I would like to point out that last summer I worked for the Department of Natural Resources on a fish population study. On that job I gained electro-fishing and seining experience and also learned how to collect and identify aquatic invertebrates.

Be specific about your accomplishments. By being specific, you avoid the appearance of bragging. It is much better to say, "I was president of my senior class" than to say, "I am a natural leader."

One tip about job experience: The best experience relates to the job you seek, but mention any job experience, even if it does not relate to the job you seek. Employers feel a student who has worked is more apt to be mature than one who has not.

Don't forget hobbies that relate to the job. You're trying to establish that you are interested in, as well as qualified for, the job.

Don't mention salary unless you're answering an advertisement that specifically requests you to. Keep the you-attitude. Don't worry about pension plans, vacations, and coffee breaks at this stage of the game. Keep the prospective employer's interests in the foreground. Your self-interest is taken for granted.

If you're already working and not a student, you construct the body of your letter of application much as we've described. The significant difference is that

you will emphasize work experience more than college experience. Do not complain about your present employer. Such complaints will lead the prospective employer to mistrust you.

In the last paragraph of the body, refer the employer to your enclosed résumé. Mention your willingness to supply additional information such as references, letters concerning your work, research reports, and college transcripts.

The Ending The goal of the letter of application is to get you an interview with the prospective employer. In your ending, you request this interview. Your request should be neither humble nor overaggressive. Simply indicate that you are available for an interview at the employer's convenience, and give any special instructions needed for reaching you. If the prospective employer is in a distant city, indicate (if you can) some convenient time and place where you might meet with a representative of the company, such as the convention of a professional society. If the employer is really interested, you may be invited to visit the company as its expense.

The Complete Letter Figure 14-3 shows a complete letter of application. Take a minute to reread it. The beginning of the letter shows that the writer has been interested enough in the company to investigate it. The desired job is specifically mentioned. The middle portion highlights the writer's course work and work experience that relate directly to the job she is seeking. The close makes an interview convenient for the employer to arrange.

A word processor is a great convenience when you're doing application letters. It allows you to store basic paragraphs of your letter that you can easily modify to meet the needs and interests of any organization you are writing to. Such modification for each organization is truly necessary. A personnel officer skims your letter and résumé in about thirty seconds. If you have not grabbed her or his interest in that time, you are probably finished with that organization.

The Résumé

A résumé provides your prospective employer with a convenient summary of your education and experience. As in the letter of application, good grammar, correct spelling, neatness, and brevity—ideally, only one page—are of major importance in your résumé. Although the traditional paper résumé is still commonplace, more and more organizations are using electronic media for screening their job candidates. Therefore, it's important to have versions of your resume available in the following formats:

- Traditional paper
- Scannable format
- E-mail format

- World Wide Web format

Because résumés of different kinds are similar in content and organization regardless of format, we discuss those aspects first.

Content and Organization The three most widely used résumés are chronological, functional, and targeted résumés. All have advantages and disadvantages.

Chronological Résumé The advantages of a chronological résumé (Figure 14-4) are that it's traditional and acceptable. If your education and experience show a steady progression toward the career you seek, the chronological résumé portrays that progression well. Its major disadvantage is that your special capabilities or accomplishments may sometimes get lost in the chronological detail. Also, if you have holes in your employment or educational history, they show up clearly.

Put your address at the top. Give your phone number, and don't forget the area code. If you have a fax number and an e-mail address, include them as well.

For most students, educational information should be placed before work experience. People with extensive work experience, however, may choose to put that first. List the colleges or universities you have attended in reverse chronological order—in other words, list the school you attended most recently first; the one before, second; and so on. Do not list your high school.

Give your major and date, or expected date, of graduation. Do not list courses, but list anything that is out of the ordinary, such as honors, special projects, and emphases in addition to the major. Extracurricular activities also go here.

As you did with your educational experience, put your work experience in reverse chronological order. To save space and to avoid the repetition of / throughout the résumé, use phrases rather than complete sentences. The style of the sample résumés makes this technique clear. As in the letter of application, emphasize the experiences that show you in the best light for the kinds of job you seek. Use nouns and active verbs in your descriptions. Do not neglect less important jobs of the sort you may have had in high school, but use even more of a summary approach for them. You would probably put college internships and work–study programs here, though you might choose to put them under education. If you have military experience, put it here. Give the highest rank you held, list service schools you attended, and describe your duties. Make a special effort to show how your military experience relates to the civilian work you seek.

You may wish to provide personal information. Personal information can be a subtle way to point out your desirable qualities. Recent travels indicate a broadening of knowledge and probably a willingness to travel. Hobbies listed may relate to the work sought. Participation in sports, drama, or community activities indicates a liking for working with people. Cultural activities indicate you are not a person of narrow interests.

If you indicate you are married, you might want to say that you are willing to relocate. Don't say anything about health unless you can describe it as excellent.

You have a choice with references. You can list several references with addresses and phone numbers or simply put in a line that says "References available upon request." Both methods have an advantage and a disadvantage. If you provide references, a potential employer can contact them immediately, but you use up precious space that might be better used for more information about yourself. Conversely, if you don't provide the reference information, you save the space but put an additional step between potential employers and information they may want. It's a judgment call, but, on balance, we favor saving space by omitting the reference information. Your first goal is to interest the potential employer in you. If that happens, then it will not be difficult to provide the reference information at a later time.

In any case, do have at least three references available. Choose from among your college teachers and past employers, people who know you well and are likely to say positive things about you. Get their permission, of course. Also, it's a smart idea to send them a copy of your résumé. If you can't call on them personally, send them a letter that requests permission to use them as a reference, reminds them of the association with you, and sets a time for their reply, like this:

Dear Ms. Pickford:

In June of this year, I'll graduate from Watertown Polytechnic Institute with a B.S. in metallurgical engineering. I'm getting ready to look for work. May I have permission to use you as a reference?

During the summers of 1999 and 2000, I worked as a laboratory technician in your testing lab at Watertown. They were good summers for me, and I qualified, with your help, to carry out several ASTM tests.

I want to start sending my résumé out to some companies by mid-March and would appreciate having your reply by that time. I enclose a copy of my résumé for you, so that you can see what I've been doing.

Thanks for all your help in the past.

Best regards,

At the bottom of the traditional paper resume, place a dateline—the month and year in which you completed the resume. Place the date in the heading of scannable and e-mail résumés.

Functional Résumé A main advantage of the functional résumé (Figure 14-5) is that it allows you to highlight the experiences that show you to your best advantage. Extracurricular experiences show up particularly well in a functional résumé. The major disadvantage of this format is the difficulty, for the first-time reader, of discerning a steady progression of work and education.

The address portion of the functional résumé is the same as that of the chronological. After the address, you may include a job objective line if you like. A job objective entry specifies the kind of work you want to do and sometimes the industry or service area in which you want to do it, like this:

Work in food service management.

or like this:

Work in food service management in a metropolitan hospital.

Place the job objective entry immediately after the address and align it with the rest of the entries (as shown in Figure 14-6).

For education, simply give the school from which you received your degree, your major, and your date of graduation. The body of the résumé is essentially a classification. You sort your experiences—educational, business, extracurricular—into categories that reveal capabilities related to the jobs you seek. Remember that in addition to professional skills, employers want good communication skills and good interpersonal skills. Possible categories are *technical, professional, team building, communication, research, sales, production, administration, and consulting*. (See JobTrak.com for other categories.)

The best way to prepare a functional résumé is to brainstorm it. Begin by listing some categories that you think might display your experiences well. Brainstorm further by listing your experiences in those categories. When you have good listings, select the categories and experiences that show you in the best light. Remember, you don't have to display everything you've ever done, just those things that might strike a potential employer as valuable. Finish off the functional resume with a brief reverse chronological work history and a date line, as in the chronological résumé.

Targeted Résumé The main advantage of the targeted résumé (Figure 14-6) is also its main disadvantage: You zero in on one goal. If you can achieve that goal, fine—but the narrowness of the approach may block you out of other possibilities. The targeted résumé displays your capabilities and achievements well, but, like the functional résumé, it's a format that may not have complete acceptance among all employers.

The address and education portions of the targeted résumé are the same as those in the functional résumé. The whole point of a targeted résumé is that you are aiming at a specific job objective. Therefore, you express your job objective as precisely as you can.

Next you list your capabilities that match the job objective. Obviously, you have to understand the job you are seeking to make the proper match. Capabilities are things you could do if called upon to do so. To be credible, they must be supported by achievements or accomplishments, which are listed next in your résumé. You finish off the targeted résumé with a reverse chronological work history and a date line, as in the functional résumé.

As with the functional résumé, brainstorming is a good way to discover the material you need for your targeted résumé. Under the headings Capabilities and Achievements, make as many statements about yourself as you can. When you are finished, select those statements that best relate to the job you are seeking.

Paper Résumés As Figures 14-4, 14-5, and 14-6 illustrate, in a paper résumé, you use variations in type and spacing to emphasize and organize information. Make the résumé good-looking—leave generous margins and white space. Use distinctive headings and subheadings. The use of a two-column spread is common, as is the use of boldface in headings. You might use 12-point sans serif type for headings and 10-point serif type for the text. (See Chapter 11) Be careful, though, not to overdo the typographical variation, which can quickly change a sensible arrangement that showcases your information into a hodgepodge that overshadows the content. Use good paper in a standard color such as white or off-white. It's best if your letters and résumés are on matching paper.

To whom should you send letters and résumés? When answering an advertisement, you should follow whatever instructions are given there. When operating on your own, send the materials, if at all possible, to the person in the organization for whom you would be working—that is, the person who directly supervises the position. This person normally has the power to hire for the position. Your research into the company may turn up the name you need. If not, don't be afraid of calling the company switchboard and asking directly for a name and title. If need be, write to human resources directors. Whatever you do, write to *someone* by name. Don't send "To Whom It May Concern" letters on your job hunt. It's wasted effort.

Sometimes, of course, you may gain an interview without having sent a letter of application—for example, when recruiters come to your campus. Bring a résumé with you and give it to the interviewer at the start of the interview. He or she will appreciate this help tremendously. Furthermore, the résumé, by giving the interviewer a point of departure for questions, often helps to structure the interview to your best advantage.

Electronic Résumés Not surprisingly, with the increasing use of computers and the Internet in business, traditional paper formats frequently have to be modified to become electronically useful. We describe three such modifications: the scannable résumé, the e-mail résumé, and the World Wide Web résumé.

Scannable Résumé A scannable résumé is a paper résumé that has been modified so that it can be electronically scanned. Many organizations now scan the paper résumés they receive and enter the information into a special database for quick retrieval by keywords. (See Figure 14-7.) For example, if the company needs an environmental specialist, the hiring manager scours the database for words such as *environment* and *ecology*. Only job candidates with the keywords on their résumé will be considered. In a scannable résumé, therefore, you must make sure that the keywords of your occupation, often nouns, are present in abundance. You must get through the computer to be considered by a human reader.

For your résumé to be scannable, you must also modify its format. Ordinarily, a scanner reads résumés from left to right and often makes mistakes if it encounters such features as italics, underlining, changes of typeface, and small sizes of type. In designing your scannable résumé, therefore, adopt the following guidelines:

- Display all information in a single column.
- Align all information on the left margin.
- Use spaces instead of tabs to separate headings from text, or place headings on a separate line.
- Use a single typeface.
- Use all capital letters for your name and major headings.
- Use 12-point type.
- Do not use italics and underlining.
- Do not use rules and borders.
- Submit a clean and crisp laser-printed copy.
- Do not fold or staple the résumé.

E-Mail Résumé Often organizations bypass paper résumés entirely, preferring to solicit and receive candidate information electronically. Such organizations, for example, might announce their job openings on the World

Wide Web and invite applications with a link to the e-mail address of the hiring manager.

Like the scannable résumé, the e-mail résumé is subject to keyword searches. Compose it accordingly, being sure to include the appropriate key words. (See Figure 14-8.)

In creating an e-mail résumé, do not use boldface, italics, variations in type size or typeface, and so forth. Essentially, creating an e-mail résumé is like typing with a typewriter, including the uniform spacing of letters. In addition, the line length is restricted to sixty-five characters (including spaces), or approximately five inches. If you are creating your résumé with a word processing program, keep these restrictions in mind: Set the width of your page for 5 inches, and eliminate all special characters and formatting. Follow these guidelines:

- Display all information in a single column.
- Align all information on the left margin.
- Use spaces instead of tabs to separate headings from text or place headings on a separate line.
- Use all capital letters for your name and major headings.

World Wide Web Résumé Technologically sophisticated companies all over the world use the search engines of the World Wide Web to scour for résumés of promising job candidates. Creating a World Wide Web résumé, therefore, offers you a worldwide opportunity to locate a job. (See Figure 14-9.)

HotJobs.com offers help in developing a Web site. Also, see Developing a World Wide Web site in Appendix B.

Incorporate a variety of internal links so that visitors to your résumé site will interact with the pages. For example, the address of a former employer could be a link that opens a window to his or her e-mail address. The listing of your major and minor could link to a page that identifies pertinent courses. The mention of a special project could link to a detailed description of the online version of that project.

A WWW résumé has multimedia possibilities. In addition to the usual listing of information, you could add pertinent graphics, sound, and animation. Use audio to speak directly to prospective employers about your most important job skills.

Especially remember to register your site with all appropriate search engines—this is how prospective employers will locate you. Also, remember to fill your résumé with the keywords that prospective employers will use to conduct

their search. Finally, be sure to include a link to your e-mail address. That is how interested employers will most likely contact you.

As discussed earlier, the WWW offers a rich variety of job-finding services. When you e-mail your résumé to such a service or submit specific biographical information electronically, it is then automatically compiled in a standardized resume format. The service then adds your résumé to its international database of available employees, thus making your résumé readily accessible through the Internet to prospective employers all over the world.

Follow-Up Letters

Write *follow-up letters* (1) if after two weeks you have had no answer to your letter of application; (2) after an interview; (3) if a company fails to offer you a job; and (4) to accept or refuse a job.

No Answer When a company has not answered your original letter of application, write again. Be gracious, not complaining—something like this:

Dear Mr. Souther:

On 12 April I applied for a position with your company. I have not heard from you, so perhaps my original letter and résumé have been misplaced. I enclose copies of them.

If you have already reached some decision concerning my application, I would appreciate your letting me know.

I look forward to hearing from you.

Sincerely yours,

After an Interview Within a day's time, follow up your interview with a letter. Such a letter draws favorable attention to yourself as someone who understands business courtesy and good communication practice. Express appreciation for the interview. Draw attention to any of your qualifications that seemed to be important to the interviewer. Express your willingness to live with any special conditions of employment, such as relocation. Make clear that you want the job and feel qualified to do it. If you include a specific question in your letter, it may hasten a reply. Your letter might look like this one:

Dear Ms. Marchand:

Thank you for speaking with me last Tuesday about the food supervisor position you have open.

Working in a hospital food service relates well to my experience and interests. The job you have available is one I am qualified to do. A feasibility study I am currently writing as a senior project deals with a food service's ability to provide more varied diets to people with restricted dietary requirements. May I send you a copy next week when it is completed?

I understand that the work you described would include alternating weekly night shifts with weekly day shifts. This requirement presents no difficulty for me.

Tuesdays and Thursdays are best for me for any future interviews you may wish, but I can arrange a time at your convenience.

Sincerely yours,

After Being Refused a Job When a company refuses you a job, good tactics dictate that you acknowledge the refusal. Express thanks for the time spent with you, and state your regret that no opening exists at the present time. If you like, express the hope of being considered in the future. You never know; it might happen.

Accepting or Refusing a Job Writing an acceptance letter presents few problems. Be brief. Thank the employer for the job offer, and accept the job. Settle when you will report for work, and express pleasure at the prospect of working for the organization. A good letter of acceptance might read as follows:

Dear Mr. Solem:

Thank you for offering me a job as research assistant with your firm. I happily accept. I can easily be at work by 1 July as you have requested.

I look forward to working with Price Industries and particularly to the opportunity of doing research with Dr. Gore.

Sincerely yours,

Writing a letter of refusal can be difficult. Be as gracious as possible. Be brief but not so brief as to suggest rudeness or indifference. Make it clear that you appreciate the offer. If you can, give a reason for your refusal. The employer who has spent time and money in interviewing you and corresponding with you deserves these courtesies. And, of course, your own self-interest is involved. Some day you may wish to reapply to an organization that for the moment you must turn down. A good letter of refusal might look like this one:

Dear Ms. White:

I enjoyed my visit to the research department of your company. I would very much have liked to work with the people I met there. I thank you for offering me the opportunity to do so.

However, after much serious thought, I have decided that the research opportunities offered me in another job are closer to the interests I developed at the university. Therefore, I have accepted the other job and regret that I cannot accept yours.

I appreciate the courtesy and thoughtfulness that you and your associates have extended me.

Sincerely yours,

INTERVIEWING

The immediate goal of all your preparation and letter and résumé writing is an interview with a potential employer. Interviews come about in various ways. If you network successfully, you will obtain interviews that allow you to ask questions of people already on the job. If you impress the person you are talking to, such information-seeking interviews may turn into interviews that assess your potential as an employee. Your letters and résumés may obtain interviews for you. Recruiters may come to your campus and schedule screening interviews with graduating students. As their name suggests, screening interviews are preliminary interviews from which the recruiters choose people to go further in the process.

Going further often means multiple interviews at the organization's headquarters. In one day, you might interview with a human resources staff person, the person who would be your boss if you were employed, and, perhaps, his or her boss. If you make it to the point of being offered a job, you will likely have an interview in which you negotiate the details of your job, salary, and benefits. All this can be quite stressful. The better prepared you are, the easier it will go. Screening and follow-up interviews follow a somewhat similar pattern. We discuss them first and then give you some advice about negotiation.

The Interview

If you have prepared properly, you should show up at the interview knowing a good deal about the organization. A comment by one interviewer emphasizes the importance of this:

It's really impressive to a recruiter when a job candidate knows about the company. If you're a national recruiter, and you've been on the road for days and days, you have no idea how pleasant it is to have a student say,

“I know your company is doing such and such, and has plants here and here, and I’d like to work on this particular project.” Otherwise I have to go into my standard spiel, and God knows I’ve certainly heard myself give that often enough.⁴

You should have the following with you: your résumé, in both regular and scannable formats; a portfolio of your work, if appropriate; pen and notebook; a list of your references; and your card (see Figure 14-2).

For interviews, you should be well groomed and dressed conservatively. Arrive at the place of the interview early enough to be relaxed. Shake hands firmly but not aggressively, and make eye contact. Give the interviewer a copy of your résumé, and, when the interviewer sits down, sit down comfortably. Body language is important. Be neither rigid or slouching.

Most interviews follow a three-part pattern. To begin, the interviewer may generate small talk designed to set you at ease. Particularly at a screening interview, the interviewer may give some information about the company. This is a good chance for you to ask some questions that demonstrate that you have done your homework about the company. But don’t force your questions upon the interviewer.

Most of the middle portion of the interview will be taken up with questions aimed at assessing your skills and likes and how you might be of value to the organization. Well-done self-assessment obviously is a necessity in answering such questions. Figure 14-10 lists some of the commonly asked questions. If you prepare answers for them, you should be able to handle most of the questions you are likely to receive. Certainly, have well-thought-out answers to questions concerning both your short-range and long-range goals. In your answers, relate always to the organization. To the question, “What do you want to be doing five years from now?” the answer, “Running my own consulting firm,” might bring the interview to an early close.

To the question, “What can you tell me about yourself?” the interviewer really doesn’t expect an extended life history. This question provides you the opportunity to talk about your work and educational experiences and your skills. Try to relate your skills and experience to the needs of the organization. Don’t overlook the people and communication skills essential to nearly every professional job. In your answer to this and other questions, be specific in your examples. If you say something like “I have good managerial skills,” immediately back it up with an occasion or experience that supports your statement.

The question “Why do you want to work for us?” allows you to display what you have learned about the organization. In answering this question, you should again show that what you have to offer meshes with what the company needs.

The question about how you would spend your life if you won \$10 million is an interesting one. “Lolling around the beach” is obviously the wrong answer, but “I’d continue to work for your corporation,” might create a bad impression, as well. What the question is intended to get at are those worthwhile things in your life that you really enjoy doing. Building houses for Habitat for Humanity or setting up sports programs for inner-city youths might qualify as good answers. So might investing in the establishment of an e-commerce company.

In answering questions about your strengths and weaknesses, be honest, but don’t betray weaknesses that could eliminate you from consideration. “I can’t stand criticism,” would likely finish you off. “Sometimes, I don’t know when to quit when I’m trying to solve a problem,” given as a weakness could be perceived as a strength.

In the last part of the interview you will likely be given a chance to ask some questions of your own. It’s a good time to get more details about the job or jobs that may be open. Ask about the organization’s goals. “What is the company most proud of?” is a good question. Don’t ask these questions just to ask questions. The interview is a good time for you to find out if you really want to work for an organization. Not every organization is going to be a good fit for what you have to offer and what you want to do. Unless the interviewer has raised the question of salary and benefits, don’t ask questions about these matters.

If you really want to go to work for the organization, make that clear before the interview ends. But don’t allow your willingness to appear as desperation. At some point in the interview, be sure to get the interviewer’s name (spelled correctly!), title, address, phone number, e-mail address, and fax number. You’ll need them for later correspondence. When the interviewer thanks you for coming, thank him or her for seeing you and leave. Don’t drag the interview out when it’s clearly over. The *Princeton Review* <www.review.com> is an excellent source of information on how to conduct yourself during an interview and the negotiations that may follow the interview.

Negotiation

Interviewers seldom bring up salary and benefits until they either see you as a good prospect or are sure they want to hire you. If they offer you the job, the negotiation is sometimes done in a separate interview. For example, your future boss may offer you the job and then send you to negotiate with the human resources staff.

Sometimes, the negotiator may offer you a salary. At other times, you may be asked to name a salary. Now is the time to put to good use the information you gathered on the Internet sources for salary we cited on pages 360–361. You may also have received useful salary information through your networking activities.

Your research in these sources will give you not a specific salary but a salary range. If asked to name a salary, do not ask for the bottom of the range. Ask for as near the top as you reasonably can. The negotiator will respect you the more for your knowing what you are worth. However, balance the compensation package—vacations, pension plans, health care, educational opportunities, and so forth—against the salary. Some compensation packages are worth a good deal of money and may allow you to take a lower salary.

Also the location of the job plays a role. Monstermoving.com <<http://Monstermoving.com>> provides information and analysis that allows you to compare the worth of salaries by location. For example, a \$45,000 salary in 1999 Savannah, Georgia, would provide the same lifestyle as a \$50,000 salary in Minneapolis, Minnesota.

Before and After the Interview

If you have not participated in job interviews before, you should practice. Get together with several friends. Using the information that we have given you and that you have gathered for yourself, role play several interviews. As two of you play interviewer and interviewee, the others act as observers. They should look for strengths and weaknesses in your answers, diction, grammar, and body language. The members of the group need to appraise one another honestly. Practice until you feel comfortable with the process.

When an interview is over, write down your impressions as soon as you can. How did your clothes compare to the interviewer's? Were there unexpected questions? How good were your answers? What did you learn about the organization? What did you learn about a specific job or jobs? Did anything make you uncomfortable about the organization? Do you think you would fit in there? By the next day, get a thank-you note (letter, e-mail, or fax) off to the interviewer.

PLANNING AND REVISION CHECKLISTS

You will find the planning and revision checklists that follow Chapter 2, Composing, and Chapter 4, Writing for Your Readers, valuable in planning and revising any presentation of technical information. The following questions specifically apply to the job hunt. They summarize the key points in this chapter and provide a checklist for planning and revising.

PREPERATION

Planning and Revision

- Have you completed the self-assessment questionnaire in Figure 14-1?

- Do you have a complete record of your past job and educational experiences?
- Do you know your strengths and weaknesses, your skills, and your qualifications for the jobs you seek? Do you have clear career objectives?
- Do you need professional career counseling?
- Have you researched the Internet and sources to find job information?
- Have you found organizations that fit your needs?
- Have you started your networking?
- Have you had business cards made up?
- Have you called on businesses and set up informational interviews?
- Have you joined a professional organization relevant to your career field?
- Have you located agencies and individuals who can help you in your job hunt?
- Have you kept good records of your networking?

THE CORRESPONDENCE OF THE JOB HUNT

Planning

- For your letter of application:

Do you have the needed names and addresses?

What position do you seek?

How did you learn of this position?

Why are you qualified for this position?

What interests you about the company?

What can you do for the organization that it needs?

Can you do anything to make an interview more convenient for the employer?

How can the employer reach you?

- For your résumé:

Do you have all the necessary details of your past educational and work experiences (dates, job descriptions, schools, majors, degrees, extracurricular activities, etc.)?

Which résumé format will suit your experience and capabilities best?

Chronological? Functional? Targeted? Why?

Do you need to prepare your résumé in electronic formats? What keywords will you use?

In a functional résumé, which categories would best suit your experience and capabilities?

Do you know enough about the job you are seeking to use a targeted résumé?

Do you have permission to use the names of three people as references?

- What follow-up letters do you need? To follow up on no answer to your application? To follow up on an interview? To respond to a job refusal? To accept or refuse a job?

Revision

- Do your letter of application and résumé reflect adequate preparation and self-assessment?
- Are your letter of application and résumé completely free of grammatical and spelling errors? Are they well designed and good looking?
- For the letter of application:
 - Have you the right tone—self-confidence without arrogance?
 - Does your letter show how you could be valuable to the employer? Will it raise the employer's interest?
 - Does your letter reflect interest in a specific job?
 - Have you highlighted the courses and work experience that best suit you for the job you seek?
 - Have you made it clear you are seeking an interview and made it convenient for the employer to arrange one?
- For the résumé:
 - Have you chosen the résumé type that best suits your experiences and qualifications?
 - Have you limited your résumé to one page?
 - Have you put your educational and work experience in reverse chronological order?
 - Have you given your information in phrases rather than complete sentences?
 - Have you used active verbs to describe your experience? Appropriate keywords?
 - Does the personal information presented enhance your job potential?
 - Do you have permission to use the names of those you list as references?
 - If you are using a functional résumé, do the categories reflect appropriately your capabilities and experience?
 - Has your targeted résumé zeroed in on an easily recognizable career objective?
 - Do the listed achievements support the capabilities listed?
- Have you followed up every interview with a letter? Are the follow-up letters you have written gracious in tone? Do the letters invite further communication in some way?
- Does your letter of acceptance of a job show an understanding of the necessary details, such as when you report to work?

- Does your letter of refusal thank the employer for time spent with you and make clear that you appreciate the offer?

THE INTERVIEW

Planning

- Have you found out as much about the organization as you can—its products, goals, locations, and so forth?
- Have you practiced interviewing using the questions in Figure 14-10?
- Have you the proper clothes for an interview?
- Do you have good questions to ask the interviewer?
- Do you know the salary range for the jobs you seek?

Revision

- How did your clothes compare to the interviewer's?
- Did you answer questions well? Which answers need improving?
- Did the interviewer ask any unexpected questions?
- How did the interviewer respond to your questions? Did he or she seem to think they were relevant?
- How well do you think you did? Why?
- Do you think your career goals and this organization are a good fit?

EXERCISES

1. Work out a schedule for your job hunt. Allocate time and set dates for completing the following stages:
 - Self-assessment
 - Gathering job information
 - Networking
 - Preparing a letter of application
 - Preparing a résumé
 - Practicing the interview
2. Complete for yourself a summary of your self-assessment. Complete and turn in to your instructor a summary of your job information search, a networking plan, a sample letter of application and résumé, and a summary of the salary ranges for entry-level jobs in your field.
3. In groups of four, plan and carry out practice interviews. Everyone in the group should get the chance to play interviewer and interviewee once.

4. Write a letter to some organization in which you apply for full- or part-time work. Brainstorm and work out in rough form the three kinds of résumé: chronological, functional, and targeted. Choose the one that suits your purposes best, and work it into both regular paper and scannable form to accompany your letter. (It may well be that you are actually seeking work and can write your letter with a specific organization in mind.)
5. Prepare a fact sheet for yourself that contains the following information that will be useful to you in your job hunt:
 - Current and future job prospects in your field. What are the qualifications needed for the jobs available?
 - Salary ranges for jobs for which you are qualified.
 - Three places where you might post your résumé.
 - Five companies that hire people in your field, accompanied by brief profiles of two of the companies.
 - Useful information about a city that interests you as a place to live.
 - Information about the job-hunting assistance offered by a state in which you might wish to live.
 - Jobs available in the federal government in your discipline.

Format your fact sheet in a way that makes it most useful to you. However, provide your instructor with a copy of it.

6. Using both this chapter and Chapter 7, Writing for International Readers, as your guides, prepare a letter of application to an employer in a country in either Latin America or Asia.

FIGURE 14-1 • Self-Assessment Questionnaire

Source: U.S. Department of Labor. *Job Search Guide: Strategies for Professionals* (Washington, DC: GPO, 1993).

Figure 14-2 • Business Card

Figure 14-3 • Letter of Application

Figure 14-4 • Chronological Résumé

Figure 14-5 • Functional Résumé

Figure 14-6 • Targeted Resume

Figure 14-7 • Functional Résumé in Scannable Format

Figure 14-8 • Targeted Résumé in E-Mail Format

Figure 14-9 • World Wide Web Résumé
Links are indicated in color.

Figure 14-10 • Frequently Asked Interview Questions