

Back to Job Search Basics

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In this time of corporate upheaval, economic downturn, and general uneasiness, many job seekers rush to get resumes out and interviews set up. In this rush, simple details that can make a candidate stand out among their peers are often left by the wayside. Today, we'll review these job search basics and define how adhering to these ideas will help you get the attention you want from recruiters!



Make Connecting Easy: Email 101

Use an email address that makes sense. Think about how email programs make suggestions when you begin entering an email address in the "To" line. By keeping your email address as close to your name as possible, it will be easier for a potential employer to pick you out of a list and contact you. For example, an email address that combines your initials and the year it was created isn't as instinctual as "firstnamelastname@aol.com." Also, avoid including years of birth or graduation in your email - there is no sense revealing this information unnecessarily.

Set up your email program so that it includes the original message string in your reply. When an employer sends you a note asking if you are available on Thursday, October 30 at 3pm for an interview with the CEO, it will be helpful if your reply has their original note attached. This way, they can refresh their memory on why they contacted you.

Put your name, email address, and phone number on each piece of correspondence. Make use of email signatures and be sure each page of your resume and cover letter has your contact information. Don't make recruiters go looking for your phone number or email address. Make it quick and simple for them!

Be Prepared and Consider the Benefits

On an interview day, be in 'interview mode' from the moment you get up in the morning. You never know who you will cross paths with along the way. Be polite to the security personnel in the building lobby, and be professional and courteous to the receptionist. Don't drive around the parking lot to kill time, don't talk to yourself in the elevator, don't arrive more than 10 minutes early, don't eat at the interview facility, and don't do any number of other things that will make people question your viability as a candidate.

Keep your messages positive, yet honest, in an interview. When asked why you want to leave your employer, instead of saying, "My company is stifling my growth and they micro-manage everything I do!" try saying, "I work for a small company, which means I've reached the ceiling there; now, I would like to join a company that..."

Map out your salary needs and best-case requirements long before you start negotiating with an employer. Think about not only the salary you want, but also the benefits you are seeking. Consider the following negotiable benefits:

- Sign on and performance bonuses
- 401K programs
- Stock options
- Medical and dental insurance benefits
- Vacation / PTO days
- Flex-time hours
- Termination benefits
- Transportation compensation
- Use of communication devices.

You should decide which benefits you are willing to compromise on or trade for another. As an example, weigh the following offers:

Offer A:

- \$150K
- Full tuition reimbursement
- Five weeks vacation
- Flex-time hours

Offer B:

- \$200K
- No tuition reimbursement
- Three weeks vacation
- 50% contribution to health insurance premiums

Which will you accept? What will you propose in response?

Establish Your Expertise

Make your expertise apparent in writing and in conversation.

To start, give your resume a logical filename that reflects your expertise. Using 'Jeff's Resume - Updated 2008.doc' doesn't lend itself to branding you as an expert in your field - nor does it provide any name association for you. By naming the document 'Jeff Grossman HR - Operations.doc' you immediately remind the reader of both your name and your profession.

When writing your thank you note following an interview, be sure to provide information that will jog the person's memory of who you are. It might be as simple as saying, "Thank you for meeting with me yesterday. I enjoyed learning about the

operations management position and especially valued the connection you made between effective team leadership and increased revenues." This strategy also demonstrates to the potential employer that you paid attention during the interview and understand the position.

To extend your expertise through conversation, provide examples to demonstrate your experience in any given situation. When an interviewer asks what you will do to handle a dispute between two subordinates, do not simply say, "I would meet with the individuals." Instead, tell the interviewer how you've handled that situation in the past by laying out the incident, "At ABC Company, there was a situation in which two associates were..." Use the S.T.A.R. (Situation, Task, Action, Result) strategy to tell the story, complete with outcomes and achievements.

Also remember to maintain a distinction between your work and that of your team. Employers are interviewing you, not your entire group. When discussing your experience, you need to demonstrate your value. Use phrases like, "My role on the team was..." to effectively communicate your specific contributions on a large project.

When the employer asks if you have any questions - have some! Ask about the management style of the company and your direct supervisor. Ask how others have failed and succeeded in the position. Ask about the interviewer's progression within the company. Ask what the interviewer likes about the company and what they might change. By asking these questions (and others directly related to the company and position) you will better understand their expectations and be able to judge whether the job would be a good fit for your working style and skills.

By following these simple, yet effective search strategies, your job search will be more effective and on point. Employers appreciate when they meet with candidates that have properly prepared for the entire process. It tells the employer that you understand their needs and are the solution to their problems.

Kimberly Schneiderman is the owner of [City Career Services](#), a company that provides job search tools including [Resumes, Cover Letters, and Interview Workshops](#) to goal-oriented professionals at all levels and across all industries.