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## Chapter 20

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### Communicating for Employment

If you call failures experiments, you can put them in your résumé and claim them as achievements.

- Mason Cooley

Volunteer—not so you can build your résumé, but so you can build yourself.

- Author Unknown

## Getting Started

## INTRODUCTORY EXERCISES

1. **Where Are You Now?** Assess your present knowledge and attributes by completing the self-inventory below. Where do you need to focus your efforts when it comes to your job search?

	Yes	Unsure	No
1. I have a good understanding of my career options.			
2. I have a good understanding of the work-related skills I will need in my chosen career and a plan to get them.			
3. I know where I can get useful information about careers.			
4. I have created a transferable skills inventory.			
5. I have a written up-to-date résumé.			
6. I know how to prepare an effective cover letter.			
7. I have both professional and social networks.			
8. I have discussed my career objectives with my academic advisor.			
9. I am comfortable in interviews.			
10. I have chosen my major based on the job market.			
11. I have chosen my major based on my personal interests.			

Source: [citation redacted per publisher request].

2. Conduct an online search for job descriptions associated with your chosen career and think about what tasks are accomplished in a typical day or week. If possible, also talk to someone who is employed in that career. Note the kinds of writing skills that are involved in carrying out job duties or tasks. Share your results with the class.

As you prepare to embark on your job search, you may be asking yourself a couple of questions:

**I won't graduate and be in the job market for a couple of years. Do I need to work on résumés and networking now?** Yes, absolutely! Even though you aren't yet graduating from college, there are many benefits to starting now. As a student, you are likely to be applying for part-time jobs, internships, and even volunteer positions. Networking is a process of building relationships, and the strongest relationships are built over time. Having a good network will help identify interesting and relevant opportunities. Having a résumé that summarizes your strengths and skills will give you an advantage over other candidates who apply without a résumé, because job application forms rarely give the opportunity to highlight your strengths. Furthermore, a résumé is an updated record of your skills and experience; it makes sense to capture your accomplishments as they happen and will save you a lot of time in the future.

**I don't have any work experience. How can I write a résumé?** You may not have any work experience, but you do have experience and skills. Focus on your transferable skills, and list examples of how you have used them. Think of organizations you have been involved in and volunteer work you have done. It is OK to include high school accomplishments if you've graduated within the last 3-5 years, and you can replace them with college accomplishments as you gain them. It is also OK to include your GPA if you're proud of it, because among other things a good GPA can help show that you are disciplined and organized.

This chapter will help you develop a sense of who you are and what you do well. You'll discover the importance of networking, the résumé, and the cover letter. Finally, you will learn how to prepare (and ace!) the job interview.

## 20.1 Developing Your Skills and Experience

### LEARNING OBJECTIVES

1. Understand the difference between work-based skills and transferable skills.
2. Learn how to use jobs, internships, and volunteering.

The employment market and job-seeking techniques have changed significantly over the past ten years and will continue to change; it is not as easy as it once was to map out a clear career path. However, a clear direction can still provide enough flexibility to respond to the changing needs of today's job market. In fact, building flexibility into your career plans is a requirement for achieving a successful career.

Consider the ways in which the job market has changed—and what it may mean to your planning:

- You will likely be employed by many organizations in your lifetime. The idea of working for a single employer is no longer the rule but rather the exception. In fact, Human Resources and Skills Development Canada reports that people will have on average approximately three careers and eight jobs over a lifetime. This trend means today's graduates need to be very flexible in their career plans and that they should make an effort to identify and develop transferable skills in order to navigate the changing employment market.
- Five years from now, you may be working in a job that doesn't even exist in the present. As new technology accelerates and national and global priorities (such as going green or national security) take on a new sense of urgency, new needs are identified and new jobs will be created to fill those needs. Think about this: five years ago, a search engine optimization (SEO) specialist was a job in only a handful of Web-centric companies. With the meteoric growth of Google, SEO is now a common role in just about any marketing department—and a job in relatively high demand. In the same way, the aging population has created new opportunities in elder care, and new discoveries and approaches in science have created fields like biotechnology and nanotechnology. Today's students and job hunters must become lifetime learners to keep up with new trends.

- The physical location of a job is no longer as important as it once was. Other than jobs that require you to serve customers in a specific location or region or jobs that require specialized equipment (as in manufacturing facilities), companies increasingly have off-site employees who stay connected via the Internet. This means that students and job hunters should be able to demonstrate the ability to work independently and produce results without consistent, direct personal supervision.
- The growth of job posting sites online has created a glut of applicants for most posted positions. You have access to millions of job opportunities via the Web, but so do hundreds or thousands of other job seekers. Each employer must cull through hundreds of résumés received for each job posted on the Web. Strategies for standing out in this crowded field become very important.

These factors combine to create a job environment that is different from what most people might expect. The way you prepare for a career needs to be more flexible and more personalized. Technology will play an important role in your career development. Linking your demonstrable skills to the needs of a job will be a key to your success.

### Have You Got Mad Skillz?

Many of the skills you will need are career specific: we call those **work-based skills**<sup>1</sup>. These include knowing how to use equipment that is specific to your career and mastering processes that are used in your field. While some of these skills are learned and perfected on the job, you may be in a vocational track program (such as for computer programmers, nurses aides, or paralegals) where you are learning your work-based skills.

These are not the only skills you will need to be successful. The second set of skills you must have are called **transferable skills**<sup>2</sup> because they can be used in almost all occupations. These include thinking skills, communication skills, listening skills—in fact, most of the skills we have been stressing throughout this book are transferable skills because they are also key to success in life. This skill set is very broad, and your extent of mastery will vary from skill to skill; therefore, you should identify those skills that are most important to your career objective and develop and master them.

1. Skills you need that are specific to your chosen career.

2. Skills that can be used in almost all occupations.

Donna Dunning, writing on Dan Schawbel's Personal Branding Blog, lists her Top 9 Transferable Skills as follows:

1. Managing change
2. Communicating
3. Leading
4. Learning
5. Working with numbers and data
6. Problem solving
7. Achieving results
8. Working on a team
9. Thinking

As you reflect on the list above, you will find that you have at least some experience in many of them, but you probably haven't thought that much about them because you use them in so many ways that you take them for granted. It is important to think about all your activities and consider the skills you have applied successfully; your transferable skills inventory is larger than you may think. For example, if you volunteer as a big brother or big sister, you have skills in active listening, mentoring, time management, and probably coaching. If you have written a college paper, you have skills in time management, researching, communicating, and writing.

Be aware of the ways you develop and master transferable skills. Keep a list of them, and update it every month or two. That will be a valuable tool for you as you work with your career development and ultimately with job applications.

### **Are You Ready for a Test Drive?**

Are you frustrated by the fact that even entry-level jobs require some experience? Yes, employers look at your previous experience, and this often stumps students who are in the early stages of their careers. Relevant experience is not only important as a job qualification; it can also provide you with a means to explore or test out occupational options and build a contact list that will be valuable when networking for your career.

But how can you gain relevant experience without experience to begin with? You should consider three options: volunteering, internships, and part-time employment.

**Volunteering** is especially good for students looking to work in social and artistic occupations, but students looking for work in other occupation types should not shy away from this option. You can master many transferable skills through volunteering! Certainly it is easy to understand that if you want to be in an artistic field, volunteering at a museum or performance centre can provide you with

relevant experience. But what if you want to work in an engineering field? Volunteering for an organization promoting green energy would be helpful. With a little brainstorming and an understanding of your career field, you should be able to come up with relevant volunteer experiences for just about any career.

**Internships** focus on gaining practical experience related to a course or program of study. Interns work for an organization or company for a reduced wage or stipend or volunteer in exchange for practical experience. A successful internship program should create a win-win situation: the intern should add value to the company's efforts, and the company should provide a structured program in which the student can learn or practice work-related skills. Internships are typically held during summers or school vacation periods, though on occasion they can be scheduled for a set block of time each week during the course of a regular school term.

Once you secure an internship (usually through a normal job application process aided by a faculty member or the career guidance or placement office), it is important to have a written agreement with the employer in which the following is stated:

1. The learning objective for the internship
2. The time commitment you will invest (including work hours)
3. The work the company expects you to do
4. The work your supervisor will do for the college and for the student (internship progress reports, evaluations, etc.)

This written agreement may seem like overkill, but it is critical to ensure that the internship experience doesn't degrade into unsatisfying tasks such as photocopying and filing.

Remember that a key objective of your internship is to develop relationships you can use for mentoring and networking during your career. Befriend people, ask questions, go the extra mile in terms of what is expected of you, and generally participate in the enterprise. The extra effort will pay dividends in the future.

**Part-time employment** may be an option if your study schedule provides enough free time. If so, be sure to investigate opportunities in your field of study. Ask your instructors and the career guidance or placement office to help you generate job leads, even if they are not specifically in the area you want to be working in. It is valuable and relevant to hold a job designing Web sites for an advertising agency, for example, if your specific job objective is to produce event marketing. The

understanding of how an advertising agency works and the contacts you make will make the experience worthwhile.

If you are lucky enough to have a job in your field of study already and are using your college experience to enhance your career opportunities, be sure to link what you are learning to what you do on the job—and what you do on the job to what you are learning. Ask your supervisor and employer about ideas you have picked up in class, and ask your instructors about the practices you apply at work. This cross-linking will make you a much stronger candidate for future opportunities and a much better student in the short term.

### KEY TAKEAWAYS

- Be sure you can identify and show mastery in transferable skills as well as work-related skills.
- Experience through volunteering, internships, and part-time jobs will illustrate to potential employers that you can work in your chosen field, but it is also instrumental to help create a network of colleagues to enhance your career development.

## EXERCISE

## Transferable Skills Inventory

In the list of forty transferable skills that follows, *underline* five skills you believe you have mastered and then describe specific ways in which you have used each skill successfully. Then *circle* five skills you think are important to your career that you have not mastered yet. Describe specific steps you plan to take to master those skills.

Active listening	Decision making	Negotiating	Researching
Active learning	Editing	Observing	Selling
Analyzing	Evaluating	Organizing	Speaking a second language
Budgeting	Forecasting	Perceiving Feelings	Supervising
Coaching	Goal setting	Persuading	Teaching
Communicating	Handling a crisis	Planning	Teamwork
Consulting	Handling details	Problem solving	Time management
Creative thinking	Manipulating numbers	Public speaking	Training
Critical thinking	Mentoring	Reading	Visualizing
Customer service	Motivating	Reporting	Writing

Skills I have mastered	Examples of how I used them

Skills I have mastered	Examples of how I used them

Skills I still need to master	How I will master them

<b>Skills I still need to master</b>	<b>How I will master them</b>

Source: [citation redacted per publisher request].

## 20.2 The Power of Networking

### LEARNING OBJECTIVES

1. Learn how to develop a network.
2. Keep track of your contacts.
3. Attend conferences and trade shows.

There is some wisdom in the saying that it's who you know that brings success in getting a job. Consider the following:

- It is estimated that only 20 percent of new jobs and vacancies are advertised or posted.
- A Web posting for a job typically yields over 150 applicants for a position.
- Sixty to eighty percent of jobs are found through personal contact and networking.

What exactly is networking? In its simplest terms, it is the process of engaging others in helping you reach an objective. Three words in this definition deserve a closer look:

The process of **networking**<sup>3</sup> involves three basic phases: prospect identification and management, making contact, and follow-up.

### All Contacts Are Equal, but Some More So Than Others

The first phase involves identifying whom you should be speaking to and pinpointing the people who can introduce you to them. This is like the game Six Degrees of Kevin Bacon applied to your own life. Whom do you need to speak to? That really depends on your objectives. If you are trying to learn about an occupation, it can be just about anyone involved with that field. If you are in the process of trying to land an internship or a job, you want to reach the person who will make the hiring decision.

3. The process of engaging others in helping you reach an objective.

Your objective also defines how you get started with your networking. In the first case, you might want to start with people you met at an industry conference; in the job-specific case, you'll want to think about whom you know in that company or

who might know someone in that company. If you don't have any contacts who fit that description, whom do you know who lives in the town in which the company is based or in a nearby town?

Your success in this phase of networking will be driven by the quality of the candidates (those who can directly influence your ability to reach your objectives) as well as the quantity (those who will lead you to the most contacts). This is why there is no such thing as a bad contact.

As important as having contacts is your ability to access those contacts when you need to. That is where contact management comes into play. Don't be caught wishing you could call someone you met three weeks ago...if you could only remember what you did with their business card! There are countless ways to keep track of contacts, from writing names in an address book, to keeping a Rolodex, to using a computer-based contact management system or simply an Excel spreadsheet. Choose a system you feel comfortable with—comfortable enough to use regularly. A sophisticated system that has all the bells and whistles is no good to you if you can't use it.

Let technology help you in this endeavour. Your computer, PDA, or smartphone probably has features for capturing contact information and retrieving it based on keywords, and most will even connect with your calendar for scheduling and reminders. Consider Web-based applications such as those offered by SuccessHawk (<http://www.successhawk.com>) and networking sites focused on professional networking, such as LinkedIn. Whatever your choices, invest the time to learn to use them well; you'll be very glad you did.

Building a network requires consistent work, and a strong network will take time to achieve. That is why we recommend you start building your professional network now—even early in your college career. Your network should include anyone who might have a connection that will help: family, friends, neighbours, past and present coworkers, bosses, people you met through associations and clubs (especially business associations), alumni from your college, and acquaintances you have met via online networking.

When you capture your contact data, use relevant keywords to help you search your database and shape your contact activity. One of the most overlooked pieces of information that you should be sure to capture is the source of the contact. That's what turns a "cold call" into a "warm call"—and it helps engage the prospect. If a friend introduced you, be sure to note that friend's name; if you met at a party, note the name of the host and the occasion; if you met at a conference, note the conference and date. You should also use other keywords so that you can quickly

find the contacts that will be most effective for each of your objectives; keywords might describe the area of specialization, organization membership, or type of contact (family, friend, colleague, etc.).

## Personal Contact

Being in the right place at the right time has much less to do with luck than with the art of personal contact. Contacts are everywhere, and you don't know when you might turn one to your advantage. You may feel a little awkward following these tips at first, but with practice you will become quite adept at meeting new people and adding them to your network.

- Be prepared. If you are going to a conference, a party, or even a class, know ahead of time which people or kinds of people you want to meet. Be prepared with topics you can steer your contact toward so you don't spend two minutes awkwardly talking about the weather and then slink away.
- Be confident. Prepare and learn a short introduction for yourself. Be factual, don't brag, and give enough information about yourself to prompt your contact to ask questions.
- Be curious. The best way to get contacts to want to know you is to show you want to know them. Observe them before you step up to them. Is there something unique about them, the way they are dressed, or perhaps what you may have overheard that you can ask about? "I couldn't help but notice that lovely necklace; is that from a local designer?" or "You have such an interesting accent; do you mind if I ask where you're from?" After you ask the question, listen actively to keep the conversation going.
- Be prepared (part 2). Have a good supply of personal cards to give out to contacts; that will prompt them to give you their contact information, too. You don't have to be in business to have "business cards."
- Be courteous. If someone you know comes up to you while you are speaking with a contact, introduce them; if you see that the contact is getting antsy, tell them you enjoyed meeting them and then move on. Don't trap them!
- Be prepared (part 3). Set yourself up for networking success by discreetly writing a word or two on the back of their card to jog your memory in the future. "World-class rodeo clown" will certainly help you remember who Jack Smith at Triangle Financial was.

## Make the Call

What you say in your networking calls or e-mails will depend largely on the objective of your networking effort. (Is it to learn about an occupation or industry? Seek a job-shadowing opportunity? Ask for a job?) But some networking basics and elements of etiquette apply to all contacts:

- **Be mindful of your contact's time.** Keep your calls and e-mails courteous but brief. If you are calling, ask if it is a good time to talk.
- **If this is a first contact, tell the contact where you got his or her name.** “I was referred to you by our friend Janet Smith” or “My colleague Richard Stewart suggested I call you” or “I heard you speak at the International Genius Conference” (remember the contact source information in your contact database?). This turns an interrupting cold call into a warm call with an interested individual.
- **Be specific about how the contact can help you.** Know what you are asking for and do so directly. Don't be shy.
- **Use your network for more than just asking for jobs.** It is a great vehicle for learning about new trends in the industry, for launching “trial balloons” for ideas or concepts you are developing, and for seeking advice on practical aspects of your occupation.
- **Help others in your network.** Networking is not a one-way endeavour. Be willing to offer your assistance whenever you can; the fact that you are still in college doesn't mean you can't be of value. You may be able to get an introduction to an instructor for a person in the industry or help that person's daughter learn about your college.

## Care and Feeding of Your Network

Much of the success of your networking efforts depends on what you do after you've hung up after a call or received an e-mail reply. The first step is to **thank your contact** for his or her help. Do this right away; any thank you after twenty-four hours of your contact can be considered late. Find a reason (not just an excuse) to **keep in touch** with people in your network. If you read an article people in your network would be interested in, send them the link. If you run across a problem one of your contacts might help you with, don't be shy—give him or her a call to **ask for help**. If you meet someone you think a contact would like, make introductions. **Send a follow-up note of thanks** to a person who gave you a particularly productive lead. Let him or her know what you were able to accomplish. People like to know they are on a successful team. Finally, if a person in your network asks you for help, **do what you say you will do**.

### KEY TAKEAWAYS

- Networking is an ongoing process that involves identifying and managing prospects, making contact, and following up.
- All contacts are good contacts.
- Common courtesy and follow-through are the catalysts of good networking.

### EXERCISES

1. Give yourself twenty minutes to list one hundred people you know. Now give yourself another twenty minutes to write one or two words next to each name to describe how he or she could help you network.
2. List three things you should do whenever you contact someone for the first time.
3. Describe two things you can do to overcome shyness and network effectively in a person-to-person setting.

## 20.3 Résumés and Cover Letters

### LEARNING OBJECTIVES

1. Describe the differences among functional, reverse chronological, combination, targeted, and scannable résumés.
2. Discuss what features are required in each type of résumé.
3. Prepare a one- or two-page résumé.
4. Prepare a one-page cover letter.

A **résumé**<sup>4</sup> is a document that summarizes your education, skills, talents, employment history, and experiences in a clear and concise format for potential employers. The résumé serves three distinct purposes that define its format, design, and presentation:

1. To represent your professional information in writing
2. To demonstrate the relationship between your professional information and the problem or challenge the potential employer hopes to solve or address, often represented in the form of a job description or duties
3. To get you an interview by clearly demonstrating you meet the minimum qualifications and have the professional background to help the organization meet its goals

An online profile page is similar to a résumé in that it represents you, your background and qualifications, and adds participation to the publication. People network, link, and connect in new ways via online profiles or professional sites like LinkedIn. In many ways, your online profile is an online version of your résumé with connections and friends on public display. Your Twitter account and Facebook page are also often accessible to the public, so never post anything you wouldn't want your employer (current or future) to read, see, or hear. This chapter covers a traditional résumé, as well as the more popular scannable features, but the elements and tips could equally apply to your online profile.

4. Document that summarizes your education, skills, talents, employment history, and experiences in a clear and concise format for potential employers.

### Focus on Accomplishments, Not Tasks

The most effective résumés will focus on your accomplishments, not just the positions you held. Your résumé should point out your strengths. Use dynamic verbs (see “101 Action Verbs” below).

## 101 Action Verbs

Here are the kinds of verbs that help “sell” you to potential employers. Expand on this list to find good verbs specific to your accomplishments by doing an Internet search for “action verbs for résumés.”

acted	delegated	implemented	persuaded
adapted	demonstrated	improved	planned
advised	designed	increased	prepared
analyzed	developed	influenced	prioritized
arranged	devised	informed	produced
assembled	diagnosed	initiated	promoted
assessed	directed	inspected	publicized
assigned	edited	instituted	recruited
attained	educated	instructed	rehabilitated
authored	enabled	integrated	represented
balanced	encouraged	introduced	researched
budgeted	engineered	invented	reviewed
built	enlisted	investigated	revitalized
calculated	established	lectured	scheduled
chaired	evaluated	managed	set goals
coached	executed	marketed	shaped
collected	fabricated	mediated	solved
communicated	facilitated	moderated	spoke
compiled	forecasted	motivated	stimulated
computed	formulated	negotiated	strengthened
conceptualized	founded	organized	supervised
consolidated	generated	originated	trained
contracted	guided	overhauled	translated
coordinated	identified	oversaw	upgraded

counselled	illustrated	performed	wrote
created			

Source: [citation redacted per publisher request].

The most effective accomplishments are quantifiable: include numbers. Be sure to include dollar amounts and percentages that support your achievements. For example, you might write “Reduced costs by 20 percent.” Your résumé should be a living document; any time you accomplish something of significance, note it in the current version of your résumé so you don't have to struggle to recall it at a later date.

Sometimes, though, we don't have numbers. We aren't told about them or it's too difficult to quantify your success. In those cases, focus on the skills you developed in that experience. Did you improve your time management skills? Did you develop excellent leadership skills? Did you polish your customer service or communication skills?

### Main Parts of a Résumé

Deciding what to include in your résumé is where most of the work comes in, because it is in the careful wording of the body of your résumé that you can really sell yourself for a position. Ideally, you should review your résumé for each position you are applying for, particularly to include any accomplishments that you would not include in your “general résumé” but that are relevant to that particular job.

Regardless of the format, employers have expectations for your résumé. They expect it to be clear, accurate, and up to date. Bennett, S. A. (2005). *The elements of résumé style: Essential rules and eye-opening advice for writing résumés and cover letters that work*. AMACOM. This document represents you in your absence, and you want it to do the best job possible. Unfortunately, too often a résumé is a reason to exclude a candidate. Poor grammar, misspelled words, lengthy listings of irrelevant experience, and messy formatting motivate hiring managers to move quickly to the next candidate.

You don't want to be represented by spelling or grammatical errors, as they may raise questions about your education and attention to detail. Someone reading your résumé with errors will only wonder what kind of work you might produce that will

poorly reflect on their company. There is going to be enough competition that you don't want to provide an easy excuse to toss your résumé at the start of the process. Do your best work the first time.

Résumés can be quite subjective. Although there is no such thing as a perfect format for a résumé, there are several basic elements that employers look for, including your contact information, a summary of qualifications, education and work experience. You may also include an objective statement, volunteer experience, and so on. Each résumé format may organize the information in distinct ways based on the overall design strategy, but all information should be clear, concise, and accurate. Simons, W., & Curtis, R. (2004). *The Résumé.com guide to writing unbeatable résumés*. New York, NY: McGraw-Hill.

### Contact Information

This section is often located at the top of the document. The first element of the contact information is your name. You should use your full, legal name even if you go by your middle name or use a nickname. There will plenty of time later to clarify what you prefer to be called, but all your application documents, including those that relate to payroll, your social security number, drug screenings, background checks, fingerprint records, transcripts, certificates or degrees, should feature your legal name. Other necessary information includes your address, your primary phone number (cell or landline), and e-mail address. You should also consider including an up-to-date LinkedIn account or personal Web page if those online sources highlight your accomplishments and represent you professionally. If you maintain two addresses (e.g., a campus and a residential address), make it clear where you can be contacted by indicating the primary address. For business purposes, do not use an unprofessional e-mail address like `sexiluvr93@hotmail.com` or `tutifruti@yafoo.com`. Create a new e-mail account if needed with an address suitable for professional use.

Figure 20.1 *Sample Contact Information*



## Profile or Summary of Qualifications

The profile or summary of qualifications answers the question, "Why should you hire me?" It summarizes the résumé in 3-4 bullets or sentences, and provides an "executive summary" of your document. This section presents your best qualities as they align with the requirements of the job ad.

Figure 20.2 *Sample Profile/Summary of Qualifications*



**Profile**

I am an enthusiastic graduate looking to use my skills acquired through my education, employment and hobbies to strengthen your business. My skill set includes:

- Strong communication skills
- Time management and organizational skills
- Ability to work successfully with others

**Summary of Qualifications**

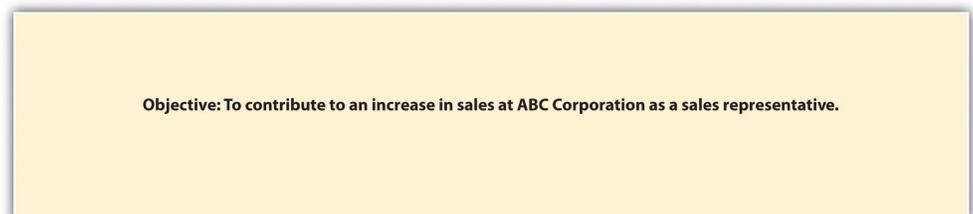
As an Office Management Major with honours, I am qualified to excel in an office environment. I have developed interpersonal and customer service skills through my employment experiences, and have acquired excellent communication abilities through college education. I have also achieved outstanding grades in all high school and college courses, which I am excited to apply to an office occupation within the workforce.

## Objective (Optional)

Hiring managers are generally divided on the use of an objective statement. Many find it redundant because they know what your objective is: to get the job!

Having said that, many applicants still have the need to include one. If you insist on doing so, your objective should reflect the audience's need to quickly understand how you will help the organization achieve its goals.

Figure 20.3 *Sample Objective*



**Objective: To contribute to an increase in sales at ABC Corporation as a sales representative.**

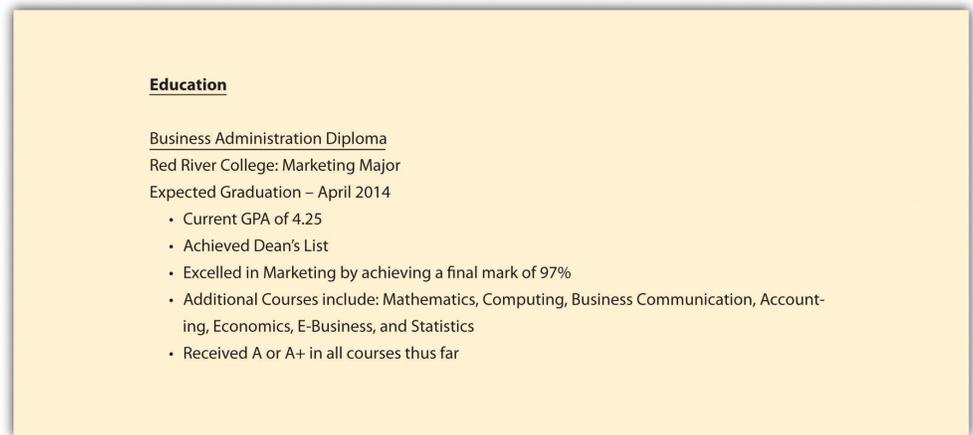
## Education

You need to list your education in reverse chronological order, with your most recent degree first. List the school, degree, and the year of completion. If your education is still in progress, say so, perhaps including an anticipated graduation date. Only list education that you completed or is still in progress; if you went to a specific university or college for a year but left because it "wasn't for you" then you don't list it on the résumé.

You may want to add your overall grade point average (GPA) if you are proud of that number. You may also want to list grades in your major courses to demonstrate your success in your chosen field. You may also want to highlight relevant coursework that directly relate to the position.

In general, follow the five-year rule when considering the addition of your high school education. If you graduated high school within the last five years then feel free to include it on your résumé. Once you've graduated college or university then you should consider removing the high school information; hiring managers will assume you graduated high school once your college or university degree is listed.

Figure 20.4 *Sample Education Field*



## Work Experience

List in reverse chronological order your employment history, including the positions, companies, locations, and dates. Use bulleted lists to describe your accomplishments, and skills demonstrated or acquired. You may also consider a bullet that succinctly describes your duties.

Ensure you emphasize quantifiable accomplishments and responsibilities that match your strengths to the requirements of the job. Often this involves communication, budgets, teamwork, supervision, and customer service when applying for positions in business and industry, but don't let emphasis become exaggeration. This document represents you in your absence, and if information is false, at a minimum you could lose your job.

Figure 20.5 Sample Work Experience

**Work Experience**

Supervisor  
 Red Plant Marketing – Toronto, ON  
 August 2010 – August 2012

- #3 company-wide sales per hour (February 2012) and #2 biggest sale (November 2011)
- Promoted to supervisor from customer service representative position within four months of employment
- Managed a small team of employees; resolved employee conflicts and delegated tasks to team members

Server  
 Bistro 777 – Toronto, ON  
 January 2009 – August 2010

- Polished customer service skills by greeting and seating guests while attending to their individual needs and wants in a professional manner
- Developed an ability to focus on detail by working in an active atmosphere while completing tasks in a timely manner
- Developed a team player perspective while working with many other employees in a busy environment

Table 20.1 Types of Résumés

Type	Function	Advantage	Disadvantage
1. Reverse Chronological	Reverse chronological résumés (also called reverse time order) focus on work history.	Demonstrates a consistent work history	It may be difficult to highlight skills and experience.
2. Functional	Functional résumés (also called competency-based résumés) focus on skills.	Demonstrates skills that can clearly link to job functions or duties	It is often associated with people who have gaps in their employment history.

Type	Function	Advantage	Disadvantage
3. Combination	A combination résumé lists your skills and experience first, then employment history and education.	Highlights the skills you have that are relevant to the job and provides a reverse chronological work history	Some employers prefer a reverse chronological order.
4. Targeted	A targeted résumé is a custom document that specifically highlights the experience and skills that are relevant to the job.	Points out to the reader how your qualifications and experience clearly match the job duties	Custom documents take additional time, preparation, analysis of the job announcement, and may not fit the established guidelines.
5. Scannable	A scannable résumé is specifically formatted to be read by a scanner and converted to digital information.	Increasingly used to facilitate search and retrieval, and to reduce physical storage costs	Scanners may not read the résumé correctly.

Do not include references at the end of your résumé. And while many people are tempted to include a “references upon request” line, even that statement is considered redundant. Of course they're available on request! If the hiring manager makes that request, you're absolutely going to provide them!

Experts are also divided on résumé length. Some suggest you should never extend your résumé to more than one page, but it all depends on who you are and what experiences and skills you have acquired. If a one-page résumé provides a good snapshot as to who you are at this point in time without seeming like it's skimping on the details, then great! But if it looks like you've chopped so much out just to get it to one page and the hiring manager can't see your skills and accomplishments, then that's not so good.

If you've got a lot of relevant skills, accomplishments and experiences, then a two-page résumé is totally fine. If it looks like you're padding your résumé with irrelevant information just to get it to two pages, then that's not so good.

Don't focus on length; ensure the résumé provides the reader with the relevant details that highlight your skills and accomplishments. Remember, you may never get a second chance to make a good first impression.

## **Maximize Scannable Résumé Content**

### **Use Key Words**

Just as there are common search terms, and common words in relation to each position, job description, or description of duties, your scannable résumé needs to mirror these common terms. Use of nonstandard terms may not stand out, and your indication of “managed employees” may not get the same attention as the word “supervision” or “management.”

### **Follow Directions**

If a job description uses specific terms, refers to computer programs, skills, or previous experience, make sure you incorporate that language in your scannable résumé. You know that when given a class assignment, you are expected to follow directions; similarly, the employer is looking for specific skills and experience. By mirroring the employer’s language and submitting your application documents in accord with their instructions, you convey a spirit of cooperation and an understanding of how to follow instructions.

### **Insert a Key Word Section**

Consider a brief section that lists common words associated with the position as a skills summary: customer service, business communication, sales, or terms and acronyms common to the business or industry.

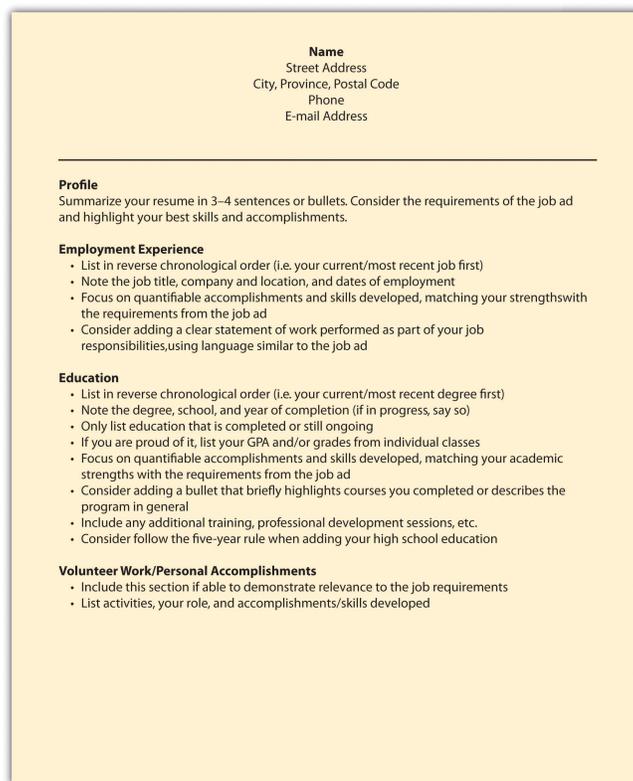
### **Make It Easy to Read**

You need to make sure your résumé is easy to read by a computer, including a character recognition program. That means no italics, underlining, shading, boxes, or lines. Choose a sans serif (without serif, or decorative end) font like Arial or Tahoma that won’t be misread. Simple, clear fonts that demonstrate no points at which letters may appear to overlap will increase the probability of the computer getting it right the first time. In order for the computer to do this, you have to consider your audience—a computer program that will not be able to interpret your unusual font or odd word choice. A font size of eleven or twelve is easier to read for most people, and while the computer doesn’t care about font size, the smaller your font, the more likely the computer is to make the error of combining adjacent letters.

## Printing, Packaging and Delivery

Use a laser printer to get crisp letter formation. Inkjet printers can have some “bleed” between characters that may make them overlap, and therefore be misunderstood. Folds can make it hard to scan your document. E-mail your résumé as an attachment if possible, but if a paper version is required, don’t fold it. Use a clean, white piece of paper with black ink; colours will only confuse the computer. Deliver the document in a nine-by-twelve-inch envelope, stiffened with a sheet of cardstock (heavy paper or cardboard) to help prevent damage to the document.

Figure 20.6 *Sample Format for Chronological Résumé*



The figure shows a sample format for a chronological résumé. It is presented as a light yellow rectangular box with a thin black border. At the top, centered, is the contact information: Name, Street Address, City, Province, Postal Code, Phone, and E-mail Address. A horizontal line separates this from the main body of the résumé. The main body is divided into four sections: Profile, Employment Experience, Education, and Volunteer Work/Personal Accomplishments. Each section has a bold heading and a brief description or a list of bullet points.

**Name**  
Street Address  
City, Province, Postal Code  
Phone  
E-mail Address

---

**Profile**  
Summarize your resume in 3–4 sentences or bullets. Consider the requirements of the job ad and highlight your best skills and accomplishments.

**Employment Experience**

- List in reverse chronological order (i.e. your current/most recent job first)
- Note the job title, company and location, and dates of employment
- Focus on quantifiable accomplishments and skills developed, matching your strengths with the requirements from the job ad
- Consider adding a clear statement of work performed as part of your job responsibilities, using language similar to the job ad

**Education**

- List in reverse chronological order (i.e. your current/most recent degree first)
- Note the degree, school, and year of completion (if in progress, say so)
- Only list education that is completed or still ongoing
- If you are proud of it, list your GPA and/or grades from individual classes
- Focus on quantifiable accomplishments and skills developed, matching your academic strengths with the requirements from the job ad
- Consider adding a bullet that briefly highlights courses you completed or describes the program in general
- Include any additional training, professional development sessions, etc.
- Consider follow the five-year rule when adding your high school education

**Volunteer Work/Personal Accomplishments**

- Include this section if able to demonstrate relevance to the job requirements
- List activities, your role, and accomplishments/skills developed

Figure 20.7 Sample Format for Functional Résumé

**Name**  
Street Address  
City, Province, Postal Code  
Phone  
E-mail Address

---

**Profile**  
Summarize your resume in 3–4 sentences or bullets. Consider the requirements of the job ad and highlight your best skills and accomplishments.

**Professional Skills**

- This section contains 3–4 functional headings to illustrate your skill sets (teamwork skills, customer service skills, communication skills, etc.)
- Under each functional heading, list 2–3 quantifiable accomplishments and skills developed, matching your strengths with the requirements from the job ad
- These accomplishments provide the “proof” that you have the skills you say you have
- You can mix in accomplishments from your education, work and volunteer experience

Skill 1

Skill 2

Skill 3

**Work Experience**

- List in reverse chronological order (i.e. your current/most recent job first)
- Note the job title, company and location, and dates of employment

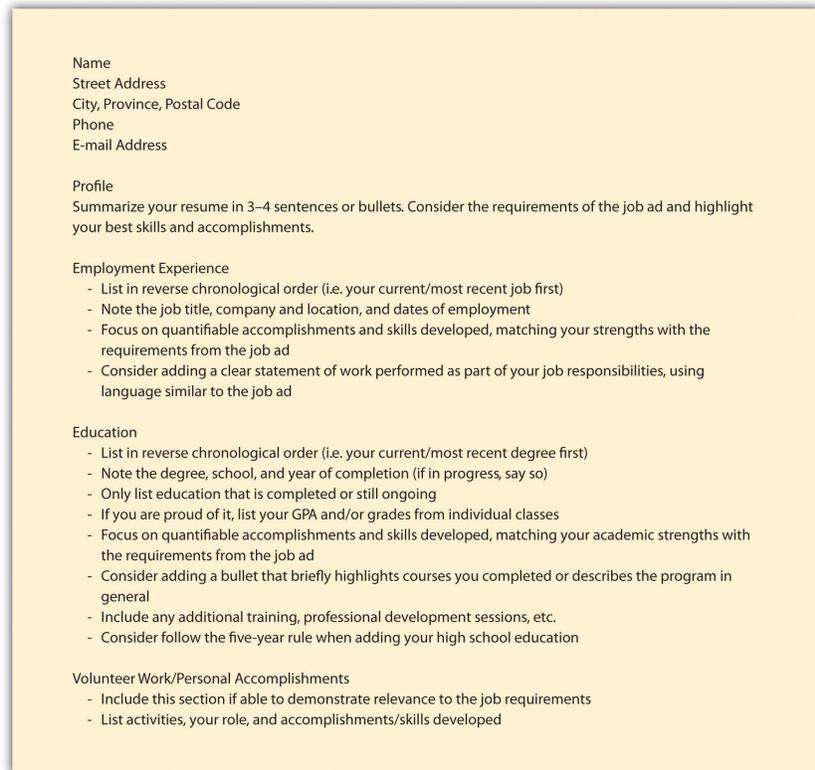
**Education**

- List in reverse chronological order (i.e. your current/most recent degree first)
- Note the degree, school, and year of completion (if in progress, say so)
- Only list education that is completed or still ongoing
- Include any additional training, professional development sessions, etc.
- Consider follow the five-year rule when adding your high school education

**Volunteer Work/Personal Accomplishments**

- Include this section if able to demonstrate relevance to the job requirements, listing activities and your role

Figure 20.8 Sample Format for Scannable Résumé



## The Cover Letter

The purpose of a **cover letter**<sup>5</sup> is to entice the recipient to read your résumé. There is no better way to entice someone to read further than to demonstrate that you fit his or her needs. A successful cover letter should emphasize how your knowledge, skills, or experiences make you an ideal candidate.

When writing a cover letter, look over the job posting carefully. What are the keywords in the posting? Underline or highlight them. Think about how your experience and skills are related to those keywords. What examples can you give in short sentences? Now you can begin to write.

Your first strategy is to show that you are a unique and qualified candidate. This, in marketing terms, is your selling proposition. Begin with an immediate summary as to why you are the best candidate for this position. Write this opening (1–2 sentences) two or three different ways and then choose the best. If you don't hook the reader here, you may not be considered for the job. Next, be sure to state what job you are applying for and how you found out about the position.

5. A letter that entices the recipient to read your résumé.

When you are happy with your opening paragraph, add one or two paragraphs that illustrate your proposition from the opening paragraph. Elaborate a bit on the bulleted information found in your résumé, showing how your skills can contribute to the company's needs and how you can contribute. Tell the story behind your most significant accomplishment.

Remember that your cover letter also demonstrates your communication skills. Be clear, be concise, and be careful. One typo and your application will be set aside. Be sure your spelling and grammar are correct. Did you double-check the spelling of the company name? Read the document; look for mistakes your spellchecker won't catch (like the word “you” instead of “your”). Put it down for a while and then reread it again.

### KEY TAKEAWAY

A résumé will represent your skills, education, and experience in your absence. Businesses increasingly scan résumés into searchable databases. The purpose of the cover letter is to entice the recipient to read your résumé.

### EXERCISES

1. Find a job announcement with specific duties that represents a job that you will be prepared for upon graduation. Choose a type of résumé and prepare your résumé to submit to the employer as a class assignment. Your instructor may also request a scannable version of your résumé.
2. Conduct an online search for a functional or chronological résumé. Please post and share with your classmates.
3. Conduct an online search for job advertisements that detail positions you would be interested in, and note the key job duties and position requirements. Please post one example and share with your classmates.
4. When is a second page of your résumé justified? Explain.
5. Conduct an online search for resources to help you prepare your own résumé. Please post one link and a brief review of the Web site, noting what features you found useful and at least one recommendation for improvement.

## 20.4 Interviewing for Success

### LEARNING OBJECTIVES

1. Learn the types of interviews.
2. Know how to prepare for an interview.
3. Be successful in an interview.

We all join communities, teams, and groups across our lifetimes. We go from an unknown outsider to a new member and eventually a full member. Businesses and organizations are communities consisting of teams and groups, and if we decide to switch teams or communities, or if that decision is made for us with a reduction in force layoff, for example, we'll be back on the job market. In order to make the transition from a outsider to an insider, you'll have to pass a series of tests, both informal and formal. One of the most common tests is otherwise known as an **employment interview**. An **employment interview**<sup>6</sup> is an exchange between a candidate and a prospective employer (or their representative). It is a formal process with several consistent elements that you can use to guide your preparation.

In a job search, nothing is more exciting or more intimidating than an interview. Reaching the interview stage means that you are in serious consideration for the position, and the pressure feels cranked up. In this section, you will learn how to prepare yourself to “ace” this process.

Employment interviews come in all shapes and sizes, and may not be limited to only one exchange but one interaction. A potential employee may very well be screened by a computer (as the résumé is scanned) and interviewed online or via the telephone before the applicant ever meets a representative or panel of representatives. The screening process may include formal tests that include personality tests, background investigations, and consultations with previous employers. Depending on the type of job you are seeking, you can anticipate answering questions, often more than once, to a series of people as you progress through a formal interview process. Just as you have the advantage of preparing for a speech with anticipation, you can apply the same research and public speaking skills to the employment interview.

6. An exchange between a candidate and a prospective employer.

In the process of exploring occupations and landing a job, you will likely participate in a variety of interviews. They are defined by their objective:

- **Informational or networking interviews.** Informational interviewing is particularly useful in helping you explore career options. This is an interview that you have requested to learn about a particular job, company, or industry and how best to present yourself to potential hiring managers. An informational interview also gives you an opportunity to create a positive impression. Be sure to get referrals, leads, and recommendations for other networking contacts.
- **Screening interviews.** Generally conducted by a representative of the company's human resources department or a recruiter, a screening interview is used to determine whether you are qualified or overqualified to do the job. This initial interview is often conducted via telephone. As the name implies, the objective of this interview is to find reasons to remove, not include, people in a candidate pool. Do not consider it lightly just because someone other than the hiring manager is conducting it.
- **One-on-one interviews.** In a one-on-one interview, the interviewer asks a set of questions to learn if you have the knowledge and skills to handle the job for which you have applied. The hiring manager conducting the one-on-one interview also wants to get a sense of what it would be like working with you and how you would fit in the organization. It is also used to learn how you behaved in past situations as a predictor of how you are likely to behave in the future. Expect to be asked "Tell me about a time when..." or "Give me an example..." questions. This interview is the one a hiring decision is based on.

The invitation to interview means you have been identified as a candidate who meets the minimum qualifications and demonstrate potential as a viable candidate. Your cover letter, résumé, or related application materials may demonstrate the connection between your preparation and the job duties, but now comes the moment where you will need to articulate those points out loud.

If we assume that you would like to be successful in your employment interviewing, then it makes sense to use the communication skills gained to date with the knowledge of interpersonal communication to maximize your performance. There is no one right or wrong way to prepare and present at your interview, just as each audience is unique, but we can prepare and anticipate several common elements.

### **Preparation**

The right frame of mind is an essential element for success in communication, oral or written. For many if not most, the employment interview is surrounded with mystery and a degree of fear and trepidation. Just as giving a speech may produce a certain measure of anxiety, you can expect that a job interview will make you

nervous. Anticipate this normal response, and use your nervous energy to your benefit. To place your energies where they will be put to best use, the first step is preparation.

Would you prepare yourself before writing for publication or speaking in public? Of course. The same preparation applies to the employment interview. Briefly, the employment interview is a conversational exchange (even if it is in writing at first) where the participants try to learn more about each other. Both conversational partners will have goals in terms of content, and explicitly or implicitly across the conversational exchange will be relational messages. Attending to both points will strengthen your performance.

On the content side, if you have been invited for an interview, you can rest assured that you have met the basic qualifications the employer is looking for. Now comes the time for you to prepare:

**Learn about the organization.** In almost every interview situation, you'll be asked, "What can you do for this company?" Practice your answer. Research press releases, stories in the *Globe and Mail*, annual reports, blogs, Web sites, the news, and so on. Know the company's philosophies, goals, plans, new products, targeted customers, new executives, and major directional changes.

**Use your network.** Do you know anyone who works for or has worked for this company or organization? Call or have lunch with him or her before your interview to learn more. Your competition likely won't have done their homework as well as you have. Your prospective employer will notice.

**Review the job description.** Be prepared to explain how your background qualifies you for the job. Did you find the job posting online? Be sure to have printed a copy, and bring it with you to the interview. Some companies take weeks to start calling people in for interviews, and by then the job description may have been removed from the site where you saw it.

**Review your résumé.** Think of examples that describe or illustrate your accomplishments. You will be asked about items on your résumé, and you need to be able to support them and go into more detail.

Businesses hire people to solve problems, so you will want to focus on how your talents, expertise, and experience can contribute to the organization's need to solve those problems. The more detailed your analysis of their current challenges, the better. You need to be prepared for standard questions about your education and

background, but also see the opening in the conversation to discuss the job duties, the challenges inherent in the job, and the ways in which you believe you can meet these challenges. Take the opportunity to demonstrate the fact that you have “done your homework” in researching the company. **Table 20.2 "Interview Preparation Checklist"** presents a checklist of what you should try to know before you consider yourself prepared for an interview.

Table 20.2 Interview Preparation Checklist

What to Know	Examples
Type of Interview	Will it be a behavioural interview, where the employer watches what you do in a given situation? Will you be asked technical questions or given a work sample? Or will you be interviewed over lunch or coffee, where your table manners and social skills will be assessed?
Type of Dress	Office attire varies by industry, so stop by the workplace and observe what workers are wearing if you can. If this isn't possible, call and ask the human resources office what to wear—they will appreciate your wish to be prepared.
Company or Organization	Do a thorough exploration of the company's Web site. If it doesn't have one, look for business listings in the community online and in the phone directory. Contact the local chamber of commerce. At your library, you may have access to subscription sites such as Hoover's Online ( <a href="http://www.hoovers.com">http://www.hoovers.com</a> ).
Job	Carefully read the ad you answered that got you the interview, and memorize what it says about the job and the qualifications the employer is seeking. Use the Internet to find sample job descriptions for your target job title. Make a written list of the job tasks and annotate the list with your skills, knowledge, and other attributes that will enable you to perform the job tasks with excellence.
Employer's Needs	Check for any items in the news in the past couple of years involving the company name. If it is a small company, the local town newspaper will be your best source. In addition, look for any advertisements the company has placed, as these can give a good indication of the company's goals.

### Performance

You may want to know how to prepare for an employment interview, and we're going to take it for granted that you have researched the company, market, and even individuals in your effort to learn more about the opportunity. From this solid base of preparation, you need to begin to prepare your responses. Would you like some of the test questions before the test? Luckily for you, employment interviews

involve a degree of uniformity across their many representations. Here are eleven common questions you are likely to be asked in an employment interview: McLean, S. (2005). *The basics of interpersonal communication*. Boston, MA: Allyn & Bacon.

1. Tell me about yourself.
2. Have you ever done this type of work before?
3. Why should we hire you?
4. What are your greatest strengths? Weaknesses?
5. Give me an example of a time when you worked under pressure.
6. Tell me about a time you encountered (X) type of problem at work.  
How did you solve the problem?
7. Why did you leave your last job?
8. How has your education and/or experience prepared you for this job?
9. Why do you want to work here?
10. What are your long-range goals? Where do you see yourself three years from now?
11. Do you have any questions?

Employment interviews, especially screening interviews, do not stray far from a standard list of questions. Find a quiet one to two hours to review the interview study guide provided here, prepare your answers, and actually practice them. Your answers should be short but complete.

## Interview Study Guide

The following questions SuccessHawk, “Interview Questions to Anticipate,” <http://www.successhawk.com/Interviewing/Interview-Questions-to-Anticipate> (accessed July 13, 2010). are typical in many employment interviews. If you prepare answers for them ahead of time, you will not be caught off guard during an interview.

- **Tell me about yourself.** Remember that one-minute elevator introduction you worked on for networking? Here’s your starting place.
- **What can you offer us? Why should we hire you?** Make a list of your qualifications for the job. Include years of experience, education, special training, technical skills, inside knowledge of a product or market, and so on. Are you a customer of this product or service?

Use your list of transferable skills like communication, leadership, organization, attention to detail, and work ethic. Review the list objectively. Which items are most valuable to the employer? Use this information to write a brief “sales pitch” that describes your qualifications for the job. Structure the information in a logical fashion and then practice saying it aloud until your delivery is smooth, natural, and confident.

- **What are your strengths?** Provide context and scope when answering this question. By elaborating on your strengths, it’s easier for the employer to see where and how you excel.

Think about your noteworthy and unusual achievements or experiences. What did you do to accomplish them? What kind of preparation did they require? Why are they unique?

Think about performance reviews you have received in a job. Have you won awards or received positive feedback from others in the organization or from a happy customer? What were the reasons for the positive attention?

If you are a student or recent graduate with limited professional experience, think about your papers, reports, projects, or group assignments. Think about the assignment and what you did to

complete it. The same strengths that helped you academically will also help you succeed professionally.

- **What are your weaknesses?** Remember that employers are human and appreciate honesty. It's OK to acknowledge your weaknesses and explain steps you've taken to address them. It's also fair to point out how you've turned a weakness into a strength.
- **Where do you see yourself three to five years from now?** Think about your personal goals and answer as genuinely as possible. This is a good opportunity to ask the interviewer about the opportunities available to a person who succeeds in this job.
- **What attracted you to our company?** Draw from your research and personal knowledge of the company to answer this question. Keep in mind that this interview is about what you can do for them, so answering that you're attracted to the free snacks in the break room won't score any points.
- **Tell me about a time you were under pressure to meet a deadline and what you did.** When did you find pressure at school or work because something was due? Describe the problem, the actions you took, and the outcome. Choose examples in which you received positive feedback.
- **What will former employers say about you?** Be honest. Think about the positive things they will say about you.
- **What salary are you expecting?** This is a land-mine question and one you'll almost certainly face. Typically a company has budgeted a certain salary range for a position and will do their best to stay within it. A general rule for salary discussions is that he or she who says the first number loses. Ask what the salary range is and where the interviewer sees you fitting into that range.

You owe it to yourself to find out before the interview what the salary range is for a comparable position in the geographical region. You can learn this through your network or an online salary search.

- **What questions do you have for me?** Before the interview, think of questions you would like answered about the company, the job, or the industry. Having good questions will tell the interviewer a lot about your listening skills and your degree of preparation. If you can, tie your questions back to something the interviewer said

earlier. Remember, an interview is not just the company checking you out, it's also you checking out the company.

#### Trick Questions in Interviews

These happen to the best of interviewees. The only wrong answer to an impossible question is “I don’t know.” Hiring managers are looking for employees who think through tough challenges. They want to know if you keep your cool under pressure, if you can think on your feet, whether you BS or maintain your credibility, and how you respond to the unfamiliar. So show them: think aloud.

Talk about what you know about the problem; work out the process in front of them. You are being judged not only on your ability to solve problems but also on your intelligence and potential. There is no potential in “I don’t know.”

Source: [citation redacted per publisher request].

Consider using the “because” response whenever you can. A “because” response involves the restatement of the question followed by a statement of how and where you gained education or experience in that area. For example, if you are asked about handling difficult customers, you could answer that you have significant experience in that area because you’ve served as a customer service representative with X company for X years. You may be able to articulate how you were able to turn an encounter with a frustrated customer into a long-term relationship that benefited both the customer and the organization. Your specific example, and use of a “because” response, can increase the likelihood that the interviewer or audience will recall the specific information you provide.

You may be invited to participate in a conference call, and be told to expect it will last around twenty minutes. The telephone carries your voice and your words, but doesn’t carry your nonverbal gestures. If you remember to speak directly into the telephone, look up and smile, your voice will come through clearly and you will sound competent and pleasant. Whatever you do, don’t take the call on a cell phone with an iffy connection—your interviewers are guaranteed to be unfavourably impressed if you keep breaking up during the call. Use the phone to your advantage by preparing responses on note cards or on your computer screen before the call. When the interviewers ask you questions, keep track of the time, limiting each

response to about a minute. If you know that a twenty-minute call is scheduled for a certain time, you can anticipate that your phone may ring maybe a minute or two late, as interviews are often scheduled in a series while the committee is all together at one time. Even if you only have one interview, your interviewers will have a schedule and your sensitivity to it can help improve your performance.

Above all, be honest, positive, and brief. You may have heard that the world is small and it is true. As you develop professionally, you will come to see how fields, organizations, and companies are interconnected in ways that you cannot anticipate. Your name and reputation are yours to protect and promote.

### **Postperformance**

You completed your research of the organization, interviewed a couple of employees, learned more about the position, were on time for the interview (virtual or in person), wore neat and professional clothes, and demonstrated professionalism in your brief, informative responses. Congratulations are in order, but so is more work on your part.

Remember that feedback is part of the communication process: follow up promptly with a thank-you note or e-mail, expressing your appreciation for the interviewer's time and interest. You may also indicate that you will call or e-mail next week to see if they have any further questions for you. (Naturally, if you say you will do this, make sure you follow through!) In the event that you have decided the position is not right for you, the employer will appreciate your notifying them without delay. Do this tactfully, keeping in mind that communication occurs between individuals and organizations in ways you cannot predict.

After you have communicated with your interviewer or committee, move on. Candidates sometimes become quite fixated on one position or job and fail to keep their options open. The best person does not always get the job, and the prepared business communicator knows that networking and research is a never-ending, ongoing process. Look over the horizon at the next challenge and begin your research process again. It may be hard work, but getting a job is your job. Budget time and plan on the effort it will take to make the next contact, get the next interview, and continue to explore alternate paths to your goal.

You may receive a letter, note, or voice mail explaining that another candidate's combination of experience and education better matched the job description. If this happens, it is only natural for you to feel disappointed. It is also only natural to want to know why you were not chosen, but be aware that for legal reasons most rejection notifications do not go into detail about why one candidate was hired and

another was not. Contacting the company with a request for an explanation can be counterproductive, as it may be interpreted as a “sore loser” response. If there is any possibility that they will keep your name on file for future opportunities, you want to preserve your positive relationship.

Although you feel disappointed, don’t focus on the loss or all the hard work you’ve produced. Instead, focus your energies where they will serve you best. Review the process and learn from the experience, knowing that each audience is unique and even the most prepared candidate may not have been the right “fit.” Stay positive and connect with people who support you. Prepare, practice, and perform. Know that you as a person are far more than just a list of job duties. Focus on your skill sets: if they need improvement, consider additional education that will enhance your knowledge and skills. Seek out local resources and keep networking. Have your professional interview attire clean and ready, and focus on what you can control—your preparation and performance.

### KEY TAKEAWAYS

- Successful interviewing depends on careful preparation.
- Most interview questions can be anticipated and prepared for.
- An interview is as important for you to evaluate the company and its working environment as it is for the company to evaluate your skills and “fit.”

## EXERCISES

1. How does the employment interview serve both interviewer and interviewee? Explain and present your thoughts to the class.
2. Identify a company that you might be interested in working for. Use the resources described in this section to research information about the company, the kinds of jobs it hires people to do, and the needs and goals of the organization. Share your findings with your classmates.
3. Find a job announcement of a position that might interest you after you graduate or reach your professional goal. Write a brief statement of what experience and education you currently have that applies to the position and note what you currently lack.
4. What are the common tasks and duties of a job you find interesting? Create a survey, identify people who hold a similar position, and interview them (via e-mail or in person). Compare your results with your classmates.
5. What has been your employment interview experience to date? Write a brief statement and provide examples.
6. What employment-related resources are available on your campus or in your community? Investigate and share your findings.
7. Prepare for a job that you would like to do by finding a job announcement, preparing sample responses, and enlisting a friend or colleague in playing the role of a mock interviewer. Limit your interview to fifteen minutes and record it (audio or audio/visual) and post it in class. If your instructor indicates this exercise will be an in-class exercise or assessment, dress the part and be completely prepared. Use this exercise to prepare you for the moment when you will be required to perform and when you want the job.