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# FINE TUNING YOUR JOB SEARCH

In order to be in the creative minority of job seekers, you will need to explore less traditional job search methods; giving you the edge over your competitors. Creative, assertive job seekers locate job leads, win during employment interviews, and get the job offers in which they are interested. Among the numerous methods used by these job seekers to ensure optimum job search results are identifying employers, informational interviewing and networking.

## Identifying Employers

Once you determine your skills and interests, you can narrow the list of employers who would hire workers with your skills. You can use a variety of resources to identify employers by product/service, equipment used, industry, geographic area and company size. In addition, you should become familiar with the local labor market to determine the probability of securing employment in your chosen field.

In today's job market, it is important for a job seeker to understand how employment trends are impacted by our country's changing economy. Evaluating employment resources for company information and labor market trends requires both identification and interpretation of resources.

## Identifying Company and Labor Market Trend Information

Libraries are an excellent source of company and employment trend information; professional organizations also collect information in their career areas. The following are examples of employer and labor market trend resources available at the Moraine Valley Job Placement Center and the Moraine Valley Library:

1. Reports from the U.S. Department of Labor-Occupational Outlook Handbook and Occupational Outlook Quarterly
2. Periodicals, magazines, newsletters and reports from public and private professional organizations, state employment services, colleges and universities, local newspapers
3. Computerized guidance systems-both Guidance Information System (GIS) and DISCOVER are located in the Academic Advising Center

## Interpreting Labor Market Trend Resources

A job seeker should use the following criteria when reviewing employment trend information:

**Be observant**-Examine the evidence carefully to identify where it originated, how closely it relates to your career area and whether the information is current

**Seek multiple sources**- Be sure to seek more than one source of employment trend information and compare the results of each source. It is rare to find one resource that will answer all of your questions

**Confirm credentials of those making forecasts**- The job seeker should determine whether or not the source's author is likely to be knowledgeable about the subject

**Keep an open mind**- The labor market changes so frequently, you should remain open to all new information as it becomes available

**Look for local, state or regional sources**- Labor market information is often reported for a large area (state or national). Keep looking until you identify resources that report information for your specific geographic region

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# THE INFORMATIONAL INTERVIEW

The informational interview, as a job search tool, is an excellent way to answer questions you have about your job search and/or career choice. Do not bring a resume this is an informational resume appointment.

A job seeker makes arrangements to meet with an employer and comes prepared to ask questions concerning his/her career choice and job search. Information about a certain company, career, industry and trends in employment is obtained. The following chart outlines how to use the informational interview as a way to begin your job search.

<b>Who</b>	<p>A job seeker might begin contacting friends and family members who are affiliated with, or know someone affiliated with, those industries and/or companies that interest you. Ask them to provide you with names and phone numbers of their contacts.</p> <p>Also, a job seeker can inquire directly at companies of interest by making cold calls. After choosing targeted companies, ask the receptionist/switchboard operator for the name of a contact person who does the hiring in your area of interest. Attempt to set up an informational interview with this contact person.</p>
<b>When</b>	<p>The best time to conduct an informational interview is during the early stages of a job search because it may set the stage for the rest of your job search process. If you employ "winning" informational interviewing techniques, your experiences will allow you to hone the interview skills necessary for the job search process.</p>
<b>What</b>	<p>What are the steps in setting up an informational interview?</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Introduce yourself.</li> <li>2. Explain that your purpose for seeking an appointment is to obtain information.</li> <li>3. Arrange a mutually convenient meeting time.</li> <li>4. Let the "interviewee" know that you will take only 20-30 minutes of their time, and make a mental note to stick to that limit!</li> </ol>
<b>Where</b>	<p>Ideally, try to meet in the work environment. If you are interviewing someone you have never met, you will likely meet with him/her at a location convenient for them.</p>
<b>Why</b>	<p>Job seekers benefit by speaking with hiring executives because they learn more about employment trends and expectations. Employed individuals considering a move might use an informational interview to compare their current position to others they may be interested in pursuing. Unemployed job seekers simply expand their contacts. Everyone who conducts an informational interview has the opportunity to make valuable networking contacts.</p>

### **Information To Obtain From An Informational Interview:**

1. Openings at the company with which you conduct the interview.
2. Referrals to other employment opportunities.
3. Training and/or education needed for the career you are pursuing.
4. Clarification and evaluation of your expectations of that company, industry and/or position.

### **Questions to Ask:**

1. What is the normal career path for someone interested in starting off in a (name of position you're pursuing) \_\_\_\_\_ position with this company?
2. What type of education or training is required in order to be considered for a \_\_\_\_\_ position? (Again, insert the position you are pursuing).
3. Do you feel my education and experience is appropriate for the career I am pursuing? If not, what am I lacking, or what other type of experience or training should I have?
4. What would you estimate is an accurate starting salary for someone with my background and education?
5. What would an average day be like for someone in a \_\_\_\_\_ position (name the position you are pursuing) with this company?
6. Could you tell me something about this company? (Perhaps the history of, more detail of products or services provided, the financial status, etc.)
7. What is the hiring process for someone seeking employment with your company?
8. What types of qualities are important in order to be successful in this company?
9. Is there anyone else in the company you might recommend I speak with regarding my job search, or career choice?
10. Would you be willing to give me the names of three other contacts that work in the field? (This information is often volunteered by the interviewer since they realize you are there to NETWORK)

## **Follow-up after an Informational Interview**

Be sure to send a thank-you letter within a week after the interview takes place. This gesture will be perceived as considerate and professional. It gives a positive impression of you.

## **Summary**

This list of questions is not exhaustive and you may ask other questions more specific to you and your job search. Keep in mind that the goal of the informational interview is to gain knowledge about potential careers and job options. Remember, stick to the pre-set 20-30 minute time limit and always thank the employer both in person and by sending a follow-up letter.

You will also want to dress appropriately for the interview (professionally if you are going to the company), arrive on time, bring a resume, take notes, and make a good impression. You never know when an informational interview can lead to a potential job offer!

# WHAT IS NETWORKING?

Networking is defined as the ongoing process of building and maintaining personal and professional relationships through reciprocal communication and sharing information with individuals and groups of individuals that can give you a powerful advantage in any marketplace. But what does all this mean? Well, in a job market that is highly competitive, networking is a tool that can increase your chances of getting a job. Networking is not about using people to find a job. It is about connecting with others to promote you. Networking is a source of gaining information. You may also obtain appointments for interviews or referrals from networking.

## Who Are Your Networking Connections?

The possibilities are endless, but here are some suggestions of connections you can make to begin your network:

Family / Relatives

Friends / Parents of Friends

Neighbors

Supervisors from jobs or internships

Faculty Members

Counselors

The Community

- Church or Synagogue
- Scout Programs
- PTA
- Sporting Events
- Homeowners' Association
- Cultural Societies
- Hairdresser

Your Co-workers

Co-workers of family and friends

Professional Organizations

Alumni List in the Job Placement Office

## Where Can You Begin?

Here are some recommended steps for networking:

1. Know what you want and exactly what to say before you start contacting people. It is all right to write this down on a sheet of paper, just in case you get nervous when the contact person picks up the phone. Approach is important; don't appear desperate or fake.
2. Start thinking about whom you want to contact. Your list can be as extensive as you wish. Use the above list for suggestions. Start with your "primary network" of friends, family and neighbors and expand from there. Make as many connections as possible.
3. Don't limit yourself to only professionals; everyone knows someone. Update phone and address book on a regular basis.
4. Rank your list in the order you would like to call. This should be based on those people who are the most closely related to the type of job you are looking for.
5. Ask someone in your field for 20 minutes of time to talk and interview them about their background.
6. When you are ready to make contact, it is recommended that you do so by phone. Phone calls are more direct than writing letters; however, you may send a letter when you cannot reach someone.
7. When you call a potential employer, let them know how you got their name. Also, be knowledgeable about the basics of the company.
8. Know what you want to ask. It can be about the type of people the company hires, what type of experience is necessary, or if there are any open positions.
9. Ask your contact if you can send them your resume.
10. Make sure you get the correct spelling of the name, as well as address and job title of the person that spoke with you.
11. It is best to keep the conversation brief and to thank your contact for their time.
12. Use the Internet; join discussion groups in your major area of interest.

It helps to stay organized with your networking efforts. Know whom you have contacted, what the outcome was, and what your next step is. Be realistic; do not expect someone to get you a job. You can even organize your networking by making contact sheets. A sample is provided below.

Contact Sheet: _____
Date: _____
Name: _____
Company: _____
Address (Office): _____
Phone (Office): _____
Phone (Home): _____
E-mail address: _____
Address (Home): _____
Referral Source:
Outstanding Features:
Notes:
Referrals Received:

## **Sample Telephone Dialogue**

The following dialogue illustrates the process of effective networking.

### **Call a friend:**

Hi Sally, this is Joe from your statistics class. How are you?

### **Ask for some help:**

Sally, I need a favor. Could I possibly have the name and number of your uncle that works at Moraine Valley Community College? I just sent a copy of my resume to the college and would like to find out more information about the school.

### **Find out specific information about the contact:**

Do you know the department your uncle works in, or what his position is? Could I have his complete name, address and telephone number?

### **Show your gratitude:**

Sally, I really appreciate your help. I am just trying to find the best way to get an interview with his company and think you uncle could be of assistance.

### **Call the contact:**

Hello, Mr. Jones. My name is Joe James, and I am a friend of your niece Sally from Moraine Valley Community College.

### **State your purpose:**

I am graduating this May and just submitted a resume to Big Money Bank for an entry-level finance position. I was wondering if you might have any advice or information that may help me to secure an interview.

### **Be prepared with questions:**

I was interested in finding out who would be the best person to follow up with regarding my resume. How many people does Big Money Bank employ? Do you happen to know what areas they are hiring in?

### **Express your appreciation:**

Mr. Jones, I really appreciate your time and all the information you have provided. It has been a pleasure speaking with you.

### **Follow up with contact:**

Mr. Jones, this is Joe James. I wanted to thank you for your advice and let you know that I have an interview next Monday.

**After the interview, call your friend and the contact to let them know how you did and thank them again.**

### **Benefits Of Using The Telephone During A Job Search Include:**

Speaking directly with people involved in the hiring process. Words spoken by you will be remembered more than words on paper.

Having more control over the pace of your job search. Calling employers to schedule interviews, as opposed to waiting for them to call you, is more time efficient.

Enhancing your verbal communication skills.

Showing initiative.

### **Some Tips For Using The Telephone Effectively Include:**

Plan your call in advance. Have your resume handy, and prepare a phone script in which you identify yourself and the reason for your call.

Speak clearly, pleasantly and don't speak too fast or too slowly.

Have all company information handy so you can easily verify addresses, names, and employment information.

Listen carefully and take notes.

Verify by repeating important information such as times and dates of interviews, contact names and titles, and salary offers.

Use your best phone etiquette: Be polite, courteous, enthusiastic, and thank everyone!

**First impressions are very important during a job search, so use the telephone effectively. Employers also use the phone extensively to screen applicants, so always answer the phone as if you are expecting an employer to call and don't make the mistake of being caught off-guard.**

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## **Fine Tuning Your Job Search - Quick Tips List**

**Get names!** Whether you are writing a letter in response to a want ad, applying in person, or making cold calls -- having a person's name will get you noticed quickly. Try not to address letters to "the human resources manager, sir or madam, or to whom it may concern".

**Thank everyone!** During a job search, you will meet and talk with many people. Thank them all, including the receptionist, switchboard operator, secretary, friend who referred you, placement specialist, and family member. A little note or word of thanks can make a big difference when trying to be remembered.

**Be ambitious!** When sending letters and resumes to companies, in addition to human resources departments, send letters to the presidents, vice presidents, and/or managers who may be integral in hiring for the position you seek.

**Stand out!** An excellent resume will get results a lot quicker than an average, mediocre or poor resume. Ask for help, get opinions, and stop using resumes that don't work. If you send a resume regularly for one month and do not get a response, it may be your resume, so work on it.

**Network!** Remember... more than 65% of all jobs are **not** found in newspaper want ads, or other publications. Ask for business cards from as many people as you can. Also, offer your business card if you have one.

**Research, research, research!** The more you know, about yourself, your career choice, the companies you target, and the current labor market; the sooner you will land the job you want.

**Use the phone effectively!** Always be in job search mode when you pick up the phone. Don't have unprofessional messages on voice mail or telephone answering machines. Answer the phone as if you expect it be an employer every time.

**Follow-up!** Don't wait for an employer to call you. In letters, tell employers you will call them for interviews. During interviews, tell them you will call to find out about the next interview, or status of the job.

**Be persistent/not irritating!** When seeking a job, know when to call and how often. Overkill can hurt you as much as waiting for jobs to fall in your lap.

**Show proper etiquette!** Be professional, shake hands, use small talk, and be polite. It never hurts.

Networking can be critical to your job search. It is very easy to send resumes in response to want ads, but isn't that what everyone else is doing? An interesting fact is that 65-80% of all jobs are not advertised in the classified ads. Networking can help you discover all the other potential leads out there. Furthermore, an employer is more apt to hire someone that has come recommended to them. Networking isn't easy, but remember, people may be more willing to give you their assistance than you think.

## **WHERE TO GO FOR MORE INFORMATION?**

### **Books/Journals**

- Paul L. Dyer (1998), The Ultimate Job Search Survival Guide, Petersons.
- Robert Orndorff (2000) Finding the Perfect Job, Petersons.
- Job Choices (2001), Cultivating Networks: Make Your Opportunities Bloom, pg. 36-37, (44<sup>th</sup> Edition).
- Ron and Caryl Krannich, Ph.Ds (2001), The Savvy Networker: Building Your Job Net for Success, Impact Publications.

### **Web Sites**

- <http://www.americasemployers.com/ae-cgi-bin>
- Networking: The Information Interview:  
[www.career.und.edu/career/JobSearch/Tedchnique/Brochure2.htm](http://www.career.und.edu/career/JobSearch/Tedchnique/Brochure2.htm).
- Career City – Advice from Executive Recruiters on Networking Strategies:  
[www.careercity.com/content/network](http://www.careercity.com/content/network)
- Job Hunters Bible.com: Richard Bolles - Links to website for contacts in various fields. [www.jobhuntersbible.com](http://www.jobhuntersbible.com)

**Remember, NETWORKING is not only an essential part of your job search, but can also be used for:**

- Seeking a promotion
- Changing careers
- Starting your own business

## COMPLETING JOB APPLICATIONS

It is important not to underestimate the importance of the job application! Most companies still require the completion of a job application in addition to receiving your resume. Keep in mind these tips:

- Bring a copy of your resume to help you transfer the information to the application.
- Follow the employer's application process exactly. For instance, if you're asked to apply in person during designated hours, do so. Check application directions carefully. If the application requests that you "print" or "write", be sure to follow these directions.
- **Always use black ink.** Ink is easier to read than pencil. Write neatly. If you have access to a typewriter, type your application.
- **Give honest and complete answers to all questions.**
- Answer all questions that apply to you.
- **Don't leave blank spaces.** If a question doesn't apply to you, either write "NA" or "not applicable," or simply draw a neat line through the space indicating to the employer that you didn't forget to answer the question.
- **Spelling must be correct.** Be sure you know how to spell words related to your type of work. If you can do it, you should be able to spell it. Bring a small dictionary if you must.
- List the specific position or occupational area for which you are applying. Employers react negatively to "anything" or "open" when written in the space reserved for the name of a job or occupation.
- **Salary should usually be discussed in an interview with the potential employer.** For this reason, it's best to write "negotiable" or "open for discussion" in the spaces that request salary expectations.
- If you submit a resume with the application, do not write "see resume" anywhere on the application. Fill out all information even if it repeats information on your resume.
- **Go alone and dress as though you will be interviewed.**
- **Practice!** A practice application can be found on the following pages. Complete it and take it with you when you apply for jobs. Having all of the information on hand makes the application process easier, less time-consuming, and ensures that the employer's application is prepared completely, correctly and neatly.

# SAMPLE EMPLOYMENT APPLICATION

Please Print All  
Information Requested  
Except Signature

DRAFT

## APPLICATION FOR EMPLOYMENT

**PLEASE COMPLETE PAGES 1-5.** DATE \_\_\_\_\_

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Last \_\_\_\_\_ First \_\_\_\_\_ Middle \_\_\_\_\_ Maiden \_\_\_\_\_

Present address \_\_\_\_\_

Number \_\_\_\_\_ Street \_\_\_\_\_ City \_\_\_\_\_ State \_\_\_\_\_ Zip \_\_\_\_\_

How long \_\_\_\_\_ Social Security No. \_\_\_\_\_ - \_\_\_\_\_ - \_\_\_\_\_

Telephone (\_\_\_\_) \_\_\_\_\_

If under 18, please list age \_\_\_\_\_

Position applied for (1) \_\_\_\_\_ Days/hours available to work  
 And salary desired (2) \_\_\_\_\_ No Pref \_\_\_\_\_ Thur \_\_\_\_\_  
 (Be specific) Tue \_\_\_\_\_ Sat \_\_\_\_\_  
 Wed \_\_\_\_\_ Sun \_\_\_\_\_

How many hours can you work weekly? \_\_\_\_\_ Can you work nights? \_\_\_\_\_

Employment desired  FULL-TIME ONLY  PART-TIME ONLY  FULL- OR PART-TIME

When available for work \_\_\_\_\_

TYPE OF SCHOOL	NAME OF SCHOOL	LOCATION (Complete mailing address)	NUMBER OF YEARS COMPLETED	MAJOR & DEGREE
High School				
College				
Bus. Or Trade School				
Professional School				

HAVE YOU EVER BEEN CONVICTED OF A FELONY?  No  Yes

If yes, please explain. \_\_\_\_\_

Please Print All  
Information Requested  
Except Signature

DRAFT



**APPLICATION FOR EMPLOYMENT**

**MILITARY**

HAVE YOU EVER BEEN IN THE ARMED FORCES?       Yes     No  
 ARE YOU NOW A MEMBER OF THE NATIONAL GUARD?       Yes     No  
 Specialty \_\_\_\_\_ Date Entered \_\_\_\_\_ Discharge Date \_\_\_\_\_

**Work**      Please list your work experience for the **past five years** beginning with your most recent job held.  
**Experience**    If you were self-employed, give firm name. **Attach additional sheets if necessary.**

Name of employer Address  City, State, Zip Code Phone number  _____  Your Last Job Title	Name of last supervisor  _____	Employment Dates  _____ From To	Pay or salary  _____ Start  Final
Reason for leaving (be specific)			
List the jobs you held, duties performed, skills used or learned, advancements or promotions while you worked at this company.			

Name of employer Address  City, State, Zip Code Phone number  _____  Your Last Job Title	Name of last supervisor  _____	Employment Dates  _____ From To	Pay or salary  _____ Start  Final
Reason for leaving (be specific)			

**Please Print All  
 Information Requested  
 Except Signature**

**DRAFT**

**APPLICATION FOR EMPLOYMENT**

**Work**      Please list your work experience for the **past five years** beginning with your most recent job held.  
**Experience**    If you were self-employed, give firm name. **Attach additional sheets if necessary.**

Name of employer Address City, State, Zip Code Phone number _____ Your Last Job Title	Name of last supervisor _____	Employment Dates _____ From To	Pay or salary _____ _____ Start Final
Reason for leaving (be specific)			
List the jobs you held, duties performed, skills used or learned, advancements or promotions while you worked at this company.			

Name of employer Address City, State, Zip Code Phone number _____ Your Last Job Title	Name of last supervisor _____	Employment Dates _____ From To	Pay or salary _____ Start Final
Reason for leaving (be specific)			
List the jobs you held, duties performed, skills used or learned, advancements or promotions while you worked at this company.			

May we contact your present employer?  Yes  No

Did you complete this application yourself?  Yes  No

If not, who did?

\_\_\_\_\_

# DRAFT

## AGREEMENT (PLEASE READ CAREFULLY BEFORE SIGNING)

I certify that all the information on this application is accurate and complete to the best of my knowledge and understand that misleading or false statements will constitute sufficient cause for refusal of hire or termination of my employment.

I understand that neither in acceptance of this application nor the subsequent entry into any type of employment relationship with (the Company) creates an actual or implied contract of employment. I understand that, if I accept employment with (Company Name), it will be on an at-will basis. This means that either (Company Name) or I have the right to terminate the employment relationship at any time, for any reason, with or without cause.

I agree to submit to drug and alcohol testing, if requested by (Company Name). I release (Company Name), and its employees, plus other persons or companies, from any and all liabilities arising out of or related in any way to such testing.

I authorize (Company Name) to investigate information concerning my education, employment experience and all other aspects of my background relevant to my proposed employment. I release (Company Name) and its employees from all liability arising from such investigation.

**Signature of applicant** \_\_\_\_\_ **Date:** \_\_\_\_\_

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(Company Name) is an equal employment opportunity employer. We adhere to a policy of making employment decisions without regard to race, color, religion, sex, sexual orientation, national origin, citizenship, age or disability. We assure you that your opportunity for employment with (Company Name) depends solely on your qualifications.