

Workshop #6: Workplace Job Searching Strategies (finding and winning the job)

Finding a job is a job in itself. You need to learn these realities and skills in order to be successful.

Workshop Topics

1. Prepare Yourself
2. Networking
3. Your Virtual Look
4. Resumes
5. Cover Letters
6. Preparation and Practice
7. Take the Stage
8. The Art of the Interview

In addition to the discussion notes listed below, more content on each these topics can be found in “Part II: Workplace Job Searching Strategies” of the *Make It Work: Disability & Competitive Employment* book available at <https://wid.org/wid-e3/employment-empowerment/>.

Discussion Notes

1.) Prepare yourself

Finding a job requires hard work, special skills, and time. Don’t approach this task in a half-hearted manner. If you do, you will move too slowly and the competition will swiftly pass you by. So, start your job search by making a commitment to pursuing it with all the energy, hard work and time needed to be successful. Next, remember that each job is filled in a competitive way. When an employer is looking for a new employee, they want the best person they can find. So, in order to have a good sampling to choose from, they’ll invite as many applicants to apply as they can. This means you’ll be in a competition with many others for that job. And, winning any competition means you have to outperform the other competitors or applicants. Since you may not always be the most experienced applicant or have the best looking resume, you can still win the race if you work the hardest to impress the potential boss with your passion for the position. This can propel you to the head of the pack.

And, you’re very likely going to get “no” answers when applying for jobs. And, the “no” response hurts. With this reality in mind, think about the “no” response as a routine part of the process. Most, job seekers, especially first time job seekers, discover the following truth about looking for a job.

Expect this pattern of replies.

Job application #1 = No

Job application #2 = No

Job application #3 = No

Job application #4 = No

Job application #5 = No

Job application #6 = YES!

The “YES” is inevitable when you keep trying. It’s also important for you to understand that a “no” is not a rejection of you. In fact, a “no” may really mean “yes” in the sense that this job is not for you; and, as a result, you wouldn’t be either successful or happy in it. So, “yes” you’re better off getting a “no” reply. Always accept the “no” answer as a sign that the job wasn’t right for you. In addition, every “no” gets you one step closer to the “YES” that’s out there waiting for you.

2.) Networking

What is networking? Networking is the art of communicating to people what you want. In a professional development context, it’s telling people something about yourself which includes information about your ambition for a particular job. It’s amazing how well this works. There seems to be a fundamental truth that when people like you they tend to want to help you get what they want -- if they can. This is the underlying reason why you should be sure to practice the art of networking. When you tell people (always in a nice and appealing way) that you’re hoping to begin a career in a particular field, the listener is going to naturally want to share with you any information or ideas they may have which might help you. And, this information can come from almost anyone, including family, neighbors, teachers, friends, employers and even strangers. It pays to advertise (network).

3.) Your Virtual Look

According to a major study, 91% of employers admit to reviewing their job applicant’s social media sites as a part of their screening process. Another study on this subject reported that 60% of employers review applicants’ social media sites to confirm what their resume says; 56% say their trying to see if job candidates “look professional”; and, 61% say that they stopped considering job candidates as a result of their social media searches (unfavorable impression). The top reasons for unfavorable impressions were: 46% had inappropriate photos; 34% wrote negative things about prior employers, professors or their schools; and, 29% make discriminatory comments related to race, ethnicity, religion or gender. Be alert and clean-up your social media sites!

4.) Resumes

Here are some general tips for an effective resume. Pick a theme with related graphics, type face and use a good paper quality. Know that when people glance at a page for the first time, they begin by looking in the upper left hand corner and glancing diagonally down the page to the lower right hand corner. This is the valuable real estate in your resume. Begin your best fact or statement in the upper left hand corner of the page to slow the eye down. Keep your resume short and to the point. Be specific. ALWAYS re-write your resume to fit the actual job position description and/or vacancy job announcement you’re applying for. Employers are creatures of habit, if you use the same words in your resume that appear in their job descriptions and/or vacancy announcements, it makes it easier and more logical for them to take a closer look at you. Failure to tailor your job description to fit the specific job you’re applying for is

both a waste time and may insure your failure. When applying on-line, be very, very careful to use the obvious search words in your job specific on-line application or resume that the employer uses in their on-line job vacancy announcement. They will be using a word search function to locate only those on-line applications or resumes which contain these key search words for a closer look.

5.) Cover Letters

Most often, when you submit a resume or job application you also add a cover letter. The purpose of the cover letter is to more personally introduce yourself and your interest in applying for the job. Here are some important considerations when preparing cover letters. First, make it interesting. Tell an interesting story about yourself. Tell it briefly. The letter should be one page, if possible, but no more than two. Second, as you should adjust your resume to best match the specific job you might be seeking, similarly customize your cover letter to match the specific requirements of the job being sought. Third, the cover letter (not the resume) is the chance to make your sales pitch on why you might be a great candidate for the job. Be sure to make your claim in a good way. Fourth, always express a passion for the job as well as enthusiasm for the organization where the job is.

6.) Preparation and Practice

As soon as you think you might get an interview invitation, even before it arrives, plan on what you will say during a possible interview. Don't wait for the interview invitation before you start this process as often the interview will take place only a few days after the notice may arrive. Begin your preparation by studying the job's vacancy announcement and/or position description, as well as general facts about the organization or company involved.

Next, alongside this job/company specific information, add your general responses or answers to these top skills employers are known to be looking:

- ✓ Ability to work in a team structure
- ✓ Ability to verbally communicate with persons inside and outside the organization
- ✓ Ability to make decisions and solve problems
- ✓ Ability to obtain and process information
- ✓ Ability to plan, organize, and prioritize work
- ✓ Ability to analyze quantitative (numbers) data
- ✓ Proficiency with computer software programs
- ✓ Ability to create and/or edit written reports
- ✓ Ability to sell or influence others

Rehearse or practice your prepared answers to all of these important questions. Don't try to memorize your answers, but just practicing them out loud creates "memory muscle" and when it's your time to talk in the interview this rehearsing or preparation will have stored your talking points in your mind and they will more readily flow from your brain to your lips. Don't make the BIG mistake of thinking, "Oh, I'll answer the interview questions spontaneously, when the employer asks them." That's the lazy way out. And, lazy people don't usually win competitions.

Lastly, know that every question that an employer asks a job applicant during an interview centers on one single question. That core concern or question is, “What can you do for me?” In the end, this is the heart of the interview, so approach your answers to any and all questions with this most important concern upper most in mind.

7.) Take the Stage

Dress and groom yourself appropriately as well as practice the “over the top” (OTT) exercise (see Workshop #2 in this series) before your leave home for a job interview. By doing so, you will start the interview at your peak performance. Be on time. No, don’t be on-time. BE EARLY! Plan to get to the interview location 20-30 minute early. If you have to wait in the lobby for 20-30 minutes, that’s a great time to settle yourself down and control your nervousness by reviewing your key talking points, getting comfortable in the space and knowing you’re there on-time. From the minute the location for the interview comes into view, start smiling and looking confident. Continue to carry that attitude until you leave the building and are well out of sight. Be pleasant to all you meet, especially on way into the interview room. Interviewers love to ask the receptionist who greeted you, “What did you think of that applicant?” So, be sure to leave a good impression with everyone you see. You never know who is watching and reporting observations about you. When you’re invited into the interview room, enter with a smile and a warm and heartfelt greeting. Say something human and friendly like, “Thank you very much for seeing me today”. When the interview is over, be sure to say “thank you”; but, also say something professional like, “I wish you the best in your search for the right employee”. Or, “I really enjoyed our meeting, this sounds like a terrific place to work”.

8.) The Art of the Interview

Here are both the asked and unasked questions in an interview room that you should try to answer even when they are not asked. Do this because while they might not be asked, these are what employers are quietly thinking about as they size you up and score your interview.

Think of the six (6) items below as individual “thought bubbles” floating in the interview room. Try and hit them all with your attitude and answers each time you give a job interview.

1. PERSONALITY & STYLE —Do I like you? Are you the right fit for our workforce? Are you professional? Do you have a work ethic?
2. SPIRIT —Do you have passion for the job? Do you want the job? Do you have loyalty & integrity as well as self-confidence & humility?
3. QUALITIES —Ability to work in a team structure? Ability to verbally communicate with persons inside and outside the organization? Ability to make decisions and solve problems? Ability to obtain and process information? Ability to plan, organize and prioritize work? Ability to analyze facts and data? Good with technology/computers? Ability to create and/or edit written reports? Ability to sell or influence others (leadership)?

4. KSA's —What are your job specific related Knowledge, Skills & Abilities?

5. INTERVIEW QUESTIONS —Did you answer the questions I asked? Were your answers good? Did they pull in everything I'm thinking about in these "thought bubbles"?

6. DISABILITY (if known by interviewer) —How can you do this job with your disability? Disability accommodations are expense, aren't they? If I hire this person, what will my boss, fellow workers or customers say about my hiring decision? I have other job candidates without disabilities, why don't I just get to the next applicant?