

COLLEGE OF INFORMATION
AND COMPUTER SCIENCES

CAREER HANDBOOK

College of
INFORMATION AND
COMPUTER SCIENCES

UMASS
AMHERST



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HELLO CICS

As the Director of Career Development for the College of Information and Computer Sciences, I'd like welcome you to our professional network. No matter where you are on your journey, we are committed to helping you answer your own unique career questions.

Our mission is to empower and engage our undergraduate students, graduate students, and alumni to discover, explore, and pursue professional experiences.

We aim to prepare a new generation of innovators, problem-solvers, and entrepreneurs to better their local and global communities. We provide broad opportunities for students to connect with employers and alumni in order to develop and showcase their competitive skills and unique strengths.

Our team is committed being student-centric, forward-thinking, professional, and community-minded.

I look forward to witnessing your successful development, now and in the future.

Brian Krusell
Director of Career Development
College of Information and Computer Sciences



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College of Information and Computer Sciences Career Handbook

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CAREER DEVELOPMENT

OUR APPROACH TO CAREER DEVELOPMENT

In 2005, Steve Jobs famously advised a group of graduates, “The only way to do great work is to love what you do. If you haven’t found it yet, keep looking. Don’t settle.”

Our approach to career development is based on this mentality. There is no single path and it’s rarely a straight line. The most successful computer scientists fail, and then fail again. But each time they learn something new, and it’s that ability to bounce back, to adjust, to not settle, that sets them apart.

As you think about your careers, I challenge you to have a “fail fast” mentality. What does that mean in reality? It means pushing yourself to step out of you comfort zone. Network and learn from alumni, take on a role that you don’t feel quite ready for, or start on that project that you’ve been postponing.

The job search has changed and will continue to change, so your ability to iterate and adapt will benefit you throughout your career.

Design, test, release, repeat.

Our Career Services

Our goal is to provide you with the opportunities and resources to customize your career.

- We can help you with **self-discovery**, whether it is identifying your strengths and emerging interests, or connecting this knowledge to professional fields.
- We also assist with **career exploration**, coaching you on how to create a plan, share your story, and network effectively.
- Finally, we can support you when you want to **pursue opportunities**, training you to ace the interview, demonstrate research and relevance, and select the best offer.

We offer several different ways for you to get the help you want.

- **Search our “OYO” (on your own) content.** We curate the best career articles, videos, books, and websites so that you can begin to find answers to your questions now. Visit our website to learn more: cics.umass.edu/career-development.
- **Attend an event.** We set up career fairs, workshops, and meet & greets throughout the year so that you can learn directly from our extended network of employers and alumni. Sign up for events on Handshake: umass.joinhandshake.com/login.
- **Schedule an advising appointment.** Can’t find the answer to your question on your own, or have a specific need? Our knowledgeable advising team is here to help. Schedule an appointment on Handshake: umass.joinhandshake.com/login.

Network and learn from alumni, take on a role that you don’t feel quite ready for, or start on that project that you’ve been postponing.

HANDSHAKE IS THE NEW HOME FOR YOUR JOB SEARCH



Handshake Makes It Happen!

Starting in September, CS Students Can Use Handshake To

1. Sign up for **career events** like the career fair
2. Apply to **jobs/internships** from 1,000+ employers
3. Request **appointments** with a career advisor

Why Sign Up?

Handshake is the ultimate career network and recruiting platform for college students. Handshake helps students find the careers they want.

How to Log In

1. If eligible, you should have received a link via email. If you do not have that email, visit **umass.joinhandshake.com**.
2. Click the blue “University of Massachusetts Amherst Current Student Login” button to use your UMass single sign-on (SSO) username and password.

Next Step: Fill Out Your Profile

Some of your information will already be in your Handshake profile (SPIRE integration data).

1. Check to be sure all pre-loaded information is correct.
2. Pay especially close attention to your major and GPA.
3. If you find an error in any of your profile data, contact CICS Careers to correct it.
4. Consider uploading a resume to help populate your profile.

Then: Adjust Your Profile Settings

Decide whether to make your profile public or private.

1. A public profile, and most information in the profile, can be seen by any employer on Handshake and by

your Career Advisors (there are some Handshake profile components, like GPA, that have their own privacy settings). You can also decide if you’d like your profile to be seen by other UMass Amherst students.

2. If you make your profile private, it can only be seen by you and your school’s Career Advisors.
3. You can switch your privacy status at any time, from private to public or from public to private.

Remember: The more information you add to your profile, the easier it will be for employers to find you and to make good decisions about whether or not you might be a good fit for their job postings.

Review

1. Login to **umass.joinhandshake.com**.
2. Click the blue “University of Massachusetts Amherst Current Student Login” button.
3. Update your profile.
4. Start searching for your future career!

The Fine Print / Why Can’t I Login?

University of Massachusetts Amherst is currently piloting Handshake. For this fall of 2017 phase, only students with majors in Computer Science, Engineering and Social & Behavioral Sciences, Exploratory Track, and 2017 alumni have been set up with accounts. All other UMass students and alumni may be added as part of a subsequent phase.

Have Questions?

Visit <https://support.joinhandshake.com/hc/en-us/categories/202711128-Student-Alumni> or ask the CICS Careers team at cicscareers@cics.umass.edu.

ELEVATOR PITCH

MAKE A GREAT FIRST IMPRESSION

Whether you are at a career fair, meeting people on your first day at your new job, or kicking off an informational interview, it’s important to be able to succinctly and effectively introduce yourself. This skill is famously referred to as the “elevator pitch” because you should be able to start and end in the time that you typically spend in an elevator. Try to keep the pitch closer to 30 seconds than to 60.

A great elevator pitch is tailored to the situation, well-rehearsed so that it sounds natural, and most importantly, memorable enough to encourage future discussion.

Step 1: Research

Before you deliver your pitch, consider the following steps and questions:

- Who are my potential audiences and which are the highest priority?
- From their perspective, what do they most want to know about me?
- What knowledge of recent news, facts or figures, or strategic objectives could help me build rapport?

Step 2: Relate

- What alumni or other people in my network do I have as potential connections?
- How do my skills and experiences relate to their interests?
- How could I help them achieve their goals?

Step 3: Rehearse

- Am I talking at a consistent, understandable speed?
- Do I sound confident and natural?
- Am I making eye contact and displaying positive body language?

Now you’re ready to create your own personal introduction. Here is a sample elevator pitch for a computer science student meeting a prospective employer at a career fair:

Hello, I’m [name]. I am a third-year computer science student here at UMass Amherst. I’ve had several research experiences related to machine learning, and have also interned for a summer at TechCo, working on a scrum team to develop a new module for their primary application. I’m known for my ability to creatively solve problems, both independently and on a team. I saw on your website that you are expanding your 2-year leadership development program for graduates interested in applying their technical skills to business objectives. How could I go about learning more?

A strong elevator pitch is a must-have resource, both for your job search and professional development. Keep working to improve it as you gain additional experience.

REPUTATION MANAGEMENT

Cultivating your digital footprint is critical to your overall career, but it's probably most important when you're searching for jobs. More than 80% of recruiters report that they search for candidates online¹. The most common sites for checking out candidates are LinkedIn, Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, Google+, and Pinterest. Given this staggering statistic, it's important to take control of your online reputation.

Google Yourself

The first step is to identify what's already out there. Use common search engines to investigate everything that is associated with your full name. Try search combinations, such as your full name with your college or university. Does what you see support the professional image you are seeking to create? What you find in your research is available for all to see. Recruiters are well-versed in how to conduct strategic online searches for candidates.

Privacy Settings

While privacy settings limit access to portions of your social sites, it doesn't remove content from the web altogether. Keep in mind that once content is shared on the internet, generally speaking, it never goes away completely. Be mindful whenever you post anything online, including comments and photos.

Social Media Cleaning Software

Found some pictures, particular words, or posts which need to be cleaned up? If so, use a social media cleaning software to help you polish up your social profiles. Search for social media cleaning software, select the program that meets your needs, and scrub down your profiles.

Turn Off Features

We can't control what others post or comment, but we can control where it appears. If you have family, friends, or acquaintances that share content, tag you in pictures, or comment on your social sites, manage where that information appears by adjusting your profile settings.

Improve Your SEO

Improve your visibility online by boosting your search engine optimization (SEO). Get active on social media sites

where you want to be found and noticed. Start sharing relevant business information, comment on statuses, posts, and updates to share your unique perspectives, and even post some of your own original content. The goal is to position yourself as a knowledgeable resource to others in your network and within your desired industry. The social sites where you have the most activity will float to the top of the search engine list when hiring managers search for you.

To increase your relevancy, make sure that your social media profiles contain keywords that are prominent in your desired industry. Generating "keyword rich" profiles and posts will allow your content to be found specifically in relationship to your desired industries and career path.

Develop Your LinkedIn Profile

To establish a professional and polished brand, create and develop your LinkedIn profile. LinkedIn is recognized as a top online professional community, so you should be an active member. Unlike Facebook or other social sites, LinkedIn should communicate your professional brand in a manner that will help you network.

Create a Personal Website

Perhaps you aren't a fan of social media sites and are wondering how to cultivate your online brand. If so, create a personal website or independent blog. Establishing a personal website allows you to have an online presence while maintaining greater control of the content. Websites could have a tab for your resume, portfolio of work, pre-professional/professional affiliations, awards and honors, blog posts and more. Don't forget to include a professional headshot. List your personal website on your resume when applying for positions and on your personal business cards for networking.

¹Joyce, Susan P. "What 80% of Employers Do Before Inviting You For An Interview," *The Huffington Post*. *The Huffington Post*, INC.

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INTERNATIONAL STUDENTS AND THE JOB SEARCH

Looking for a job is seldom easy for any student. For international students, the job search process can be especially confusing. The following is an overview of the topics most relevant to international students in conducting a successful job search.

Bureau of U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services Regulations

As an international student, you should only obtain employment-related information from an experienced immigration attorney or your campus USCIS representative. Advice from any other resource may be inaccurate. Once you have decided to remain in the United States to work, contact the UMass International Programs Office (IPO) and make an appointment with your USCIS representative. In addition to helping you fill out necessary forms, the USCIS representative will inform you of the costs associated with working in the United States.

Strong Communication Skills

It's important to be able to positively promote yourself and speak with confidence about your education, relevant skills and related experiences. Self-promotion is rarely easy for anyone; however, when interviewing in the United States, you are expected to explain your credentials and why you are suitable for the position.

Be sensitive to the interviewer's verbal and nonverbal cues. Interviewers are sometimes too embarrassed or impatient to ask for clarification, so be on the lookout for nonverbal clues, such as follow-up questions that don't match your responses or sudden disinterest on the part of the interviewer. Also, make sure you express proper nonverbal communication; always look directly at the employer in order to portray confidence and honesty.

If your English language skills need some work, get involved with campus and community activities. These

Curricular Practical Training (CPT) Guidelines for International Students

If you are on an F-1 student visa, you must fulfill certain requirements in order to gain practical training through either an internship or co-op so that you don't violate the terms of your visa. Visit our website and search for CPT to learn more.

events will allow you to practice speaking English. These activities are also a great way to make new contacts.

Career Center Support

The career center can be a valuable resource in your job search. Be aware, however, that some employers using the career center won't interview students who are not U.S. citizens. Though this may limit your ability to participate in some campus interviews, there are numerous ways to benefit from the career center:

- Attend sessions on job search strategies and related topics
- Work with the career development staff to plan your job search strategy
- Attend campus career fairs and company information sessions to inquire about employment opportunities and to practice your networking skills

It's a good idea to get advice from other international students who have successfully found employment in the U.S. and to start your job search early. Create and follow a detailed plan of action that will lead you to a great job you'll want to write home about.

Written by Rosita Smith.

As an international student, you should only obtain employment-related information from an experienced immigration attorney or your campus USCIS representative.

NETWORK YOUR WAY TO A JOB

Richard Bolles, author of the legendary job search book, *What Color Is Your Parachute?*, warns that the biggest mistake he sees job hunters make is spending too long looking online and getting nowhere. Experts estimate that only 4% to 10% of online job seekers have any success using that method. What’s a better option? Ask for leads and info from family, friends, professors, and any other people in your network. That’s how most people find a job.

1. Set Up Informational Interviews

Spending 20 minutes talking directly with someone is the best way to research a position, industry or company you’ve targeted. It’s a good way to add contacts to your network, too. They’ll also be more likely to want to help you—such as putting in a good word on your behalf or hand-delivering your resume.

Tap your network of friends and family and keep your request simple. Try some variation of this script: “Do you know anyone who works in IT?” or “Do you know anyone who works at Amazon?” Then make sure you have their permission to use them as a referral by asking, “Is it okay for me to contact them and mention you suggested I get in touch?”

At the end of a successful informational interview, don’t be afraid to ask for more networking leads.

2. Attend a Wide Variety of Events

Go anywhere groups of people in your field assemble. While job fairs catering to your major and career interests are best, it may be worth casting a bigger net. By meeting people everywhere you go, you can engage innumerable pairs of eyes and ears helping you look for a job, which is what often leads to success. “The best way to find a job is still friends of friends,” says Oliver. “Build a network of connections so that you hear about a job before it’s posted.”

3. Tell a Story About Yourself

In addition to discussing general topics of interest, learn how to slip in a bit about your job search: “I’m looking for

a software engineering job.” Later, practice relaying more detailed, career-related information about yourself. “You need to be specific about your skills and talents,” said Peggy Klaus, author of *BRAG! The Art of Tooting Your Own Horn Without Blowing It*, “so you’re able to explain what it is that you do. Prepare and rehearse little stories so it comes off conversationally.”

4. Be a Giver

Now is a great time to volunteer for a nonprofit or industry group. You’ll get out of the house, feel a sense of accomplishment and pick up some new skills. Maybe best of all: “Nonprofits have people serving on their boards that may be able to help you, and you’d never make their acquaintance otherwise,” says Downs. Also, make an effort to help others with their careers or in other ways. Building this goodwill could help you in the future and it’s genuinely rewarding.

5. Network From Within

Taking a not-perfect-fit job at a dream company is a great way to network and develop relationships from the inside. “Say you want to be a software developer at Apple, but you’re offered a junior quality control position. Take it and in a few years you may be right where you want to be,” says Tim Sanders, author of *Love is the Killer App: How to Win Business and Influence Friends*. Don’t worry about getting stuck in your first role. If you’re a talented person who makes a good fit with the corporate culture, a smart company will find a way to train and promote you. Even after you’re hired, don’t stop adding to your network and nurturing your contacts. In an uncertain world, no job is permanent.

Written by Jebra Turner, a former human resources manager, who writes about career issues, and other business topics. She lives in Portland, Ore., and can be reached at www.jebra.com.

Make an effort to help others with their careers or in other ways. Building this goodwill could help you in the future and it’s genuinely rewarding.

MAKE THE MOST OF A CAREER FAIR

Many employers use career fairs to promote their opportunities and to pre-screen applicants for internships and full-time positions. Employers often like to go to schools where they know the high quality of the students because they have previously hired students from that school. Career fairs come in different sizes, from small program-specific fairs to large campus-wide fairs.

Career fairs consist of tables manned by recruiters and other representatives from each organization. When possible, employers will send representatives who are alumni. Employers will generally have written materials on their tables that you are encouraged to take away with you. Career fairs are an excellent opportunity to engage and interact with employers, recruiters and other company personnel.

Before You Go

Generally, if attending a career fair as a senior or as someone who is looking for a full-time position, your attire should be “business formal”. For women, this can be a career style dress, skirt or pants suit, and dress shoes. Men can wear a suit or blazer with dress pants and a button down collared shirt, tie and dress shoes. In most other situations “business casual” will do fine. Keep in mind that the way you dress for a career fair may not have to be the way you dress for your job. Remember to be clean, wrinkle-free, and conservative.

Don’t forget to bring copies of your resume, or resumes if you have several versions tailored to different career choices. It is always better to have too many copies of your resume than not enough. Also bring a couple pens or pencils (have backups—they have a way of disappearing), and a folder or portfolio for taking notes. Avoid bringing your backpack. It’s cumbersome for you, it gets in the way of others and it screams “student” instead of “candidate”.

You should know before you get to the career fair what companies you want to meet with and have done the appropriate research for each of these organizations. At minimum, be sure to visit their website. A little advance preparation goes a long way and can make you stand out among the many other attendees. Don’t forget to plan your elevator pitch. Career fairs are a great time to use your elevator pitch. Remember to keep it short (no more than 30-60 seconds) and to the point.

Take a few minutes to set some goals. The questions you ask at a career fair depend upon these goals. Are you interested in finding out about a particular career field?

Then ask questions about working within the industry. If you’re seeking career opportunities with a specific employer, focus your questions on the application and interview process.

Career fairs are a great time to use your elevator pitch. Remember to keep it short (no more than 30-60 seconds) and to the point.

At the Fair

In order to maximize your career fair experience, you must be an active participant and not just a browser. Avoid traveling in groups. If all you do is stroll around, take company literature and load up on the ubiquitous freebies, you really haven’t accomplished anything worthwhile (unless you’re a collector of key chains, mousepads and pocket flashlights). It is essential to chat with the company representatives and ask meaningful questions. Don’t just drop your resume on employers’ display tables. Try to get it into a person’s hands and at least say a few words.

Remember to keep track of the recruiters with whom you speak. If you leave a resume you should get their contact information (name and email) and send follow-up notes referencing your discussion.

Don’t interrupt the employer representatives or your fellow job-seekers. If someone else is monopolizing the employer’s time, try to make eye contact with the rep to let him or her know that you’re interested in speaking. You may be doing a favor by giving the recruiter an out. If all else fails, move to the next table and plan to come back later.

Sincerity always wins. Don’t lay it on too thick, but don’t be too nonchalant either. Virtually all employers are looking for candidates with good communication skills. Be memorable and seek to make connections.

DEVELOPING A NOTICEABLE LINKEDIN PROFILE

Technology has revolutionized the hiring process. In 2003, LinkedIn introduced an online business-networking platform that gave candidates and recruiters unprecedented access to over 332 million users across the globe, making the search for the right job and the right candidate a more efficient process. As a current or recent graduate, you may be unsure about how to best use LinkedIn. Is it like Facebook? What information should be in my profile? How do I use it to network or find a job?

Is LinkedIn Like Facebook?

Nope, LinkedIn isn't like Facebook. LinkedIn isn't about personal details, like what you did last weekend. While you have a profile and a profile picture, the focus is business. This platform is where you showcase your educational background, relevant experience, volunteer experience, skills, knowledge of your desired industry, and interaction with other business professionals. You want to communicate your "value proposition" to employers.

What Should Be Included in My Profile?

A polished LinkedIn profile is the crux of successful online networking. Consider your profile your first impression to a global online business community. While that can feel a bit intimidating, don't overthink it. It's easy to create a profile you can be proud to share with other professionals. To help you get started, use the following tips for constructing a professional profile beyond just your work experience.

1. Headshot

LinkedIn profiles that have a headshot are more likely to be viewed by recruiters. Unlike your Facebook picture, your LinkedIn picture should be business-oriented. Your profile picture should be a preview of what it would be like to see you come in for an interview. Look professional and smile. Keep in mind that selfies are strictly prohibited if you want to land the job!

2. Keyword Rich Headline

The second most important piece of your profile is the headline. This is an opportunity to announce to the global business community who you are or who you seek to become. Use this prime real estate to your advantage by incorporating keywords from your desired job or industry.

3. Summary

The summary section is your 30-second elevator pitch. Use this section to introduce yourself and highlight significant skills, qualifications, and interests in your desired field. Be sure to communicate passion and enthusiasm for the industry and the work.

4. Education

The education section is the place to list your full degree, indicate your institution, and graduation or anticipated graduation date. Be sure to include any minors, study abroad experiences and certificate programs related to the degree.

5. Language

Share that you have the ability to speak a second language; include the language and proficiency level. Sharing this information can give you a competitive advantage over other candidates.

6. Samples of Your Work

LinkedIn offers a great feature for users to upload samples of their work. Showcasing samples of presentations, research projects, senior capstone assignments, and portfolios add value and credibility to your profile.

7. Volunteer Experience

Employers take note of volunteer experience. Be sure to include the name of the organization, your role within the organization and length of involvement. Also include details such as fundraising results, event coordination, management experience and more. Your volunteerism, in many cases, can be as valuable as work experience, especially if it is related to your desired industry.

8. Awards and Honors

Highlight any awards and honors received during your collegiate academic career including nonacademic awards received for community or civic engagement. List the full name of the award (avoid acronyms), awarding organization or department, and the year the award was received.

9. Select Your Skills

Identify your top industry-specific, technical and general skills. Adding this information to your profile will allow others to endorse your skill set, giving you instant credibility. A solid list of at least 8-10 skills demonstrates value and capability.

10. Share Your Interests

Disclosing your personal interests and hobbies can help demonstrate your work-life balance. Personal interests can sometimes score a few extra "top candidate" points, but be sure to avoid sharing too much personal information. Remember, the LinkedIn profile is a platform for professionals.

How Do I Network to Land the Job?

Now that you have completed your profile, land the job by using these top features to start connecting with other professionals:

Customize the Invitation to Connect

Every time you send a message to connect with someone on LinkedIn, make sure that you customize the text. Share who you are, why you want to connect, and how you found or know the individual. For example, if you met them in-person, tell them where you met and when.

Alumni Connections Feature

LinkedIn offers users a dynamic tool that connect individuals who share the same alma mater. Search for alumni who are practicing in your desired field, have the same degree, attended your institution during a specific time period, and more. Many individuals are happy to assist their fellow alumni with career advice and even hire alums. Don't forget to showcase your school pride in that customized invitation to connect!

Follow Companies, Join Groups, and Connect with Recruiters

Start following your dream companies on LinkedIn and join industry specific groups. Be the first to know about company news and job postings. As you start following companies, make note of who is posting updates and job announcements. Use those clues to connect with recruiters and company leaders.

Share Content

Position yourself as a knowledgeable resource. Share interesting industry or work productivity articles. Comment on posts shared by others in your network. Reinforce your professional brand by sharing your knowledge and perspectives.

Gala Jackson, M.Ed. is a Millennial Expert & Career Management Consultant with InterviewSnob, a career consulting boutique for millennials. Connect with Gala @interviewsnob and check out her website at www.interviewsnob.com

ALUMNI NETWORKING WITH LINKEDIN

Your Linkedin Profile Is Ready. Now What?

Whether you know what you want to do or you have no idea, informational interviewing is a great strategy to explore. The concept is you are not interviewing for a job, but rather asking people about their jobs. It is particularly effective with people in your LinkedIn network, whether they are alumni from your school or acquaintances who do interesting work. Keep it short, always express your appreciation, and have fun learning from others' experience.

1. Use alumni insights to explore your network.

Filter on your major, skills, and desired geography to find companies and potential alumni connections. Read profiles and company pages to decide which are the most promising.

Extra Tip: Keep a log of target companies and contacts, including status, and notes from research and any interactions.

2. Request an informational interview.

LinkedIn makes it easy to connect with alumni who might be willing and able to help. Don't forget to "Add a note" to send a personal message. Then use Messaging to introduce yourself, note the alumni connection, and make a specific request (e.g., propose a short call).

Extra Tip: Assume they are busy—aim to set up a call in one exchange by suggesting a time window and requesting their preferred phone number.

3. Use LinkedIn to prepare for the conversation.

Read their profile to find out more personal connections. Do you share a connection, skill, or volunteer passion? Go to their company pages. Study content they have posted. See what companies and groups they follow. The more you know, the better questions you can ask and the better rapport you can build.

Extra Tip: Always remember to send a short, thoughtful thank you note the same day. Include what you learned and any next steps.

Informational Interview—Suggested Call Outline

- Confirm duration and that it's still a good time to chat
- Make or mention connection
- Introduce yourself (elevator pitch)
- Identify goals for discussion
- Focus on one or two key questions
- React to their responses to create follow on discussion
- Recap next steps or ask for a new introduction
- Say thank you!

RESUME WRITING 101

Remember, the resume can only get you the interview—the interview gets you the job.

Resume Must Haves

- **Name:** Typically centered, alone at the very top, larger font to stand out
- **Contact Info:** Phone, email
- **Education:** School, degree, major, GPA, exp. grad date
- **Professional / Work Experience:** Role, company, location, dates, details on actions and outcomes

You May Also Want to Consider

- **Links:** GitHub, LinkedIn, personal website, online portfolio
- **Address:** Permanent and/or current
- **Projects:** Research (publications, presentations), hackathons, independent / “skunkworks”
- **Skills:** Programming languages, software, tools, spoken languages, requested “soft skills”
- **Additional Education Details:** Coursework, scholarships, study abroad, transfer school info
- **Honors:** Awards, recognitions, patents, certifications
- **Other Types of Experience:** Leadership, business, volunteering, teaching, mentoring
- **Other Activities and Interests:** Sports, art, hobbies (be specific and descriptive—not a list)

Seven Common Pitfalls in Resume Writing

1. **Too long.** Most new graduates should restrict their resumes to one page. If you have trouble condensing, get help from a peer or career advisor. Pay attention to the amount of “white space” on the page.
2. **Spelling mistakes.** Errors suggest carelessness and/or lack of intelligence. Have at least two people proofread your resume. Don’t rely on your computer’s spell-check.
3. **Hard to read.** Use standard fonts (Arial, Calibri, Times New Roman), no smaller than a 10-point. Formatting (e.g., bullets, underlining, bolding, italics) should be used to make the document easier to read. Avoid color and distracting formatting.
4. **Too wordy.** Do not use complete sentences or paragraphs. Say as much as possible with as few words as possible. Be careful in your use of jargon and avoid slang.
5. **Irrelevant information.** Customize your resume for each application. Consider their perspective and emphasize your most relevant experiences and skills. Do not include unnecessary personal information such as your age or marital status.
6. **Too modest.** The resume showcases your qualifications in competition with the other applicants. Put your best foot forward without misrepresentation, falsification or arrogance. Prioritize where appropriate (don’t feel compelled to be chronological).
7. **Boring.** Make your resume as dynamic as possible. For your bullets detailing your experience, make sure you answer the question “so what” to explain not just what you did but how you created value. Also, begin every statement with an action verb.

For your bullets detailing your experience, make sure you answer the question “so what” to explain not just what you did but how you created value.

POWER VERBS FOR YOUR RESUME

accelerated	fostered	planned
advanced	founded	prepared
advised	generated	prioritized
analyzed	guided	procured
assessed		produced
augmented	implemented	programmed
	improved	promoted
built	influenced	queried
	informed	recommended
classified	initiated	refined
coached	innovated	researched
collaborated	integrated	resolved (problems)
computed	invented	
conceptualized		served
consolidated	justified	solicited
contributed		solved
coordinated	launched	spearheaded
created	led	streamlined
customized		studied
		supervised
debugged	marketed	
designed	mobilized	tailored
developed	modeled	trained
directed	motivated	transformed
enabled	negotiated	updated
engineered		upgraded
enhanced	organized	
established	originated	validated
evaluated	overhauled	verified
examined		
executed	performed	wrote
	persuaded	
facilitated	pioneered	
formulated		

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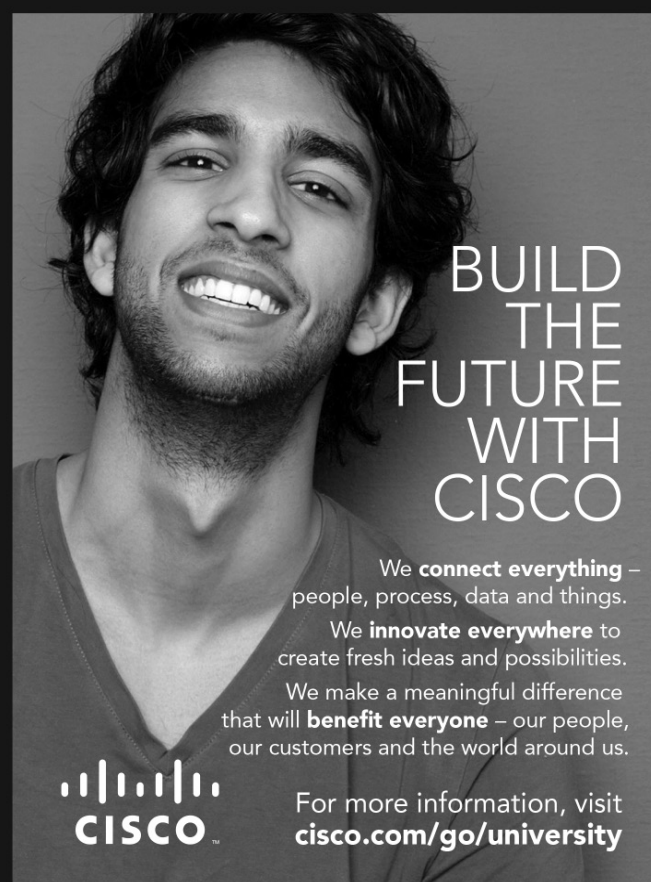
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DEVELOPING A WINNING CURRICULUM VITAE (CV)

A Curriculum Vitae or CV is a professional document that is used for marketing your background for a variety of purposes, mostly within academia or research. It can be multiple pages, but should be focused. Use the following tips to help you get started on your CV.

Common Uses

- Graduate school admission, graduate assistantship or scholarship application
- Teaching, research and upper-level administrative positions in higher education
- Research and consulting in a variety of settings
- Academic departmental and tenure reviews
- College or university service appointments
- Professional association leadership positions
- Publishing and editorial board reviews
- Speaking engagements
- Grant proposal

Your CV can be multiple pages, but should be focused.

Education

Include the following information:

- Name of institution(s) where obtained or working toward a degree, listed in reverse chronological order
- Official name of degree(s) and/or certification(s) obtained or currently working toward
- Add Master’s Thesis, Project and/or Dissertation title(s)
- Name of advisor

Foundational Standards

Found in most standard CVs:

- **Heading**—name, address, professional email and phone number. A website with professional content (e.g., a portfolio) can be listed in the heading as well. Use the direct URL to the proper page, so the recruiter doesn’t have to search your entire site.
- **Objective**—should be specific to the position for which you are applying.
- **Format**—standard margins of one inch, type size from 10-12 points and easy-to-read fonts.
- **Content**—the organization of your document should be rearranged depending on the potential employer. For example, if your education section speaks more to your qualifications for the desired position, it should appear before your employment experience.
- **Experience**—highlight paid, unpaid, school and extracurricular experiences that relate to your desired objective.
- **Skills**—technical/computer, language, leadership, laboratory to name a few.

Additional Sections

Depending on your background, you may want to add additional sections to your resume:

- Teaching Experience and Interests
- Research Experience and Interests
- Related Experience: Internships, Practicum and/or Fieldwork
- Grants Received and Academic Awards
- Special Training
- Scholarships and Fellowships

Written by Veronica Rahim, Career Services Consultant, Center for Career Opportunities, Purdue University, for the 2011-2012 Career Planning Handbook.

TURNING YOUR INTERNSHIP INTO A FULL-TIME POSITION

One of the biggest benefits of an internship or co-op is that it can serve as your passport to future employment opportunities. Getting your foot in the door by landing the internship or co-op is only half the challenge in turning your career dreams to reality. The more vital half is to build a reputation during this experience that will culminate in receiving a full-time job offer. A growing number of employers are using internships as a way to gain a primary in-depth look at prospective employees. In this respect, both you and your employer have a common goal—namely, to determine if it is a good fit. Here are ten tips to becoming a savvy intern and making powerful career moves:

- 1. Exhibit a Can-Do Attitude**
Pass the attitude test and you will be well on your way to success. Your attitude speaks loud and clear and makes a lasting impression, so make sure that it is one of your greatest assets. Take on any task assigned—no matter how small—with enthusiasm. Take the initiative to acquire new skills. Accept criticism graciously and maintain a sense of humor.
- 2. Learn the Unwritten Rules**
Get to know your co-workers early in your internship. They will help you figure out quickly the culture in which you will be working. Being the “new kid” is like being a freshman all over again. You will need to adapt, observe, learn, and process a large volume of information. Watch closely how things get done. Ask questions and pay attention to how people interact with each other.
- 3. Take Your Assignments Seriously**
Build a reputation for being dependable. Be diligent and accurate in your work. You may encounter a great deal of ambiguity in the work environment, so seek direction when in doubt and do whatever it takes to get the job done. As an intern, you will generally start out by performing small tasks, asking a lot of questions and learning the systems. Your internship supervisor knows that there will be an initial learning curve and will make allowances for mistakes. Learn from your errors and move on to your next task. From there, your responsibilities and the expectations of others are likely to grow.
- 4. Meet Deadlines**
Always ask when an assignment is due. This will help you to understand your supervisor’s priorities and to manage your time accordingly. Alert your boss in advance if you will be unable to meet expectations. This will show respect and professional maturity.
- 5. Set Realistic Goals and Expectations**
Invest actively in the most critical element of your internship—that is, the learning agenda, which you set up with your supervisor at the beginning of the

assignment. Your learning agenda should target specific skills and competencies that you wish to acquire and demonstrate. After all, the learning agenda is what distinguishes a short-term job from an internship. It is up to you to establish a correlation between your learning goals and the daily work you are asked to perform. Maintain a journal of your activities and accomplishments in order to monitor your progress. Seek regular reviews from your supervisor to assess your performance and reinforce the fact that you are willing to learn and improve.

- 6. Communicate Respectfully**
Assume that everyone else knows more than you do. However, don’t be afraid to present useful ideas that may save time or money or solve problems. Make sure, however, that your style does not come across as cocky. Employers value assertiveness but not aggressiveness. Find out the proper way to address individuals, including customers. Maintain a pleasant and respectful demeanor with every person, regardless of their rank.
- 7. Be Flexible**
Accept a wide variety of tasks, even those that may not relate directly to your assignments or those that may seem like grunt work. Your willingness to go the extra mile, especially during “crunch time,” will help you carve the way to assuming greater responsibilities.
- 8. Be a Team Player**
Learn how your assignment fits into the grand scheme of things and keep a keen eye on getting the job done. In today’s work environment, success is often defined along the lines of your ability to get along with and interact with others. You’re only a winner if your *team* wins.
- 9. Get a Mentor**
Identify at least one individual to serve as your mentor or professional advisor. It should be someone who is willing to take a personal interest in your career development and success. Once you know your way around, begin to network wisely and get “plugged in” by associating with experienced employees who may share their knowledge, perspectives and insights. Get noticed, because many more people will have a role in determining your future than you might initially realize.
- 10. Have Fun!**
Last but not least, enjoy learning, sharpening your skills and developing professionally and personally. Participate in work-related social functions and become an active member in your work community.

Make your internship or co-op experience work for you. It can be the first link in the chain of your career.

Written by Lina Melkonian, Executive Director of Development at San José State University, College of Engineering.

INTERVIEWING ADVICE FROM THE EXPERTS

1. Keep Your Answers Concise

Limit your answers to one to three minutes per question. Time yourself and see how long it takes you to fully answer a question such as “tell me about yourself”. The best interviews are those where the applicant speaks half the time, and the interviewer speaks the other half. It should feel like a conversation, not a monologue.

2. Research Organizations in Advance of Interviews

Since most on-campus interviews are relatively short, it is important that you use this time to sell yourself to an employer. Don’t waste this opportunity by spending too much time on questions that could have been answered by reading the company’s website. Displaying your knowledge about a potential employer will greatly enhance your chances of interview success.

3. Be Organized and Logical

Use simple frameworks to organize your thoughts. For example, there are three main reasons why I would be great for this position. Or my weakness is X, so I did Y, and now Z. If you receive a question that you did not anticipate, it is important to think before you speak, and when possible, try to quickly come up with a structured method for answering to avoid rambling.

4. Image Is Often as Important as Content

What you look like and how you say something are just as important as what you say. Be enthusiastic during your interviews. Nonverbal cues such as gestures, handshakes, physical appearance, and attire are highly influential during job interviews. Watch Amy Cuddy’s TedTalk on body language to learn more.

5. Ask Great Questions

The answer to “do you have any questions” should always be “yes!” The questions you ask and the way you ask them can make a tremendous impression on the interviewer. Good questions require advance preparation and demonstrate creativity and knowledge. Before the interview, write out specific questions you want to ask. Avoid asking about salary and benefits until after the interview when they have expressed interest in hiring you.

6. Prepare Five or More Success Stories

In preparing for interviews, make a list of your skills and key assets. Then reflect on past experiences and pick out one or two instances when you successfully exhibited those skills. Practice giving the context on the situation, discussing what you did, and then explaining how what you did created value or demonstrated the skill. Great stories stick.

7. Keep Interview Notes

As soon as possible, write a brief summary of your experience. Record any follow-up actions, including thank you notes to each individual you met. Write down some things you learned about the company, people, and yourself. The best way to improve on the next interview is to reflect on previous ones.

8. Be Honest and Sincere

Never lie during an interview. While you should never draw attention to your weaknesses, don’t attempt to hide a shortcoming by being untruthful. Learn how to deal with perceived (or real) weaknesses before your interviews by talking to a career services professional or reading job interviewing techniques.

9. Be on Time

This goes without saying but there is never a good reason to be late for an interview appointment. Give yourself plenty of extra time to deal with the unexpected. Remember that it never hurts to arrive five minutes early.

10. Relax

While this is easier said than done, try not to fixate on being nervous. Even seasoned professionals get the “interview jitters.” Find a funny video or a favorite song to listen to before your interview to get you in a relaxed, fun mood.

Written by Roseanne R. Bensley, Career Services, New Mexico State University.

Some of this material is adapted from Recruiting Trends by L. Patrick Scheetz, Ph.D., Collegiate Employment Research Institute. © Michigan State University.

SELLING BRAND “YOU” IN THE INTERVIEW

Modesty is an admirable trait. But it’s of little use during a job interview. The purpose of an interview is to find the best candidate for a job. Employers want to learn about the knowledge, skills, attributes and experience that distinguish you from other job candidates. They won’t know what makes you special unless you tell them. However, most employers won’t go out of their way to hire someone who comes across as cocky or arrogant. So how do you balance the two?

Choose What to Talk About

Start with the job posting and make a list of all the preferences and requirements. Try to match them with your own knowledge, skills and experience. Make sure that you have examples ready for as many of the items listed as possible. If leadership experience is preferred, scrutinize your past for examples of it. If the job requires good teamwork skills, be prepared with examples from your past. But also be prepared to talk about things not listed specifically in the job posting. Looking beyond the job posting could help separate you from other applicants.

Make sure that everything you discuss is relevant to the job. It’s not easy to do, but you may have to leave out some of your most impressive skills and achievements. Talking about skills, accomplishments or experience with no relevance to the job does not help the interviewer identify you as a strong job candidate, and could easily be interpreted as bragging.

Many recent college graduates make the mistake of limiting their discussion to their college coursework, or jobs they had that are directly related to the one they are applying for. But this is a mistake. “Students should be willing to talk about any type of knowledge or skills that they have acquired that are relevant to the job they are interviewing for,” says Micael Kemp, retired Director of Career Services at the University of California, Santa Barbara. Volunteer experience, leadership positions in a sorority or a fraternity, extracurricular activities, and even work experience at retail or fast-food jobs can be sources of information. “Many students underplay work experience gained at places like grocery stores or fast-food restaurants,” she continues. “But employers deeply appreciate people who have gotten their hands dirty and aren’t afraid to work hard.”

Story Time

Reading off a list of knowledge, experience, and accomplishments makes for a short and boring interview. Your goal during the interview is to keep the interviewer interested in what you are saying. Many career advisors suggest that job candidates prepare a reservoir of stories that they can pull from during an interview. People are naturally drawn to stories. It’s why we read novels and why we watch movies. Stories allow job

candidates to show interviewers their skills and knowledge in action. “Interviewers need more than just your word that you have a particular skill or attribute. They need specific examples, and stories are a good way of providing that,” says Cynthia Redwine, former Director of the Engineering Career Resource Center at the University of Michigan, College of Engineering.

Stories have the added benefit of being easy to remember for you and the interviewer. Demonstrating a particular job attribute through a story has the added benefit of sounding less boastful than stating the qualification directly. Saying that you are a good leader sounds boastful; explaining how you led a team of volunteers during a record food drive is admirable.

Once you have created a list of job skills and requirements from the job posting and your own research of the company and the position, sit down and try to come up with stories to demonstrate each. Of course, certain things cannot be demonstrated through a story (a high GPA, or a certain degree or academic specialty), but that information is already apparent to the interviewer from your resume. However, stories can be used in situations that at first might not be apparent. For example, instead of simply stating that you are proficient with a particular piece of software, you can tell the interviewer how you applied the software to accomplish a particular task. Keep your stories short and to the point. An interview is not a creative writing class. There is no need to supply vivid descriptions or unrelated background information. In fact, many career advisors suggest that students limit their stories to one minute.

Final Advice

Take time to prepare for the interview. Never walk into an interview with the intention of “winging it” no matter how qualified you think you are for the position. If you are having trouble coming up with stories or examples for the interview, make sure you talk to friends, family members, co-workers, professors and career advisors. Often those around us can see skills and attributes that we do not.

Students sometimes make the mistake of telling employers about job-related knowledge or experience that they don’t have. While candor is an admirable trait, such frankness is out of place in a job interview. Employers don’t want to know why you can’t do the job, but why you can do it. You should always have examples of your ability to learn quickly and independently.

Employers want to hire people who are excited and proud of the work that they have done. They want to know that you will bring that same type of proficiency and enthusiasm to their company. Use your best stories to create a personal brand that is memorable and desirable.

Written by Chris Enstrom, a freelance writer in Nashville, Ind.

**Stories allow job candidates to show interviewers
their skills and knowledge in action.**

INTERVIEW QUESTIONS TO EXPECT AND QUESTIONS TO ASK THEM

Before you begin interviewing, think about these questions and possible responses. Discuss them with a friend or conduct mock interviews and be sure you are able to communicate clear responses.

- Tell me about yourself.
- Why did you choose to interview with our organization?
- What do you consider to be your greatest strengths?
- Can you name some of your weaknesses?
- Have you ever had any failures? What did you learn from them?
- How does your college education or work experience relate to this job?
- What motivates you most in a job?
- Have you had difficulty getting along with a former professor/supervisor/co-worker and how did you handle it?
- Why should we hire you rather than another candidate?
- What do you know about our organization (products or services)?
- Where do you want to be in five years? Ten years?
- Do you plan to return to school for further education?
- Why did you choose to become a computer science major?
- Why did you choose to attend UMass?
- In which campus activities did you participate?
- Which classes in your major did you like best? Least? Why?
- What job-related skills have you developed?
- What did you learn from these work experiences?
- Give an example of a situation in which you helped solve a problem.
- Give an example of a time in which you worked under deadline pressure.
- How do you think a former supervisor would describe your work?
- Do you prefer to work under supervision or on your own?
- Do you prefer large or small organizations? Why?
- What other types of positions are you considering?
- Are you able to work on several assignments at once?

Recruiters will almost always end the interview with “do you have any questions?” Don’t be fooled. This question is yet another opportunity to shine.

Prepare Questions in Advance

You should have a list of questions prepared for this crucial part of the interview. Every question you ask should demonstrate your interest and confirm your knowledge of the organization.

You should read publications in the field. You can get information about new products or policies by surfing the employer’s website or by reading magazines or other publications. It is appropriate to address some of your questions to what you have read. Ask about new products or services, management strategies at the company, how the company has changed, and potential growth.

Some publications providing a wealth of information about companies are *The Economist*, *Fortune*, *Forbes*, *Business Week*, and *The Wall Street Journal*.

Questions Not to Ask

Not only should you know what questions to ask during the interview, but it is important to know what questions not to ask. The following areas should generally be avoided:

1. Avoid asking questions that are answered in the company’s annual report or employment brochure. Recruiters are familiar enough with their own information to recognize when you haven’t done your homework. If some information in the annual report isn’t clear to you, by all means ask for clarification.
2. Don’t bring up salary or benefits in the initial interview. The recruiter may choose to bring up the information, but you should not initiate the topic.
3. Avoid asking any personal questions or questions that will put the recruiter on the defensive. This includes questions such as the interviewer’s educational background, marital status, past work experience and so on.
4. Don’t ask questions that have already been answered during the interview. If you have prepared a list of questions and some of them have been addressed during the interview, do not repeat them unless you need clarification.

Questions You Should Ask

Now that you know what you shouldn’t ask during the interview, determine what questions you should ask.

1. Ask specific questions about the position. You need to know what duties will be required of the person in the position to see if there is a fit between your interests and qualifications and the job you seek.
2. Try to find out as much as possible about qualities and skills the recruiter is looking for in job candidates. Once you determine the necessary qualities, you can then explain to the recruiter how your background and capabilities relate to those qualities.
3. Ask questions concerning advancement and promotion paths available. Every company is different and most advancement policies are unique. Try to find out what the possible promotion path is to see if it fits your career goals. You may also want to ask about periodic performance evaluations.
4. It is appropriate to ask specific questions about the company’s training program if this information is not covered in company literature.
5. Ask questions about location and travel required. If you have limitations, this is the time to find out what is expected in the position.

PROFESSIONAL ETIQUETTE

Exemplary professional etiquette indicates to potential employers that you are a mature, responsible adult who can aptly represent their company. Not knowing proper etiquette could damage your image, prevent you from getting a job, and jeopardize both personal and professional relationships.

Meeting and Greeting

Etiquette begins with meeting and greeting. Always rise when introducing or being introduced to someone. Provide information in making introductions—you are responsible for keeping the conversation going. Unless given permission, always address someone by their title and last name. Practice a firm handshake. Make eye contact while shaking hands.

Dining

Shirley Willey, owner of Etiquette & Company, reports that roughly 80% of second interviews involve a business meal. Remember that an interview is always an interview, regardless of how relaxed or informal the setting. Anything that is said or done will be considered by the interviewer, cautions Cobb. In order to make a good impression during a lunch or dinner interview, make sure you:

- Arrive on time.
- Wait to sit until the host/hostess indicates the seating arrangement.
- Place napkin in lap before eating or drinking anything.
- When ordering, keep in mind that this is a talking business lunch. Order something easy to eat, such as boneless chicken or fish.
- Do not hold the order up because you cannot make a decision. Feel free to ask for suggestions from others at the table.
- Wait to eat until everyone has been served.
- Practice proper posture; sit up straight with your arms close to your body.
- Bring food to your mouth—not your head to the plate.
- Try to eat at the same pace as everyone else.
- Take responsibility for keeping up the conversation.
- Place napkin on chair seat if excusing yourself for any reason.
- Place napkin beside plate at the end of the meal.
- Push chair under table when excusing yourself.
- Start eating with the utensil that is farthest away from your plate. Remember to work from the outside in.
- Don’t chew with your mouth open or blow on your food.
- Don’t drink alcoholic beverages, even if your interviewer does.
- The interviewer will usually take care of the bill and the tip. Never make an issue of the check.

Dress Code

To dress appropriately for an interview, think one level in formality above what people normally wear on the job. For men, if you’d wear khakis and a polo shirt on the job, wear dress slacks and a blazer to the interview. Women should follow a similar “step up” plan. Scope out company dress codes during informational interviews.

Timeliness

One of the easiest ways to make a good impression is to arrive for interviews 10-15 minutes early, so you have plenty of time to get settled and perhaps check your appearance one last time. If something pressing does come up, immediately call to cancel or reschedule.

Decided you don’t want the job after all? Don’t just disappear. It’s not only rude, but every industry has a grapevine, and word of flakiness gets around. Failing to show for an on-campus interview can have even more severe consequences, so make sure you know the cancelation and no-show policy.

Control Your Devices

“We get complaints about candidates taking a cell phone call, or checking email, or texting in a meeting,” says Kathleen Downs, recruiting manager at Robert Half International in Orlando, Fla. “It’s a mistake to not silence a phone during a meeting. Even in the waiting room, we’ve had phones go off and it’s an inappropriate ring tone, like a hip-hop song with swear words.”

Make sure you have a greeting on your voicemail—some employers won’t leave a message if they aren’t sure they’ve reached the right party. And if your phone number is blocked, they can’t call you back if you don’t leave a message. “I’ve called candidates and gotten obnoxious voicemail messages, ‘You know who this is. You know what to do,’” she says. That’s not the way to win over a recruiter.

Show Gratitude

Sending a thank-you note is an important way to demonstrate good manners. It doesn’t have to be handwritten, but it should be considerate and specific. “An email is fine, but make sure it shows thought and effort,” says Klaus. “Don’t do it in the elevator on the way down. Do it with forethought, so you can translate what you got out of the interview.” If you do a round of interviews with three people, then send three slightly different thank-you notes that day, or the next. Get business cards so you have everyone’s contact information close at hand.

Social skills can make or break your career. Practice the social skills necessary to help you make a great first impression and stand out in a competitive job market.

Written by Jennie Hunter, retired professor, Western Carolina University and Jebra Turner, a former human resources manager, who writes about career issues, and other business topics. She lives in Portland, Ore., and can be reached at www.jebra.com.

LETTERS OF RECOMMENDATION

Candidates for employment, graduate school, and scholarships often need to request letters of recommendation. The content and quality of these letters, as well as the caliber of the people who write them, are critical to the selection process. Many times, when two or more candidates are considered equally qualified, a strong letter of reference can play an important role in determining who is selected for the position.

If you are applying to many employment opportunities, or graduate or professional schools, you may find a credentials portfolio service to be beneficial. A credentials portfolio service allows you to collect, store and deliver your digital letters of recommendation in a portfolio that you manage. Interfolio offers a low-cost service called Dossier which can simplify and streamline this part of your job search.

Selecting People to Serve as References

Select individuals whom you feel are knowledgeable of your skills, work ethic, talents, and future capacity. The selection of your references is critical, as a reference that is ill-informed could sabotage all the great work you have done in a matter of minutes. The longer they have known you the better, but they must have had regular contact with you to observe your growth and development. A reference from someone who may have known you several years ago but you have not spoken to in a year or more is not in a position to elaborate on your current skills.

If you must choose between several people, select those who know you the best but who also hold a higher rank in their profession. A department head is a better candidate than a graduate assistant or an instructor. However, never choose someone on status alone. Continue to choose people based on how well they know you and how much they want to assist you in your job search. Each situation will dictate the required number of references, but it is best to have three to five letters of recommendation identified.

Try to Meet Face to Face

Never assume someone will want to serve as your reference. Set up time to discuss your career goals and the purpose of the letter of recommendation. Determine if the person would want the responsibility of serving as your reference, which involves not only writing a letter supporting your skills, but also handling any phone

inquiries and responding to other questions which may be posed by a selection committee.

A personal meeting is useful because you can observe your potential reference’s body language to see how interested he or she is in assisting you. A slow response to a question or a neutral facial expression may be this person’s way of trying to show you that he/she doesn’t feel comfortable serving as your reference. Trust your instincts. Always thank the person and end the meeting on a positive note.

Help Them Help You

You must assist your references so they can do the best job possible. Provide them with a copy of your current resume, cover letter, and the job description. Provide a one-page summary of achievements or skills that they can use as reference. They may not remember everything you did under their supervision or time spent with you. Finally, provide them with a statement of future goals outlining what you want to accomplish in the next few years.

An employer will interview you and then contact your references to determine consistency in your answers. You should not inflate what you are able to do or what you have done. A reference is looked upon as someone who can confirm your skill and ability level. Any inconsistencies between what you said in your interview and a reference’s response could eliminate you from further consideration.

Maintain Professional Courtesy

Give your reference writers ample time to complete their letters. Make it as easy for them as possible by giving them clear and detailed instructions on how to submit the letter. Follow up with your letter writers and let them know the status of your plans and search. You never know when you will need their assistance again.

Maintaining a good list of references is part of any professional’s success. Continue to nurture valuable relationships with people who want to aid in your success. Your personal success is based on surrounding yourself with positive people who believe in you. No one makes it alone—we all need a little help from our friends.

Written by Roseanne R. Bensley, Career Services, New Mexico State University.

Choose people based on how well they know you and how much they want to assist you in your job search.

DEALING WITH JOB SEARCH REJECTION

After meticulously preparing your cover letters and resumes, you send them to carefully selected companies. You even get a few job interviews. But all of your return correspondence is the same: “Thanks, but no thanks.” Your self-confidence melts and you begin to question your value to an employer.

Sometimes, we begin to dread “no” so much that we stop pursuing additional interviews, thereby shutting off our pipeline to the future. We confirm that we couldn’t get a job because we stop looking. Remember, fear of rejection doesn’t have to paralyze your job search efforts. Let that fear fuel your determination.

Five Tips to Ward Off Rejection

1. **Depersonalize the interview.** Employers may get as many as 500 resumes for one job opening. How can you and the other 498 be no good?
2. **Don’t make it all or nothing.** Don’t set yourself up for a letdown: “If I don’t get this job, I’m a failure.” Tell yourself, “It could be mine. It’s a good possibility. It’s certainly not an impossibility.”

3. **Don’t blame the interviewer.** Blame your turndown on a stone-hearted interviewer and you will learn nothing. If you made it to an advanced round, there may even be situations where you can be called back in to apply for a similar position later on.
4. **Don’t live in the past.** When you dredge up past failures, you experience all the feelings that go with failure. Unwittingly, you overestimate the dangers facing you and underestimate yourself.
5. **Keep up your sense of humor.** Nobody yet has contracted an incurable disease from a job interview.

Recovering from a situation where you have invested countless hours takes time. Allow yourself to process the decision, then show the grittiness that makes you a valuable hire by finding new opportunities.

Written by Roseanne R. Bensley, Career Services, New Mexico State University

10 STEPS TO FIRST YEAR SUCCESS

1. **Build a good track record.** You may have to go above and beyond the call of duty during your first year to make a lasting positive impression. This could involve staying late to help someone else meet a tough deadline, or taking outside initiative to improve a process that was broken.
2. **Absorb information and spend your first year learning as much as possible.** Master the tasks of your job and improve your knowledge, skills and abilities. Learn while you are at work, but also make efforts to keep learning outside of work using different sources.
3. **Take advantage of mentor and coaching relationships.** Great mentors are everywhere but it usually requires some initiative on your part to find them. Ask around to learn about who has a reputation as a great mentor. Trust your gut and find someone you really admire.
4. **Take responsibility for your mistakes and learn from them.** Everyone makes mistakes, especially when they are first starting out. Not everyone responds with maturity and ownership. Remember that interview question about your weaknesses? You should respond similarly to your mistakes with self-awareness and action.
5. **Admit what you don’t know; sometimes that is more important than showing off what you do know.** You want to have a reputation for being intellectually

- curious. People who ask great questions tend to move up and succeed, even if they don’t start with the most knowledge.
6. **Be prepared to pay your dues.** Be prepared to work long, hard hours. Be sure to keep your work-life balance since stress can be detrimental to your development, but at the same time realize that the schedule has changed from college and you need to adapt.
7. **Find your “niche” with the organization.** Work on building relationships and fitting into the company culture. Attend team-building events and help connect colleagues.
8. **Have a positive attitude.** You will make a better impression being positive and likable. Most jobs have their frustrating moments but stay focused on what you can influence.
9. **Recognize that office politics exist.** Learn the politics of your office, but don’t get involved. Watch out for complainers; they tend to gravitate to new hires in hopes of bringing you to their “side.”
10. **Set aggressive goals that you genuinely want to accomplish.** Then go out there, do them and set some more. However, make sure that you are not stepping on anyone’s toes in the process. Don’t be a bulldozer —be an ambitious team player.

THE ART OF NEGOTIATING

An area of the job search that seldom receives attention is the art of negotiating. The definition of negotiation as it relates to employment is a series of communications (either oral or in writing) that reach a satisfying conclusion for the new employee and the hiring organization. Or to say it another way, negotiation is a planned series of events that requires strategy, presentation, and patience in order to reach an agreed upon solution.

Once you have been offered a job, you have the opportunity to discuss the terms of your employment. Negotiations may be uncomfortable or unsatisfying because we tend to approach them with a winner-take-all attitude that is counterproductive to the concept of negotiations. It is important to remember that negotiating requires balancing your own needs with those of your potential employer.

Consider the following suggestions to help you prepare for successful negotiating:

Research

Preparation is the most important part of successful negotiations. Any good trial attorney will tell you the key to presenting a good case in the courtroom is the hours of preparation that happen beforehand. The same is true for negotiating. Gather as much information as you can to back up the case you want to make. For example, if most entering employees cannot negotiate salary, you may be jeopardizing the offer by focusing on that aspect of the package. Turn your attention to other parts of the offer such as their retirement package or the type of schedule you prefer.

Decide

After understanding all the components of the offer and doing some outside research, be sure you know exactly what you want. This does not mean you will get exactly that, but having the information clear in your head will help you determine what you are willing to concede. Unless you decide what your top priorities are, you won't be able to tell somebody else. Clarity improves communication, which is the conduit for effective negotiations.

Practice

Rehearse the presentation in advance using another person as the employer. If you make mistakes in rehearsal, chances are that you will not repeat them during the actual negotiations. A friend can critique your reasoning and help

you prepare for questions. If this all seems like a lot of work, remember that if something is worth negotiating for, it is worth preparing for.

Be Confident

Always begin by expressing genuine interest in the position and the organization, emphasizing the areas of agreement before outlining the parts you would like to alter. Provide justifications to defend your proposal. Back up your reasons for wanting to change the offer with meaningful, work-related skills and positive benefits to the employer. You will need to be fairly direct and assertive at this point even though you may feel extremely vulnerable. Keep in mind that the employer has chosen you from a pool of qualified applicants, so you are not as powerless as you might think.

Be Patient

Sometimes the employer will bristle at the suggestion that there is room to negotiate. Stand firm, but encourage the employer to think about it for a day or two at which time you will discuss the details of your proposal with him or her. Do not rush the process because you are uncomfortable. The employer may be counting on this discomfort and use it to avoid the negotiations. Remember, this is a series of volleys and lobs, trade-offs and compromises that occur over a period of time. It is a process—not a singular event!

Document

Once you have reached a conclusion with which you are both relatively comfortable, present in writing your interpretation of the agreement so that if there is any question, it will be addressed immediately. Negotiation, by definition, implies that each side will give. Do not perceive it as an ultimatum.

If the employer chooses not to grant any of your requests—and realistically, he or she can do that—you will still have the option of accepting the original offer provided you have maintained a positive, productive and friendly atmosphere during your exchanges. You can always re-enter negotiations after you have demonstrated your worth to the organization.

Written by Lily Maestas, Career Counselor, Career Services, University of California, Santa Barbara.

CHOOSING BETWEEN JOB OFFERS

For many college graduates, salary is a primary consideration for comparing job offers. It's easy to understand and clearly important, especially for graduates looking to pay off student debt. There are many online resources available to you to learn about pay ranges for your role or industry. You should also factor in cost-of-living differences when considering salary offers.

For computer science majors, it is often also critical to consider other monetary benefits such as bonuses and equity when evaluating an offer. When considering a position at a startup, you may want to accept a lower salary now with a potential upside if the company succeeds.

Be sure to never make your decision on salary alone. Students tend to overemphasize salary when considering job offers. Money is important, but it's more important that you like your job. If you like your job, chances are you'll be good at it. And if you're good at your job, eventually you will be financially rewarded.

Factor in Benefits

Of course, salary is only one way in which employers financially compensate their employees. Ask anybody with a long work history and they'll tell you how important benefits are. When most people think of employer benefits, they think of things like health insurance, vacation time, and retirement savings. But employers are continually coming up with more creative ways to compensate their workers, from health club memberships to flextime. The value of a benefits plan depends on your own preferences and needs.

Work Environment

There are three aspects to a work environment: 1) the physical workspace, 2) the "culture" of the employer, and 3) fellow co-workers.

Don't underestimate the importance of a good workspace. If you are a private person, you probably will not be able to do your best work in a cluster of cubicles. If you are an extrovert, you won't be happy shut in an office for hours on end.

Culture comprises the attitudes, experiences, beliefs and values of an organization. What's the hierarchy of the organization? Is there a dress code? Is overtime expected? Do they value creativity or is it more important that you follow protocol? Whenever possible, you should talk to current or previous employees to get a sense of the culture. You may also be able to get a sense of the environment during the interview or by meeting your potential boss and co-workers during the interview process. Ask yourself if the culture is compatible with your own attitudes, beliefs and values.

Your boss and fellow co-workers make up the last part of the work environment. Who you work for can have

as much bearing on your overall job satisfaction as how much you earn and what you do. Reflect on your interview and post-interview interactions to evaluate your potential co-workers and boss. If you have strong feelings one way or the other, be sure to take them into consideration when making your final decision.

Like What You Do

Recent college graduates are seldom able to land their dream jobs right out of school, but it's still important that you at least like what you do and have opportunities to learn. Before accepting a job offer, make sure you have a very good sense of what your day-to-day duties will be. What are your responsibilities? Will you be primarily working in teams or alone? Will your job tasks be repetitive or varied? Will your work be challenging? What level of stress can you expect with the position?

Location, Location, Location

Climate, proximity to friends and family and local population (i.e., urban vs. rural) should all be evaluated against your desires and preferences. If you are considering a job far away from your current address, will the employer pay for part or all of your moving expenses? Even if you are looking at a local job, location can be important—especially as it relates to travel time. A long commute will cost you time, money, and probably more than a little frustration. Make sure the tradeoff is worth it.

Time Is on Your Side

It's acceptable to request several days to consider a job offer. If you've already received another offer or expect to hear back from another employer soon, make sure you have time to consider both offers. But don't ask for too much time to consider. Like all of us, employers don't like uncertainty. Make sure you give them an answer one way or another as soon as you can.

It's Your Call

Once you make a decision, act quickly. If you are accepting a position, notify the hiring manager by phone followed by a confirmation letter or an email. Keep the letter short and state the agreed upon salary and the start date. When rejecting an offer, make sure to thank the employer for their time and interest. It always pays to be polite in your correspondence. You never know where your career path will take you and it might just take you back to an employer you initially declined.

Written by Chris Enstrom, a freelance writer from Nashville, Ind.

UNDERSTANDING COMPANY BENEFITS

Though promises of high starting salaries or accelerated career growth may entice you as you search for your dream job, don't forget to check out the company's benefits package. "Most employees today are looking for more than a paycheck," says Amy Roppe, former senior account manager at Benefit Source, Inc., a Des Moines, Iowa-based company that designs and administers employee benefit packages. "Employees are looking for overall job satisfaction, and benefits are a key part of that."

What kinds of benefits can you expect at your first job out of college? That depends. Benefits packages are generally designed to provide protection against financial hardship brought about by unforeseen circumstances, such as illness or injury. Remember, not all benefits programs are created equal, and most have certain rules, limitations and exclusions, particularly in regard to health plans. Take the time and effort to understand them.

The benefits described below will give you a general overview of what many companies offer to their employees:

- **Medical insurance.** This is the most basic (and probably most important) benefit you can receive. Health coverage limits an employee's financial liability in the event of illness or injury.
- **Disability insurance.** Provides an income to the employee in the event of a long-term disability.
- **Life insurance.** Provides a benefit payment to family members in the event of the employee's death. The benefit of having life insurance changes throughout your life, as you either gain more personal assets or dependents.
- **Dental insurance.** Provides basic dental coverage including cleanings and x-rays.
- **Prescription drug plan.** This can save you a lot, particularly if you require medicine for an ongoing condition. Typically, the employee pays a fixed co-payment—for example, \$25—for each prescription.
- **Vision.** Provides a benefit that helps defray the cost of eye exams and contact lenses.
- **Flexible spending accounts.** These plans allow you to set aside untaxed dollars to pay for dependent care and unreimbursed medical expenses.

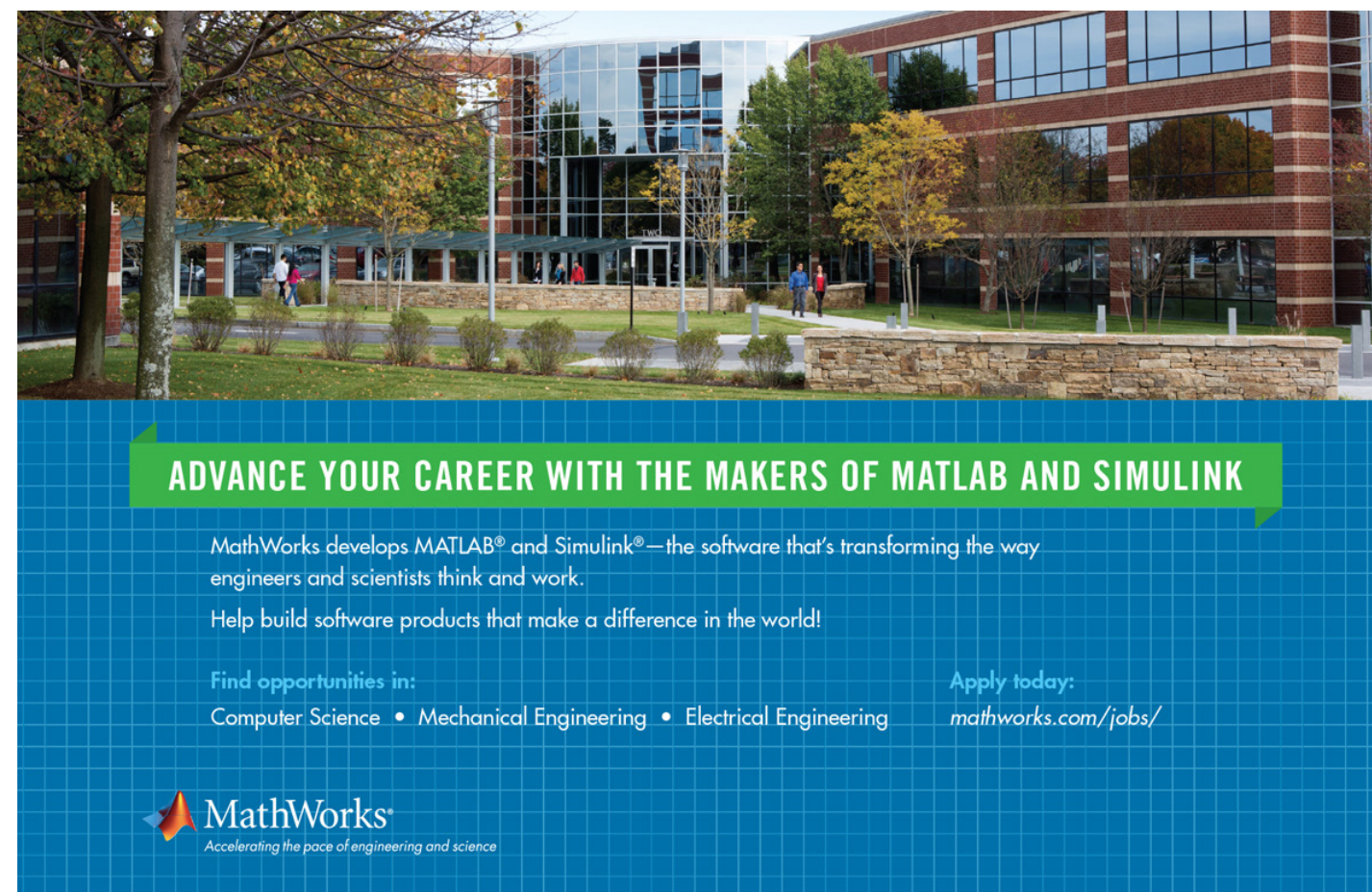
- **Retirement plans.** These used to be funded entirely by employers but have been largely replaced by 401(k) plans, which are funded by the employee, often with some degree of "matching" contribution from the employer. However, these matching contributions have limits and the plans vary from company to company. In many companies, there is a specified waiting period before new employees can participate.
- **Tuition reimbursement.** The employer reimburses the cost of continuing education, often with restrictions such as applicability to your job or achievement of certain grades.
- **Vacation.** Most companies will offer paid vacation time to employees. The number of days off is usually determined by how long you've been with the company.
- **Sick time.** Paid leave in the event of illness.

You should also be aware that there is something called "soft benefits." These are usually very popular with employees and cost the company little or nothing. For example, many companies have gone to a business casual dress code, while others may offer what is called "dress-down Fridays." Flextime is another popular soft benefit that many employers offer. This simply means that you don't have to arrive at work at a specific time each day. If it's more convenient for you to start at 10 a.m. to avoid the morning rush hour, for example, you'll be able to do so. However, most companies require employees to be at the office during predetermined "core hours"—usually between 10 a.m. and 3 p.m.

Telecommuting from home is another "benefit" that some employers offer. However, don't assume you'll be allowed to work from home whenever you want. You may only be offered this option when you're too sick to make it to the office, when you're on a tight deadline and your boss wants you to put in extra time, or when you're unable to come to work because of weather-related conditions.

Benefits packages are not standard from company to company. When you consider an offer, make sure you know the full offer—benefits included.

Written by John Martalo, a freelance writer based in San Diego.



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