



Career Guide

Table of Contents

1. Career Audit
2. Career Planning
3. Create Resume
4. Cover Letter
5. How to Interview
6. How to Avoid Interview Mistakes
7. Dress to Impress
8. Job Offer Process
9. Resignation

Career Audit - set a solid foundation for job search success

You want a job - not just any job, but a great one. And you want to find it as quickly and painlessly as possible. Follow this step by step guide, to build a strong base for executing your job search so that you can achieve your desired career goals.

Most job seekers understand the value of a job search that is focused and fast, as opposed to one that is broad and leisurely. To accomplish a fast and focused search, it is essential that you have a clear picture of what you're aiming for:-

Self Evaluation

Self-evaluation is critical but often overlooked when you start thinking about finding a job. Take some time to assess what you've learnt in your last job, your strengths and weaknesses and what areas you need to develop. Think about the type of role that interests you and what type of organisation will be actively looking for your skill set. This will help you clearly articulate to hiring managers and recruiters what you want to achieve from your next move.

Reflecting on your skill set will also help you market yourself and it's of utmost importance that you differentiate how your skills and achievements make you different from someone else with the same academic qualifications.

What role are you hoping for in your next position? For instance do you like to lead groups or be lead? Do you like to execute a specific task or work on several projects? If you are having trouble articulating your job role, consider this:

- ≡ What roles have you been in before that you enjoyed?
- ≡ What were your former position titles, and would you want to find similar work?
- ≡ What skills and talents do you possess that might be translated into a new role, such as leadership skills, or technical skills.
- ≡ What education, professional qualifications or experience qualify you for a particular role.
- ≡ Where do you want to be in 6 / 12 / 18 months and 5 years?
- ≡ Do I need to study? If so, what for?
- ≡ What are my individual priorities?
- ≡ Which industries are a good fit for the job you choose?
- ≡ Geographically where would you like to work?
- ≡ What salary is realistic?

By merging a job role with industries that interest you, you can quickly create a very powerful and appealing focus - one that will help you attain fast and successful job search results. Being able to say, "I'm seeking an X position in the Y industry," allows hiring managers and recruiters to help you most effectively.

By choosing a job search focus (or two or three) made up of a specific role combined with a particular industry, you will be able to move forward easily and effectively in your search.

Being willing to clearly state what kind of position you're seeking, and setting aside other job search focus areas, take a great deal of courage. Although you could maintain a broad search approach, keeping yourself open to whatever might cross your path, the results could be long and frustrating. Instead, just as you can aim light through a magnifying glass to achieve fast, effective results, you can get your search smoking quickly by defining a job search focus thats right for you.

Career Action Plan

With firm goals in place, you must obtain the right attitude. Enthusiasm is the catalyst to success. It makes your personal and professional experiences more enjoyable and satisfying. Remember nothing great was ever accomplished without enthusiasm.

Career planning is essential whether your aiming to be the next CFO or aiming to be a Help Desk Manager, you must know in which direction you are headed. Planning is a basic, yet key principle used by successful business people. Think of your career plan along the lines of a business plan.

Now that you have an idea of where you want to go, it's time to work out how you can get there.

Find out where you fit

How would it feel to know that 20, 50 or even more companies are a great match for your talents and experience - and that with just a little bit of research, you could identify these companies and begin to connect with them to uncover great opportunities?

You have defined your job search focus, a step in the right direction, now you need to use that focus to your best advantage. To begin, write down your focus information:

I am searching for a position where I will potentially be employed in this capacity 1).....2).....3).....

Possibly within the following industries
1).....2).....3).....

Now brainstorm your target list of potential employers.

You have now got your initial categories defined, you are well on your way to developing a valuable, productive target list. Now you can move on to the next step.

Develop Lists of Potential Employers

At this stage you can talk to recruitment consultancies about the current market, which sectors are recruiting and how long the recruitment process is currently taking. Ask for any market updates and salary information, a professional recruiter should be able to assist you with the next steps.

Since you have already chosen your sorting criteria, its now time for you to develop a list of specific employers that fall within the categories you have selected.

Following are some resources to help you build your target list:

- ≡ Talk to recruiters / networks
- ≡ Yellow / white pages
- ≡ Linked in
- ≡ Industry Directories
- ≡ Industry Associations
- ≡ Trade Fairs
- ≡ Google
- ≡ Databases - e.g. D&B

Developing your target list can be a fast and rewarding activity, you'll very quickly see that there are more potential employers and opportunities than you realised before.

In total aim to compile a list of 20 - 100 potential employers, researching as may key pieces of information as you can. Your target list will be one of your most valuable job search tools.

Creating a list of target employers is hard and can be tedious, you can ask a recruiter to do this for you. However this single activity can make the difference between conducting a job search that is energising and successful, or one that is a disappointing failure.

Consider this:

When job hunting most people (about 80%) of them will only pay attention to jobs that are clearly advertised e.g on Seek, Career One, most job hunters will set up job alerts, and as a result on look at companies who announce positions this way. If 80% of job searchers are applying this method, its a competitive market place. However about 80% of companies (the majority of them!) never advertise openings. They fill them through better, higher quality avenues. So unless you strategically research a list of organisations that interest you, you may miss out. So is it worth spending a few hours developing a target list? You decide. It may be tedious and overwhelming at first, but you can do it and you'll be much better off for your efforts.

Career Planning

Planning is vital to any job change, career planning is not an activity that should be done once, upon leaving school or university and then left behind as we move forward in our careers. It always amazes me this is typically the case. When people come to meet with us the majority don't plan their career in any great depth but they expect to be earning a higher salary, and are disappointed they haven't been considered for a recent promotion and often wonder why. Only to often candidates haven't done the preparation for the pay rise, promotion or career change, and will then leave it in the hands of the recruiter to try to achieve their goals for them. Remember that the onus is on you to create your career vision and to market and sell yourself into your next job or next promotion, no one else. Career planning is not a hard activity, not something to be dreaded or put off, but rather an activity that should be liberating and fulfilling, providing goals to achieve in your current career or plans for beginning a transition to a new career. Career planning should be a rewarding and positive experience.

Here are a few tips to help you achieve successful career planning.

Set aside time to career plan - make it an annual event

Most of us have a regular medical check up, take regular trips to the dentist, do a myriad of other things on an annual basis, so why not career planning? Find a day or weekend once a year to lock yourself away and truly focus on your career, what you really want out of your career, out of your life. One of the first activities whenever you take on career planning is spend time mapping out your career path since the last time you did any sort of planning. While you should not dwell on your past, taking the time to review and reflect on the path, whether straight and narrow or one filled with any curves and dead-ends will help you plan for the future. Once you've mapped your past, take the time to reflect on your course, and note why it looks the way it does. Are you happy with your path? Could you have done things better? What might you have done differently? What can you do differently in the future?

Become your profession

A career is about continuous building rather than isolated jobs and instances. It is about increasing your knowledge and building up a portfolio of skills and experiences which are the kinds of asset that companies need and value. Too often people forget the building bit and get carried away by their emotions and by what seems a good idea at the time. For example, people start their career on a certain track and are quite happy for a while. But then they may decide it is time to move on, they may be pushed out involuntarily by the company or they may want to do something better or earn more. This is when mistakes are often made: people dive into jobs without assessing the impact this could have on their career.

So the key is to have a profession. A profession is what you do for a living, what you have spent time training to do or what you want to be doing. It is the crux of the career, giving it meaning, purpose and direction. Without it, a career will come unstuck, reach a halt or start to drift off on a tangent. It is then hard to sell a track record of this sort to an employer.

Asses yourself - reflect on your likes and dislikes, ability and skills

Change is a factor of life; everybody changes, as do our likes and dislikes. Something we loved doing two years ago may now be unsatisfying. So always take time to reflect on the things in your life, not just in your job, that you feel most strongly about. Understanding what motivates and drives you is crucial to success.

Make a two column list of your major likes and dislikes. Then use this list to examine your current job and career path. If your job and career still fall mostly in the like column, then you know you are still on the right path; however, if you job activities fall mostly in the dislike column, now is the time to begin examining new jobs and new careers.

Finally, take the time to really think about what it is you want or need from your work, from your career. Are you looking to make a difference in the world? To be

famous? To create wealth? To effect change? Take the time to understand the motives that drive your sense of success and happiness.

Believe in yourself

Do you really believe in yourself, your talents and your abilities?" If you don't believe in yourself, how can you plan for greater things? If you don't have the advantage of drawing upon inner confidence, then you will need to build yourself up. Try changing your attitude towards certain situations that you would normally dread or avoid. For example, instead of reverting to the negative see the positive in situations and experiences. Focus on your key skills. What are these and how could you really promote these on paper? Think about how you can show that you are a real asset to the organisation. Practice believing that you are capable of so much more. Notice how you feel and notice what resistance comes up in your mind.

Create a winning resume

Most people don't keep a very good record of work accomplishments and then struggle with creating a powerful resume when it's time to search for a new career. Making note of your past accomplishments, keeping a record of them, is not only useful for building your resume, it's also useful for career planning and the ego.

Sometimes reviewing your past accomplishments will reveal forgotten successes, one or more which may trigger researching and planning a career shift so that you can be in a job that allows you to accomplish the types of things that make you most happy and proud. Does your CV do all this? If not, then make the investment now to sell yourself professionally on paper and discover how a new look CV will advance your career further

Research Further Career/Job Advancement Opportunities

One of the really fun outcomes of career planning is picturing yourself in the future. Where will you be in a year? In five years? A key component to developing multiple scenarios of that future is researching career paths.

Of course, if you're in what you consider a dead-end job, this activity becomes even more essential to you, you should take the time to research various career paths and then develop scenarios for seeing one or more of these visions become reality. Look within your current employer and current career profession, but again, as with all aspects of career planning, do not be afraid to look beyond to other possible careers.

Use other people to help you plan your career

Watch, talk to and draw upon other people's professional knowledge, reputation and skills when planning your career. These people will be experts in their field and will be higher up on the career ladder so their position, experience and expertise can help you to further your career. So how do you use these people?

As a role model. Having a role model is an easy and worthwhile way in which to develop a career. A role model is a person you can watch closely to see how he/she deals with different people, situations and problems. The role model can pass on tips and techniques to save you time, energy and effort in the long run. Anyone can be a role model but it is usually a boss. Remember the emphasis of the relationship is on learning and progression and not on being pals.

As a mentor. This relationship is different from having a role model because the mentor is not usually your boss but someone higher up than you in the organisation. The mentor benefits from the relationship because he/she is building up a reputation for developing people within the organisation. The benefit of a mentor is that he/she can offer you a confidential and open relationship because the mentor doesn't appraise you. The role of the mentor is to advise, encourage and talk from a personal experience but avoid relying too heavily upon the personal.

In the words of Nike - just do it

Don't wait too long between career planning sessions. Career planning can have multiple benefits, from goal-setting to career plan / change to a more successful life. Once you begin regularly reviewing and planning your career using the tips provided in this article, you'll find yourself better prepared for whatever lies ahead in your career and in your life

Final thoughts:

People who have fulfilling careers have made it that way. They have invested in themselves and they have used this investment to fulfill their dreams and expectations. In short, they have made their own luck. Focus your energy on building skills, learning from the people around you and creating a vision for the future. Become a real expert at your job and remember to sell yourself. Whatever you want, go and get it.

Creating a Winning Resume

“You are perfect twice in your life when you come into the world and when you put your resume together.”

At Aequalis Consulting we know that sometimes you just need someone to help you get kick started so we've built a useful [resume template](#). We recognise having the right tools, organised at your finger tips, can make a difference between completing a task easily and struggling each step of the way.

A resume is a document that summarises who you are, what you've done in your career and how well you've done. The resume is designed predominately as a “door opener” for you. It should present you in the best possible light and convince a prospective employer that you have what it takes to be successful in this specific position or career.

Research suggests that readers scan resumes within about 20 seconds, so it's important to show them at a glance why you are the best fit. Remember your resume is not a copy of war and peace its a sales tool. To write a winning resume use the following tips:

Clearly state your objective - the objective is a highly debated part of the document. Some people feel very strongly that its better to not include an objective, so their resumes are more flexible for a variety of opportunities. Other people believe that an objective helps resume screeners quickly determine whether each candidates career goals matches their needs. With years of experience at Aequalis Consulting we strongly believe in the value of including an objective, primarily because resumes that clearly state and support a specific career goal produce a significantly higher rate of interviews than those that don't.

Include keywords to boost your resumes results - Adding in keywords - the phrasing and terminology included in the job description to describe position requirements - will increase the chances of your resume being selected from among the many other resumes that have been submitted for an opening. This is because often computer programs sort submitted resumes using keyword filters.

Format your work history, experience, and qualifications - Resumes can be organised in several ways. Two of the most popular formats are chronological and functional / skills based. In general, it makes sense to use a chronological format if you are aiming to stay within, or progress further in your current career. It allows potential employers to see your progression, and commitment to your chosen career.

Key areas to strengthen your CV are:

- ≡ **Qualifications:** List both academic and non-academic qualifications in chronological order, giving grades. Do not include irrelevant information.
- ≡ **Employment History:** Beginning with your most recent job, include your responsibilities, duration of employment and reasons for leaving. Do not omit any period of employment for whatever reason, as this may prove awkward at interview.
- ≡ **Achievements:** It is not sufficient to simply state the posts and responsibilities that you have held. It is vital to illustrate how well you have carried out this work through your list of achievements. How does an achievement differ from responsibility? An achievement is a statement of how you have added value to an organisation.
- ≡ **Check:** Before submitting your CV/Resumé, make sure you check it thoroughly, not just for spelling mistakes, but also to make sure that it is a clear representation of you, that it is relevant and that it will encourage the employer to contact you to find out more. Ask a friend to check it, too. Someone who works in the industry for which you are applying would be particularly beneficial.

Put your resume to the test: Once you have created a resume, you can determine its effectiveness using the following criteria;

- ≡ Within 10 seconds or less, is a reader of your resume able to gain a clear idea of the kind of position you are aiming for, as well as a few key pieces of information about your qualifications
- ≡ Does your resume consistently generate a fair rate of interviews for you? E.g one interview for every ten resumes submitted?
- ≡ Is your resume easily customisable, allowing you to tweak it quickly to take advantage of opportunities?

If you can answer “Yes” to these three questions, your resume is a strong tool for your job search. If not consider reworking and enhancing your resume to achieve better results.

Final Thoughts.

There are many ways to create a resume, as you implement the ideas above, keep in mind that there’s no one “right” way to create a resume. As long as your resume generates interviews, it’s working!

Cover Letters - that get results

In today's electronic age, of job boards, and online applications its easy to forget common courtesy. Your cover letter and resume go hand in hand in representing you as a qualified desirable candidate. For this reason its important to present your cover letter as professionally as your resume.

Cover letter basics include:

Length

One A4 page, well spaced.

Language

Be sure to make your letter clear and concise. Use strong verbs which demonstrate action and accomplishments, such as "organise" and "supervise".

Name, Title and Address

Always write to a named individual, check and double check the spelling. Find out the details of the contact person (including all spelling) in the organisation and address your letter accordingly. Don't forget to include your address, phone number and email.

Layout

This includes an introduction and identification of the position. For example, commence with the reference number, followed by your reason for applying and a summary of your unique skills/qualifications.

Substance

Identify your skills, experience and attributes that match what the employer wants. Look for keywords in the advertisement and address the main elements. For example the advertisement might say: "This position requires an outgoing person with demonstrated capacity to work in a team". The keywords here are "outgoing", "demonstrated" and "team". Show you meet these essential criteria to increase your chances of an interview.

Proofing

Essentially you need to draw attention to you and away from others, but not by misspelling the company's name. Check grammar and spelling meticulously. Sloppy spelling will get your application straight onto the reject pile! Proofing is so important; you may even benefit from someone else double checking your cover letter for you.

Begin your letter with a to the point first paragraph - "I am writing to introduce myself and to apply to the JOB TITLE position currently open within your company. Your organisations focus on fill in a statement about its products, services and mission is of interest to me, and a good fit for my career focus and background. Following is a summary of my qualifications as they pertain to your position requirements.

List three bullet points highlighting the most important / relevant aspects of your background - For the main part of your cover letter, choose three pieces of information about you that are most relevant to the companies priorities, and highlight them with bullets. Often, you can determine its primary needs from the job ad, or based on your own knowledge of the position.

Conclude your letter with proposed next steps - "I would welcome the opportunity to talk with you further about the JOB TITLE position and how I might benefit your organisation in this role. I will follow up with you to confirm receipt of these materials and to determine the next steps.

Final Words

Keep it succinct

Tailor each letter to suit the job

Proof read very carefully!



How to Clinch the Job through Effective Interviewing

You know the saying “20 percent of your effort yields 80 percent of the results”? This is particular true when it come to job interviews. To maximise your interviewing results, with a minimum amount of effort follow these proven steps:

- ≡ Identify the key tasks for the position.
- ≡ Brainstorm a few examples in those areas.
- ≡ Practice your responses.

The first step in preparing is to analyse the job description or advertisement for the position and pull out three to four most important key requirements for the job.

Once you have prioritised the positions responsibilities you will next need to brainstorm several examples of times when you have succeeded with those tasks. Helpful resources to identify possible examples could include your resume, performance reviews, or references.

Once you have identified these examples develop them into a “what, how and proof” story that will include the following details:

- ≡ **What** - What was going on? What happened to cause you to become involved in this activity? What problem needed to be solved, or what plan needed to be implemented?
- ≡ **How** - How did you handle the situation? How did you get the job done? Provide a step by step account of your actions.
- ≡ **Proof** - Prove that your efforts paid off, name some results.

Practice to Improve your Performance

You have heard the saying, “practice makes perfect.” Perfection is a big call, however practice can make a huge difference. After all “its not the best person that gets the job its the one that prepares for the interview.”

Research a list of potential interview questions, think through and write down your responses to these questions, practice your responses out loud. Start with the following list of interview questions and add more if you choose:

- ≡ Tell me about yourself.
- ≡ What are your best strengths?
- ≡ What weaknesses do you have that might hold you back in this job?
- ≡ Give me some examples of times when you have held similar responsibilities as those required for this job.
- ≡ What would your previous boss say about you?
- ≡ Why did you leave your last position? (Or, why are you leaving your current position?)
- ≡ What about this position appeals to you?
- ≡ What do you know about our company?
- ≡ What salary are you looking for?
- ≡ Why should I hire you?

Once you have worked out the basic content for your answers, practice, practice, practice until you feel comfortable. Trying to formulate and articulate answers for the first time in an interview can be a formula for failure, by practicing your response out loud, five times or more, you will significantly reduce your anxiety and improve your performance.

Finally

Deciding just to wing it on the day can seem far easier, that is, until you get into the interview and realise you don't know what to say! Investing just an hour or two in preparation can mean the difference between "You are not what we are looking for" and "You're hired!"

Fight the Panic - how to avoid common interview mistakes

For any candidate who's ever wondered whether those scuffed shoes, and a wet handshake has cost them a job, well yes it has.

Walking into an interview is sometimes a stressful situation. Avoiding a few common mistakes can put you above the rest and help you land the job.

A good resume, the right experience and matching skills don't mean the job is yours. The job interview is where a potential employer gets a good look at you as a possible employee and decides if you fit. Avoid common job interview mistakes with preparation. An ex colleague of mine always said "its not the best candidate that gets the job its the candidate best prepared for the interview that gets the job" this is very true.

Read on to find out how to avoid common interview mistakes that can put you in the reject pile.

DON'T BE LATE TO AN INTERVIEW-Being late to an interview is the first and worst mistake anyone can make. It shows that you disregard punctuality. The best thing to do is prepare for your interview as if it were 30 minutes earlier. Being 10-15 minutes early for an interview is usually expected.

DON'T NEGLECT YOUR APPEARANCE - Matching your wardrobe to the position and one step up is generally expected. If you are interviewing for an office/corporate role, it is generally expected that you wear a suit. Hygiene is also something you shouldn't ignore. It is unacceptable not to shower and put on deodorant before an interview. Another point I should mention is that your suit should be dry cleaned before each interview.

DON'T NEGLECT TO DO RESEARCH ON THE ORGANISATION - This is one of the most vital points I have to mention. When you do the research of an organisation, you may go to their website, look at their mission statement, find out how long they have been in business, etc..

DON'T COMMUNICATE POORLY - It's best to listen carefully to what the interviewer is saying so that you don't have to ask them to repeat themselves.

DON'T USE BAD BODY LANGUAGE-An interview generally starts with a handshake. You want to be firm when doing this. Once you sit in the designated spot, do not cross your arms. It shows that you have something to hide. In addition, eye contact is very important, but do not stare at the interviewer as this can make him or her very uncomfortable.

DON'T BE NEGATIVE-It's important that you present yourself in a positive light. Also, it's advisable not to argue with the interviewer as this can be seen as a future of work feuds to come.

DON'T LIE-Lying at the interview will most likely show in your work. If you do not know a skill, do not say you know it. They will find out!

DON'T FORGET TO ASK QUESTIONS-This shows that you are interested in the role. The question should be relevant to the position. For instance, a good question may be "Can you tell me more about the work environment here?"

Finally

Wait to ask the money questions. Naturally you want to know how much the job pays. A good interviewer may tell you toward the end of the session, but it is a mistake to raise the issue of compensation too early in the job search process.

Dress to Impress / Making the right Impression

One of our clients, a major multinational communications organisation with head offices in Sydney was in the midst of a major reorganisation. The Finance Director was retiring and the general word on the street was that the Financial Controller was first in line to take his place.

A consultant was brought in. The Financial Controller talked to him and asked for his feedback. The consultant was very frank, looked him in the eye and said, "I'm sorry, I don't think you will be chosen." The Financial Controller was devastated. He said, "But I have the seniority! I have the skills! I have the qualifications and the experience! I'm the logical choice to be the next Finance Director of this company."

The business consultant turned, deadly serious, and said, "Yes, there is no doubt about that, but... you just don't have the walk."

The second I heard this I knew what he meant.

What's a Walk? A walk is the way you look, the way you package yourself and it says a lot about you. People see you and make snap judgments about you, just as you make snap judgments about others. This is why the way you look really matters, especially in business.

Successful people believe their success is attributable to a pattern of mutually beneficial interpersonal relationships, as much as it is due to technical skills or business knowledge. Your communication and the image you present create the first impression - often the lasting impression and form the basis of those interpersonal relationships.

Get dressed for success

First impressions are lasting impressions. But if you're like most people, you probably can't see the first impressions you, yourself are making.

"Dress for the job you want, not the job you have currently." Every heard that old nugget? It may be a tired saying, but that doesn't make it less true. Even in this day of business or smart casual dress for work, your professional image will serve you well when promotions, lateral moves, choice assignments and departmental visibility are available.

Now this may be bitter medicine for some. Many claim that what they are in the inside matters more than what they look like on the outside. True. No argument there, but if you don't make a good first impression you'll rarely get a chance to demonstrate what is actually on the inside.

So, what can you do to audit your own walk? Ask one or more of your close friends if you are guilty of any of the following image deficiencies below. If so, thank them for their honesty, and immediately correct the deficient areas! Create a lasting impression by being conscious of the following:

Your handshake

Don't shake with a limp wrist, sometimes called the dead fish handshake. Some think they are conveying humility by doing this. For a man this is a sign of weakness or disinterest. For a woman it is a sign that she lacks confidence. To shake hands with confidence grip the whole hand pressing the fleshy part of your hand between your thumb and index finger to the same area in their hand. Grip tightly without crushing the other hand and pump slightly 2 – 3 times. This will immediately put a positive impression in the other's mind.

Your clothes

I hear consultants say, "Your clothes do not have to be expensive..." Now coming from a seasoned shopaholic allow me to tell you that it is extremely difficult to get good, respectable and decent business clothes without investing in quality. And quality costs money. Good clothes last longer and turn out to be more economical when used for the long haul. You only have to have a few quality pieces in your wardrobe if you shop smartly and mix and match appropriately. Make sure you get pieces that flatter your shape and put a professional, polished image forward. Simple lines and basic colours typically work well.

Your Words

Now we're moving into the less visible qualities that define you. If you have a weak vocabulary do what you need to do to strengthen it. You must be articulate to express your ideas well and have people understand and respect you. Avoid filler words like "ah" and "um" or "blah, blah, blah" etc. And avoid using the latest slang you've picked up from your 11 year old daughter.

Your grooming

Unruly hair, sideburns, three-day stubble, bad makeup, un-tucked shirt or blouse, unpolished shoes all say to people: "Can't be left alone for a second with prospective clients" - also a sign of sloppiness!

Your hygiene

Foul body odor, dirty fingernails, chronic bad breath - One of those things you want to ask your most trusted best friend about because (1) Chances are, you can't notice it, and (2) Some people won't want to hurt your feelings.

Your posture

People notice the way you enter a room, the way you carry yourself. Take a few deep breaths to collect yourself. Stand tall and hold your head up high. Walk with purpose and direction.

Your character

While it is difficult to assess the worthiness of a person's character in their first few encounters, people can sense whether the person exhibits nobility by the way they speak and most especially by the way they treat those who are below them.

Studies about people meeting reveal that most people make decisions about a new acquaintance within the first thirty seconds to two minutes of interaction. This does not give you much time to make a good impression. So remember first impressions do last and you never get a second chance to create a good first impression.

Landing the Job / Offer Process

Salary Negotiation

You landed the interview, you impressed them with your credentials, skill set and enthusiasm and now you've been called back for a second interview. You know they want to hire you.

The problem is, you'd like more money than they're prepared to offer. How do you convince the decision-makers to offer you a higher starting salary without taking yourself out of the running for the job?

It's all in the preparation, attitude and presentation. Here are some tips.

Use Your Marketing Skills

Do Your Research

Learn as much as you can about the pay scale of the organisation that wants to hire you. Find out the industry average, as well. You may aspire to a career in scheduling at a major airline, but if their practice is to hire from within, you might need to accept an entry-level position. There may factors limiting flexibility on salary levels, no matter how many university degrees you have.

As part of your research, you need to have a clear idea of what your minimum salary expectations are. Do the maths in advance and decide what your deal-breaker point is. There's no point wasting your time -- and theirs -- interviewing for a low-paying job in a company that may not be able to offer the salary you need.

Understand Your Value

Consider whether you are in a position of power. If you're in high demand elsewhere, you have leverage. Draw attention to it, but be careful not to emphasise it too much. Avoid acting overly confident or cocky. It's OK to mention that you have interviews at other organisations, but don't try to force a favourable decision.

Let The Company Bring Up The Salary Negotiation Issue

Avoid being the first to propose a salary figure. Tell them you're interested in a mutually rewarding career with the company and you're sure you can agree on an acceptable compensation package. If you're backed into a corner, introduce your salary range, but make it clear that it is "up for discussion." Don't ramble on. Say what you have to and then be quiet and listen.

You need to be ready to negotiate if you want a higher starting salary...

Prepare To Negotiate

Emphasise The Benefits Of Your Skills - When you talk about your last job, describe your accomplishments. Quantify your successes in terms of cost savings, increased productivity and overall contribution to the company. This will help the interviewers recognise the benefits of having you join their team, and will help boost the salary offer. If you earned performance bonuses or incentive awards, mention those so that you'll be viewed as an achiever, well worth top dollar.

Don't Blink

Listen to how the offer is presented. When the interviewer or prospective new boss states a salary figure, nod your head to signify you're considering it, but keep quiet. If they're low-balling you, the figure could make a quick jump in those few moments of consideration.

Be Reasonable

From your research, you know the offer is low. What do you counter at? If you choose 10%, you may have to accept a saw-off at 5%. Don't be confrontational. It's a calculated risk to walk away from a job offer. They might call you back with a revised starting salary or they might just close your file and hire someone else if they feel you've been greedy, arrogant or overly demanding.

Be Prepared To Be Flexible

If you want this job, consider agreeing to start at the salary level they're offering, so long as they offer additional bonuses for specific accomplishments. Be prepared to define them. Salary is important, but consider the complete compensation package. Negotiate other perks and benefits and get them in writing. Ask about the frequency of potential salary increases. As with any negotiation, your goal is to create a win-win situation.

Believe In Yourself

Sometimes the only way you can get a higher starting salary is by being actively sought for your position. Other times, you may have to demonstrate that you have the exact skills the company needs and, if you play your cards right, you may land the job you want at a salary level beyond your dreams.

In all cases, being well prepared, using a little psychology and practicing your marketing and negotiation skills will help you maximise the salary offer.

Of all the job related minefields you can enter, asking for a pay rise or negotiating a new salary may seem one of the most dangerous.

The bottom line

Remember that the hardest part is asking. But never be afraid to ask - you just don't know if you don't ask you don't get.

Accepting the offer

When accepting a job offer be enthusiastic and back up your verbal confirmation with a letter of acceptance. It's really important to let the employer know that you are looking forward to working with them and will ensure you get off to a good start in the role. You should back up your verbal confirmation with a letter of acceptance, and expect a letter of appointment in return. Make sure you get formal confirmation of your new position, including start date and time and any forms you may need to supply or complete.

Take Yourself Off Any Jobsites You Might Be Registered With

As soon as you accept a new job, you're morally obliged to take yourself off all job sites and notify any recruitment consultancies who may have been acting on your behalf. If you are on any other shortlists or have any outstanding applications, inform the companies concerned. It goes without saying that you also need to let your current employer know you're resigning. Check the terms of your contract with them and make sure you give them adequate notice.

Resignation

The most important job-search rule to remember when resigning from any job is that you never want to leave on bad terms -- if possible. Courtesy, etiquette, and professionalism go a long way. So, as much as you may want to tell off your boss or a co-worker, you should never burn any bridges. And don't spend time bragging to co-workers about your great new opportunity. Job-hunting is a funny process, and you never know when you'll run smack right into your former supervisor, a former co-worker, or a former employer through a merger or other circumstance.

So, once you are ready to announce your resignation, how can you make as smooth a transition from your current employer to your new one? You'll again want to act professionally - and follow company guidelines. Specifically, you need to consider:

- ≡ **Timing** - Give enough notice. The standard notice has traditionally been four weeks, but you should consult your employee handbook in case your employer expects more (or less) advance warning.
- ≡ **Negotiating** - Be sure to get a fair settlement for any outstanding salary, holiday (and sick and personal) days, and commission payments or other compensation due to you.
- ≡ **Hiring** - Offer to help your current employer find your replacement.
- ≡ **Training** - Volunteer to train or work with your replacement to show him or her "the ropes."
- ≡ **Working** - Don't disappear during the last weeks on the job. Stay an active member of the team. Avoid taking a short-timer's attitude or aligning yourself with any discontented co-workers.
- ≡ **Completing** - Be sure to do your best to complete all open assignments and leave detailed progress reports for your supervisor and co-workers.

- ≡ **Leaving** - Before walking out the door for the last time, be sure you have contact information for key supervisors and co-workers that you want to keep part of your network of contacts, and be sure to thank them again for their support.

Here are some other issues you need to be prepared for once you announce your resignation:

- ≡ **Escorted out of the building** - In some industries and with some professions (such as sales), once an employee resigns, the employer asks the person to leave on the spot. Be prepared for this scenario by clearing personal files and removing personal software from your computer, removing personal information and belongings, and getting your workspace organised.
- ≡ **Guilt from co-workers or your boss** - It's only natural, especially if you are leaving an unpleasant work environment, that your co-workers may be a bit envious and try to make you feel a little guilty. And no matter how great your boss may be, s/he may also make you feel a little guilty for "deserting" the team. Try not to let these things bother you; instead, concentrate on making the final weeks/days pleasant and professional.
- ≡ **A counter-offer to entice you to stay** - Be very wary of counteroffers. No matter how good it makes your ego feel to have your current employer respond with a counteroffer, most recruitment experts advise against taking it because studies show that the vast majority of employees who accept counteroffers from current employers aren't in those jobs for very long. Whether the employer admits it or not, your dedication will be questioned, and once that happens, your time on the job is limited. It's better to tactfully decline the offer and focus on your new job with your new employer.
- ≡ **An exit interview.** Some employers like to have all departing employees meet with someone from the human resources department for an exit interview. Be careful, but be professional. Some employers want to know the "real" reason you are leaving. Again, remember not to burn any bridges by saying anything negative or petty.

Writing a Professional Resignation Letter

What should you do once you've made the decision to take a job with another employer? You should take the time to write a letter of resignation to your current employer. It's best to have written documentation of your resignation and planned last day of work.

The most important thing to remember when writing your letter of resignation is to be professional, there is just no sense in making enemies. Regardless of whether you loved or hated your job or your employer, the outcome should be the same: a short, polite, and professional letter stating your intention to leave.

People leave their jobs for all sorts of reasons, and you certainly do not need to provide any details on why you are leaving the company. Resignation letters are a courtesy to your employer, so you simply need to state that you are leaving your current position to pursue other opportunities.

As you are composing your letter, please again remember that your job history follows you around, and that frequently the world is much smaller than we think. You never ever want to leave on bad terms with any employer, mainly because doing so could come back to haunt you later in your career.

When should you submit your letter of resignation? And to whom? You should submit a hard copy resignation letter four weeks before your planned departure date (depending on company/profession policy).