

Set Yourself Apart From The Job Seeking Crowd



Whether you are out of work, working at a dead end job, toiling at a job you hate, or just ready for a change, a slow economy is no reason to give up. By following these tips, you will set yourself apart from the crowd and get that dream job sooner rather than later.

Prepare a winning resume. Resumes aren't just for white-collar jobs. Entry level job applicants, blue collar workers, and summer job seekers can set themselves apart with good resumes. Your resume's only purpose is to get you an interview, so include only items designed to do that. Online resumes begin with short titles written to make readers want to read further. Use the title to communicate your best qualification and your career objective.

If you include an Objective section, use it to tell who you are and where you are going professionally. Tell what you will do for an employer, not what you want them to do for you. Write a different objective for each career path you are considering.

When writing your job history, headline your qualifications, not your former employers' names. It is vitally important that you use the keywords of your industry in your resume. Don't list your job duties; instead, in active voice, communicate your achievements. Be honest, interesting, and specific.

Do not put anything negative or even neutral in a resume. If something doesn't matter in the job you are seeking, don't include it. Proofread it, proofread it again, and then have others proofread it. Typographical and grammatical errors can be fatal. If your resume doesn't set you apart from the others who may apply for the job you want, you haven't finished drafting.

Finding potential employers. Get your resume to as many contacts as possible—most jobs are found through contacts. Don't limit your job search to advertised positions—most jobs are filled without advertising. Identify businesses you would like to work for and write a short letter to a person you might work for saying that you are: 1) impressed with the organization, 2) interested in a job, 3) enclosing your resume, and 4) stopping by on a particular day within the next week and hope they'll give you five minutes of their time to discuss possible employment and their ideas on opportunities in your field. If the organization is out-of-town, tell them you'd like to talk on the phone for 5 minutes on a particular day.

Prepare for your interview. Proper interview preparation is critical. Read everything you can about the employer and use it to form questions. Prepare two or three specific questions to ask at the interview. Find sample interview questions online and develop short answers to each. Ask someone to help you practice interviewing. Practice answering questions until you both agree that your answers are near perfect. Ask your mock-interviewer to ask you a few difficult surprise questions. If you find sample answers to interview questions, use them as examples of good answers, but don't copy them.

The interview. Always dress nicely for the interview (and when you pick up an application). Wear a coat and tie or a woman's business suit for interviews for office jobs. For a blue collar job, wear business casual clothes—slacks and a knit (Polo) shirt are fine. Cover tattoos and remove visible piercings (except for women's ears). When you meet the interviewer, look them in the eyes and give them a firm handshake. Listen carefully. When necessary, ask them to repeat questions. Use the information you learned about the organization in your answers, and ask several of the specific questions you developed about the organization.

After the interview. Follow up the interview with a typed thank you note. You can email this, but snail mail is usually better. Thank the interviewer, express your interest in the job, explain briefly how you can help the organization, and, if the interviewer didn't tell you about follow-up, ask what you can expect next. Few people send notes, so it sets you apart.

Job hunting is hard work. Work harder than those competing with you for available positions.

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