

## **The Butler Eagle**

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### *Conducting a Successful Job Search*

There are many components to a job search, all of which are equally important.

First there is the identifying the target job itself. Identifying a “job” is more than just reading & responding to a want ad and completing an application for employment. Individuals who take the time to understand themselves, their purpose, values, motivators, skills, experience, financial needs etc. and research careers (and companies) that satisfy these needs will be happier and more successful in their “job”.

To begin the actual search for employment, take into consideration what you are trying to accomplish. Are you looking to advance within the same field or industry? Are you looking to change fields or careers? Are you re-entering the workforce after a lengthy absence or a recent graduate with little or no experience in your field? Successful job search mechanics should vary depending on this goal. There are many resources for finding jobs, some published and some unpublished. A help wanted ad is an example of a published resource. Networking is an example of an unpublished resource. A large number of jobs become available and are filled without ever being published in a paper, on a website or through a job service. How do you access these jobs? It can be safely estimated that every one person knows 50 people. By effectively utilizing your network of contacts, it is possible, and likely that you will find opportunities. This is called networking. If your goal is to advance within your current industry or field, published resources can be very productive since you have related experience and can compete with other respondents initially. However, if you are looking to change fields you may benefit by conducting a job search using more unpublished resources such as networking. By networking, a person can gather important, useful information about the industry they are pursuing as well as make productive contacts to help open doors.

One thing that every job search has in common, however, is the resume. A person’s resume can open (or close) a door in as little as 10 to 20 seconds – that’s right, seconds!

The resume is another component that should vary depending on a person’s goal. To use the same examples, a person who is responding to an ad for a position within their current field should use the chronological format for his/her resume to highlight relevant experience in reverse chronological order. However, if one has little or no experience in the field for which they are applying, a chronological resume will get nothing more than a brief glance. A functional format highlights a person’s skills and abilities up front, rather than their experience, and is more likely to receive consideration if these skills and abilities are relevant to the position. Regardless of the format, a resume should be kept to one – two pages maximum length.

Okay, so your magical resume has landed you an interview! Be happy, but be careful: Most people would guess the job interview starts when you meet the interviewer. Wrong! The interview actually starts when you receive the phone call to schedule the interview. How you handle this call is as important as the face to face meeting with your prospective employer. Your answering machine message should be short and professional. If you’ve got small children who like to answer the phone or teenagers tying up the lines, you might consider using your mobile phone number (if you have one) to receive calls from prospective employers. A benefit of this is caller ID. You may allow a prospective employer to leave a message and return their call when you’re prepared with pen/paper, calendar, etc. If you are currently working keep this activity restricted to breaks & before/after work.

Once the meeting has been scheduled, it is critical to keep it and to appear for your interview on time and dressed appropriately. It is advisable to arrive for an interview 15 minutes early to allow of any unexpected

paperwork that may be required. Showing up too early can be a sign that you don't value the time of your prospective employer, so if you arrive more than 15 minutes early, take a moment in your car to review the resume you brought with you, information you have gathered about the company and how you will answer commonly asked questions. Your attire and hygiene should be professional. Today's corporate culture can be more casual than in the past, however, it is better to be conservative when meeting your prospective employer for the first time.

When meeting your interviewer, shake his or her hand, with confidence, and introduce yourself. During the interview speak clearly and make eye contact. If you tend to mumble and look around (this can be a nervous habit) you may consider role playing with someone in advance to practice verbal skills and eye contact. Commonly asked questions for which you should be prepared may include: "Tell me about yourself." The response to this question should be kept work related and should consist of a brief (one – two minute) summary of your experience in reverse chronologic order. If you're experience is not relevant to the position, focus on the skills you used that are relevant. Do not respond with your life story. Where you were born, where you grew up, where you live now, whether you're married, single, divorced, have children, etc. is not job related and should not be discussed.

It is a good idea to take some notes during the conversation with your interviewer. There is no need to write down everything the interviewer says, (you won't be maintaining eye contact or giving thought to your answers to their questions if you're busy trying to take dictation) only points of interest or importance and questions you want to ask following your discussion. Asking questions of your interviewer is a very important part of the interview. Not asking questions may be interpreted as lack of interest. The questions you ask are just as important and should be related to the job or company and not salary, benefits, time off, breaks, etc. Questions that show an interest in the position or organization may be: "What is the company's mission statement?" "How many people are employed within the company, department, location, etc?" "What are the goals of this position & how are they measured?" Salary is a topic best left for the interviewer to bring up. Your response to questions regarding your salary expectation should be based on two things: The value of the position to the company and what you bring to the table (not your personal financial obligations). It is helpful to research demographic information to understand the regional wage & salary averages for the types of positions in which you are interested during the process of identifying prospective career choices.

If meeting with more than one person be sure to get the proper spelling of each person's name and their title either by writing them down or requesting a business card. Upon completion of the interview, if you are interested in the position, express the interest and inquire as to the process. "I'm very excited about this company and interested in the position. What is the next step?" Thank your interviewer for their time and consideration and let them know you are looking forward to speaking with them again.

Send an individual thank you note to each person you met. This can be the difference between you and a similar candidate. Many people no longer send thank you notes following a job interview. But when it comes down to deciding between two like candidates, the candidate who sent the thank you note went the extra step and is more likely to be selected.

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