

Job Search Etiquette

11. Job Search Etiquette

Whether on-campus recruiting, career fair or in-house interviews, written communication or phone calls, how you present yourself and how well you can perform in social interactions is the key to landing a job (or not). Remember: First impressions you can make only once. You also want to be consistent with the good impression you are making.

Your Application Material

- Have your résumé and cover letter checked by the Career Services Office and/or give it to friends of yours to check for language, typos and general impression of the presentation of you as a job candidate.
- Use quality paper.
- Be honest. While every application differs with every job and therefore emphases may be different in various résumés, you still have to tell the truth. You must never give any false information. Anything you write in your cover letter and résumé may be challenged and probed further in the interview and will sooner or later be detected. Anything you say in the interview may be probed in the first months of your job – and it may backfire if you are lying.

Pursuing the Job

Whether after you have turned in your written application, or after the interview(s), if you have been told that they will contact you within a certain time period, wait until after that time has passed before you contact them. This shows that, while you are pursuing your interests with determination, you are still polite and respecting their schedule. If then you finally do contact them, you could phrase it like this: 'I was told that you would contact me by XYZ. This time has passed, and I am curious about my status.'

If, during the process, you lose interest in a job or the company, let them know immediately. You do not want to waste the time of any party

involved in the process.

Your Appearance

Whether on-campus recruiting, career fair or in-house job interviews, always consider the following:

- Always appear well-groomed:
Clothes high quality and clean, pressed/ironed and well-tailored, hair neat and well cut, shoes polished, fingernails clean and trimmed.
Avoid excessive jewelry and cologne or perfume.
- Dress up at least one, if not two levels above the job you are applying for. For both men and women the suit is still the most appropriate attire. Wear a dark suit, black or grey, perhaps navy blue. However, in some industries and also in the academic world, depending on the discipline, the suit may or may not be as important. However, if in doubt, always dress conservatively. NEVER wear jeans. Be comfortable in the clothes you wear. This is the most important rule. For women, both skirt and pants suits are acceptable. Choose those shoes that are both appropriate and comfortable. If you feel uncomfortable wearing a tie, wear a turtle neck. Clothing should always be appropriate for the respective season and climate. If you buy clothes or shoes especially for the interview, wear them beforehand so that you have a chance to become comfortable in them.
- Bring your papers, i.e. résumé, transcript, writing samples, etc.
- Prepare a list of questions you may ask. This shows your interest and puts both parties in a more conversational context, as both ask and answer questions. You may ask about the corporate goals, company mission, values and community lifestyle, market trends and development, career enhancement possibilities, career paths of recent hires, etc.

The Office Visit

The office visit usually comes after the first interview, and an invitation for the office visit usually implies a great interest in you. Unfortunately,

this is also the part where quite a few jobs are lost because of behavioral challenges. Usually, you will meet with a lot of different people during the visit, and it may take anything from 2 hours to one day, depending on the kind of job and the company's general way of proceeding.

You may meet with your potential supervisor, colleagues, and people who would not work with you but have high ranking positions. All of them evaluate your qualifications as well as your fit with the company and its employees. Here, your social skills, leadership skills, communication skills and your self presentation skills are evaluated.

The office visit may include a tour, lunch or dinner, one-on-one interviews with several staff members, or even a written test or task. The ground rules are: be yourself, be consistent and honest. But also: be polite to EVERYONE you are interacting with. Do not dismiss a person's influence in your hire 'just' because s/he is the secretary. Everybody you are interacting with contributes to the decision of your hire!

Always remember everybody's name and function!!! If you are in an interview with several interviewers, always address everybody, not just the person who asked the question you are currently answering.

Dining With the Interviewers

Remember that whatever meal it is you are having with the interviewers, it is never a social event but still a part of the interview. Interviewers do want to know how you are doing in social settings but this should not lead you to let your guard down. It is a business situation in which you have to watch what you are saying and how you are saying it.

Remember:

- Napkin: Place your napkin on your lap immediately after seating. If you need to leave the table during the meal, put it on your chair.
- Alcohol: Do not order alcohol if your interviewer(s) don't. If they do, you might too, but only if you are comfortable and don't get too

chatty. No hard liquor!

- Food: Do not order anything fancy or messy. Stay within the price range of what your interviewer(s) order. If you have to order first, stay in the middle of the price range. Order dessert only if others do too. Start eating only after everyone is served. Eat in the pace of your interviewer(s).
- Talking: Talk only with an empty mouth, i.e. after you swallowed. Take your bites when the interviewer(s) talk. Talk to and address everybody, not just one person.
- Keep elbows off the table.
- Do not season food before you have tasted it.
- Do not get chatty and gossip. If the interviewer(s) want to go there, smile and steer conversation back to business.
- Utensils: Do not let utensils touch the table once you started using them. After you finished, place them side by side on your plate.
- Do not ask for a doggy bag!
- If in doubt about any of the above, please refer to further readings to brush up your table manners. You may think that this is a waste of time, but there have been more than one case in which this step made all the negative difference.
- If you are invited to a social reception, make sure that you are outgoing and that you try to meet and speak with as many organization representatives as possible.

The Career Fair

The career fair is a special event as it is here where the company and its recruiters are right in front of you. It is your one time chance to make a good impression and a connection. Make the best of it.

Prepare:

- Bring at least 20 copies of your updated résumé that has been checked by your Career Services office. Not bringing copies of your résumé will definitely put you into severe disadvantage.
- Learn which companies will be attending the fair and do research

on those that you are interested in.

- Prepare a short version of your elevator pitch, which is – for the fair – approximately 30 seconds long and includes the following: your name, your degree, what kind of position you are looking for, what field you want to be working in, and why you want to work with this company. Take this chance to really show that you are focused and know what you want.
- Take paper and pencil for notes taking, your business cards (if you don't have one, get one), copies of your résumé in a briefcase. Do NOT bring a backpack.
- Select appropriate clothing (see section 'Your appearance').

During the fair:

- Initiate the contact with the recruiters.
- Shake hands firmly.
- Make eye contact.
- Do not monopolize recruiters.
- Do not cut into conversations unless invited.
- Do not just drop your résumé. Talk to the recruiter before you leave your résumé at their table.
- Ask appropriate questions about the company. Possible questions to ask: What qualities are you looking for in candidates? What are the company's plans for expansion? How would you describe the work environment in this company and the community life style?
- If you are asked to fill out a job application, do so.
- Collect business cards and immediately make notes on the back so that you remember who you talked to and what you agreed on.
- In the end, revisit those companies that you favor to stay in their memory.
- Do NOT ask about salary.

After the fair:

- Write a thank you note to each recruiter you talked to at the fair. This is much like the thank you letter you sent after an interview in

that it should be sent out no later than 24 hours after the fair. It should also communicate once more your enthusiasm for the company. You can also take this as a chance to ask about the hiring procedure.

Remember: You will get out of the fair what you put in to it. Be assertive, but also be positive, polite and curious.

The Biggest Mistakes in Interactions

- Weak handshake.
- No eye contact.
- No questions prepared.
- No research done on the company.
- No business card to hand out.
- Not taking business cards.
- Forgetting the names of your conversation partners.
- Lack of communication skills.
- Lack of focus, rambling.
- Behaving too assertive or being too shy.
- Being negative or pessimistic.
- Trying to be humorous when inappropriate.
- Inappropriate body language. When in doubt, mirror the other's demeanor.

The Thank You Note

You want to write a thank you note after each personal encounter you have during your job search process. You may think that this is too much work, since after all, there will be many encounters. However, it is worth it. People you meet for an informational interview spend their valuable time for someone and have to return of investment other than that they like to help. Company representatives gave you valuable information at Career Fairs. Interviewers invested their time in you. So be it after a phone or face to face conversation, you must send a thank you note. Whether you send it per email or per letter depends on the importance of the contact

and on your personal style.

You may include the following:

- Your appreciation of the person's time and the information you received (a must).
- Your enthusiasm for the job, field and/or company (a must).
- You want to emphasize one of your unique skills and/or experience, which make an immediate difference to the employer or for your work in this field in general.

The thank you note should be written no later than 24 hours after the encounter.

References

Career Recruitment Media, Inc. (1999–2004). [Getting the Most Out of a Career Fair](#).

Dantzig, J. (1995). [Landing An Academic Job. The Process and the Pitfalls](#).

Dowdall, J. (2002/2005) [When Your Presentation Style Holds You Back](#).

Martin, C. (2005). [Eating Your Way to a Job Offer](#).

<http://www.wm.edu/career/04/JobSearch/SearchEtiquetteHandout.cfm>

<http://www.grad.uiuc.edu/CareerServices/AcademicJobs/Interviews/PreInterview.html> (2004)

<http://www.coba.usf.edu/services/career/careerfair.htm>