



[DR. SHIRLEY SAYS...]

By: DR. SHIRLEY A. WHITE
President
Success Images

Reprinted from the April 2004 issue of BIC

Succeeding in today's job market

Finding a job in today's economic climate has become a skill that no one can afford to be without. Guidelines are quite different from those of just a few years ago. Job security is a thing of the past. Skills, accomplishments and a willingness to change are more important than ever before.

Restructuring of business and the continued downsizing within many companies have driven workers of all ages, occupations and income levels into a highly competitive job market. People who once thought they'd never have to look for another position in life are, in fact, in the job market.

Employers who are hiring are looking for marketing materials — cover letters and résumés. These documents go a long way in forming your image. They should show your accomplishments, illustrate how you have benefited the company; provide any numbers, dollar amounts, or percentages that back up your claims; and key responsibilities and a broad range of skills. So, think like a salesperson — you are the product with much to offer. Your job is to develop a targeted marketing campaign that promotes your talents and effectively markets your background to potential employers.

Where do you begin? Begin with a résumé, one that is concise, visually appealing and designed to stimulate interest. It should ignite the curiosity of the reader without providing all the answers. A good résumé can certainly increase your chances of landing an interview. And, if you've been using the same résumé for a while, perhaps it's time to consider a

makeover.

Preparing your résumé is only the beginning. A well-written cover letter is your chance to convince the prospective employer to interview you. Letters can be powerful, persuasive, useful tools in your job search. They are a must with each résumé you mail or fax. Use an abbreviated form of the letter as the transmittal message when e-mailing your résumé. For best results, type each letter individually and make it fairly short in order to hold the reader's interest. Three or four paragraphs that get right to the point should be adequate. The effectiveness of a cover letter can also be greatly enhanced with a telephone follow-up within a week after the letter is sent. This allows you to create a positive impression and perhaps get an interview before the letter is lost in the pile and forgotten.

Now, your résumé and cover letter have been successful — you got the interview. The interviewing process is one of the more important milestones in your job search. For many professionals, it's also one of the most unnerving. However, it need not be unbearable.

Keep in mind that the objective of the interview is the exchange of information. So, be prepared, truthful, relaxed and natural; then you will find that your interviews go much better. The more prepared you are, the less anxious and more able you will be to present yourself in a positive and professional manner. During the interview, continually emphasize your background, qualifications, and

five most marketable skills as they relate to the needs of the position and the organization.

Look upon each job interview as a positive adventure. Keep your objective in mind as well as the fact that research indicates it takes an average of eight interviews to land one job offer.

After the interview, it is advisable to send a brief, well-worded, handwritten or typed thank-you note for the courtesy extended to you during your interview. This simple act,

The interview process is one of the more important milestones in your job search.

believe it or not, can be a deciding factor in the final hiring decision. It puts your name back in front of the interviewer in a positive way. Make sure you mail your note, ideally, within 24 hours, but no later than 48 hours after the interview.

Finally, keep in mind that those who are hired are not always the most qualified. They are those who are qualified as well as skilled in the art of the job search. Being successful takes an extra measure of self esteem, motivation, initiative, resourcefulness, preparedness and persistence.

Dr. White's quick and easy-to-read career resource, "101 Winning Tips for Getting A Job," can be ordered at her Web site, www.successimages.com.

For more information, please contact Dr. White at (225) 769-2307. □