

Career Planning



Agenda and Objectives

- Implement an effective job search, using a variety of strategies
- Create a personal profile of interests, values and skills
- Refine and expand your networking skills
- Develop effective interviewing skills
- Develop a professional profile that reflects your skills and talents
- Create an effective resume, cover letter, reference sheet and thank you letter
- Develop a skills matrix and career search plan

Professional Profile

Your profile should:

- Introduce your key skills, talents and expertise
- Be consistent across various profiles (LinkedIn, resume, website, etc.)
- Encourage readers to research you further
- Include a title and any associated years of work experience

Sample Profile

Entry level IT professional with 3 years of progressive experience and a broad knowledge of the IT industry. Demonstrated problem-solving skills and advanced communication skills, with the ability to explain technical concepts to non-technical individuals. Strong organizational and planning capabilities coupled with a solid track-record for delivering on-time and exceeding client expectations.

Your Profile



Networking

Networking is about creating mutually beneficial relationships; it is not about selling or asking for favours from everyone you meet. For those uncomfortable with networking, consider approaching each opportunity from the mindset of “what can I do for you?” rather than “what can you do for me?”

Effective Networking Strategies

Virtual Networking

- Schedule time specifically for networking
- Reach out to potential connections and introduce yourself
- Prepare your introduction ahead of time
- Research attendees you want to speak with when attending a virtual event
- Get contact information for those you’ve connected with
- Connect others in your network to one another
- Update your LinkedIn profile in advance of your networking efforts

Tapping into Social Networks

Social Networking Considerations

- Choose one or two networks that are in sync with your reasons for networking.
- Try them out by becoming a member, creating a profile, and networking with others.
- Set goals to keep your online networking activity focused.
- Focus on quality relationship versus quantity or the overall size of your network.
- Introduce others in the spirit of traditional networking.
- Don't forget to explore other Web 2.0 tools such as blogs and discussion groups.

Maintaining Your Network

So, you've stepped out of your comfort zone, have met new people, offered help and support to some, and collected enough cards to wallpaper your office. Congratulations!

Now what? In order to keep your network alive and growing, it needs some time and attention.

- Follow-up (i.e. call, email, drop by, walk up)
- Stay current on topics and people that you're interested in
- Touch base periodically (i.e. holidays)
- Host a party and invite a mix of people
- Invite/go to an event with someone outside your circle
- When attending an event, meet someone new other than who you came with
- Build rapport through other family, friends and business associates – attend events, accept invitations, volunteer
- Organize business cards following an event
- Stay credible – do what you said you were going to do to build your reputation

Looking the Part

We've all heard the phrases "don't judge a book by its cover" and "dress for success". While these clichés seem old and worn out, they still hold true.

Dressing for Success

This image shows a single sheet of white paper with horizontal ruling lines. The lines are evenly spaced and run across the width of the page. There are no margins, text, or other markings on the paper.

Informational Interviews

Conducting an Informational Interview

- Identify the objective of your interview
- Determine the best person to provide you with the information you're looking for
- Ask for an introduction or contact the individual directly
- Book a time to meet of approximately 30 minutes
- Develop the questions you will ask, and which are aligned with your objective for the interview
- Ask for a referral to others who would also be able to provide you additional information
- Follow-up with a thank you
- Ensure you follow-up with any others you were referred to

My plan...

The objective of my interview is: _____

The people I will contact for an informational interview are:

The questions I will ask are:

Informational Interview Assignment Submission:

Via the dropbox, please submit the following details of your interview:

1. The name, position title, and employer (organization name)
2. 3 – 5 bullet points outlining what you learned during your conversation
3. One piece of advice for other job seekers

Resumes

What do recruiter's look for?

- How relevant & recent is the experience and education?
- Are there any unexplained gaps in the candidate's work history?
- Are there any overlapping dates?
- What does the resume suggest about the candidate's stability?
- How is the overall appearance and accuracy? (ie. formatting, spelling and grammar)

Creating a Great Resume

- Make it job-specific
- Review the key duties, responsibilities, skills and experience, competencies and qualifications required
- Focus on professional experience versus personal information
- Demonstrate application of skills and knowledge versus job descriptions or course names
- List work and education experience in start and end years rather than including specific months and years
- Consolidate all positions worked for a single employer under one heading

Formatting

- Text: 10 – 12pt font
- Headings: 2pts larger
- Consistent use of bullets, punctuation, capitalization
- Spelling and grammar check
- 1" margins
- Use **Bold**, *Italics* and Underlining sparingly
- Ensure sufficient white space between sections

Cover Letters

The purpose of your cover letter is to:

- Introduce yourself to the recruiter
- Highlight particular skills that demonstrate your fit with the position
- Provide insights into your attitude and personality
- Encourage the recruiter to continue reading and review your resume

Cover letters should:

- Include the recipient's name and address
- Be positively worded
- Be free from grammatical and spelling errors
- Be no more than 1 page in length
- Include:
 - an introduction
 - a short overview of your skills and experience that demonstrate your fit for the role
 - a statement that encourages the recruiter to contact you
 - a thank you



Thank You Letters

Thank you letters may be sent following an employment or informational interview. They are an opportunity to remind the interviewer of your conversation, make another good impression, and add information not discussed during the interview.



Sample Career Fair Letter

Mr. Greg Bailey
Satellite Research Inc.
1424 Gateway Blvd. SE
Calgary, AB T1T 1T1

Dear Mr. Bailey,

Thank you for taking the time to meet with me at the SAIT Information Technology Career Fair today. I certainly appreciate your time and attention in the midst of so many students seeking jobs and information.

You were extremely thorough in explaining Satellite's IT structure and internship program. Now that I have a better idea of what the position entails, I am even more confident that I would be an asset to your team at Satellite.

My solid education from SAIT's Network Technician program, and the fact that I have held a part-time position while completing my studies, demonstrate a strong work ethic and determination to succeed, two qualities you said were important at Satellite.

I look forward to an opportunity to visit Satellite's office and speak with you further about your internship program and will contact you next week to arrange an appointment.

Thank you again for your time and consideration.

Regards,

Scott McFee

Employment Interviews

Most employment interviews will follow a standard format:

1. Introductions
2. Resume review
3. Role fit and career aspirations
4. Overview of organization and/or role
5. Candidate questions
6. Summary and follow-up

1. Introductions

You only have 1 chance to make a great first impression. While we hope that recruiters will dig deeper, it's true that most of us make a judgement about others during the first 20 seconds after meeting an individual. Some ways that we can ensure our first impression is a positive one:

- Dress professionally
- Arrive early, approximately 15 minutes before the scheduled interview time
- Smile, make eye contact, offer a firm handshake
- Stick to safe topics when making “small talk”
- Others?

2. Resume Review

During this stage of the interview, the recruiter may be:

- Checking for continuity in work experience or education
- Inquiring about time gaps in your resume
- Seeking clarification about courses taken or job responsibilities
- Generally confirming the details of your resume
- Others?

3. Role Fit & Career Aspirations

This stage will likely be the longest portion of the interview, consisting of a variety of questions about your specific experience, skills, and career goals. Recruiters may use a combination of question types to gather information. Common styles include hypothetical, open, and behavioural description questions.

To prepare for interview questions:

- Prepare answers to some commonly-asked interview questions
- Think about specific examples that demonstrate the knowledge and skills outlined in the job posting
- Practice by engaging in mock interviews
- Identify responses that highlight your positive contributions, how you learned from negative situations, and demonstrate your “fit” with the company and role
- Others?

4. Overview of Organization/Role

During this stage of the interview, the recruiter will likely provide you with additional details about the organization and role. Be prepared that they may also ask what you already know about the organization, and they're expecting that strong candidates have researched the organization in advance of the interview. Information covered may include:

- Size and scope of organization, department, or team
- Primary challenges or priorities of the role
- Employment benefits such as vacation, medical/dental plans, pension, etc.
- Others?

5. Candidate Questions

Recruiters expect candidates to have questions and may wonder if a candidate has none. It's a good idea to prepare 2-3 questions in advance of the interview, even if you decide to ask different questions once you reach this stage of the interview. Questions should be focused on the organization and role, rather than on specific benefits of employment (including salary). This is your opportunity to gather the information you need to make sure that the organization and role are a good fit for you. Common questions include:

- What is the primary challenge for this role?
- What are the deliverables for this role in the first 3 months/6 months/year?
- Can you describe a typical working day for this role?
- What drew you to this organization?
- Do you have any additional questions for me that I can answer?
- Others?

6. Summary & Follow-up

This closing phase focuses on potential next steps, timelines, and additional information (such as references) that may be required. Following this step, both parties should clearly understand what will happen next in the process and when

References

- Use references who will be able to speak positively about your experience, skills, etc.
- Select references with whom you've had recent experiences
- Identify a minimum of 2 professional references
- Ask for permission before providing an individual's name and contact information to a prospective employer
- Provide an accurate representation of your relationship with each reference
- Provide background information about the role you're applying on so that references are able to customize their responses somewhat to the position and/or required skills
- Stay in touch with references
- Follow up with references to share the outcome of your job search

Sample reference format:

Ms. Angela Darby
Manager, IT Services
Cooperative Electrical
Ph: 403-555-1111
adarby@cooperative.com



Interview Questions

Three common types of interview questions include hypothetical, open, and behavioural description.

Hypothetical – asks you to place yourself in a hypothetical situation and describe how you would handle the situation.

For example:

“If you were working on a project that could not be delivered on time or on budget, what would you do?”

“How would you handle a situation where you and another co-worker couldn’t get along?”

Open – open-ended questions may be on a variety of topics and require you to offer a lengthier response.

For example:

“Why did you choose this career?”

“What do you consider to be your greatest strength? Weakness?”

“How would a friend, co-worker/classmate, or teacher who knows you well describe you?”

“Why did you decide to apply for this position?”

“Why should I hire you?”

“Which part of the job did you like best? Least?”

Behavioural Description – asks you to relate a specific example and explain the situation, your role in it, and the outcome.

For example:

“Describe a time when your first approach failed and you have to select a different approach to complete a task or project.”

“Give me an example of a time when you couldn’t finish a task because of insufficient information.”

“Tell me about a time when you had to make a decision quickly.”

“Describe a time when you had to use your written or verbal communication skills in order to get a point across to others.”

“Give me an example of a time when you had to go above and beyond in order to get the job done.”

Behavioural Description Questions

For many, this type of interview question is the hardest to deal with. For this reason, it's a good idea to prepare some examples in advance, using the STAR format.



ST – situation or task

A – action

R – result

Situation / Task	Action	Result

Virtual Interviews

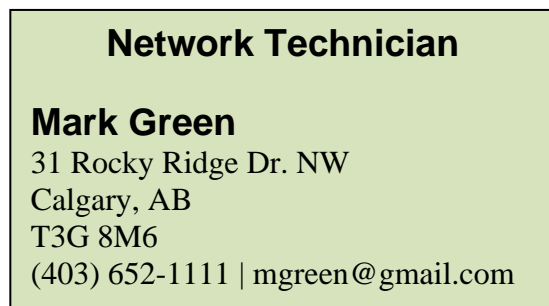
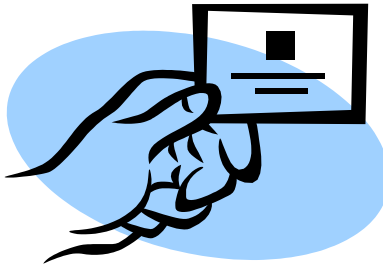
- Test your technology beforehand to ensure everything is in working order
- Maintain a virtual identity that is professional and aligned with the reputation you want to create
- Dress appropriately as if attending an in-person interview
- Create a background that is professional and free from distractions
- Pay attention to body language and facial expressions
- Maintain eye contact with your camera



Business Cards

Business cards speak volumes so make sure that its message is consistent with the one you want to send. Good business cards should:

- Contain current information.
- Use a font and color that is easy to read.
- Be memorable but not gimmicky.
- Be compatible with business card readers.
- Include the name that you commonly go by.
- Work cross-culturally.



Art of Cold Calling

Up to 80% of jobs may be hidden from job hunters unless they take a proactive approach and contact prospective employers. To create an effective cold calling strategy you'll:

1. Compile a list of potential companies.
2. Identify those individuals with hiring authority.
3. Create a vibrant cover letter, personalized to each individual and company, and include a current copy of your resume.
4. Follow-up by phone with the individuals you contacted by mail / e-mail and ask for an interview.
5. If no positions are currently available, request an informational interview and referrals to others who may be hiring.

Alternatively, you may decide to reverse steps 3 and 4, and begin with a call that asks permission to send them a copy of your resume.

Scripting Your Call

1. Introduce yourself.
2. Explain your reason for contacting them.
3. Share three skills that are relevant to the position you're enquiring about.
4. Ask if you can leave or send a copy of your resume.
5. Arrange a day/time when you can follow-up to schedule an interview or provide additional information about yourself.

Tips for Great Cold Calls

- Do your best to reach the individual directly rather than leaving voicemail messages.
- Ask if this is a convenient time for you to talk with each other.
- Smile when speaking on the phone and project confidence.
- Maintain a detailed record of calls completed and messages left.
- Be persistent and don't get discouraged.

Career Fairs / Trade Shows

Do	Don't
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Have a specific strategy for the event. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Eliminate companies that are recruiting for positions outside of your field.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Attempt to get a list of attending companies. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Drop your resume at the booth and walk off.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Research the companies attending. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Be intimidated by recruiters.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Be prepared for common interview questions. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ask questions that you should already know the answers to.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Be ready to talk about your work experience and skills. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Eliminate bad habits such as gum chewing, fidgeting, etc.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Collect business cards from recruiters. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Use words such as “um”, “like”, etc.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Attempt to build rapport with each recruiter. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Interrupt conversations already underway at company booths.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Bring copies of your resume. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Forget to network with others at the event.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Use a firm handshake, smile, and make eye contact. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Say negative things about previous employers or schools.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Dress professionally. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Focus too much of your conversation on salaries and other benefits.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Inquire about the company's hiring process. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Follow up with each recruiter. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •

Skills Matrix Template

Market / Target Position Skills	My Skills	Identified Skills Gaps	Plan to Close Gaps

Planning for Success

Finding a job takes focus, effort and perseverance. In order to focus your efforts, it's important to fully understand your skills and motivation, plan to close skills gaps and overcome other challenges you may encounter. One way of doing this is to create a job search plan and then "work the plan".

Step 1

Define a personal career objective for yourself. This objective should answer the question "What will the outcome of my job search be?"

Job/position: _____

Industry: _____

Location: _____

Compensation: _____

Start date: _____

Step 2

Based on your objective, articulate the individual steps or goals that you will complete in order to achieve your objective. In developing the goals for your job search, you may want to consider the following questions:

1. What do I know about the jobs I'm interested in?

2. Do I have the skills required? (a skills matrix may be useful for this step)

3. What do I know about the industry and/or companies I'm interested in?

4. What do I know about my market worth?

5. What additional documents will I need for my search? (ie. transcripts)

The answers to these may prompt you to identify additional activities as part of your job search such as informational interviews, online research, etc. that should be included in Step 3.

Step 3

Based on your objective, articulate the individual activities that you will complete in order to reach your career goals and vision. This may include activities such as:

- Updating your resume
- Conducting research
- Networking activities
- Closing identified skills gaps
- Etc.

Define your job search activities using the SMART goal-setting format:

- Specific:** What specifically will you do?
Ie. Update resume using a different format, highlighting particular skills.
- Measurable:** How will I assess the effectiveness or outcome of this activity?
Ie. Number of cold calls made.
- Attainable:** Activities, while challenging, should be realistic and achievable.
- Relevant:** Activities should be directly related to achieving success in your job search. If you do not see how the activity moves you forward to your career vision, you may wish to re-evaluate and possibly remove it from your plan.
- Timebound:** A timeframe or deadline for completing the activity.
Ie. By September 1st, 2019.