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Resumes with IMPACT!

By Lester Watts

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About the Author

Lester Watts worked in various clerical jobs before starting and running his own business.

After selling the business because of the long hours, he was in a position to not have to work again.

But, he was very active and interested in changes to his community and the lives of his friends and other people that came from the rapid advance of technology and the effects of the Internet.

So, he started researching and writing articles about a wide variety of subjects.

He interviewed many people of various ages and backgrounds for positions with his business and has interviewed many people about the increasing pressures on applicants and employers in the 21st Century employment scene for this book.

He hopes that his plain language approach will help people to cope with the stresses and demands of the changing job landscape and show them some ways to make their applications and their results better.

Lester Intends that the information he shares with you in this book will help you to cope with the pressure and uncertainty so that your road to successful employment is short and smooth.

Introduction

I've written this book to help you improve your chance of getting the next job that you apply for, whether that is because you want to change or change has been forced upon you by developments within the company or other factors.

Also, much of this information will be helpful when you apply for an internal promotion or a transfer to a different position, where you see more opportunities, with your present employer.

The traditional scenario where someone went into a job straight from school or, maybe, after a period of travel, and then was likely to stay in that industry for most of their working life is fading away fast.

Rapid changes in technology and lifestyles have dramatically changed the employment landscape.

Security of tenure has evaporated and many routine jobs have been automated or exported to countries where labor costs are lower.

But, new opportunities and exciting new industries are appearing. And, there are also increasing opportunities to get jobs in other countries.

As the rate of change shows no sign of slowing, it's possible that you will change jobs, and even the industry that you work in, at least once within the next few years even if that is not in your list of goals right now.

Part I - Resumés.

The Basics of Resumés

Some people say that resumés are an easier part of the application process than interviews because you're not facing real humans.

But, we need to prepare our resumé as carefully and as thoroughly as we prepare ourselves for the interview. Once you have sent your employment package off, it must be your silent salesman, able to present you in the best light possible.

Photographs

Do not include a photograph of yourself unless it is requested.

When you do, select it carefully so that that it helps to maintain the professional image you have established with the resumé.



Use a fairly recent head and shoulders portrait type of picture if you have one available.

Make sure that you are portrayed as the sort of person the employer wants for the position.

A genuine smile improves an average picture better than any special computer program.

Don't use a picture which includes other people, pets or distracting details.

Which Type of Resumé?

There are three basic ways to present your information and claims in your resumé. But these basic categories are not set in stone.

You are free to include sections which cover all of these areas in whatever depth seems appropriate.

Your History

This is a very traditional form which details your education and work history along with any special achievements. It's probably still featured in many schools because that's what the instructors were taught when they went to school.

This is the obvious choice for someone that has perhaps had a career in one industry and whose jobs through their career have each been either a move upward or, at least,

sideways to a job with similar duties and remuneration but, in your opinion, more potential.

As the work environment changes and less people are following the traditional path by staying in one job for many years or even their whole career, this type of resumé is becoming less common.

It may not be the most suitable for someone who has, for whatever reason:

- Moved between jobs fairly often
- Had periods where they were not employed
- Had ups and downs in their career path

One advantage with this type of resumé for whoever reviews all the applications is that it is very linear and easy to follow.

These are some important points to keep in mind when writing the historical resumé:

1] The employer is likely to be most interested in your recent history – up to about 5 years ago.

2] Be sure to account for any long gaps in your employment record.

Your Skills and Achievements:

This format emphasizes your accomplishments and is becoming more common and popular as people change jobs and even industries more frequently than used to happen.

This form of resumé may be a good choice if:

- You have gaps in your employment history
- You got most of your relevant experience some time back and have been doing a different type of work more recently.
- You have practical experience and success but may not have the best formal qualifications.
- You have the skills for the job but gained them over many years and think that the employer may focus on your age and hold it against you.

You should give the most space to your experience and less emphasis on the path your career has taken.

Fitting the Specifications:

This format focuses on matching your experience to the criteria for the specific job you apply for.

The information you provide should give details of your successes in your previous jobs and demonstrate any personal qualities which fit the employer's stated requirements.

This way, you can make it easy for the employer to find the specific points which he or she is most interested in, rather than having to dig through your detailed work history to dig them out.

But, you still should include brief details of the most important parts of your work history.

Preparing a Powerful Resumé

Psychological testing of applicants has developed over recent years and interviews are obviously also very important when selecting the successful applicant.

This has led many people to think of the resumé as a necessary but relatively unimportant part of their application. But, your resumé is likely to be a critical factor in getting you on the short list of job-seekers who actually get to be tested and interviewed.

It is not only a record of your work history and other details, it is your only chance to influence the person who does the initial screening of all the applications submitted for the position.

Read, Understand and Respond to the Advertisement

The first step is to carefully examine the advertisement of the position.

They are usually carefully designed to be most attractive to the people with the skills, experience and attitude that the employer wants.

There are laws to protect applicants from discrimination on grounds like gender, race or religious preference but there may be points stressed within the advertisement that help to reduce the number of applications from people who are not a close fit to the criteria.

That's because the employer wants to minimize the extra work involved for his staff or employment consultant in sorting the best possible candidates' applications from the pile.

Cover the Specific Points in the Ad

You can help yourself and them by emphasising the key points mentioned in the advertisement in your cover letter and resumé.

Read the ad carefully and try to establish as closely as possible the need which the employer wants to fill.

The better that you do this, the more closely you will match the ideal applicant they had in mind when they wrote the ad.

Basic Requirements

Almost every ad which you see has the standard information about:

- Type of position.
- Essential and desirable qualifications, skills and experience.

- Location and other important details about the work.
- The level or range of remuneration offered may or may not be specified.
- How applications are to be submitted. They may only want applications by mail and specify whether they want enquiries to be made by telephone, fax or email.
- Full contact details for the person or company, if they are using a consultant, which will do the initial review of the applications.

You will also find most of these qualities listed as desirable. They are really essential:

- Team worker: Someone that can accept and act on direction without having to be pushed or needing to discuss every minor detail.
- Enthusiasm: Willing to work a little harder and give the company and their clients what they want.
- Used to working under pressure: ready and able to do what's required without hand-holding or close supervision.
- Good communicator: Good at dealing with colleagues and clients by phone and face-to-face.
- Good Organizer: Files their paperwork and doesn't forget appointments.
- Reliable: Keeps their commitments.

Find Out what They Really Want

Look for any unusual words in the text. These may be terms or phrases which will be familiar to people with experience in the area.

Be Clear about Their Needs

If there is not enough information about the type and scope of the duties involved, don't hesitate to contact them. You must ensure that you know all of the requirements so that you can cover them in your application.

Sometimes, the person you talk to may mention other, usually fairly minor, requirements or responsibilities that were not mentioned specifically in the printed ad. Be sure to cover these in your application as well.

These details may also be spelled out in a more detailed job specifications sheet which the company will provide to you if you ask them.

When you have reviewed the information, you should be able to pick out the core responsibility of the person doing that job. You must keep that in mind the whole time that you are writing your application.

If You Aren't Ready, Try for Something Else.

Don't apply for jobs that you don't have the ability to handle from day one unless the employer specifies that "training will be provided".

Otherwise, you are wasting some of your time while setting yourself up for inevitable disappointment and also wasting the employer's time. They may remember that if they see an application from you for another position at some later time.

However, if you have experience and some proven ability with similar work, though not necessarily on the same equipment or in the same industry, you probably should apply. But, be very clear about your level of skill.

Employers may say they want five years experience, but then might consider someone who tells them up-front that they have just three years experience and a good record of performance if no applications are received from people with the five years experience that they hoped for.

Written or Printed?

Do not send a hand-written application unless the employer specifies that is what they require.

This is usually only with some entry-level positions.

There may be particular reasons for the employer to ask for handwritten applications:

1. You would have to write clearly on receipts and other documents such as directions for other staff or customers.
2. The employer, or their employment consultant, uses graphology, a pseudo-science whose promoters claim they can define character traits from handwriting.

All other applications should be prepared on a computer, preferably your own (for privacy reasons).

If you do not have a computer, you may be able to access one through your local Library or other public agency.

Otherwise, you might ask to use a friend's computer. You will need to arrange a reasonable length of time which is convenient to both of you to organize, prepare and print your resumé.

Collecting Information

Job Opportunities

Many people used to get jobs through people that they, or their close relatives, worked with, knew socially or through being members of the same organizations.

I guess that sometimes still happens, but most companies know they need the best available staff to deal with increasing competition and costs. Today, the focus has to be about what you can do more than who you are or who you know.

You need to find the best available opportunities and gather information which might give you an edge when you submit your resumé.

It can be helpful when you have enough information about the different companies that are offering interesting positions, to be able to compare them and select those which are most suited to your skills and future goals.

This will increase the amount of time which you can put into customizing your application for each position which should improve your chance of getting the positions which most suit you.

Your Information

You will need the important dates from your career history.

About the Employer

You also need to learn as much relevant information as you can about the company and people you could be working with, before finalizing your resumé.

This will help you to decide the best way to set out your resumé and what points in your work history, personal qualities and skills to emphasize when you ask and answer questions in the interview.

Sources

Local and State Newspapers.

The first source of information is your local newspaper.

Remember also that most newspapers also have an online version and many of them carry positions vacant advertisements there.

As well as the information in the employment advertisement which you will respond to, and the business section, you also should pay some attention to reports about any local



and foreign developments which might affect the fortunes of your prospective employer and, of course, cause changes in the company which you currently work for.

Even the social pages of your newspaper might carry information about company events and any assistance it donates to community organizations.

This is all helpful background information. You might be able to refer to this, if relevant during your interview.

You also need to look for news about the company's competitors, share value or take-over offers. This gives you a better idea of the potential for further advancement if you get the job you are applying for.

State and national newspapers and magazines will have a wider range of related articles and features about the industry which the company operates in.

Don't restrict yourself entirely to your country.

The major papers and business magazines in countries where the company operates or where it gets its raw materials or products may carry related information from time to time.

If you cannot locate the publications in your local shop or through your Library, check for the publication's web site and search their archives. This may require you to pay a fee.

Yellow Pages

The telephone directory is an invaluable source of information.

Look through the alphabetical listing of categories to find other companies which have similar positions to the one you are applying for.

Professional Associations

There are associations for people and businesses in many industries.

There are also organizations where the majority of members are in business but the focus of these organizations is more social and community-spirited.

But, both types of organizations are good sources of business information, including news about possible job vacancies and also the current activities and prospects of companies like the one where you are applying for a position.

The Company

Every company produces many kinds of printed material, from brochures to annual reports. You can find much useful information by checking these.

Private Consultants.

These organizations provide advice, help and information about current job vacancies on a fee for service basis.

Some provide job placement services for both part-time and full-time positions.

Many also offer training courses to help to improve your presentation, both written and at interviews.

This area includes many successful companies and individuals who provide services of the highest quality and there are inevitably, also a number of less reliable operators.

Neither type is likely to be cheap to use, so you need to be sure that you will get good service for your investment before you sign anything or hand over your money.

None of the reputable companies will guarantee that using their services will definitely get you the job you want.

You also need to get information about these points to help you make an informed decision:

- ? Detailed information about all the costs involved, including any text books or equipment which is necessary to complete the training.
- ? Does the provider and the staff that will train you have current recognized qualifications and/or high-level experience or skills related to the type of jobs which you are applying for?
- ? How long does each session, and the course as a whole, take?
- ? Where and when will the session(s) be held?
- ? Can you take a session at a different time or location if you cannot for good reason, such as illness, get to the original scheduled session? Does this incur an extra charge?
- ? Is there provision for refresher sessions or the opportunity to attend another course some time after completing your original course? If so, what are the costs of that option?

- ? Could you meet the person who will conduct the course you attend before signing up?
- ? Can they give you contact details for a couple of previous students?

One type of training session which I know that many people find helpful is when the students role-play through simulated interviews.

Internet Resources.

Even if the position you apply for is with a company that only operates in your local area, you should look for current information about developments and employment trends in their industry on the Internet.

This is one of the major advantages which the Internet brought us; you can get the latest information whenever it is convenient for you to log on and go to the web site.



If you post your resumé to a site that displays vacancies and position wanted notices, it's available to potential employers and recruiters 24 hours a day.

Few companies are not affected by the changes in the availability of their products or raw materials or new technical advances. You are likely to get the most current information from the World Wide Web.

There are many job-related resources on the Internet, including:

- 1) Government sites where you can find out about new positions, your legal rights when applying for a job, advice about applying for jobs and how to protect yourself from scams.
- 2) Privately run web sites offering jobs and counselling.
- 3) Web sites operated by professional organizations related to your industry which often have well researched information about employment and related business trends.
- 4) Company sites often carry detailed information about their activities, vacancies, personnel policies and contact information of the relevant sections and individuals at national and local offices.

A Warning about **Dangerous** Web Sites

Free Advice Could Cost You Plenty

There are plenty of web sites where you can get advice on just about anything, including applying for a job. But, you need to keep your wits about you.

The advice may not be applicable to or legally valid under the rules and common practices which apply in your State or country.

Never accept any "legal" advice from any web site and apply it to your situation without getting the paid, professional opinion of a lawyer that operates in your area.

Most of the information you see is well-intended, but there are some people that deliberately offer information that could enrich them or their associates and perhaps ruin your day, or even your whole life.

Phishing

"**Phishing**" is where crooks set up web sites that mimic the appearance of well-known, legitimate companies, including banks and other businesses that handle financial transactions, or that you would routinely provide your personal information to.

These sites are promoted with fake emails that are usually well crafted so they might fool someone that doesn't pay careful attention to them. They usually say that, for some special reason, they need you to confirm your account details and give you a link to click.

The link looks right but it leads to a fake web site which is designed to get your bank details or other personal information. Then, they can raid your account or, perhaps, sell your information, and that of many other people who have visited the site, to other crooks who may be located in another country!

Never click through a link in an email to a site where you might be required to put in your personal, financial or other information.

Always examine any email which appears to come from your bank carefully.

Contact the bank directly either by phone or going to the branch where you usually do business.

You should always have your anti-virus and anti-spyware programs running and keep them up to date.

If you run a Windows based computer, Microsoft provide a firewall program with the most recent versions. There are many alternatives available – some are free and some might cost up to \$100.

But, you need to use a good firewall program which will help to prevent crooks installing viruses and other nasty programs on your computer. Some of these programs record which keys you press on your keyboard and then send the information, which could include the username and password you use when you go to your bank's Internet web site.

Writing Your Resumé

The most important points to remember with your resumé are:

Be positive. Avoid making negative or defensive comments about yourself or companies or individuals that you have worked with.

Be natural: Don't try to be different than the person your friends and colleagues know.

Be honest: Don't make claims which you could find difficult to sustain at the interview or when you get the job.

Be professional: Some small error in your resumé might be forgiven but could, at other times, be the point which puts your application lower than another person's. Always try to put your resumé aside for at least an hour and then review it closely.

It might help to read your cover letter and resumé aloud. This is a help to some friends that I have suggested it to who say that just reading it silently may not change your perspective enough so that errors show up for you.

You could break the resumé writing process into just a few steps.

They are simple but you need to complete each one with due care.

Then, review every part so that you are sure that you have not missed anything that you intended to do or include.

You only get one chance, so you need to make your best effort.

Your resumé will always contain most of the same basic information but you will, of course, adapt it to fit each particular job that you apply for.

What You Must Always Include

There is some basic information which you must always include in your resumé.

Career Highlights

Include basic details about the jobs which you have been in. Remember that the employer is likely to be most interested in those which you have had in the last few years but add a brief statement in this area about any experience or knowledge you gained earlier which has a direct bearing on what is required to do the job you are applying for.

Don't just make this a historical record with dates and little else. Include a little information about the work you did and the skills which you gained in each company.

Be sure to put in something about any special achievements that you had in the various positions. Those points will help your application to stand out from some of the others.

This is your main opportunity to show where you successfully demonstrated the qualities and skills that are required in the job that you applied for.

Do I need to say that you should not include anything negative about the companies you worked for or the people who were your colleagues? That would create a bad impression and make the employer wonder what you might say to others about his company and whether you would get along with the other employees.

Contact Details.

Your name is the first thing to provide.

If you sometimes use different forms of your name (Ted or Edward, John or Johnny), use the one which you are most comfortable with in a work environment for your application.

When your name is even slightly difficult for some people to pronounce, it can be a great help to interviewers if you write in your resumé something like, "pronounced H-oo-arn".

Some people, whose actual name may be difficult for their colleagues to pronounce correctly, go by a simpler form of the name. In that case, you might write your real name and then put, "- usually called James".

If your name is not one that clearly indicates your gender, put your title with it. If you have several names between your first and your last name, it is your choice whether or not to put them all on your application.

Include **your home address**.

Make sure that you include enough detail to avoid any chance of confusion or delay with letters that may be mailed to you. "Ct" might be used as a short form of Court or Crescent, so it is always best to write those terms out in full.

You can use either your home address or a Post Office box. Some people include both. If you think the area where you live has a bad reputation, which might slightly taint your application, then use the Post Office box if you have one but, this should never be a big consideration.

Include all relevant **phone numbers**.

It is usually best not to put your current work phone number on applications, especially if you share the use of that number with other people.

If that number is one that only you use, then it might be alright. But, if the potential employer calls when you are away from your desk, someone else may answer the call. So, you must carefully consider how a colleague might answer your phone and whether you want other people in your office to know about the call.

Always put your cell phone number and your home number.

Make sure that you cell phone is charged and turned on at all appropriate times.

The same considerations need to be thought through before you use the **fax number** at your present employment. You also should remember that any fax you send from that machine will probably have your current employer's business details on the first and last pages.

You should include **your private email address** but, preferably, not one that you use on your current employer's computer system.

If you want to use that address, check first that your current employer is happy for one of their staff to use their computer resources to look for a different job.

Remember that many companies now check their employees work email accounts because of the possibility of viruses or other malware being brought into their computer system through those emails and, also, because of concerns that some employees might be sending or downloading "inappropriate" material to their work station.

So, you should ask your employer before using the work email address or use one which you have full, private control of.

If you do not have your personal email address, you can quickly arrange to get one from the company which provides your home connection to the Internet. If, say, your provider was yournetservice.com (not a real service when this was written), then the address they provide to you might be something like this; yourname@yournetservice.com

Another option is that you could sign up for an account with a free service like Google's GMail <http://mail.google.com/mail/signup>.

There are several other similar free and paid services but GMail is very popular and, I believe, reliable.

Your Work History

This should usually be the next section that you include in your resumé unless you are applying for your first job. But, there is not any hard and fast rule about this.

Give just enough details to explain what sort of duties were involved in each of the positions and focus as much as possible on the highlights of each job you did.

There is no benefit to writing the reason why you left each job in your resumé. But, you should think about what happened so that it is clear in your mind and you have a suitable answer ready if the interviewer asks you for those reasons.

The highlights that you list might include personal and team success in reaching or exceeding targets for improving sales, reducing costs or even assisting with fund-raising for a local charity or community group.

You should go through this section again to ensure that you include all significant personal and professional achievements.

Education History

This should emphasize achievement. Be sure to include details of any business-related awards or courses as well as the standard school and higher learning results.

Not every educational institution grades their awards in exactly the same way, so you should try to make it clear when you have achieved the best or near to the top results in a particular area. Otherwise, the person reviewing your application might not realize the value of your achievement.

Memberships

Include details of professional clubs and associations which you belong to and mention any periods when you held a significant office in them, especially if they relate to the type of work you will be doing if you get the position.

Although you have already put your full contact details as the first item on your resumé, you should also include a brief version near your signature and the date at the end.

Optional Information

If your memberships, hobbies and other outside activities and interests are not likely to add any weight to your application, then you can leave them out.

But, consider whether they may have some value in rounding out the picture which the employer has of you.

Some activities may not relate directly to your business duties but, for instance, a group where the Members learn Public Speaking could be seen to be valuable for improving your communication skills.

Referees

You will usually be asked to include with your resumé, contact details for two referees or references; people that will provide information about your suitability for the type of work you have been doing.

Some applicants treat this as a matter of little importance. While it is true that some employers do not bother to contact all the referees which even the short-listed candidates put in their applications, you should carefully consider who you ask to be a referee for you.

Always check with each referee before you send an application for another position whether or not they are still willing to be one of your referees. They may be having a particularly busy period in their business or personally. If they are about to take a world cruise, then you'd better thank them, wish them well and quickly find another referee.

Each referee should be someone that knows about your work performance.

If they are willing to be a referee for you, someone that has been manager or above of a company when you worked there would be a good choice. It would be really good if they were your manager in the last year or eighteen months or for a period of, say, two years or more.

You must be confident that they will give you a positive reference. The referee may want to help you improve your job but they must also be truthful about you when talking with the potential employer. Otherwise, their own professional reputation could suffer.

If you have not got many people that are willing to be a referee for you, you could ask a close friend, especially if they have worked with you. But, you should not submit the name of a close relative as one of your referees.

It could be helpful if a referee is particularly well-known in the industry or local business circles.

Some organizations do not permit their staff to provide references for ex-employees. Where that is the case, don't blame the person who you asked.

I remember one young employee who did an outstanding job in a temporary position. When she later asked her ex-manager if he could be a referee for her, he told her that it was against the rules.

"But," he said, "I was very impressed with your enthusiasm and willingness to assume responsibility. Here is my personal number. Please give this to anyone that you think might want to talk to me about business anytime."

Final Tips for a Top-class Resumé.

Put your application package flat in a large envelope with a thin cardboard stiffener. Do not fold it. You want it to look 100% professional alongside the other applicants' packages.

Always put your name and the position you applied for, or the employer's reference number, on each page.

Number the pages so that, if your staple falls or is pulled out, the whole thing can be quickly re-assembled without much fuss or time.

Maintain a positive focus throughout the various parts of your application. If there are any dark spots in your employment history, such as being fired or serving time in prison, leave those for the interview.

If the employer sees the basic information in your application, it may influence him or her against giving you an interview where you could explain the circumstances and perhaps point out the improvements which you have made since then.

Never send your original documents with your application.

Send copies of only the most significant documents if they are requested. Take the others with you to the interview. No employer wants to get copies of all the documentation for every applicant. They can ask those who are short-listed to bring the originals of their documents to the interviews.

If you find an error in your application just before you are about to post it, don't write on the copy or use an covering-up liquid. It looks very unprofessional, so always make a fresh, corrected copy of that page.

Do not use colored paper, unusual fonts, mixed fonts and colors or effects like ALL CAPS to try to make your application stand out. If it is hard to read, then it's more likely to be thrown out.

Use the fonts commonly used in business correspondence like Arial or Times New Roman.

Use Arial, Times New Roman or Verdana on your web pages.

Space the lines of your text and use short paragraphs with a bit of white space between them so that the employer finds your application easy to read. Long paragraphs are harder to get through and the reader may miss some significant points in them.

Use bullet points to emphasize groups of related points like I have done in this book. But, don't use that, or other effects, so much that they lose their impact.

Make sure that your points are focused and avoid vague feel-good statements.

Put your Resumé on Your Web Site

Do you, like many people that I know, have your own **personal web site**?

You might be using it to share information about your hobbies, favorite sports or other non-business topics.

If you have one, then you should consider remaking the web site as a showcase for you in your professional capacity, and include your resumé and other job related information.

This could be very helpful if you are looking for employment where using computers is important.

You should then remove any material which is not related to your business life so that you present the best impression. But, you might include some information and even a photo or two of your family and community activities that you are part of.

Only display information which gives the right impression to your prospective employer.

Maintain a business-like professional look throughout your website.

If you have the skills or can afford to pay someone who does, think about putting a video about your achievements and skills on your site.

Make sure that anybody you hire understands what sort of style you want to have and check examples of their previous work. Low costs may indicate a dabbler rather than somebody that can provide what you want.

A high fee does not guarantee quality or satisfaction either.

MySpace[®] and Other Social Networking Web Sites

Social Networking is a major phenomenon on the Internet recently. That's where people post information about themselves, their interests and their lives.

This is one way that they connect with people that have similar views and desires around the World.

Web sites like Myspace.com developed from the less sophisticated bulletin boards and chat-rooms that have always been a very popular part of Web culture.

One problem with being too open through what you disclose about your views, activities and opinions on Myspace and other web sites is that anything you put there becomes public property.

Many employers and consultants check these sites to see if applicants for jobs they are offering have disclosed anything about themselves which might differ substantially from the information in their resumés and other material in their application about, for instance, their opinions of the companies and people they have worked with.

If they find anything that doesn't match, it's possible that they may cancel your interview or drop you from the list of people they intend to interview.

Many people don't realize that anything which is put on the Internet is very hard to remove completely. Search engines are constantly scouring the byways of the Internet and they store (or cache) text and pictures for months or years. To test this, look at the **Cached** link next to most entries on searches which you do on Google.

There are also sites like the [Wayback Machine](#) which stores old versions of web sites and pages and almost anything else which has been put on the Internet at some time in the past.

You may remember the late actor, Michael Conrad (as Sgt Phil Esterhaus in the television police drama, "Hill Street Blues") saying, "Be careful out there".

It's also very important to be careful about what you put out there on the Internet.

Body Piercing, Decoration etc



Many people choose to decorate themselves with tattoos, body jewellery or in other ways.

This can be a liability when they apply for many jobs.

They have every right to make a personal statement but the potential employer has to consider whether the applicant is suitable as a representative of their business and the reaction of their customers.

Emailing Your Resumé

Some companies will accept your application by email.

That's fine but check first whether:

They can accept attachments with your email. Many mail systems routinely delete attachments or drop them straight into a spam folder for later inspection because attachments have often been the way that viruses and other nasties have been brought into business computer systems

What format your email should be in; HTML or plain text? This is another result of the spam and virus plagues. Email messages in HTML format (using the same code as web pages) may also carry malware so many systems are set up to put it in the spam folder.

If attachments are allowed, don't make them too large. Most attachments, like your cover letter and resumé, can be sent as text documents. Save them either as .rtf files which allow some formatting or .txt files where only the most basic formatting will remain.

They could also be sent in the Adobe Acrobat® .pdf format which is less likely to be corrupted accidentally or deliberately.

Just Fill out Our Form

Some employers require that you fill out an application form.

This is supposed to make for a level playing field.

It also gives them the chance to ask specific questions that probe the applicant's background and test their knowledge and ability to do the job.

These questions are usually part of the interview process. By putting them on the form which all the applicants fill in on their own time, the interviewer gets to see a wider range of answers and that helps them to make better decisions about each applicant's suitability to proceed to the interview stage.

That saves the company time and money, but preparing a form well enough to get consistent, useful results requires skill and time.

Always follow any instructions on the form as closely as possible.

Common Questions

You can expect to see most of these questions on most application forms. For most, you will just have to provide the information as described in the resumé section of this ebook.

Personal information: This is no problem unless the fields on the form are too small to include your full name, for instance.

You may have less room to detail your education and work history than if you were supplying it in a resumé, so concentrate on the points which are most relevant to the position you are applying for.

If they ask for medical information, don't detail the trivial – just the important conditions such as heart disease and conditions which might affect your ability to perform the job to a satisfactory standard.

Contact information: Double-check this. I suspect that many people make mistakes when putting their information into forms than make those same mistakes when just writing them in an email, for instance.

If you make an error in your contact phone number, you may never get that interview.

Position applied for: Copy the information exactly as it is described in the employment advertisement. Always include the reference number if there is one.

Awards and Qualifications: Only put down academic recognition and other successes which might be relevant to the position.

Skills learned on the job: Be sure to mention any skills you have acquired informally through previous work or private study which are directly relevant to doing the job you applied for.

If you can speak other languages or have first-aid skills, write them down.

Computer Proficiency: Give details of the type of computer software you are competent with and give the names of those which are likely to be relevant to the position, such as Microsoft Office and other office suites, Cad (Computer Assisted Drafting) packages, graphics programs for manipulating pictures, and desktop publishing programs.

Employers like to know whether you can use the software which is already in use in their company. Just saying that you are "competent in many programs" is useless.

It might be worth mentioning if you have successfully helped new, or less experienced colleagues, to become proficient with the programs.

Be careful to keep it low-key. They don't want a "computer nerd".

Referees: See the information in the resumé section of this ebook. Make sure that you follow the suggestions there very carefully.

Many of these forms are now provided as computer files or on a web page but you could get some that you will have to fill in by hand. Unless your writing is copybook perfect, print your answers to make it easy for the person or computer that scans the completed application.

If the form is set up to be checked by a computer, with multiple boxes you can just check and you make a mistake, start a new copy of the form. Don't confuse the computer or risk your form being rejected by their system.

Writing the Cover Letter

This letter is not like a normal letter to a friend or family member.

It is a marketing document intended to sell you as the ideal person for the specific position the employer wants to fill.

There is no problem with setting up a template or basic format for your cover letter. You might even use one that comes with your word processing program, such as Microsoft Word from [Microsoft](#), OpenOffice.org from [OpenOffice.org](#) or Thinkfree from [thinkfree.com](#)

But, you should adapt the original version to focus more tightly on your best points and the main criteria in the advertisement.

If you are applying for a position where advanced computer skills are required, then you should probably work up your own format from scratch.

Try to be subtle about it, but indicate in your cover letter that there is more detailed information in your resumé. Include enough positive factors in your cover letter that the employer will really want to read your resumé.

Outline for your Cover Letter

Start with a brief overview of you and why you are applying for this particular position.

Then, tell them why you are a prime candidate for that position and the benefits of interviewing you.

All that is left is a brief, positive close that includes a single point about how well prepared you are to take on the responsibility and opportunity of the position.

Thank the employer for their time and consideration. Mention that you will contact their office in a few weeks if you have not heard from them.

Avoid humor in the cover letter and the resumé. It might not seem as funny to the employer or they might not understand why the line is included at all, detracting from the overall effect of your presentation.

Check these Points

Before you put your cover letter with your resumé, print out a copy and carefully review these points:

- ? Correct address of the company, with all names and titles formatted and spelled correctly.
- ? The letterhead has your name, any relevant honors and full contact details.
- ? Easy to read; white space and large enough text in a standard business font.
- ? Carefully consider whether you might use effects such as bullets or underlining. Sometimes these add impact but they may detract from the professional look if carelessly applied.
- ? Make sure that the text is dark enough. Yes, get another cartridge for your printer if any of the text is hard to read.
- ? Don't just copy sentences from your resumé. If you don't put anything different and at least a little which is new in your cover letter, then the reader will be less than impressed to read it all again in your resumé.
- ? Don't use fancy bullets like small pictures or the question marks which I've used for these points.

What to send the Employer

Put fresh copies of your cover letter and resumé along with copies of documents which have been specifically requested into a large, business envelope so that they lay flat.

Print by hand or with your computer the address label. Make sure that its style, colors and dimensions conform to the requirements of your Post Office.

Put your name and postal address on the actual envelope as well as the label in case the label is defaced or removed during transit.

Ensure that you put sufficient postage on the package. Do not use more stamps than necessary – it gives an impression of cheapness.

Only seal the envelope if that is permitted under postal regulations for that class of mail.

Holding Your Pages Together

My advice is to use the humble staple rather than:

- pins, which stab people
- clips, which fall off and drop your pages into someone's coffee.
- binders, which often make it very awkward to remove the pages for copying and even harder to re-assemble everything. That's not a big problem when you just have a couple of documents but many vacancies might attract more than a hundred applications. So, the extra work caused by bound documents can add to the time required and cause negative feelings about whoever sent the bound applications.

Of course, the staple method means that your documents might start to look a little tired when the original staples are removed and new ones inserted in new holes. But, that doesn't take very long if you remembered to clearly label each page with your name and brief details or the reference number of the position,

Whatever method you settle on, make sure that the binding does not make it hard for the employer to read any of the text close to the margins.

Waiting to Hear from the Employer

The time from when you post your employment application until you hear whether you will get an interview or you have not made it to that next stage can be very stressful but that's only if you let it get at you.

Just realize that worrying or even constantly thinking about what decision you will get is not helpful to your prospects or your general well-being. All the worry might do is make you less able to handle the stress you might feel if you get an interview.

Try to put that out of your mind as far as possible by doing things which can have a positive effect on you.

- ✓ Increase your level of exercise.
- ✓ Try to get your partner, other family members (including the dog) or some friends to join you so that your mind is not dwelling on the fate of your application.
- ✓ Learn some relaxation techniques such as meditation, deep breathing or Yoga. They really can help you to reduce the amount of stress in your life.
- ✓ People can become used to feeling stressed like it is normal for them but it can actually encourage the development of uncomfortable and even harmful medical conditions. Stop it before you get to that stage.
- ✓ Adjust your diet to include more healthy options.
- ✓ Drink more water and fruit juice and less carbonated water (sodas).
- ✓ Reduce or eliminate tobacco, caffeine and other stimulants from your body.

Some doctors say that these last two steps will improve your general health because sodas, nicotine and caffeine all take some precious water from your body and your brain. This can affect the level of functioning of parts of your brain which, among other things, could affect your chances of a successful interview.

Start Another Application

You improve your chance of getting a new job if you have more than one application under way at a time.

This also will help to keep your mind occupied with productive thoughts rather than idling and full of worry and doubt.

I found that writing my second book was much easier because of the experience I gained, including the mistakes I made, with the first one.

So, your second and later applications may be better prepared than your first, even though you might have thought that was near perfect when you sent it out.

Another point is that preparing and sending more than one application gives you some valuable practise.

That might be very handy if you hear by chance of another position becoming available and you have to prepare your application in a short time.

The employer's response may be in the form of an email, a letter or a phone call.

Answering the Call

Be sure to answer all incoming calls in a clear, professional manner, even if you're sure that it's your buddy from the football club. It might not be!

I was told by one friend, who tried to contact an applicant for a job which she advertised, that the message on their answering machine was so unprofessional and offensive that she immediately took them off the list of applicants she wanted to interview.

If other members of your family might answer when the employer or interviewer phones, make sure that they know how what to say that will create a good impression.

Three year old Sally may delight her grandparents when she answers their call to you. But, it can be frustrating for a busy professional to try to leave a coherent message or even persuade the child to, "Please ask Mom or Dad to come to the phone".

Provide them with pen and paper. Make sure that they know the basic information which you need for them to write down.

Also, it might be a good idea to ask them to PRINT the message, if you think that their handwriting might be hard to understand when they are not used to writing messages.

Tell them to ask for the caller's name again if they don't hear it clearly. That's not likely to upset the caller at all.

Part II – Interviews

Making a Positive Impact at Interviews



Many people have a fear of interviews that may only be exceeded by their fear of going to the dentist or having a tax audit.

I hope that the information I share with you in this section of the book will help you to cope and even excel with your next application and interview.

The Interviewers' Focus

The first thing to remember is that, like most dentists, the people on the interviewing panel are there to help you, not to hurt you.

They've all probably been interviewed for various positions from time to time themselves. They have seen many other people sitting like you are before them.

So, they understand the pressure which applicants are under.

They actually will try very hard to put you at ease because that's the best way to get the information they and the employer need to decide whether you are really the best person for the job which is on offer.

The Applicant's Focus

You may have been through this process many times yourself or you may have attended courses where you went through simulated interviews, taking turns as the applicant and the interviewer.

But, most applicants have not had much opportunity to develop skills and tactics for dealing with the pressure of a possibly life-changing interview.

Reduce the Anxiety

The best way that I have found to reduce, and then eliminate, the anxiety in an interview situation is thorough preparation. Yes, I said this before but it's worth repeating.

The "secret" to preparation is to start early and not leave it until time-pressure is mounting. You may not absorb the information you need as thoroughly if you are not relaxed.

Here are some more tips which have proven their worth:

1] A good night's sleep before your interview.

2] Practise role-playing in mock interviews. This activity might be available in courses offered by private companies that support job seekers, community courses which focus on improving job skills or sessions in community organizations that have members who need help to improve in these areas.

If there are no courses available at a price that you can afford in your area, you might discuss it with friends that share your need whether you could set up some sessions for yourselves.

This won't be very effective if none of the participants have had much recent success in real interviews. It might even be counter-productive. Well-meaning participants might offer suggestions for improving other people's presentations which could backfire on those who used them later on.

But, this can be very rewarding if your group includes some successful job seekers. If not, some members may know people that are successful or who perhaps conduct interviews who could be invited to share their experience and knowledge with the group.

3] Applying for more jobs. Some experience with real interviews is the best way to improve your performance.

I read that Bob Hope, probably the most well-known and successful comedian of his generation, regretted the closure of many theatres because he said it reduced the opportunities for inexperienced comedians to be bad.

He explained that experience in front of real audiences would help them improve more quickly than anything else.

Another benefit of applying for another job or even a couple is that you will get less time to worry and you'll improve your chances of getting a new position.

4] Realize that the interviewers have the same goal as you do – they want the best person for the job to be selected. That's their only focus. You just need to demonstrate that the best person is you.

Mental Preview

Some people have also told me that they feel it is helpful for them to imagine themselves going through the whole interview process, putting their best points to the interviewer and answering the hardest questions.

I wondered whether this was really like day-dreaming but I have read that many successful sports people use a similar sort of mental preview before each of their contests.

An important point about this tactic is that it will only work when you have thoroughly reviewed the material and know what you want to say.

It cannot be used as a substitute for thorough preparation.

Get Ready for Your Interview

Your Appearance



Your clothes must be in good condition and freshly cleaned.

Do a dress rehearsal at home well before the day of the interview.

Check everything, including rain-wear, shoes (get spare laces in case one breaks on the day of the interview).

Clean your glasses.

Use a mirror or ask your partner to tell you honestly if your back-view is okay. This is not vanity. The interviewer will see each applicant leaving the room and that can color their overall impression of each person.

Are the heels of your shoes are unpolished while the toes gleam in subdued light?

Are there any loose threads or worn areas on the back of the outfit you wear to the interview?

What to wear? Check the company website, annual report and other publications for pictures of their staff in the office. This tells you their dress standards and acceptable styles.

If in doubt as to what to wear, follow the advice of an experienced presenter who has worked all around the country.

He told me, "I always wear clothes that are in line with those of my audience but I try to ensure that mine is the best outfit in the room".

Avoid extravagant accessories, perfume or aftershave.

Do not wear or carry items which are produced by a competitor of the company you want a position with. An entertainer I knew had a house in both England and the U.S.A. He drove his American-built car in the U.S.A and his Bentley around Britain.

Write down a check-list for all the personal and the material related to the interview.

Tape it in inside the top of your briefcase or bag which you use.

Don't use a bag which is larger than you need and make sure the bag or case reinforces the impression you want to give to the interviewer.



Answer all the Questions

You must answer all questions from the interviewer.

Sometimes, even very neutral questions can get a candidate in knots because they have not prepared and practised answering questions.

Just remember these few points:

- Keep off sensitive areas like politics, religion and any current or past controversy.
- Keep your answers brief and focused on re-inforcing the impression that you can do the job because you've the experience and skills needed.
- Don't boast or overstate your abilities or previous achievements. Be like the iceberg; quiet, powerful and ready to do business.
- Don't be like the duck, trying to look calm when it's obvious that there is a lot of agitated paddling going on beneath the surface.
- Practise answering any questions that you are hoping they won't ask. Careful preparation will help reduce your fear of the questions and also help you to make the best of the situation

Before You Leave

When the questions have finished, you may be given a couple of minutes to make a statement to the interviewer.

Just in case, you should prepare an "elevator speech" short enough to be said while in an elevator traveling just a couple of floors but covering the most important point – your suitability for the position.

Then, thank them for their time and leave, making sure you don't leave anything behind but a good impression and maybe some smiles.

The Interview



When you enter the interview room, you must appear just as presentable, relaxed and competent as you would be if it was just another day at the office in your new job.

That's why the lifestyle and exercise tips in a previous section are so important.

Take a deep breath or two. If you can, go to the bathroom and yawn a couple of times. That really works for most people. It increases the amount of oxygen in your body.

Concentrate on your breathing for a minute or so. Focus on taking each breath slowly into your belly, not just the top of your lungs.

Short, harsh breaths do not give you enough oxygen.

Some people have a simple way to reduce their immediate stress level. They push it away by putting both hands flat against a wall and pressing hard. This is another exercise that's best done in the privacy of the bathroom.

Now, it's too late to worry about what extra preparation you might have done. Concentrate on playing your best game with the cards you have.

N.L.P. and other Tactics

If you are an experienced user of Neuro linguistic programming or other systems for interpreting other people's unspoken signals and even their feelings, then you could have some advantage.



But, gaining proficiency and understanding of how these processes work can take years of practise in the real world.

If you just got a book or course about something like that a few weeks before your interview, you might get a few useful tips, that's all.

The interviewing panel is likely to include people with a lot of practical experience of using those techniques and they may not be impressed if applicants try to use them and just display their lack of experience.

But, I do suggest that you consider learning skills such as improving your memory, reading faster with greater comprehension and, yes, N.L.P.

But realise that they probably will not be of practical use until you have had at least some months of practise, despite what many of the promoters tell you.

No Regrets



When you don't get accepted for a position, it is always hard to take.

But, you should accept the lessons you have learned through the process and realise the result does not mean you're just not good enough.

You may need more practise.

Some employers don't always fill every position they advertise because of changes in the company or their business environment.

You can look to the next application or you can dwell on thoughts about the one you lost.

Part III – Prepare Yourself

Prepare Yourself

Whatever type of job that you want to get, you need to set yourself up so that you can produce the best resumé and make a great impression if you get an interview.

Part time Preparation

You may only have a couple of weeks to research the employer, prepare and send your resumé and get everything ready for your interview (you should always prepare on the basis that you will get to the next step and beyond it).

But you need to remain grounded so that your current job, your friends and, especially, your family don't suffer from your new task.

Make sure that you don't become obsessed with the new opportunity to the exclusion of those important factors in your life.

You'll need the current job if you don't get the new one and the goodwill of your old employer will still be valuable if you do.

Your family and friends will still be or not you succeed with this particular application.

But, if you don't remain in contact and share their important moments when possible, they may not be as supportive or understanding in the future.

Give Yourself a Deadline

Most of us can't avoid delays, either ones we cause or those which Murphy's Law drops on us when least welcome.

I suggest that you give yourself a day less for each major section of the application and preparing for the interview.

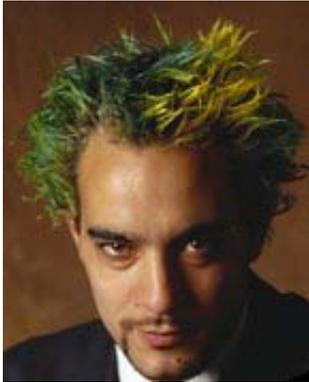
That day will help to absorb any unexpected bumps.

If you find that you meet that tighter deadline, don't waste the time.

Share some of it with your family and friends but not all of it.

Get started on the next part of your preparation a little sooner. If you throw away the day you worked so hard to get, your whole application will probably suffer.

Appearance



You must check whether there are any factors which might get in the way of your successful campaign and then remove or improve them.

Decide whether you should update your clothing and maybe your hair-style.

Is that facial hair really a personal or professional asset?

Make a couple of appointments with your dentist. If you have not been having regular check-ups, you'll probably need at least some maintenance work before your interview.

Despite almost everyone disliking sitting in the dentist's chair more than almost everything except having to make a speech, dentists are always extremely busy.

You may find it hard to get an appointment in the time available. So, call your dentist and make a booking now!

Think about how you speak and the impression that gives other people.



Some things to consider and improve if necessary:

Avoid humor in your interviews and resumés. It's very hard to do even reasonably well. Don't use humor at all unless you have practised the lines privately. Comedians make it look very easy because they practise everything, including those apparently off-the-cuff remarks.

Don't use even the mildest swear-words. You don't know the standards of the employer or the interviewers. This may also please your partner and friends who didn't like some expressions you used but were too polite to say

anything.

Last Words from Lester Watts

I hope that this information helps you to get the job that you dream of.

As the employment situation changes and job security rapidly disappears, I've tried to help you to prepare yourself for the next job you apply for, whether it's a better position with your current employer or a change of location or even a in a different industry.

The best time to prepare is when you don't have a pressing need to find another job.

Good luck and much success,

Lester Watts.

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