

CAREER SCOPE

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THE STORY: 982 APPLICANTS... AND ONE JOB

Imagine yourself in the hiring manager's shoes. What does he/she need? Can you fulfill those needs? Answering these kinds of questions can help you write a good cover letter and resume and have an effective interview.

This is a true story of a hiring manager, Lisa Marks,* who advertised for a receptionist/clerk in a Toronto paper and got 982 resumes. [*The name has been changed.]

The First Cut

Lisa and her staff of seven couldn't read every application. They cut any resume without a cover letter, that used coloured paper, was printed with a fancy font, or was too long. "It had to look professional and be brief", Lisa says. "Two to three pages is

enough." That cut out about 400 work applicants.

The Cover Letters

They then eliminated any candidate whose cover letter:

- Was hand-written.
- Had three or more grammar mistakes or misspellings.
- Sounded generic "as if the writer had just filled in the blanks."
- Was addressed "To Whom It May Concern."

"I was impressed by people who had taken the time to telephone the office, find out my name and address the letter to me personally."

Lisa read the 200 remaining cover letters carefully. "Good cover letters didn't parrot the newspaper ad. They didn't tell me about skills I didn't need or give me the feeling that the applicants would take this job until they could find something else." 25 resumes remained.

The Resumes

For Lisa, a good resume had:

- A career objective

- A list of achievements well explained. "Organizer of major conference" doesn't tell me as much as "Organized major conference with 3,000 delegates."
- A demonstration of accomplishments in work/volunteer experience. "If you handled office supplies, show me an achievement such as "Reviewed office supply management and saved \$300,000."
- Information about interests. "But not just a list of things like 'skiing,' or 'reading.' When I see 'Coached Little League' or 'Taught Sunday School,' that tells me a lot more."

The Telephone Interviews

Lisa had her staff call the remaining 15 candidates and ask them:

- Why do you want to work for our corporation?
- What specific skills do you have in accounting/bookkeeping?
- Which word-processing software can you use?
- Have you ever been responsible for dealing with office supplies and equipment?

"Those conversations gave us a feeling about the candidates' communication skills," Lisa says. "What's amazing is that you can really 'hear' a smile through the telephone."

The Personal Interviews

Lisa talked to the 5 remaining candidates. "It's my job to make sure the interviewees are comfortable," Lisa says. "In the meantime, I'm looking to see if they're dressed appropriately and conducting themselves well."

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Spotlight

Take Charge of your Job Search

Discover effective ways of looking for work in today's job market

Review the questions below. If you answer yes to more than one, consider how Job Quest - Career Services' Job Search Techniques Workshop can provide you with the knowledge and resources to make your job search more effective.

1. Are you unsure of what to say when calling employers? **Learn some basic strategies to address this common situation.**
2. Wondering how to locate the "hidden" (unadvertised) jobs? **Find out what the hidden job market is and learn how to access the jobs that are out there.**
3. Networking is the most effective way to find employment. Want to know how to do it? **Learn how networking can lead to job opportunities.**
4. Did you know that researching companies that you want to send a resume to can improve your chances of working for them? **Having information on the companies you plan to contact**

will help you tailor a cover letter and resume that gives employers specific information about what you can offer their company.

5. Have you sent out numerous resumes on advertised jobs and not received much response? **Discover why this is not always the most effective method and learn other techniques that can improve your job search.**
6. Have you ever been called for an interview and couldn't recall where you placed your information on the company? **Organization is key to performing a successful job search. Discover essential tips on doing this.**

Job Quest - Career Services offers a free Job Search Techniques Workshop that covers all aspects of looking for work in today's tough job market. For more information or to register, call 482-2100 or toll free (866) 482-2100. See what previous participants have had to say about the Job Search Techniques Workshop.....

"I am currently seeking employment and this workshop has helped me gain confidence in my abilities to find a suitable position in the work force."

Cheryl, Selkirk

"The sources of job leads - there were suggested sources that I wouldn't have thought of on my own. I attribute my current employment to what I learned in this workshop."

Greg, Clandeboye

"Calling employers and knowing what to say when leaving messages. I never would leave messages before."

Jan, Gimli

I have learned of several websites that are useful for researching employers, jobs, and the labour market that have added an edge to my job search."

Kim, Stonewall

A Job Search Preparedness Checklist

- I have a positive attitude about marketing myself.
- I have a strong support system for maintaining momentum.
- I have a clear and realistic job objective.
- I have an effective strategic resume.
- I have a clear idea of how to write effective cover letters.
- I have planning and record-keeping systems set up to maximize my efficiency.
- I have a list of people I plan to consult for information and advice.
- I have a list of employers I am interested in approaching.
- I have at least basic company information on my target employers.
- I have a good understanding of networking benefits and techniques.
- I have a good knowledge of sources of job leads in my line of work.
- I have a solid grasp of job interviewing methods and issues.
- I have proficiency in communicating in job interviews.
- I have several strong references who can respond to inquiries.
- I have a solid grounding in salary negotiation techniques.

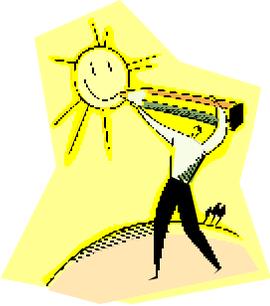
Mahoney, Marci. Strategic Resumes. Melno Park. Crisp Publications Inc, 1992: 74

Job Quest is Coming to a Town near You!

Job Quest is based in Selkirk but did you know that we visit Arborg, Fisher Branch, Gimli and Stonewall every two weeks? We provide the following free services:

- Resume Writing Workshop
- Job Searching Session
- Interviewing Session
- Career Planning Session

Call Erin for details or to register at 482-2100 or toll free (866) 482-2100. Seating is limited.



Staying **Positive** during your Job Search

During a job search it is key to stay positive for not just for your well-being, but to be aware that how you're feeling will present itself in your job search. Any negative attitude that creeps into the way you communicate, verbally or non-verbally, can impact the productivity of your job search. How do you stay positive when you are in a job search? The following are some tips to get you started.

- **Take care of yourself.** Eat well-balanced meals regularly and get plenty of rest. Exercise - ten minutes on the move can make a world of difference to how you feel.
- **Seek out people who can provide emotional support.** Tell family members and friends about what you are doing and how things are going. They may be worried about how the changes in your life will affect them. Keeping the lines of communication open will help them too.
- **Set realistic short-term goals and reward yourself when you achieve them.** For example, decide how many direct contacts (in person, over the telephone, by mail) you should be able to make each day. Make a list of things that make you feel good but don't cost too much in time or preparation (for example, a longer walk than usual with the dog). Use these activities as rewards when you have achieved the day's objectives.
- **Set a time limit on how long you will allow yourself to feel "down",** preferably no more than a few hours. Then start working your way back up again.
- **Keep growing.** Do lots of reading on current trends and subjects related to your work or areas of interest. Take short courses and attend conferences or seminars. If they might be helpful to you, read books or attend workshops on time management, problem solving, communication, self-esteem, relaxation, positive thinking.
- **Help others.** Get a better perspective on your own troubles by reaching out to others. Do volunteer work that will make use of your skills, give you needed experience, or allow you to meet people who could be helpful in your job search.
- **Take temporary or part-time work** to help keep your spirits up, as well as provide short-term income. If your employers are impressed with your performance, they may offer you full-time work or pass on information about work opportunities they hear about. It would also be an opportunity to gain a good reference.
- **Be kind to yourself.** Listen to your self-talk. If you catch yourself thinking "I can't...", "I'm no good at...", "It's impossible...", STOP. Try to reframe your thoughts and think in more positive terms. For example, "I can learn from this mistake" instead of "I'm such a fool".
- **Read every flattering thing you have ever received (letters of praise, recommendations, performance appraisals).** Keep them handy and periodically read them.
- **Make a list of the things that worry you** and brainstorm solutions with a friend or counsellor.
- **Keep laughter in your life.** What makes you laugh? Cartoons? Comics? Certain types of T.V. shows? Being with certain friends? Laughter is a wonderful release so use it as often as you can.

Positive thinking really is powerful, according to a study in which people read 15 self-boosting statements three times a day for two weeks. The statements were based on the subjects' own most frequent negative thoughts that were restructured into positive statements... plus their typical positive thoughts, enhanced to be even more encouraging (*I never succeed at anything* might be transformed into *I'm confident that I can make the best of whatever happens*, while *I feel good most days* might become *I feel great - today will be a good day*). After two weeks, subjects' self-esteem and symptoms of depression improved. The researchers attribute the technique's effectiveness to the use of statements tailored to people's personal concerns, rather than repeating one-size-fits-all affirmations.

*-from Northwestern State University,
Natchitoches, Louisiana*

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Visit our web site: www.selkirklearningcentre.ca

Job Quest - Career Services is funded by:



(The Story: 982 Applicants Con't from page 1)

Some questions she asked:

- Why do you want to work for us? "I wasn't impressed if they hadn't done any research since the telephone interview."
- Tell me about a time you solved a problem with a co-worker. "I needed to see if they had the skills to work in a small office."
- What does it take for you to bring a question to your supervisor?

Meeting the Staff

The remaining 2 candidates returned to meet the staff in a relaxed setting over coffee. "The person who got the job challenged us," Lisa says. "She wanted to know why we were working for the corporation, what we did, why we liked our jobs and what we had learned."

The Moral of the Story

- Be a self-reliant job searcher.
- Research an organization so that you know what it needs in new workers.
- Learn how to write cover letters and resumes that show why you're a great match for the job.
- Practice your interview skills so that you will be prepared, confident and relaxed.

From www.worksearch.gc.ca

COME AND DISCOVER WHAT WE HAVE TO OFFER!

RESOURCE AREA

FREE ACCESS FOR YOUR CONVENIENCE

INTERNET

EXPLORE JOBS AND RESEARCH INFORMATION, SEND AND RECEIVE E-MAIL

COMPUTERS FOR RESUMES AND COVER LETTERS

PHONE FOR CALLING EMPLOYERS

FAX MACHINE FOR SENDING OUT RESUMES

DAILY & WEEKLY NEWSPAPERS

REFERENCE MATERIAL FOR ALL OF YOUR JOB SEARCH NEEDS

JOB BOARD WITH CURRENT JOB POSTINGS FOR SELKIRK AND INTERLAKE AREA

FREE WORKSHOPS

SIGN UP BY CALLING OR DROPPING IN

RESUME WRITING

LEARN HOW TO WRITE YOUR OWN RESUME – A SKILL YOU WILL HAVE FOR A LIFETIME!

INTERVIEWING SKILLS

LEARN HOW TO PLAN AND PREPARE FOR AN INTERVIEW – PRACTICE MAKES PERFECT!

JOB SEARCH TECHNIQUES

USE EFFECTIVE METHODS FOR LOOKING FOR WORK & LEARN HOW TO NETWORK TO YOUR ADVANTAGE!

CAREER PLANNING

UNSURE OF WHAT YOU WANT TO DO FOR A CAREER OR WANT A CAREER CHANGE? LEARN ABOUT YOURSELF AND EXPLORE NEW DIRECTIONS