
The Resume and the Interview

You may ask, “What resume? I never had a job before.” Did you do any volunteer work, babysit, work in a church help or teach children, mow lawns, do chores for the sick or elderly—it all counts. What are your strengths? Are you enthusiastic, energetic, and hard working? Give examples that would support your statements. “I sold the most tickets for the school musical.” “I’m an active member of three clubs in my school.”

The Resume

Contact Information: First thing in a resume is to make sure you have your contact information: full name, address, phone number, and email address if you have one. You want to be available if the person wants to hire you.

You may have on your cell phone this answering message, “Yo dude. What’s up?” If your prospective employer hears this, he may have second thoughts about hiring you. You’d be wise to change your phone-answering message to, “Hi. This is Dave. Please leave a message.”

Education Experience: Tell where you went to school and the classes you majored in. Include also any extra courses, such as CPR training or drama classes, and if you’re an honor student. If you have any citations for outstanding achievement, include them.

Activities: List activities that you have participated

in: team sports, gymnastics, band, chorus, clubs, student committees or councils, leadership training, hobbies, and class officer or president. List honors and awards.

Skills: Are you computer literate? What programs are you familiar with? How well do you get along with others? What kind of skills do you have that would benefit the company? Tell something about yourself that an employer would like to hear. Don't embellish your story. Nothing turns off an employer more than someone who exaggerates or is dishonest.

Work Experience: If you were employed, list your previous employers. If not previously employed, include any extra work you've done from volunteering to mowing lawns.

References: List at least two adults who know you well and will have something good to say about you. A good source would be your previous supervisor. If you have never worked before, you won't have any references dealing with your work experiences. But you can list individuals who know you such as: teachers, coaches, or anyone with authority. Ask their permission to use their name. Include their name, company, address, phone number, email and their relationship with you.

Many students don't have enough job experiences to create a compelling resume. Think of anything positive about yourself that would help you get the job. For example: "I've had perfect attendance for the last two terms." Don't be overly concerned; employers don't expect a lot of experience. They're searching for someone with the right attitude and a willingness to learn. But resumes are important, particularly when there's much competition. Go on the Web and search for ideas. Make

your resume distinct.

When looking for a job, spend time researching the company. Most companies have Web sites. Show interest by spending time looking over their Web site. If you're just interested in a low-paying job, you won't have to do this. But if you're interested in a job with great potential, then think and ask yourself, "What can I do to demonstrate it would be beneficial for this company to hire me?"

Inferiority Complex

One of the most damaging attitudes to have in seeking employment is an inferiority complex: feeling lower in value than others. Many people are plagued with this attitude. But why should they when we're all created equal?

For years you may have felt inferior and unworthy. Someone may have put you down and made fun of the way you look: your nose, hair, eyes, ears, glasses, or whatever. Stop! Don't be a dummy and go around defeated because of someone's opinion. Some things you can change. If you're overweight—be disciplined and go on a diet. If you're failing in school—take corrective action to help you succeed. But some things you can't change. You can't change the color of your skin or your nationality. You can't change the shape of your nose, ears, or eyes. I know some use plastic surgery to alter their bodies, but I think many would be a lot wiser to put their money in a bank and learn to accept themselves the way they were born.

Healthy Self-Esteem

Think positively. Lift up your chin and look straight ahead. Never be ashamed of the way you were born. Remember, change what you can change; accept what you cannot change. A healthy self-esteem is critical to success.

“I was constantly tormented by worries and fears and self-consciousness,” said Elmer Thomas, a former senator from Oklahoma. “I was extremely tall for my age and as thin as a fence rail. I stood six feet two inches and weighed only 118 pounds.”

The kids poked fun at him and called him “hatchet-face.” In recalling what happened, Thomas said, “Every day and every hour of the day, I brooded over my tall, gaunt, weak body. I could hardly think of anything else.”

His mother advised him, “Son, you ought to get an education, you ought to make your living with your mind because your body will always be a handicap.” Thomas went to college, but he still had that inferiority complex. Then something happened that turned his life around. His mother urged him to enter a speaking contest at a fair. “I didn’t have the courage to talk even to one person—let alone a crowd,” Thomas said. “But my mother’s faith...inspired me to enter the contest.”

He memorized the speech and rehearsed it a hundred times. He won first prize! He was astounded. Those boys who had ridiculed and poked fun at him said, “I knew you could do it, Elmer.”

His mother hugged him and cried. Then he said, “As I look

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back in retrospect, I can see that winning that speaking contest was the turning point of my life.”

Thomas continued his education and worked. In order to pay for his educational expenses, he said, “I waited on tables, looked after furnaces, mowed lawns, kept books, worked in the wheat and cornfields during the summer, and hauled gravel on a public road construction job.”

No longer did he fear making speeches. The excitement he received from speaking made him desire to enter politics. He studied law and public speaking. He became editor-in-chief of the college annual, and the university paper. He opened a law firm, then for 13 years served in the Oklahoma senate, became a representative from Oklahoma, and then his “lifelong ambition,” became a United States senator from Oklahoma.

“I have told this story,” Thomas remarked, “not to brag about my own fleeting accomplishments, which can’t possibly interest anyone else. I have told it wholly with the hope that it may give renewed courage and confidence to some poor boy who is now suffering from the worries and shyness and feeling of inferiority that devastated my life.”¹

Endeavor to develop a healthy self-esteem. I purposely chose the word, “healthy” self-esteem. There are those who have a proud self-esteem. They think they’re better than everyone else. They’re arrogant and egotistical; they stubbornly refuse to listen to advice. They are the fount of all wisdom. That’s destructive self-esteem.

A healthy self-esteem is to accept, without reservation, the way you were created. You’re not devastated by criticism. You’re not over confident. You’re not only willing to take

advice, you earnestly seek advice. You're able to laugh at yourself. You're not intimidated by others. You accept responsibility for your actions. You're willing to take risks. You're willing to stand up for your convictions. You have a sense of purpose. If you have a healthy self-esteem, you won't be intimidated when you have to go for an interview. The first thing you'll probably do is give a handshake.

The Handshake

The way a person shakes a hand sends subtle messages. Just think of someone shaking your hand and it feels like you're shaking a dead fish tail, or someone who vigorously pumps your hand. What kind of messages do they reveal about the individual?

The *Houston Chronicle*, in "Handshake all-important," states, "A handshake done well exudes confidence. Done badly—which includes looking over the shaker's shoulder or down at the ground—it makes someone look clueless, uncomfortable, and out of place." The report went on to say:

One day Helene Cavanaugh discovered how much a poorly performed handshake can hurt a job candidate.

Cavanaugh was working as a recruiter for a staffing agency and she couldn't understand why her candidates weren't getting offers. They had the skills. They had the education. They tested well.

Yet the clients made vague references to not having a "good feeling" but couldn't explain why. Cavanaugh did some investigating and found that her

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candidates' handshakes were giving off vibes of either submissiveness or aggressiveness, strong yet subtle impressions that clouded the rest of the interviews.

The best way to shake a hand is to hold yours out so it's perpendicular to the floor—sort of like a knife slicing straight through the air, said Cavanaugh, who is now executive director of Texas Association of Personnel Consultants and the Houston Area Association of Personnel Consultants.

“It gives the subtle message you are equals,” she said. “It also says: ‘I’m confident, I’m strong, but I’m not overbearing.’”²

Your handshake often reveals your character. When you go for a job interview, look the person in the eye and give a firm handshake. But before you go for the interview, practice shaking hands so you’ll be comfortable doing it the right way.

The Interview

The way you act in an interview is critical for your success in getting the job. I’ve interviewed many individuals for employment, both skilled and unskilled. One of the first things I look for is if the person is energetic. Sometimes within the first few seconds, the individual is rejected. Here’s an example:

The secretary where I was operations manager gave the prospective employee an application to fill out. When the form was completed, she called me to the office to interview the applicant. When I saw the applicant in the office, I called him

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to come. This young applicant got up so slowly that he acted like a crippled 80-year-old man. Within one second of seeing him getting out of his seat, I had already rejected him. Why? If he's that sluggish just to get out of a chair, I could just imagine the amount of energy he would put into his work.

I watch the way applicants walk. Do they have energy or not? Now I may be wrong in my judgment, but I just have a few moments to evaluate applicants. So I must make quick judgments. John H. Harvey, William John Ickes, and Robert F. Kidd, in *New Directions in Attribution Research*, tell this story about J. C. Penney:

In a radio interview some years ago, the department store tycoon suggested that a good way to spot executive potential is to observe whether an individual salts his food before tasting it. Mr. Penney reasoned that any person who salts food without determining that it in fact needed salt might not weigh all the facts before making important executive decisions.³

Joe Cirulli owns Gainesville Health & Fitness Center in Gainesville, Florida. According to an American expert, it is the best fitness business in the United States. They have five steps for applicants to be hired at the fitness club. First they give the applicant a four-page form consisting mostly of puzzles and games. Shawn Steward, the company's operations manager, says, "We eliminate most of the lazy people with that."

They check references, do group interviews, and have one on one interviews with a department head. On one occasion

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Steward went to interview an applicant that had excellent reviews. The applicant was sitting in a room when Steward arrived. “They need some chairs next door,” Stewart said as he began picking up some chairs and bringing them to the room.

Stewart kept doing this until two chairs were left. The applicant didn’t move, except to take his feet off a chair. “Well,” said Stewart, “thanks for coming, but this place is really not for you.”

“But you haven’t interviewed me yet,” the applicant complained.

“Yes, I just did,” Stewart said as he led the applicant out of the room.⁴

Paul Boynton, employment director for Socony-Vacuum Oil Company has interviewed over 60,000 job applicants. He wrote the book, *6 Ways to Get a Job*. Boynton said, “The biggest mistake people make in applying for jobs is in not being themselves. Instead of taking their hair down and being completely frank, they often try to give you the answers they think you want.”⁵

The first rule for the interview: Don’t be a phony. Be energetic and show enthusiasm, interest, and ambition. Don’t be arrogant, thinking you’re doing an employer a favor if he hires you. Look the person in the eye and give a firm handshake. Demonstrate a positive attitude.

If you happen to have work experience, don’t talk against your former employer. Often I call the former employer and ask about the applicant I’m interested in hiring. Learn to build a good reputation for yourself.

Dress appropriately. It’s better to be on the neat side. Don’t

come with dirty or worn jeans, sloppy clothes, and messed up hair. That's true even for a factory job. Women, dress modestly and use makeup conservatively. Carolyn Gustafson, an image consultant, said, "We make quick decisions about people based on their appearance. Whether or not that's right, that's the reality of it."⁶

You may think tattoos and body piercings look cool, but there are employers who think otherwise. They don't want employees meeting customers with exposed body art and piercings. You may object, "I don't want anyone telling me what I can or cannot do."

You have the right to your opinion, but the employer also can say, "I don't want anyone to tell me the type of person I should hire."

In the end you may find the job you're seeking for will be elusive. Zig Ziglar, a successful salesman, motivational speaker, and businessman, tells in his book, *Top Performance*, about a student who kept looking for a job, but was constantly turned down. He went to his professor and asked why. "Are you absolutely certain you want to know why?" his professor asked.

"I am," said the student.

"You look like you've been on a six-month camping trip."

The student became indignant. "Are you referring to my hair and my beard?"

"Yes, and your clothes and your shoes, and your breath."

"That's not fair."

The professor then replied, "You didn't ask if it was fair, you simply asked why."⁷

Employers Reluctant to Hire Teens

Being a teenager, you may think that employers are eager to hire you since you're earning minimum or close to minimum wages. Many aren't. Why? It's very costly for employers to train employees. Now if you're doing a simple job that requires no training such as handing out flyers, there's no problem getting hired. But if the work requires skill, employers have to spend considerable time training. Many teens don't realize that this training is very costly and time consuming.

Teens have a tendency to be flighty. Some will quit after a few months, and all the costly training is lost to the employer. So what do employers want? They want employees who are eager to learn and are willing to stick it out. One way to get hired is to show enthusiasm for the employment you're applying for.

Extra Steps

You plan on going to college and specialize in a certain occupation. You find there's a company you'd like to work for during the summer that will help you in the field you've chosen. What could you do to get a job in that company? Here's an important tip: Show a sincere interest in that company.

Most companies have a website. Find the company's website and learn as much as you can about the company and the kind of work it does. Learn about its products and services. When you go for the interview, tell about your future plans and how you'd be eager to work for this company. Tell about your research. Remember, employers are looking for employees

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who are eager to learn. Be willing to do any kind of work.

John Wanamaker pioneered the first department store in 1876 and is credited with being the father of modern advertising. A young man came to Wanamaker and asked for a job. He told the young man he didn't have a job for him. "I am willing to do anything," the young man replied.

Wanting to get rid of him, Wanamaker said, "The only job I have is a job of washing windows."

"I will take it," the young man said.

The young man became the best window washer. Eventually he became the manager of the great store. After working there for 25 years, the manager died. Afterwards Wanamaker said, "I am willing to pay as high as one hundred thousand dollars a year for a manager who can fill the place of the one I lost."⁸ That was a lot of money in those days.

That young man's enthusiasm was a hallmark of his personality, and it transferred into whatever he did. Every employer would love to hire employees like this.