

Top Talent

INTERVIEW GUIDE

Successful organizations are dynamic structures. They succeed in large measure because of the talent, insights and actions of their leadership.

The SSI Executive Search Group Interview Guide has been developed to help you position yourself as the kind of talent that will bring significant competitive advantages to an organization.

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For further information, or if you have questions, please feel free to contact us.

THE INTERVIEW

Congratulations on being chosen to interview for a new position. Now that you have the opportunity, you are the only one that can control whether you excel to the “getting an offer” stage.

At SSI Executive Search Group, we recognize that the interview process can be stressful and uncomfortable, especially if you have not been through an interview in a while. Therefore, to help you prepare for the interview, we have developed this guide.

OBJECTIVE OF THE INTERVIEW:

Your objectives going into the interview:

- Get an offer.
- Get the information you need to evaluate whether this is the right opportunity for you. At the end of the interview, you should be able to determine if you want the position or not. If it is only a first interview, you should be able to determine if you would like to continue the process or not.

The potential employer has just one objective:

- Determine if you are the best fit for the position and their organization.
- If it is only a first interview, then they will need to determine if they should continue the process or not.

Conduct yourself with confidence and determination to get the position. You have other options, of course, and your interviewer knows this, but wants to think that you want a position with this company. Don't play coy. Sell yourself. This is your first meeting - the position, as well as future promotions, may depend on your presentation. Are you going to sell them on the idea of hiring you, or will they sell you on the idea that this opportunity is not for you? You must present a positive attitude to the prospective employer. You must **NOT** seem disinterested or appear to be job shopping.

The interview should be a two-way conversation. Ask questions of the interviewers. This shows your interest in the company and the position. It also enables you to gather the right information to make an intelligent decision afterward. The questions you have prepared can be asked to the different people who interview you.

Remember, the objective of the interview is to obtain an offer. During the interview you must gather enough information concerning the position to make a decision.

We are confident that the techniques and tips outlined in this document will give you a leg up on the other candidates you are competing against for the opportunity. We are also confident in mentioning that the stronger you can present yourself in the interview process, the better the compensation package will typically be.

Top 10 Interview Performance Tips

Performance Tip #1: Know the benefits you bring to the table.

The interview is a selling situation. In this case, the product happens to be you. And, just like another sales situation, your buyer (the employer) needs to be able to answer the question “What’s in it for me?” If they cannot answer this question, you will not get the offer you are looking for. To help you answer this question, we recommend that you do the following:

- Research the company’s industry at a macro level.
 - ❑ Who are their competitors and what are their product lines?
 - ❑ What are the industry trends?
 - ❑ What environmental factors are impacting the company?
 - ❑ How will you help the organization excel in the industry?

- Research the company at a micro level.
 - ❑ Read their annual report. What is their stock price?
 - ❑ Why has it increased/decreased in value?
 - ❑ Who are the key executives within the organization?
 - ❑ What things are highlighted in the annual report that the company is most proud of?
 - ❑ What is being said about the company in the news?
 - ❑ How will you help the company meet and exceed their business objectives?

- Think about the position.
 - ❑ What skills are important to the job?
 - ❑ What types of problems or issues will you be faced with?
 - ❑ What do you think your expectations will be for the position?
 - ❑ Why do you deserve the position?

Once you conduct your research, you will be prepared to start thinking about the skills and experiences you bring to the table that will truly be what the company needs to see in a candidate.

Sometimes it is not easy to come up with these benefits on your own, or to know what benefits are more important than others to a specific employer. It is for this reason that teaming up with a recruiter can be of tremendous benefit to your career search. At SSI Executive Search Group, we have intimate knowledge of our clients, and this allows us to help you understand what types of things you need to present and how you need to present them to best represent yourself to our clients.

Performance Tip #2: Point out past accomplishments.

Now that you have thought about some of the benefits you will bring to your new organization, you need to be prepared to back them up with past performances that will serve as proof. You will want to construct mini-stories. Each ministry should contain:

- A description of the situation – This could be a problem you solved or a project you worked on.
- A description of your behavior in that situation.
- A description of why you behaved the way you did.
- A description of the end-result.

Be sure the employer understands how the end-result will translate into a benefit for them. (For example – what you learned, customer relationships you can bring to the table, knowledge of a product line.)

If you are having difficulty putting together mini-stories, ask yourself the following types of questions:

- What have you done to increase efficiency, develop process improvements or specific success examples that benefited the position, department or company? (STAR format)
- What have you done to control costs and by what amount?
- What problems have you solved, and how did they impact your company?
- Have you managed people, and if so, what did they accomplish under you?
- Did you work on a problem that everyone else avoided? What was the result?
- What special projects were you hired to work?
- Have you met or exceeded your manager's expectations? If so, by how much?
- What are your greatest strengths, and how will they benefit the company you are interviewing with?
- What are your opportunities for professional development and what is your action plan to develop these areas?
- What do you do in your spare time?
- How can you contribute to the company?
- Where do you hope to be in 5 years, and what do you plan to do to get there?
- What have you learned the most in your current position, and how will this benefit an employer?

Again, it is worth mentioning that teaming up with a recruiter can be of benefit in this situation. At SSI Executive Search Group, we work with thousands of candidates a year that go through interview processes. With each candidate, we gain new insight into what works well and what does not. This expertise allows for us to help you make sure your language and style in describing yourself is consistent with what works best!

A detailed Accomplishment Summary process is described on the next several pages.

Accomplishment Summary

In preparation for your interview, using your past work experiences, detail up to three specific work-related events or projects that meet the following criteria:

1. Shows a clearly defined role you played in the success of the specific event or project.
2. Shows measurable and profitable results that were achieved because of your role in the event or project.

Each project you detail should include the following components:

1. **Event:** Name the Event or Project (*e.g., scrap reduction or productivity improvement*).
2. **Backdrop:** Describe the business rationale for this project, and what was the intended result of it. (*e.g., “we needed to increase the cost effectiveness of the welding cell”*)
3. **Your Role:** Describe your role in the project.
4. **Outcome:** Describe the result(s) of the project in **narrative and quantitative terms**, indicating results versus objectives or goals.

Quality Examples:

- Our target was to reduce scrap by 15% and increase productivity by 25%.
- Our team completed the project on time and reduced scrap by 21% and increased productivity by 38%.
- These improvements reduced operating costs \$656,000 and helped to increase sales by \$13 million.

Regulatory Example:

- Our target was to launch two new orthopedic implant products and get approval by the 3rd quarter.
- Our team completed the 510 (k) submission process within 68 days.
- The FDA came back with questions on one product and approval on the other; both submissions were approved within 85 days and 15 days in advance of our target date in the 3rd quarter.

This exercise provides you an opportunity to “showcase” your past accomplishments, and in doing so, you will provide the decision-maker valuable insight into your experience, skill, leadership capability and written skills.

Remember, companies do not hire resumes, they hire value – and value is generated by:

(a) Increasing sales, (b) Optimizing costs, (c) Maximizing profitability, (d) Improving Efficiencies, (e) Mitigating Risk, (f) Creating NPD innovation, (g) or Provides Intangible Leadership.

This exercise will provide real life examples of how you have created value as well as how you get along with others. We appreciate your willingness to work with us on this vital aspect of your interview preparation process.

DIRECTIONS:

1. Save the following document to your hard drive as an Word (.doc) document.
2. Click on the gray fields of each section and type in your responses. The fields are set to accept as much information as you want to include - they will expand based upon your input.
3. When you have completed this document, save it again and forward back to us at the email address given to you. You will need to attach this document to your email.
4. Should you need additional assistance, please contact us at SSI Executive Search Group (317) 983-4473.

Accomplishment Summary

Name:
Phone:
Today's Date:

Accomplishment 1

EVENT/PROJECT:

BACKDROP:

MY ROLE:

OUTCOME:

Accomplishment 2

EVENT/PROJECT:

BACKDROP:

MY ROLE:

OUTCOME:

Accomplishment 3

EVENT/PROJECT:

BACKDROP:

MY ROLE:

OUTCOME:

Performance Tip #3: Typical Questions for Candidate to Ask.

Your interviews should be two-way conversations. You must ask questions and take an active role in the interview. This demonstrates the importance you place in your work and your career. Asking questions gives you a chance to demonstrate your depth of knowledge in the field as well as establish an easy flow of conversation and relaxed atmosphere between you and the interviewer. Building this kind of rapport is always a plus in an interview.

Asking questions will permit your prospective new employer to recognize several characteristics about you.

- You are intelligent.
- You know what information needs to be analyzed to make decisions.
- You are interested in the opportunity.
- You can be conversational.

Remember, you are not just there for the interviewer to determine if you are right for the position, but also to help you determine if this position is right for you. Some of your questions should evolve from research you've done on the company in preparing for the interview. Following are some guidelines for your questions as well as some examples.

□ Interest Questions.**Why do you want someone for this job?**

Force the interviewer to explain why this job can't be done by one of their current employees. The answer may give you a valuable job description.

□ Job Satisfaction Questions.

Ask questions that relate to the responsibilities, importance and authority of the position as well as those investigating the rewards for a job well done and the long-range career opportunities.

□ Past Performance Questions.**Why isn't this position being filled from within the company?**

You may discover there isn't anyone in the organization that wanted this position, or there is a weakness in this area.

How many people have held this job in the last five years?

Were they promoted or did they leave company?

If the turnover has been high, you have a right to suspect that the job may leave something to be desired. It could also mean that you could expect to be promoted quickly.

How did you get started in the company?

A good way to get to know the interviewer better and gain insight into the promotional path the company follows.

What are examples of the best results produced by people in this job?

Here you may discover you are overqualified or in a position to ask for considerably more money.

- 25 of the toughest questions clients have ever been asked by candidates (pick a few - be strategic):
 1. What would I see if I stood outside the front door at 5 o'clock? Would everyone be smiling? Staying late or leaving early? Would they be taking work home?
 2. What is your "learning plan" for me for my first six months?
 3. What competencies do you propose I will develop that I don't currently have?
 4. Which individual in the department can I learn the most from?
 5. What can they teach me? Can I meet them?
 6. Does the company have a specific program to advance my career?
 7. What are some examples of the decisions I could make in this job without any approvals? Show me the degree of autonomy and control I will have in this position.
 8. How many hours a week do you expect the average person on your team to work? How many hours does the average person in fact work? Are there work/life programs in place to promote a healthy work/life balance?
 9. How will my performance be evaluated? What are the top criteria you use? What percent of my compensation is based on my performance? Is there a process where the employees get to assess their supervisor?
 10. If I do a great/bad job in the first 90 days, how specifically will you let me know? What are the steps you would take to help me improve?
 11. What is the first assignment you intend to give me? Where does that assignment rank in the department's priorities?
 12. What makes this assignment a great opportunity for me at this particular point in my career?
 13. How many hours of your time can I expect to get each week for the first six months on the job? How often will we have scheduled meetings?
 14. If I were frustrated about my job, what specific steps would you take to help me overcome that frustration? How about if you were frustrated with me?
 15. Can you show me examples of what you have done for others in your group in the past year to overcome any frustration?
 16. What are the "wows!" of this job? What are the worst parts? And what will you do to maximize the former and minimize the latter?
 17. If I asked the incumbent what stinks about the job, what would they say? Can I talk to them?
 18. What are the biggest problems facing this department in the next six months and one year?
 19. What key competencies have you identified that I will need to develop in the next six months to be successful?
 20. What makes this company a great place to work? What outside evidence (rankings or awards) do you have to prove this is a great place to work? What is the company going to do in the next year to make it better?
 21. What is the best/toughest question I could ask you to find out about the worst aspects of this job? How would you answer it?
 22. If you were my best friend, what would you tell me about this job that we haven't already discussed?
 23. Can you give me some examples of the best and worst aspects of the company's culture? When top performers leave the company why do they leave and where do they usually go?
 24. When was the last significant layoff? What criteria were used to select those to stay? What packages were offered to those that were let go?

25. Does the company have a program to significantly reward individuals that develop patents/ great products? Is there a program to help individuals "start" their own firms or subsidiary? Will I be required to fill out non-compete agreements?

□ **Some other watch-outs when asking questions:**

- Be careful not to appear to be cross-examining the employer.
- Ask questions requiring an explanation.
- Questions that can be answered with a "yes" or "no" are conversation stoppers.
- When the employer is answering YOUR question, don't interrupt.
- Human Resources will usually provide company information and available benefits. Thorough review and questions concerning benefits should be addressed after the interview. Remember, the interviewers are trying to see how you can contribute to the company.

At SSI Executive Search Group, we take the time to really get to know our candidates. The information we gather on you will be used to help you develop your list of questions. We do not want you leaving an interview without having all the information you need to be able to make a decision.

Performance Tip #4: Typical Questions Clients Ask.

You should give complete but brief and relaxed answers to questions. When possible, use questions as a basis for developing information that you want to make sure is presented. Continue to sell yourself in a positive way. Describe jobs in terms of duties and give indicators of good performance such as raises, sales volume, and promotions. Include short stories involving problems or challenges and how you were able to solve or overcome them. Describe the results you achieved.

Typical interview questions generally fall into eight categories: Background, Personality, Motive, Job Satisfaction, Past Performance, Compensation, Tougher Questions, and Behavioral Interviewing.

Examples and suggested responses follow:

□ **Background Questions.**

Tell me about yourself.

Answer these questions in terms of the qualifications required of the position. Keep responses concise and brief. Avoid being derogatory or negative about previous jobs and bosses.

"Tell me about yourself" means, "Tell me about your qualifications." Prepare a one-to-two-minute discussion of your qualifications. Start with education and discuss your experiences. Describe your performance (in raises, promotions, innovative designs, sales volumes, increased profits, etc.)

What are your greatest strengths?

Interviewers like to hear abstract qualities. Loyalty, willingness to work hard, eagerness, fast-learner, technical skills, politeness, and promptness expressed in concrete terms are good examples. Avoid the simple generalization "I like people". It's not a good answer.

What are your greatest weaknesses?

Don't be intimidated. The interviewer probably wants reassurance that hiring you won't be a mistake. This is not the time to confess all your imperfections. (Do not state "not being able to go work on Mondays," or "coming in late," etc.). Present your weaknesses as professional strengths, (i.e., "Sometimes I work too hard to make sure things are done accurately"). **If you don't know the best way to answer this question, let us know and we will work with you on it.**

□ Personality Questions.**What do you do in your spare time?**

Workaholics are not always the best employees. Present yourself as a well-rounded person. Your answer gives you dimension. Name some hobbies.

What do other people say about you?**□ Motive Questions.**

Answer motive questions enthusiastically. Show the interviewer that you are interested in the position and that you really want the job. Remember to maintain eye contact and be sincere. Communicating efficiently is important - how you answer the question is as important sometimes as the content. **Use examples; we recommend the STAR process.**

How can you contribute to this company?

Be positive and sell! Strong technical skills, enthusiasm and desire to complete projects correctly and efficiently are good responses.

Why should I hire you for this position?

Explain your qualifications and how they fit the available position. Address your interest in the job and the field and why you enjoy this style of work. Emphasize your ability to successfully perform the duties required.

Why do you want to work for our firm?

Make a compliment about what the company does, its location or its people. Other positive remarks might be about the company's product or service, content of the position or possibilities for growth or advancement. Research about the company is important here.

Where do you hope to be in five years?

Use conservative growth positions that clearly show you plan to be there in five years and that their investment in you will pay. Be sure that you know what can and cannot be achieved by the ideal candidate in this position. Never tell the interviewer that you feel you will be more successful than they are, but do show a strong desire for promotions.

What interests you most about this position?

Teasing the interviewer with a truthful one or two-word answer such as, “the challenge” or “the opportunity,” will force them to ask you to explain. Here again, you have the chance to demonstrate your knowledge of the company.

How long do you plan to be with company?

As with marriage, most employers expect a till-death-do-us-part attitude, but they can be equally attracted to the candidate with ambition and candor. “As long as I continue to learn and grow in my field,” is a reasonable response.

What are your career goals?

Your answer should depend on a specific time frame:

Short term - “I want to be the best in my current position, while learning additional responsibilities. This, in itself, will assure my commitment to the firm and raise me to the next level of responsibility and promotion. I see myself wanting to stay technical but learn the necessary skills to lead people and projects.”

Long term - “After proving my abilities, I see myself in a firm with the possibility of moving into a level of management that allows me to keep my skills sharp.”

What are you doing to achieve your goals?

“I look at continued learning as the key to success. I continue my education, as you can see from my resume, by taking company educational courses, when offered, and college courses. I also read trade publications and magazines to keep me informed about the current and future directions in my field. When possible, I participate in professional organizations in my field.”

□ Job Satisfaction Questions**Why did you leave your previous employer?**

NEVER speak poorly about a former employer. Be pleasant, be positive and be honest. Your answer will probably be checked. Mention your desire to work for a more progressive company that offers more growth opportunities and recognition.

What did you like least about your previous position?

An employer can evaluate the type of worker you will be by the items you choose. Cite specifics. You are also providing clues about the environment that you seek. What you liked most can include a strong teamwork atmosphere, high-level of creativity, attainable deadlines. What you liked least should include any situations that you are unlikely to encounter in your new position.

Why are you looking for another position?

Again, be positive. “I have to say that I have really enjoyed my years at _____ Corporation. There are a lot of good people over there. But I am looking for a more progressive organization with greater opportunities for growth and recognition. I am looking for a team to join where I can make real contributions and advance my career.”

Why are you looking?

“I wasn’t actively looking, but after meeting my “SSI Recruiter” I became intrigued by your company and was excited to explore this opportunity.

What do you think your employer’s obligations are to you?

Interviewers listen for employees who want a positive, enthusiastic company atmosphere with the opportunity to advance. Such a person, they surmise, has motivation and staying power.

Are you applying or interviewing for any other positions?

In your answer, show that your search is geared for similar positions. This demonstrates a well-defined, focused objective. Make it known that your talents are applicable to other businesses and that you have explored ways to maximize your potential and are serious about finding the perfect opportunity. Don’t give an indication that you are just shopping.

□ Past Performance Questions (To determine behavior based on past examples).**What kinds of decisions are most difficult for you?**

Again, be truthful and admit that not everything comes easily. Be careful what you do admit so as not to instantly disqualify yourself. Explain that you try to gather as much information and advice that you can to make the best decision possible.

What causes you to lose your temper?

Everybody has a low boiling point on some particular issue. Pick one of yours (something safe and reasonable). People who are late to meetings, blame shifting, broken appointments and office “back-stabbing” are suitable responses. Don’t say that you never fly off the handle. You won’t be believed.

What are your greatest accomplishments?

Be ready to recite one or two stories that demonstrate strong capabilities or achievements that will make you attractive to your new employer. A special project that you pioneered at your previous job, cutting department expenses, increasing productivity or receiving frequent promotions.

How do you feel about a younger male or female boss?

A question like this usually means that your boss will either be younger or of the opposite sex or both. Be certain that if you register any concern, you will probably not be hired. Explain that their age or sex is of no importance to you. You are only interested in their capability and what you can learn from them.

What kind of Manager are you?

Again, no one is perfect. Showing that you tackle every assignment with all of your energy and talents is admirable, but mention that you also learn from your mistakes.

□ Salary Questions.

Salary discussions should be avoided, if possible.

What type of salary do you have in mind?

Do not state a starting figure. A suitable reply: “I am looking for the right opportunity and I am confident that if you find me to be the best candidate for this position, you will extend to me your best and most fair offer.”

What is your current salary?

Answer truthfully. Remember that **“salary”** includes base, bonuses, commissions, benefits and vacations as well as sick days and personal days. Also, if you are due a raise in the next three months, state the approximate percentage you expect.

□ Tougher Questions.

The definition of a tough question is any question you feel you would not like the employer to ask because you do not feel comfortable with the answer that you would be able to give. For example, many candidates find it difficult to answer questions that deal with the following areas:

- Gaps between employment.
- Being fired from a previous job.
- Lacking specific skills the job requires.
- Relationships with previous employers.
- Your weak points.
- Are you willing to relocate?
- May we check your references?
- May we verify your income?

In most cases, the employer is not so much concerned with the content of the information but rather is looking for how the candidate handles themselves under pressure. In general, you should prepare an answer that has the following characteristics:

- Does not focus on the negative.
- Provides information of how you developed or improved or are working to improve.
- Describes how the company will benefit from you having gone through the situation.
- Is clear, direct and to the point - if the answer is too wordy, the employer may think you are trying to hide something.
- Never lie.

□ Behavioral Interviewing.

Behavior-based interviews are the newest trend in job interviewing. If you aren't prepared to answer these questions, they can really trigger the alarm bells in your head. The best cure is preparation. By learning to prepare for, and respond to, behavior-based interview questions, you position yourself to outshine the competition during interviews.

The premise behind behavior-based interview questions is that "past performance is the best predictor of future success." Consequently, interviewers increasingly ask candidates to provide specific examples that illustrate key skills and experiences. You know that you're in a behavior-based interview when the preponderance of questions that you're asked begin with declaratives like "Tell me about a time when" and "Describe a situation where..."

Preparation begins with good research. Start by reviewing the job description in order to identify your most relevant skills and experiences and relay stories that reflect those qualifications. You should also study the organization's website in order to learn more about their mission, values, products, services and customers.

This kind of targeted information can enable you to focus on what the employer is looking for, eliminate extraneous anecdotes and position yourself as a very focused candidate who understands the employer's needs and priorities. Unlike traditional interviews, a behavioral interview usually requires that you provide specific examples of how you acted in the past, instead of sharing your opinion or ideas. In other words, they showcase what you've achieved (or, in some cases, failed to achieve) rather than what you hope to accomplish in the future.

Keep it simple. Organize your thoughts in terms of STAR: Situation/Task, Action and Result.

Problem or Situation.

Start by describing the problem or situation that you faced.

"Because of the escalating price of ingredients in our products, we needed to rethink our production, pricing and marketing strategies and processes.

Action.

Describe the action that you took.

"I initiated discussions with the purchasing, production and marketing managers - both individually and collectively - to determine whether we needed to revise our product formulas, develop new brands and/or open up new channels of distribution.

Result.

Describe the results.

"When we discovered that our product was too expensive for its original target market, I worked with the purchasing manager on a strategy to identify, solicit and negotiate less expensive contracts. I also worked closely with the marketing manager and the marketing team to reposition our product for a more upscale clientele. This resulted in a \$200,000 decrease in expenses and \$250,000 increase in net revenues."

One common mistake that candidates routinely make is to over-describe their actions in excruciating detail without fully describing the organizational problem or challenge that they were facing. Worse yet, some people get so caught up in the description of their activities that they never even get to the results.

Of course, it's impossible to anticipate every question, so knowing how to think on your feet is important. However, be sure to give real forethought to what stories (or examples) you want to relate. Rehearse those stories until you can tell them flawlessly. Otherwise, you may end up recounting stories that lack happy endings and don't portray you as an effective professional.

Many interviewers frame their questions around the traits or skills deemed essential for success in the position or organization in order to determine both their ability and their desire to do the job. *How* you tell your stories will say as much about your performance as *what* you tell. If you don't feel comfortable telling a particular story, replace it with an anecdote or illustration that you feel more comfortable relating.

After you tell your story in response to a behavioral directive, ask for feedback. Is this the kind of information that the interviewer was looking for? Or would they like you to give a different example. Also, don't be afraid to say "I don't know" or "nothing comes to mind." You can't invent experiences (positive or negative) that you don't have. Answer any question to the best of your ability and then relax. If there is a period of silence before the interviewer asks the next question, stay calm. Interviewers often use silence to see if you can handle stress and maintain poise.

Performance Tip #5: Dress for success.

We have all heard the cliché "You only have 30 seconds to make a great first impression." We think it is more like 15 seconds. Uncombed hair, poorly positioned tie, stained shirt or blouse can very quickly be translated by the interviewer into thoughts about a person's interest, organization skills, attention to detail, or even questions on whether the person will represent the company well. We recommend that even if the environment has a business casual dress code, you should always wear traditional business attire for a first interview. You want to be sure to show respect for the position and the people with whom you are meeting.

To avoid making a wrong first impression, we recommend that you take note of the following personal appearance recommendations. Some of the recommendations are obviously very detail-oriented. Have fun with the list, but please recognize the importance of it.

Men

- Wear a dark suit, white shirt with a solid or non-daring pattern tie.
- Fingernails should be clean and manicured, if possible.
- Shoes that are black and freshly polished (including the heels) are a safe choice.
- Hair should be neatly combed and freshly trimmed. Always comb hair with your jacket off.
- Be sure to get a good night's sleep to avoid having red eyes or dark circles under your eyes.
- Be clean-shaven. If you have a beard or mustache, make sure it is neatly trimmed.
- Keep jewelry to a minimum.
- Avoid heavy colognes.
- Do not take cell phones into the interview.
- Practice giving a firm handshake.
- Make sure you always give good eye contact. When addressing a group of people, be sure to make eye contact with everyone so no one feels left out of the conversation.
- If your interview happens shortly after a meal, make sure your teeth are clean.
- Be sure to sit up straight and attentive.

Women

- Wear a navy or gray tailored suit. Avoid busy patterns. Blouses should also be tailored and color-coordinated. Don't wear big bows or ties.
- Avoid wild hairstyles - conservative is best.
- Make-up should be applied lightly and avoid heavy perfumes.
- Keep jewelry to a minimum.
- Nail polish should be conservative.

- Be sure to get a good night's sleep to avoid having red eyes or dark circles under your eyes.
- Do not take cell phones into the interview.
- Practice giving a firm handshake.
- Make sure you always give good eye contact. When addressing a group of people, be sure to make eye contact with everyone so no one feels left out of the conversation.
- If your interview happens shortly after a meal, make sure your teeth are clean.
- Be sure to sit up straight and attentive.

Performance Tip #6: Telephone Interview.

In today's busy times, it is quite common for companies to conduct an initial "telephone screen" with a candidate. It is important that you do not take this process lightly. Having a formal business discussion over the telephone is not natural for many people. Take the time to make sure that you properly prepare.

- Find a quiet environment. No dogs, kids, spouses, or televisions in the background.
- Sit in a chair that will allow for you to sit upright and attentive.
- Pick one object in the room you are sitting in and focus on it during the interview. Looking around can cause the mind to wander and perhaps not listen well enough.
- Talk directly into the mouthpiece.
- Open your mouth when you talk to annunciate words more clearly.
- Develop and refer to that list of questions.

How to pass a screening interview when it's conducted over the phone.

By: Calvin E. Bruce & Paula W. Moore

Perhaps you're a pro at selling yourself face-to-face. How comfortable, though, are you at interviewing over the phone?

Telephone screening interviews are becoming more commonplace as companies seek to cut hiring costs and streamline the selection process. A hiring manager can spend an hour and a half screening three candidates over the phone, then invite the most impressive one to the company for a lengthier interview.

John Young, president of First American Rehab, a health care company based in Athens, Georgia, personally interviews as many as 50 candidates a week over the phone. "Telephone prescreening is extremely cost effective," he says, "because 75% to 80% of the people you talk to can be easily eliminated." Mr. Young believes that more companies will make use of phone interviewing for this reason.

Given this trend, your job search may involve more telephone interviewing. Whether you are talking to headhunters or company recruiters, the more convincingly you make your case over the phone will determine further interest in you as a job candidate.

Phone interviewing is unique. You can't count on visual stimuli such as good looks or power suits, eye contact or body language, to aid your presentation. Neither can you rely on visual signals to interpret the interviewer's response. In this context, faceless conversation takes on an added dimension of importance. Both strengths and weaknesses, as conveyed by voice, are magnified through the phone. Your voice personifies everything about you.

Headhunters, in particular, listen for a relaxed style that communicates confidence, enthusiasm and intelligence. This is reflected in a smooth conversation flow devoid of clichés or verbal catchalls to stall for time as well as other negatives.

The following techniques will help you prepare for and handle any phone interview situations, especially with company officials:

Preparation is Key

The success of a telephone interview begins with mental preparation and setting the stage with the interviewer. The first order of business is to establish a clear time frame for the conversation. By mutual agreement, this should be at least thirty minutes when both parties can be free of interruptions and distractions.

If you're currently employed, arrange for a phone interview in the evening rather than during the workday. Confidentiality and discretion may be at risk if you interview during working hours - you never know who might barge into your office unannounced or overhear something by accident. In the privacy of your home, you can be more at ease and in control of your surroundings.

Being clear on the interview format gives you an edge in preparation. Before the actual interview, it will help to know the topics to be covered, objectives to attain and the basic information regarding the position to be discussed. It helps to rehearse. Try to think like the employer - what key information is the interviewer looking for? What questions are they likely to ask? What things do you hope they don't ask?

George Walther, president of TelExcel in Seattle, Washington, is a consultant and speaker on the subject on improving telephone-interviewing effectiveness. "From my experience, I would say that 98% of business executives can assess the candidate's personality after thirteen seconds with no visual information," he says. "Furthermore, initial voice impression tends to be reinforced by the content of continued conversation." In other words, you need to sound like a winner quickly to sustain the listener's interest in you.

It is also advisable to prepare for possible scenarios that might unfold. Hypothesize a bit; suppose the interviewer asks questions that make you feel uncomfortable. How do you handle that? Suppose they ramble, are easily sidetracked and don't allow you to sell yourself. How do you subtly take control of the conversation and target pertinent issues? As a worst-case scenario, suppose the interviewer doesn't call you at the agreed-upon time. If it's an evening interview, and you have other engagements, how long should you wait by the phone? If it's a daytime interview, should you assume the interviewer "forgot" and call them directly? Or do you await their call at some other, unspecified time?

Finally, clear a work area near the phone and keep the following tools handy to aid your fact gathering and information sharing.

- A copy of the version of the resume you sent to the interviewer.
- A note pad and pen.
- Five or six carefully worded questions you'll want to ask.
- Company literature with pertinent sections highlighted.
- A calendar.
- A watch or clock.

Preparation will increase your confidence and ability to focus on the conversation during the interview as well as enabling you to make a favorable impression.

Phone Personality

The need to make a good impression on the phone cannot be overemphasized. The telephone screening interview is a make-or-break proposition, your one chance to convince the interviewer that you are worth serious consideration. The interviewer will be listening carefully to determine three factors: your sincere interest in the job, how you verbalize your qualifications and how aggressively you pursue the position.

Voice reflects personality. A well-modulated, controlled voice communicates authority and heightens the verbal impact you want to make. The quality, pitch and tempo of your speech convey a certain attitude, energy level and enthusiasm. "Enthusiasm and excitement are the biggest selling points of candidates talking on the phone," says Mr. Young of First American rehab. "This translates directly over to their performance and work ethic."

Here are some practical tips to enhance your phone "personality" and overall presentation:

Talk directly into the mouthpiece. Hold the receiver approximately three inches from the mouth, not below your chin or above your nose. Speak in a relaxed, conversational style as though the other person was in the same room, not on the other side of the planet.

Avoid sitting in a hunched position, grasping the phone in a vise-like grip. This will add a note on stress, and your voice will communicate that uneasiness. Try standing - it opens your diaphragm to a smoother airflow and imparts a feeling of liveliness. Getting up and moving around introduces an element of action, which instills a relaxed, conversational manner and reduces fatigue.

Pay attention to the interviewer's voice patterns - do they speak slowly or rapidly? Try to match the cadence so that the conversation flows smoothly. According to Mr. Walther, at TelExcel, the average person speaks at a rate of 160 words per minute. Adjust your speaking rate, voice volume and phrasing to be more in rhythm with the interviewer.

Sound upbeat. If you had a lousy day and came home to find your spouse and kids arguing, put it out of your mind. Genuine enthusiasm is contagious. Smile to show a sense of humor. After all, the interviewer may have had a bad day too.

Be a conversationalist. Listen carefully to get the big picture and to avoid saying something that indicates any momentary mental distraction. Allow the interviewer to complete questions without you finishing their train of thought or blurting out answers prematurely.

Handle any trick questions in stride. The interviewer may throw in several to test your alertness or mental keenness. Showing verbal adeptness is a sign of how quickly you can "think on your feet." Be cautious: the interviewer may say something that puzzles you or that you firmly disagree with. Show enough respect to voice your thoughts in a professional manner. A defensive posture or argumentative tone is the surest way to alienate the interviewer and eliminate your candidacy. Never be afraid to "**peel back the onion**" for greater clarity in what they are asking, or feed the question back to make sure you understand.

Establishing rapport at the beginning of the phone conversation sets a favorable tone. During the first few minutes, mention something that shows commonality of interest or similarity in background. This helps both parties feel more comfortable as the conversation progresses.

Get to know the person behind the voice. Do they show a sense of humor? Are they direct and forthright in supplying information? Does their speech sound "canned," or does it exhibit freshness of thought and expression? Just as importantly, do they listen to you or merely wait for the chance to ask their next question?

The interviewer may be a personnel officer or a hiring manager. If the individual is someone with whom you will be working, pay all the more attention to their explanation of the job and what potential it offers.

Your prepared list of questions will indicate that you have given careful thought to the prospect of joining the firm. Even though you don't know everything about the position at this point, convey the impression that it's something you are interested in and competent at handling.

Only in a face-to-face interview can you totally sell yourself. The purpose of the phone interview is to identify areas of mutual interest that warrant further investigation. In other words, whet their curiosity and give them good reasons for wanting to invite you to the company location.

Basically, what the interviewer needs to hear and conclude is that you can get the job done. Mentally, they are making the connection between the company's problems and you as a problem-solver. Don't overwhelm them with facts and figures; they're only going to remember so much.

You can best make your point by reciting memorable stories that document your ability to analyze a dilemma, weigh alternative responses and choose the appropriate action. By selectively highlighting turnaround situations you spearheaded, you are communicating a willingness to tackle similar problems for his company.

As you glance over your notes and keep an eye on the clock, there may be additional important points to cover in the pre-allotted timeframe. Tactfully take control and introduce the subject matter that needs to be discussed or further elaborated. Example: "That's a good point. Can we come back to it a little later? I have some additional thoughts on the subject we were discussing a moment ago."

As the conversation winds down, become less talkative and give more thought to what you say. Your final words will generally have greater impact and be remembered longer. Careful word choice and voice inflections will underscore the significance of your remarks. By contrast, a machine-gun volley of words will likely put the listener on the defensive or turn them off altogether.

The Home Stretch.

After 30 minutes, both parties should know how much of a "fit" there is. Provided the job interests you, express your desire to proceed to the next step - a company visit. The interviewer may extend an invitation at that point. With calendar nearby, suggest several available dates and times that work with your schedule. Should the phone interview go well but end without a specific invitation to visit the company, state your desire to investigate the opportunity further. *Example:* "I'd be very interested in such a challenging position. I would be available to come in for a personal interview and discuss my abilities in greater detail on (day)."

They may then mention the likelihood of an onsite interview once they confer with other officials. Your assertiveness will be remembered. If you hear nothing within 48 hours, follow up with a call.

A final concern: the interviewer may ask what you are expecting as a salary range (don't introduce the issue yourself). It's best to mention that at this point you are not altogether certain what the job is really worth. Example: "I would feel more comfortable discussing a salary figure after meeting the key people I would be working with and knowing more about the position." If the interviewer continues to pressure you for a figure, specifically ask, "What salary range are you working within?" Chances are 50/50 that they will tell you.

Respond by indicating that your desired salary is in that range (if that is correct). If the dollars are a little low, don't despair or defend what you feel you are worth. For an absolutely sterling candidate, most companies can flex the purse strings and make a very attractive offer.

On the phone, your job is to entice the buyer, not to close a sale. Salary negotiation will fall into place at the right time. End the conversation on a positive note. Thank the interviewer for the information shared. Let them know again that you look forward to visiting the company. After all, if the position discussed is not the ideal job for you, something else might be. Improved telephone interviewing techniques can really give you a competitive edge.

Performance Tip #7: Ask for the job.

No matter what position you are interviewing for, if you want the position, “asking for the job” is one of the most important things you need to do as a candidate. Many employers view candidates that do not ask for the job as not interested. Once an employer believes that a person may not be interested in a position, they too become not interested and move on to the next candidate. This is extremely important in sales and leadership positions; otherwise, make sure you make them aware that you want to move to the next step in the process.

Even if you have some hesitations about accepting an offer from the company, you should ask for the job. The truth is, if the hesitations can be addressed, you will accept. Therefore, asking for the job gives you the ability to keep the door open and evaluate the opportunity not only for how it will benefit you professionally, but financially as well.

The Close: Asking for the Position!

- Asking for the Position is defined as asking for what you want to have happen next (i.e., face-to-face interview, 2nd face-to-face interview, or an offer).
- Do not be pushy or overbearing, but be direct and enthusiastic.
- Examples of several closes.
 - Summarize what you’ve done that ties in with the new position and ask: *Do I have the qualifications you’re looking for? **Do you have any questions about my ability to fill this role?***
 - *Now that you have seen my background and had an opportunity to meet and interview me, is there anything else that you would like for me to expand on or share with you that would enhance my fit with your company and this opportunity?”*
 - *Recruiters Name from SSI Executive Search Group contacted me and described the opportunity with your organization. I was interested to learn more from you about the details of this career opportunity. Now that we have had a chance to meet, I am even more enthused about what we have discussed. My background and experiences have prepared me for the role you have outlined. Is there anything you have seen in my background or in our discussions here today that would prevent us from moving forward?*
 - *What is your understanding of the next step in the process, and what is your time frame for making a decision?*

Performance Tip #8: Negotiating a Compensation Package.

If you are working with one of our professionals at SSI Executive Search Group, the process is simple - let them handle your compensation negotiations for you. We are skilled at being able to ensure that you are compensated according to the going rate at fair market value. Our intimate knowledge of the client's requirements as well as your needs puts us in a better position to know what compensation package will not offend either you or the client and could run the risk of becoming a roadblock to an offer being extended.

In order to help you handle compensation discussions with an employer, we recommend the following:

- Be confident - If you don't think that you bring value to the table, why should the employer.
- Be honest - If they ask you what you are currently earning, or the compensation range you would consider, tell them. You are only confirming what we have already told them.
- Focus on the opportunity - Be sure that the employer recognizes it is the position you are most excited about.
- Sell the benefits you bring to the company and what benefits the company will give you.
- Let the employer know that whatever range they are working with you are willing to entertain any offer within that range.
- If you are working with a recruiter, let them know that "You're sure that the recruiter and the company will come up with a number that is fair for both parties."
- Put the ball in the court of the employer - Let them give you a number first.

Having an answer that addresses these issues will put you in a position to receive a fair offer.

Performance Tip #9: Writing thank-you messages.

Always send a thank-you email to everyone that was involved with the interview process. Your thank-you note should be brief, but should contain a summary of the benefits that you feel make you right for the position. You should also include a few points on why you feel the position is right for you. Don't forget to ask for the job again, if appropriate.

This is a sample thank-you letter that you can adopt to fit your specifics.

Dear Mr. /Ms. /Mrs. Contact's Last Name,

Thank you very much for the opportunity to meet with you. *Use this introductory paragraph to recap the highlights of the conversation and describe why you think the company and opportunity will be right for you.*

To continue, as much as I feel that the opportunity is right for me, I personally feel that I am right for the opportunity. *Use the second paragraph to outline a few of the benefits that you feel the employer really needs to tap into and can get from you.*

Use the third paragraph to close for next steps. Set a date that you would like to hear from them. Make a statement that suggests when you will reach out to them if you have not heard from them by such and such date.

Respectfully,

Your Name

Performance Tip #10: Interview Prep Final Checklist.

- ❑ **Research.** (See Performance Tip #1)
 - Thoroughly research the company. The Internet and the company's website are an excellent source of information. We will provide website address whenever possible. Company information is typically plentiful and very available.
- ❑ **Question Preparation.** (See Performance Tip #3)
 - Prepare good questions and write them down.
 - By nature, questions should be **job and value focused**
 - Should illustrate *listening* during the interview, *good preparation*, and a *probing attitude relative to the company and opportunity*.
- ❑ **Be prepared for tough questions.** (See Performance Tip #4)
 - Why did you leave your last employer?
 - Why would you consider leaving your current employer?
 - What do you want to do next?
 - Why would you want to work for our company?
 - What do you want to be doing in five years?
 - What have been your top 3 successes over the last 3 years?
 - What have been your top 3 disappointments over the last few years?
 - What are your top 3 strengths?
 - What are your top 3 weaknesses?
 - Will you relocate?
- ❑ **Reviewing Opportunity.**
 - How is the position an improvement over your current or past positions?
 - What are you looking for in your next position that you don't have right now?
- ❑ **Evaluate Decision timing.**
 - Is there anything in your personal or professional life that would prevent you from resigning tomorrow and starting in a new position in two weeks?

□ **Items to Bring to the Interview.**

Candidates Requirement Profile & Resume.

- Review thoroughly and be prepared to discuss all points.
- Always bring copies identical to the ones supplied to the interviewer.
- Bring along samples of your work, if possible. Never discuss or show proprietary information.

References.

- Use three former supervisors who are familiar with your work.
- Include their name and companies as well as home and work phone numbers.
- Always consult with references for their approval and to ensure that their remarks are positive.

Other items.

- Bring a notepad and pen to the interview to jot down notes.
- Prepare and review your list of questions as well as specific responses to anticipated questions.
- Bring directions to the interview location
- Have Interviewer's phone number in case you are running late.
- Have your recruiter's phone number to give immediate feedback after the interview

□ **Arrival at the Interview.**

- Attire: Dark, formal, conservative attire. Remember, you get one chance to make a first impression.
- Know the exact place and time of the interview. Be on time!!
- Allow adequate time for traffic, parking, and a last-minute appearance check.
- Scout out the location the day before the interview to avoid any last-minute issues.
- Review your notes and go in with confidence.

□ **Employment Applications.**

- If asked, complete an application. Complete the application in full and leave no blanks.
- Do not write "see resume" as a response to any application question.
- Respond to "expected salary" questions as "open/negotiable" and "current salary" questions accurately.
- List references if requested.
- Your recruiter's name should be your response to any "referred by" questions.

□ **Interview KILLERS.**

- Casual dress. You get one chance to make a first impression - make the most of it!
- Overbearing, aggressive, "know it all" attitude.
- Rambling, long, aimless answers. Present your ideas concisely and directly. Stick to the point!
- Appearing to be without purpose or goals.
- Lack of interest and enthusiasm: passivity and indifference.
- Low confidence or self-esteem.
- Initiating discussion about compensation or benefits on the first interview.
- Lack of tact, maturity and courtesy.
- Condemnation of past employers. Say nothing negative about a current or past employer.
- Failure to look interviewer in the eye and engage with firm handshake.
- Not asking good questions about the opportunity.
- Persistent attitude of "what can you do for me?"
- Lack of preparation for the interview. Information is abundant.
- Profanity or off-color jokes.
- Smoking or chewing gum, including at meals, even if interviewer does.

- ❑ **The Interview.**
 - Have the interviewer's full name, the correct pronunciation and their title.
 - Let the interviewer set the tone of the interview.
 - Listen: It demonstrates courtesy, confidence and learning style.
 - Strive for a balanced exchange of information.
 - Show genuine enthusiasm & be positive.
 - Be friendly and polite to everyone - You never know who's opinion is going to count.
 - Don't be afraid to show the company that you have researched them.
 - Express gratitude for the opportunity to interview.
 - Have Fun!!!! Take this time to enjoy meeting new people and learning about the company.
- ❑ **The Close: *Asking for the Position!*** (See Performance Tip #7)
 - Asking for the Position is defined as asking for what you want to have happen next (i.e., face-to-face interview, 2nd face-to-face interview, or an offer).
- ❑ **30-30-30 Rule.**
 - Call your Recruiter 30 seconds or 30 steps after you have completed your discussions to debrief.
- ❑ **Follow-up thank-you message.** (See Performance Tip #7)
 - Email response expressing continued interest **same day** of interview to each interviewer.
 - Write a well thought-out one-page follow-up letter and send to each interviewer.
- ❑ **Relocation.**
 - If relocation is involved, make sure that you and your significant others have given careful consideration to the ramifications of a move.
- ❑ **Counteroffer.** (See the Counter-offer page)

If applicable, we will have discussed the subject of **counteroffers** thoroughly with you by this time. If accepting a counteroffer is a possibility on your part, then please let us know so we can reach resolution before moving on with the interview process.

As we move forward in this process, we expect you to give us your "word of honor" that a decision on your part to accept an offer from our client is final. Accepting a counteroffer after the fact has significant implications for several reasons:

- It would represent a very significant breach of faith between us, and place both you and our firm in a very unprofessional light with the client.
- It means either that we have done a poor job of probing relative to your reasons pursuing a career change, or you have not been forthright with us during the process - or both!
- A counteroffer is typically financial, which does not address the reasons you considered leaving in the first place. If your reason for changing jobs is financial, we strongly recommend that you ask your employer for more money now before we move on in the process.
- On average, over 50% of those who accept counteroffers end up leaving their job within a six to eight month timeframe either because of culture, strategy changes or involuntarily severance.

- Current employers almost always view acceptance of a new position with another company as an act of betrayal and things are never quite the same after acceptance of a counteroffer.

Eleven Reasons for Rejection

Poor Attitude. Many candidates come across as arrogant. While employers can afford to be self-centered, candidates cannot.

Appearance. Many candidates do not consider their appearance as much as they should. First impressions are quickly made in the first three-to five minutes. Review the appearance checklist.

Lack of Research. It's obvious when candidates haven't learned about the job, company or industry prior to the interview. Use the Internet to research the company. Then talk with friends, peers and other professionals about the opportunity before each meeting.

Not having questions to ask. Asking questions shows your interest in the company and the position. *Prepare a list of intelligent questions in advance.*

Not readily knowing the answers to interviewers' questions. Anticipate and rehearse answers to tough questions about your background, such as a recent termination or an employment gap. Practicing with your spouse or friend before the interview will help you to frame intelligent questions.

Relying too much on resumes. Employers hire people, not paper. Although a resume can list qualifications and skills, it's the interview dialogue that will portray you as a committed, responsive team player.

Too much humility. Being conditioned not to brag, candidates are sometimes reluctant to describe their accomplishments. Explaining how you reach difficult or impressive goals helps employers understand what you can do for them.

Not relating skills to employers' needs. A list of sterling accomplishments means little if you can't relate them to a company's requirements. Reiterate your skills and convince the employer that you can "do the same for them."

Handling salary issues ineptly. Candidates often ask about salary and benefit packages too early. If they believe an employer is interested, they may demand inappropriate amounts and price themselves out of the jobs. Candidates who ask for too little undervalue themselves or appear desperate.

Lack of career direction. Job hunters who aren't clear about their career goals often can't spot or commit to appropriate opportunities. Not knowing what you want wastes everyone's time.

Job shopping. Some applicants, particularly those in certain high-tech, sales and marketing fields, will admit they're just "shopping" for opportunities and have little intention of changing jobs. This wastes time and leaves a bad impression with employers they may need to contact in the future.

THE RESIGNATION.

The resignation process can be stressful and filled with emotion. Especially if your company culture is very team-oriented. There is a good chance that you have developed fairly strong relationships with many people in many different parts of the company.

To help you through this difficult process, we recommend the following:

1. Don't resign until you have a formal offer and start date from your new employer.
2. Be prepared to resign both verbally and by letter.
3. Resign verbally to your direct report. Try not to get emotional. At times this may be difficult, especially if you have a very special relationship with this person. Thank them for the opportunities they have given you to grow personally and professionally and give them a well-constructed reason for your resignation. Don't focus on the possible negative reasons you are leaving. Rather, be sure to explain the highlights of your new opportunity.
4. If you are a key player on the team, anticipate that your boss may show some degree of frustration. Remain calm. Recognize that they are acting on the emotion of one of their best people leaving them. You will find that if this is an initial reaction from your employer, they will quickly recognize their attitude and become more relaxed.
5. Prepare your resignation letter. We recommend that you keep this letter brief and very formal. Remove all emotion from the content. Including comments that are based upon emotion may give your employer the ammunition they need to develop a counteroffer. Your letter should be addressed to your immediate supervisor and a copy should be sent to your Human Resource Department.

Here is a sample resignation letter.

Your Name
Your Current Position
Your Address

May XX, 200X

Mr. /Mrs. /Ms. Direct Supervisor
Direct Supervisor Title
Company Address Information

Dear Direct Supervisor's First Name,

I am writing you to announce that I have decided to resign my employment from (enter your company's name) effective (last date of employment - you should give a two (2) week notice). I appreciate the opportunity that you and (company's name) have given me to develop my professional skills and my career.

My decision to resign is based upon an opportunity that I believe are consistent with my career goals; and therefore, is irrevocable. I do not wish to enter into any discussions that may be designed to have me reconsider my decision.

I will make every effort to leave on the best of terms by completing my assignments and making smooth transitions for those who will be taking over my responsibilities. I look forward to having an exit interview discussion if you feel it is appropriate.

Respectfully,
Your Name

6. Continue working to the best of your ability while you work through your notice period, which we recommend being no longer than two (2) weeks. Notice periods that extend longer than two weeks usually lead to unnecessary tension between your current employer and yourself. After all, you are excited about your new position, and probably want to start impacting your new company. Think about how your enthusiasm for your new position could impact your peers.
7. If your employer asks you to leave immediately, do not let this be a concern. Your employer probably recognizes some of the possible negative ramifications your resignation may have on the rest of the company.
8. If your company does not have formal exit interviews, you should ask for one. Exit interviews are great ways for you to exchange valuable information that may help a department or company grow. During the Exit Interview, do not be negative. Rather, point out the opportunities for growth or improvement you feel exist. If you are going to bring up a problem, be sure to offer potential solutions.
9. If you are working with one of the professional recruiters in our firm, be sure to discuss with that person your personal situation. Let them know your fears, comfort level and concerns. You will find that they probably have dealt with candidates with similar concerns and therefore will be able to help you through the process.
10. Don't second-guess your decision to resign. Remember that you went through the interview process; the hassle of taking personal time from work, invested time to educate yourself on the company, and perhaps even had many emotional conversations with your family members for a reason. You need to recognize that you would not have let the process come to this point if at any time you thought that it was not the right thing to do.

THE COUNTER-OFFER.

Typical reactions to a resignation:

- You can't leave, the department really needs you.
- We were just about to give you a raise.
- I didn't know you were unhappy.
- Why didn't you come to me sooner?
- What can we do to make things better?

Again, stay focused on your decision and your opportunities.

You need to ask yourself:

What kind of company do you work for if you have to threaten to resign before they pay you what you're worth?

Where did the money for the counteroffer come from? Is it your next raise or promotion just given early? Are future opportunities limited now? Will you have to threaten to leave again for another raise or promotion?

You've demonstrated your unhappiness and may be viewed as having committed blackmail in order to get a raise. Your loyalty may also be questioned come promotion time.

Well-managed companies rarely make counteroffers since they view their employment policies as fair and equitable.

If you do consider being "bought back," obtain the details of the offer in writing, as well as a one-year "no cut" contract from the employer. If they refuse, as two-thirds of counter-offering employers do, your decision to leave is made.

Another suggestion: Look at your current job and the new position as if you were unemployed. Then make your decision based on which holds the *real* potential. It's probably the new job or you wouldn't have accepted it in the first place.

There is significant evidence that accepting counteroffers could adversely affect your career. Read through this list of potential implications below which includes some factors already discussed previously when considering a counteroffer. You will begin to see why there could be significant risk in accepting a counteroffer. Also refer to www.google.com Key word search: "counteroffer" for additional information on this topic.

1. You have now made your employer aware that you may be unhappy. From this day on, your loyalty could be in question.
2. When promotion time comes around, your employer may remember who is loyal and who is not.
3. When times get tough, your company may begin cutbacks with you.
3. Accepting a counteroffer could be considered an insult to your intelligence and a blow to your personal pride: you were bought.
4. Where is the money from the counteroffer coming from? All companies have wage and salary guidelines that must be followed. Is it your next raise early?

6. Your company could immediately start looking for a new person for a cheaper price.
7. The same circumstances that now cause you to consider a change could repeat themselves in the future, even if you accept a counteroffer.
8. Statistics show that if you accept a counteroffer, the probability of voluntarily leaving in six months to a year is extremely high.
9. Once the word gets out, the relationship that you now enjoy with your co-workers may never be the same. You could lose the personal satisfaction of peer group acceptance.
10. Why did you not get the money you were worth before you resigned?

If you are even considering that you might accept a counteroffer from your present employer, you should also consider removing yourself from any search process you may be involved with and try to get what you want from your employer without threatening to leave. It puts you on much more solid ground.

THE RESUME: If you aren't working with SSI and being positioned in a Presentation Format

The resume is your first chance to show a potential employer or recruiter that you are a highly polished executive in your industry. Remember that a well-written resume won't get you the job, but a poorly written resume will assuredly eliminate you. We recommend that you develop a resume keeping in mind the following guidelines.

Objective.

Top-level candidates have career direction. They accept new positions; take on new responsibilities and even volunteer for special projects at the office because they understand how it will impact their careers. Your objective is where you can showcase your career direction to potential employers. Try to keep it no longer than two sentences.

To help you develop a strong career objective that you can be committed to, think about:

- Where do you want to be professionally 5 years from now?
- What skills will you need to develop to get there?
- What projects, positions, teams, or companies will allow for you to develop those skills?
- What skills need to be developed first?
- Why is this career objective important to you?
- Have you talked about your career objective with your family? Are they behind you?

Career Path.

For most positions, we recommend that you put your chronological career path first.

Some people like to put education credentials first. We feel that it depends on the industry. Typically, with highly technical positions, or with career paths that require advanced education levels to excel; it will make sense to put educational credentials and accomplishments before the career path.

Your career path information should be chronologically organized starting with your present employer and position. Try and use no more than two or three sentences to outline your basic duties and responsibilities.

Employers do not want to have to hunt for information that will tell them why they should hire you. Therefore, use bullet points to outline your major accomplishments. Most executives are looking for individuals who can make an immediate impact.

Executives think in terms of three basic impacts:

- Maximizing profits.
- Optimizing cost structures.
- Increasing revenues.

Decision-makers will be looking at the impact you brought to your past positions in terms of quantifiably documenting your progress **from /to** in what time frame. For example: Increased revenues **from** \$100 million **to** \$120 million, and improvement of \$20 million or 20 % over three years.

To help you develop a list of accomplishments, consider the following:

- What major projects have you worked on that no one else wanted? What was the end result?
- What problems or challenges did you face that stretched your skills and permitted you to grow?
- What projects did you work on that helped your company generate revenue? What was the amount?
- What projects did you work on that helped your company control costs? What was the impact?
- Have any people that you managed excelled?
- Have you been honored with any company awards? Describe what helped you achieve the award.
- Have you been honored with any industry awards? Describe what helped you achieve the award.

Limit your bullet points under each position to two or three that reflect the skills and abilities that you feel identify with what the employer is looking for in a candidate. If you are working with a recruiter, they can help you in this area.

Education:

Organize your educational path chronologically starting with your most recent formal education first. Be sure to include any specific accomplishments, awards or clubs in which you participated.

List any continuing education classes you feel appropriate. You might want to list various computer training you have had, night school classes you have taken, or even seminars you have attended.

Hobbies:

What do you like to do outside of work? Employers like to see well-rounded people. Workaholics do not always make the best candidates. Rather than just list the activities or groups you are involved with, try pulling out specific points of responsibility that relate to what a company may view as being of value to their organization. For example, if you are the Treasurer for the local 4H club, be sure to highlight your fiscal responsibility.

Resume - additional thoughts:

- Use short sentences.
- Be direct.
- Use bullet points to isolate specific points of interest.
- Highlight position titles and company names.
- Don't try to fit too much information on one page. It will look cluttered and be hard to read.
- Use a clean font that looks professional.

- Have several people proofread your document.
- Have a copy of your resume ready to email as a Word document.
- Use descriptive words that help to paint a visual picture of what you can do and who you are.
- Don't put your resume in a fancy cover.
- Spell check your document.

References:

Be sure to provide at least three business references. If you don't want to list anyone from your current employer, think about customers, vendors or competitors that you may have dealt with at one time or another.

RESUME Template:

First Name, Middle Initial and Last Name
Street Address
City, State Zip
Home Phone Number
Cell Phone Number
E-mail Address

OBJECTIVE: State objective here

**PROFESSIONAL:
EXPERIENCE** **Name of Company #1 and Address**
Position Title #1
Dates of Employment

In two or three sentences, describe your current duties and responsibilities. List accomplishments in bullet points.

- Accomplishment #1
- Accomplishment #2

Name of Company #2 and Address
Position Title #2
Dates of Employment

In two or three sentences, describe the major duties and responsibilities of the position. List accomplishments in bullet points.

- Accomplishment #1
- Accomplishment #2

Name of Company #3 and Address
Position Title #3
Dates of Employment

In two or three sentences, describe the major duties and responsibilities of the position. List accomplishments in bullet points.

- Accomplishment #1
- Accomplishment #2

Education: **Name of School #1 and Address**
 Dates of Attendance

- Use bullet points to list relevant courses
- Use bullet points to list relevant accomplishments

Name of School #2 and Address
Dates of Attendance

- Use bullet points to list relevant courses
- Use bullet points to list relevant accomplishments

Hobbies: List outside interests and activities. Bullet point significant accomplishments or skills you developed through your hobby that you believe will help you perform better for the company.

References: List business references only.

THE RESUME COVER LETTER

Your resume outlines factual pieces of information of your career that an employer needs to evaluate to determine if you have the skills and experience to do the job. Well, as any strong sales professional will tell you, features and attributes do not cause people to make a decision. It is the perceived benefit that they feel they will get from those features and attributes that will steer them in the direction of either saying yes or no to something.

As Search consultants, we are trained extensively in helping employers understand how the features and attributes of our candidates will benefit their organizations. Our recruiting professionals spend extensive amounts of time conducting research in specific industries. The knowledge that is collected allows for them to be aware of what employers really need to see in candidates at any given time; and therefore, they know how various skills and experiences of a candidate need to be positioned in the market place.

Your cover letter is your chance to sell benefits! What is a benefit you ask? The answer is anything that will answer the employer's question of "What is in it for me?"

To help you develop a cover letter that will give you a competitive advantage, follow these guidelines.

Develop a list of benefits you will bring to the company.

- Do you have a unique ability to control costs?
- Do you have a unique ability to develop ways to generate revenue?
- Do your skills allow for you to solve problems quickly?
- Do your project management skills allow for more efficiency?
- Have you managed people that have been successful?

1. Develop a list of your accomplishments or skills that support the benefits you have developed.

- It is OK to repeat a few of the accomplishments you may have listed on your resume.

2. Using the lists you have created, develop clear and concise sentences that will be put into a letter.
 - Be sure that you are using action words.
3. Use high quality paper.
4. When you type your letter:
 - Align the date on the right margin.
 - Align your name and address on the left margin.
 - Align the company's name and address on the left margin under your information.
 - The salutation should be formal and address your contact as Mr./Ms./Mrs. (Last Name).
 - Use no more than three paragraphs.
 - Align your closing on the left margin.
 - Be sure that you have equal space between the top and bottom of the letter.
5. Always personally sign your letter.
6. Keep your letter to one page.

Resume Cover letter sample letter

Mr./Mrs./Ms. (Your First and Last Name)
Your Address 1
Your Address 2
City, State Zip

Month, Day, Year

Mr. /Mrs. /Ms. (Your Contact's First and Last Name)
Your Contact's Position Title
The Company's Address 1
The Company's Address 2
City, State, Zip

Dear Mr. /Mrs. /Ms. (Your Contact's Last Name),

Use the first paragraph to give the reader insight as to how you became aware of a certain position or their company. Use a powerful upbeat first sentence like; "It is with great enthusiasm that I provide you with my career profile."

Use the second paragraph to highlight a few of the benefits you think you will bring to the employer. Be sure to use action words in your sentences like; develop, create, enhance, increase, or decrease. Remember, you need to create a visual picture of your abilities.

Use the third paragraph to invite the reader to review your attached resume for more information. Also, be sure to close with a statement like, "I would like to discuss my resume in person so that we may review my credentials together. I am available to meet with you (provide a few dates). Please let me know if that works with your schedule." Asking for the interview is a sign of confidence and interest.

Respectfully,
Your First and Last Name

FAB (Features - Achievements - Benefits) Exercise

List 3-5 items under each section. Make sure each item is related to the major requirements of the position and illustrate why you would be the best choice.

Feature - *These are facts or attributes about you such as years of experience, skill sets, educational achievements, etc. Make sure they relate to and illustrate your suitability for this career move!*

Achievements - *These illustrate instances where you have “delivered” value. Utilize the Summary of Accomplishments exercise and list below.*

Benefits - *Why should you be hired for this position? How will you add value?*

FAB Worksheet

FEATURES Facts about candidate’s background, experience or education	ACHIEVEMENTS Measurable & quantifiable evidence of features	BENEFITS What and how employer can gain from features and achievements
1.	1.	1.
2.	2.	2.
3.	3.	3.
4.	4.	4.
5.	5.	5.
1.	1.	1.
2.	2.	2.
3.	3.	3.
4.	4.	4.
5.	5.	5.

Pre-employment DRUG TESTING

The use of drug testing as part of a pre-employment physical examination is becoming more prevalent. It is predicted that within five years, drug testing will become one more standard for getting a job. Some firms are testing for drug use as part of a pre-employment physical without telling the applicant that they are being tested for drugs, *Personnel Journal* reports.

Some over-the-counter products can produce positive drug-test results. Among them: Alka-Seltzer Plus, Allerest, Bronkaid, Contact, Donnagel, Nyquil, Primatene, Promlamine capsules, Sinutab, Sudafed and Triaminic. Poppy seeds in your food can also produce a positive drug-test result.

You should not take any medication 48 hours before your pre-employment physicals, but if you must, be sure to list all drugs taken and advise the examiner.

FINAL THOUGHTS

The entire team at SSI Executive Search Group would like to wish you luck in your career search. Additionally, we would also like to point out that although a career change can be very stressful, you should remind yourself often of the positive influence you are trying to have on your personal and professional objectives. You started the career search process for a reason. You might want to keep those reasons posted in a place of visibility so that you can always remember that if it is worth starting, it is worth finishing.