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The Job Hunters Handbook

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(Please note that this information is from a secular view point but is still very applicable.)

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Job Hunting Tips

Are you a fresh graduate and planning to look for a job? Did you just recently quit your job and are looking for greener pastures? Are you unemployed and have little experience regarding ways to secure a job? Whatever your situation may be, it would be to your advantage to study the following tips:

Check your resume for mistakes

Before submitting your resume to a prospective employer, check your it for corrections at least three times before handing it over. After researching about the job position, it is critical that you format your resume to match the needs of the company. For example, if you are applying for an accounting job, you should put in detail your accounting experience on your resume. Typographical and grammatical errors are serious no-no's. It is also ideal to keep the length of the resume' to at least a page and a half long.

Taking the interview challenge

A survey conducted by a staffing and consulting firm based in California which corresponded with 1,400 chief financial officers concluded that candidates for employment made most of their mistakes on their interviews. Some of the mistakes they made include:

- Arriving late
- Having little knowledge about the company
- Having little knowledge about the position applied for
- Having a superiority complex
- Behaving arrogantly

The body language of the applicant must also denote that he is confident yet not overpowering. He must maintain eye contact, have a strong handshake, and avoid looking defensive by the act of crossing the arms. Wearing the right clothes is crucial for projecting a confident stance. As they say, it is better to go to an interview over-dressed than being under-dressed.

Answer questions smartly

A common mistake of interviewees is that they tend to get tense and

forget the questions that are given to them, which has the effect that they are not prepared for the interview. It is important to research the company and the position applied for to prevent being side-tracked during the interview. If you do not know the answer to the questions being asked, it is better to admit you don't know the answer to the question and add that you can research about it. Look for the skills or expertise that the company is looking for so that when interview day comes and the interviewer asks about your strengths and core competencies, you will be able to match it to what they need.

Getting the necessary referrals

Having a referral from one of the company employees can go a long way toward landing an interview. A typical company may receive job applications in the hundreds and usually 35% to 60% of all job vacancies are filled by referrals. The odds of getting hired when you have a referral are very high if you have another 200 to 500 applicants vying for the same position. If you do not know anyone from the company that may give you a referral, it is a good idea to network the alumni of your college or university, trade groups, social networks, and professional associations. Remember, having a referral greatly increases your chances of getting the position.

Online application

With the current trend of technology and its merging with business processes, more and more companies are now requiring prospective applicants to submit their application online. Thus, first impressions are relayed not by your first appearance but by the quality and content of your e-mail. E-mails regarding job application should be polished and well-articulated. When applying on-line, use the following tips:

Complete your sentences and do not abbreviate.

Employers do not like when you send them application letters that seem to be too casual. It is important to make a letter that is both formal and well written. This gives a good impression regarding your capabilities and skills.

Get directly to the point

When writing an application letter, you must be concise and straightforward. Do not put a story on the letter just to get the attention of the employer, chances are he or she will just get irritated

with you and this only reduces your chances of getting hired.

Consider potential issues that may hinder you from getting the job

You may find instances wherein there is a lot of need for a job but the requirements for the position may entail training programs that may bar you from getting the position due to its highly competitive nature. Some require a lot of experience even at least 3 years of work experience. Some may have no barriers to entry but the job itself may entail a very routine work flow.

Getting the job you want may be a challenge but never lose hope. It is better to wait a while and get a job that you will enjoy rather than get a job as soon as possible but ending up dissatisfied and unhappy. Make the right decision then act on it.

More information on completing a proper resume will follow in an upcoming chapter.

Identifying your skill set

When applying for a job, it is ideal that you identify your strengths and weaknesses and get prepared to address them. By knowing your advantage, the chances of getting the job that you want will surely get easier. But you should not get too confident since this is one of the common mistakes that plague job applicants. Appearing too confident or as somewhat of a know it all person will only get you labeled by your interviewer as unfit for the job.

Identifying your skills

First thing's first. You should identify your skills. This is your ticket to get that job and you should be able to articulate your abilities and expertise as best as you can. Many people have a hard time telling their skills and abilities as this may seem to be bragging. But you should not be shy or afraid to discuss your skills. In fact, it is important that you convey to your potential employer what your talents are. You should be able to sell your abilities to your employer. That is how you will get the job that you want. It is important that you don't appear arrogant or condescending but you should also avoid selling yourself short. If the interviewer asks you about your strengths or what separates you from the other applicants, you should be able to readily give a good answer. But before you even go to the interview,

your resume should highlight your skills and talents for your prospective employer to see.

Type of skills

There are two main types of skills, hard skills and soft skills. Hard skills are tangible in the sense that these are things that you do like: knowing how to operate different kinds of machinery, knowledge of a specialized computer program, ability to type fast, skills on using many types of tools, credentials regarding special crafts, etc. Soft skills are skills that are rather abstract in nature like personal qualities. This may include the following: being a good team player, having the ability to work on your own, being enthusiastic or organized and decisive.

The steps to follow:

Making a list of your previous jobs and experience acquired

First thing to do is to make a list of all the companies that you have worked for and the things that you learned from these jobs. There will be a lot of things to list and you should be careful not to forget even

the smallest things or activities that you were part of or organized. It is also a good idea to list the volunteer activities that you participated in.

Include a list of your hobbies

Although it might sound trivial at first, it is also very helpful to list all your hobbies. There are a lot of abilities that your prospective employer may get from your hobby list. This will also give an idea of your personality. For example, if you were part of the school's debating team, then your employer may deduce that you have good analytical skills. If you were a champion chess player, then your employer will have the impression that you are good at making critical decisions. Think of your daily routine and the things that you do and often take for granted. Are you an organized person who always keeps your things in proper order? Are you an extrovert that can easily make friends in a matter of minutes? These may seem ordinary to normal things to you, but your future boss might think otherwise.

Deciding what career you want

After listing all your skills and all the things that you do well, you may

now decide what field or career you want to take a crack at. Select the skills contained from your list and partner it with the employment you are seeking. Always take time to consider if your skills are relevant to the job that you are aspiring for. Don't be bothered if you have to cut out some of the skills from your list. It is also important to include in the list your skills that the prospective employer will probably value.

Stand by what you write

You should be realistic about your skills and the level of expertise that you have with it. For example, if you indicate that you are a very organized person, then you should be able to show this to the interviewer by being able to organize your thoughts and effectively use the time that was given for your interview.

It is important to know your skills every time you are job hunting.

Always put your best foot forward and good luck!

Setting Clear Objectives

To achieve a goal, there is a process that you should implement. This process is to streamline and analyze your objectives. Begin at the

very beginning at the smallest, specific part. These are the most important steps to take to meet the guidelines. An objective is a way of knowing what action or plan is to be taken and identifying the expected results. This plan provides a set of directions so that making the decision will not be as complicated as when the goal is just being considered.

Peter Ducker documented a book published in 1954 entitled *Practiced Management* wherein MBO which stands for Management by Objectives, was introduced. This is a program that consists of simple but very useful processes in order to meet commitments in an organization. Never worry, as this is also applicable to personal plans.

MBO consists of 5 steps:

1. It should be SPECIFIC. It is better to accomplish one goal at a time rather than thinking of several different plans at one time. A single objective cannot be derived if there are two or more results expected. What's important is that there is a need to clarify what is to be achieved and should have your full attention. This must be taken as seriously as possible.

2. It should be MEASURABLE. A lot of things that are not tangible are hard to measure and there are things that are really measurable for the mere fact that it includes numbers or ratings. Take the service crews for example, it is hard to measure how the service was delivered but if the number of complaints is counted then there is a specific number that can be used to rate the effectiveness of the service.

In offices, the number of tasks or assignments that were accomplished is used as basis for the measurement. Cooperation, though a very vague word can also be measured by means of getting a subordinate and peer survey. How fast or delayed assistance was provided to a certain individual is enough to provide information on how situations can be measured. Try not to use general terms when making an objective statement. It should be something clear and specific like: to write, to recite, to perform, to fix, to process, to designate, to purchase, to choose, to reprogram, etc.

3. It should be ATTAINABLE. The resources available give information on how an objective can be attained. This must be something that is derived from fact and very realistic. It could be that a certain objective is indeed realistic but the time frame to reap the result may not be. It is better to say objectives that can be factual for

this promotes motivation rather than an objective taken from belief as this may cause unexpected failure and feeling of discouragement.

4. It should be RESULT-ORIENTED. An objective should be stated clearly so that the expectation is clear. Focus on the end result as this will be the guide whether or not the objective to reach the goal is effective and meaningful. Is this objective going to help an individual grow or succeed? Will it be beneficial to all concerned? Once the success has been attained and all the plans were completed then it is a success.

5. It should be TIME BOUND. There should be a limit to all the things needed to be accomplished. This matters since the root of any plan can be traceable. This will also tell if the objective is effective enough not to cause any delay. There will also be more of the sense of fulfillment once a goal is attained with the objectives set earlier than a deadline.

To sum it all up, develop an objective that is easily measured, can be attained, with a limited time, this will help in determining if the objective is realistic enough, meaningful, and proven to be worthwhile to everyone involved. A chart or journal can be kept to keep track of

any opportunities and strengths that were met along the way. This will also indicate the time that was consumed and the length of the objective developed. A successful objective helps motivate the individual or the group involved toward greater achievements.

Hot Tips on How to Job Scout

Prior to looking for the specific job that would be the best fit for you, learn how to effectively market your talents. This will help you gauge the possibility of landing the job you want.

First, skills and interests should be evaluated personally. Jotting down a list would definitely be the best way to define your capabilities; second, to know your limitations. There are jobs that are too demanding that might not work for you, or jobs that you may be overly qualified for; and third, planning the time as soon as there is an inner instinct that tells you that you are ready and qualified.

Once this has been done, go to companies and prospective employers early in the morning for this will give them a good impression and for the applicant, a time to complete the process the application if lucky. Remember, the early bird catches the worm.

The very first thing that needs to be done when looking for a job is to prepare an impressive resume as we discussed in a previous chapter. The resume will depend on the type of job being applied for. There are times when certain employers require curriculum vitae and even a cover letter or letter of intent. Every professional job you apply for expects to receive a well written resume.

After preparing the documents needed for application, the next thing that should follow is finding vacancies for new hires. Searching using the Internet will be very helpful for this activity. There are sites that provide this assistance like HotJobs, America's Job Bank, and Monster that utilizes resources and convenience for people to look for jobs.

Where else to look for job openings?

The initial step is to look at local newspapers for this provides information just by looking at the Classified Ads section and the lists of wanted personnel and employment opportunities will be read.

Applying at several companies initially in a local area can save an applicant more time and money. If it so happens that a job was found late in the day, call immediately for inquiries and never let a day pass

when opportunities arise.

How to look for jobs that are not announced?

Sometimes companies and other employers do not really advertise any job openings in their organization. The best thing for an applicant is to weigh things if it will be possible to be hired by a certain company by just submitting an application form or resume. Start looking for the job personally. Tell everyone about your job hunting. Relatives and previous offices or company co-workers will be able to give hints on job vacancies in their current companies. Professors or teachers will also be helpful in recommending schools and institutions that are now looking for new instructors. These people might not have any vacant position in their company in mind but they certainly know someone who knows or needs a new employee. That is what others call networking.

Often times, the Yellow Pages does the important job of providing information on how and where to call to look for a job. This gives an accurate list of companies and prospective employers in a chosen area. Visiting the library is also a tool than can be useful when looking for a job. There are libraries that have a list of local employers, just

asks the librarian for more information.

Contact these employers personally, even if they did not advertise any vacant positions that needed to be filled

Lastly, be observant of signs posted on doors and windows of shops and stalls being passed by. If lucky, just walk in and ask for information about the job and how to apply.

After submitting application forms and resumes to the respective companies, keep track of the progress by creating a chart where you can jot down the name of the company and when the application was submitted.

Here's a job-scout checklist to help you along your way:

1. Identify experience list
2. Identify prospective employers
3. Prepare documents
4. Plan schedules
5. Contact companies and/or employers
6. Get ready for an interview
7. Evaluate how interview went along

8. Take the exams
9. Start with the new job!

Dressing up for the Success Interview

Prepare and practice for an interview. After the date and venue has been set, allow time for enough preparation for the big day.

Remember that first impressions do last, so the way an applicant look really does matter. Employers could easily give the verdict based on the manner of dressing during the initial interview.

Better questions and service can be received if the appearance itself commands respect. It is important to consider the surroundings of the company granting you an interview. There is no reason to be over dressed or poorly dressed during this very significant day. In fact, it is a good rule of thumb to always dress appropriately for any situation.

All too often appearance is glossed over. Some might say that the inner characteristics of the person matter more, but in reality, you only have one opportunity for a first impression. Make it count!

Although there are specific guidelines that can be followed, these does

not apply to all states like New York for example, where people wear trendy up to extreme styles that are far away from the usual fashion rules common people know. The rule of thumb should be to wear something that could boost more confidence.

Below are the top ten do's and don'ts during an interview:

Ø Avoid wild colored nail polish before the interview. The same goes with long nails that could easily turn off some conservative employers. These should be neat and very tidy looking.

Ø Never wear jewelry that rattles and jiggles as you speak and move. Try not to wear two or more rings or earrings. Piercing aside from the ears is also a no.

Ø Professional hairdo also counts

.

Ø If you are a woman, wear closed shoes. Heels are very appropriate as this gives more confidence to an individual and sense of respect is also provided once they see the person wearing them.

Ø Again, for the ladies, never bare those newly shaven legs. If

possible, use stockings regardless of the temperature. But make sure not to use fancy colored ones. Only use those made for neutral looking legs. These should also match the shoes.

Ø Remember that a good suit or dress brings more confidence as well. This will also allow more comfort and chance for the applicant to answer comfortably or with ease.

Ø Avoid short skirts for women. Wearing pants or leggings are a no, no during interviews.

Ø Wear the appropriate blazers just as long as they do not look fashion outdated. Do not use any leather coats or jackets.

Ø For men, the tie is still appropriate. Avoid using turtlenecks. If there is no suit and tie available, use a collared shirt or white long sleeves.

Ø Men must not use too much aftershave.

Ø Women should be using bags that are not too bright and conspicuous. These should be conservative and matching the dress.

Ø Any briefcase used must be in perfect condition.

The way a person looks equal the message he is trying to convey.

During the interview, this can either become a plus factor for the applicant or big loss. Know for a fact that the way an applicant should look must be appealing, fashionable but not loud.

Consider the latest trends in the area or location where the prospective job is located. One aspect that is a part of how employer picks a new hire is based on the physical attributes of the applicant. From the way the hands were shaken, keeping an eye contact, the way the posture was maintained, the smile was delivered up to the manner of dressing is being rated already.

Regardless of your personal career background, skills, and underlying talents, if the first impression was never striking enough to make an outstanding appeal to the interviewers, nothing else counts. This can be the potential employers' initial interpretation of how an applicant will do on the job.

Whether that perception is "fair" is irrelevant. Do you want the job?

Look the part and your chances for success are much greater!

How to be invited for Interviews

Once the application has been sent and the resume has been received the next thing that would possibly happen is that the employer will be calling to test communication skills by means of an interview. Allowing oneself to be given the option on which employer is best fitting the applicant is one characteristic of being pro-active. Consider being called by multiple employers for a job interview in a day a good sign. This only means that they were really impressed with the documents submitted, therefore, deserving a personal communication on how most likely an applicant would land on the job.

Resumes can present an individual very well. Seventy-five per cent of employers say that applicants with resumes passing their standards would definitely be invited for a job interview. Allow two or more interviews. How? Here are some resumes tips that would give you not only one but more calls for interview:

1. The position that an applicant is interested in should be placed right

at the start of the resume. Having this as an objective shows that an applicant is really focused and career oriented tells that he or she knows what is exactly the perfect career for him or her.

2. One of the best significant ways to get the employers' attention is by using words that are really powerful that denotes strong capabilities of the applicant. An example of this is, instead of writing, "assigned to be", write instead "in-charge of," indicating that the applicant has active leadership skills that can be a step to the management position if there is any.

3. A bullet catches the eye of an employer at one look. Use these in itemizing achievements, career highlights, recognition, qualifications, and skills and interests. Words in bullet form forces the employer to read the information provided. These also create more clear space on the paper making the application form or the resume very neat and astounding.

4. Make sure that the resume is very selective. Only apply for a certain position in one company or organization one at a time. Do not submit resumes with different job interests and positions applied for at one time. This will be a complete waste of time.

5. Ask a pro. Resumes are written with the help of experts who can actually see the applicant's strengths and opportunities.

Aside from preparing an impressive resume carefully follow and read all the special instructions like how many spaces are provided for a specific answer or the number of words for the answer. Keep in mind that this is also a test to see how well an applicant can follow simple rules. Not only does it have to follow the steps, the application form should also be neat. Handwriting is also being considered and using a black pen will greatly add to the formality of the answer. As much as possible, never use a liquid paper or fold and bend the application form and paper.

When answering, be careful not to leave blanks unless it really does not apply. Use N/A only if necessary. Be truthful with all the answers but this does not mean that you have to provide a complete or thorough answer for every question. Always adapt the answers to the job being applied for. Only provide the skills and recognition received that will be beneficial to the new company or employer. However, see to it that the answers provided indicate the reason of being more qualified than the other applicants.

Choose references that can provide the applicant an objective description and information, teachers, friends, and previous employers can be willing and honest enough to provide that information. The application form must be consistent with the resume. Since many of these employers standardize and gauge the information the applicant is providing in his application form and resume, these must be full of complete and honest information. This will be their basis when considering a one on one interview to see if what they read is true enough.

Arm yourself with positive strategies and knowledge to get those invitations for interviews come after you. Remember that this will also be a marketing tool that any applicant can use for other future job hunting experience. Since many of these employers standardize and gauge the information the applicant is providing in his application form and resume, these must be full of complete and honest information. This will be their basis when considering having a one on one interview to see if what they read is true enough. Arm yourself with positive strategies and knowledge to get those interview invitations coming to you. Remember that this will also be a marketing tool that any applicant can use for other future job hunting experience.

7 Easy Steps to Improve Your Interviewing Skills

In the midst of technological advancement nowadays, the "back-to-basics" rule still applies when it comes to getting hired for a job. It does not matter if you are planning to apply for a million-dollar company or a small, independent firm. When you face an interviewer, it all boils down to how you present yourself. This is the deciding factor whether you will get hired or not.

So you have distributed your resume to prospective employers and you have determined the correct job to apply for. The next step is to schedule the job interview.

You can make the acquaintance of the assistant or the receptionist when you schedule for the interview, either by phone or personally. Be friendly and polite, as these people might provide information that can be essential to getting that job or, even just give you a background of the company or your prospective boss.

Finally, you show up for the interview.

The basic traits of being prompt, how you speak and carry yourself and even how you dress are all factors that contribute in making a lasting impression that will eventually get you hired.

Here are 7 easy steps on how you can improve your interviewing skills:

1.) Prepare for the interview.

First, dress appropriately. Once the interviewer walks into the room, or once you walk into the room to be interviewed, your appearance will be the first thing to make the impact. Dress appropriately, check your grooming and mind your posture. Read the chapter on dressing for success!

Second, practice basic courtesy. Know where the interview will be held and be there with ample time to prepare yourself before the scheduled interview. Turn your phone off to avoid unnecessary distractions.

2.) Research.

Use all your resources to make sure that you know the basics about the company. You would not want to be caught unprepared when asked about how you heard or what you know about the company that you are applying for.

Learn about your potential employer. In your mind, develop a clear picture of the company profile.

Make sure that you prepared answers to a few basic questions, but do not sound scripted. This happens when you rehearse what you will be saying word for word. It is enough that you have an overview of what you will impart to the interviewer, and it is better to be spontaneous.

3.) Be cool.

Step forward so that you are now seated and the interview is about to begin. Make a great first impression by maintaining eye contact, giving the interviewer a firm handshake, a friendly smile and a polite greeting. Sit only when you are asked to do so and do not forget to thank the interviewer for taking time off of his or her busy schedule to interview you.

Make sure to start on a positive note and set the proper expectations.

4.) Do not sell yourself short.

In the course of the interview, answer the questions briefly and accurately. The key is to be honest.

Make sure that as a prospective employee, you impart to your future employer what you really are and what you can do for the company, not the other way around. Stay positive and do not give a bad impression about your previous employer.

If you are applying for your first job, do not let your lack of experience hinder you from gaining the advantage against more experienced applicants. What you lack in experience, make up for in confidence and eagerness to learn.

You may also put yourself in the employer's shoes. Ask yourself, if I were on the other side of this desk, what qualities should I look for in a potential employee? Would I profit if he works for me and can he contribute to the development of the company?

Do not be afraid to sell yourself but do not be overconfident. Just project an air that you are sure of yourself and your capabilities.

5.) Ask questions.

Should you encounter a difficult interviewer, do not be intimidated. One who does not let you put in a word edgewise should be lightly reminded that you should do most of the talking since he is the one who needs to learn more about you.

6.) Wrap it up.

As you near the end of the interview, make sure that all bases are covered. Now is not the time to discuss or even ask about the salary and the benefits that you will receive once employed. There is ample time for that once you do get the position and you are discussing the job offer.

Wrap things up by summarizing your strengths and pointing out your positive traits. Finally, as you end the interview, make sure to thank the interviewer again for his or her time, thus leaving a lasting impression.

7.) Follow up.

Send that all-important thank you note after the interview. Thank the interviewer for the time that he took with you and for giving you that opportunity. Make sure that you know who to contact for follow-up of the results.

A lot of research has been made about the interviewing process. Here is a brief run-through:

First, you make a schedule for the interview.

Then, you are there in the office and you are seen by the interviewee.

The interview itself then transpires.

Next is the closing, then you follow-up with a thank-you-note.

You eventually get accepted and you discuss, negotiate for and sign-up the job offer.

You may notice that the interviewing takes up a great deal of the getting-hired process, so you might as well polish up your interviewing skills on your way to getting that dream job.

How to Follow Up on All Contacts

If you are still in the job search process, it is extremely important to follow up on all contacts. It is not good to just sit and wait for results to come pouring in when you think that you've already done your part because your contact information has been distributed.

Consider two men applying for a prime position at a company. After the interview, the first applicant just sits around waiting to hear from his prospective employer.

On the other hand, the second applicant distributes his contact information to some people that he met in the company. Furthermore, applicant number two does a follow-up on the results of the job interview a few days later. The first applicant has not been heard from, because he just relies on the basic "We'll call you" routine. Who do you think will have a greater chance of getting the job?

Even though the first applicant is more qualified, since he did not follow up or even send a thank you note to the interviewer, in the end, he does not get the job.

If you are still waiting for that job offer and you do not follow up on

your contacts, your chances of getting hired become slimmer. In business, following up on all of your contacts is a sure-fire way to spread the word about you, your business sense and expanding your horizons.

If you are still looking for a job, here are some tips on how to follow up on your contacts:

- * Send a thank you note right after the interview, ideally after a couple of days. This is a way of getting the prospective employer to hear from you again. Should you not get hired for the current position that they offer, someone from that company will likely keep your information on file for future consideration.

- * Make sure that you leave your mobile and landline number, e-mail address and home address so that prospective employers will have no excuse of not getting in touch with you.

- * Be accurate in getting the contact information of perspective employers. In return, when you place their information on any letter that you send out (i.e. resumes, thank you notes) avoid typographical errors and make sure that you have their names

correct, to see to it that everything is in order.

- * Some companies do take a look at your character references so alert the people on your list that they might receive a call from your prospective employers.

- * Always be on the positive side. Should you not get hired for a particular position, you may ask the people from that company for referrals to other companies or at least keep you in mind for future hiring.

If you are currently in business, whether you are just starting out or in the midst of expanding, you also need to make sure to follow up on all important contacts. For example, you go to a corporate event and you have distributed a lot of business cards. Do not stop there. These people might eventually bring big business to your company so it is important to build up a strong business relationship with them.

Here are some tips on following up on your contacts if you are already in business:

- * Send thank you notes to current and future customers. This

rule does not just apply to people applying for a job. This is much more helpful for those who are already in business, as a simple thank you note would remind customers of which company they are dealing with and your brand name will be imprinted on their minds. This practice should send more business your way.

* Send follow up messages. If you are in sales, it is good to follow up on existing buyers who are most likely to purchase your products again.

You might also want to personalize any correspondence that you send out as this leaves the customers feeling as if they know you personally. This should lead you to earning their trust, which in turn leaves the customer feeling secure that you are handling efficiently whatever business it is that they throw your way.

* Make sure that you follow up swiftly and promptly. The rule of thumb is to reply fast, fast, fast. Whether it is a solution to a problem or sending out an order or replying to a letter, responding quickly to a customer is the easiest way for them to think of you and your company in a positive way.

Why Small Organizations Mean Big Business

In the movie "You've Got Mail", the sub-plot aside from the love angle is that the heroine (played by Meg Ryan) was forced out of business when the big-time bookstore owner (played by Tom Hanks) moved into town.

Meg's character owned a quaint little bookstore which she inherited from her mother. Although the prices of her books were a little steep, she makes up for it in service. She packs the books in a specialized bag, and she knows all of her customers by name.

Tom's character, on the other hand, moved into town to build a branch of a big chain-bookstore which offered discounted prices and a huge building, as compared to Meg's little bookshop on one corner of the town's streets.

In the end, Meg was forced out of business because her customers went to Tom's monstrous bookshop.

Nowadays, this situation will not hold true anymore.

More and more small organizations are paving the way and giving big businesses a shot of their own medicine.

In the movie, the reason why Meg Ryan was forced out of business is because she cannot profit anymore. Her prices are steep as compared to the other big business' discounted rates.

Her only edge is that she gives personal service, she knows her customers by name and she has a very small staff, about 2 or 3 employees.

As a small organization you may turn around and have these qualities as your edge to compete against the big sharks in business.

Here are some tips on how you can hold your own against a big business:

1. Small businesses have big competition.

This means that you need to know how to survive out there.

No matter what nature of business you have, it is better to learn about the competition so that you will be able to survive.

Here are some tips on how you can survive the big competition:

>Keep your business alive.

When it seems as if your cash flow is in a downward slope, keep a tight rein on your budget.

Do not spend on unnecessary business purchases and always balance your books.

If you are one to buy on impulse or if you are the type to listen to those who sweet-talk you into purchasing "necessary" items, control yourself.

Get a second and third opinion if possible, as these impulsive buys may lead to the end of your small organization.

>Do not be afraid to seek professional help.

The fall of most small businesses start with decisions on problems which are not carefully analyzed.

Although you think that you already have a contingency plan, make sure that you have foreseen the results of a certain business decision.

In the long run, it is better to seek professional help rather than embark on a plan that could start the downfall of your business.

>Keep your books straight.

The better option is for you to hire a professional outside accountant to figure the returns of your investment and handle the other financial aspects of your business.

>Take advantage of every free business counseling whenever available.

This does not just help widen your knowledge, but it will also give you an idea of how other businesses are ran by small-scale owners.

>Know exactly where your business is headed.

In your day-to-day operation, make sure that you know where you want your company to be 5 or 10 years from now.

Be always aware of the trends in the industry that you are in, practice good money management and learn how to recognize potential problems before they arise.

2. Learn how to market your small organization.

Marketing is not about trying to sell your products and services to everyone.

It is about knowing who to market your products to.

In marketing, it is good to remember these fast facts:

> Know about your customers.

> Communicate with your customers.

> Build a good and personalized relationship with your customers.

This will be a great edge for you to have against the bigger companies.

They might offer discounted prices but it is harder for them to keep track of customers on a more personal basis.

>Do not stop the marketing process.

As a small organization, you need to routinely review the markets that you need to pursue so that you can better reach out to your customers.

Remember, small organizations are big businesses these days so do not be afraid to work hard for the company that you have - not matter how small.

If you work hard, make wise business decisions, learn how to market your small business and personalize your customer interaction, your small-scale business is sure to rise to the top.

How to Create a List of Warm Contacts

Usually when you are looking for a job, you would ask for help from family and friends. You would contact these people to ask for information on current job openings, business opportunities and tips.

Your family, relatives and friends belong to your warm contact list.

The warm contact list is the list of people with whom you have or had some personal association. A former classmate, officemate or neighbor may belong to your warm contact list.

Who may be included in your warm contact list? Here are a number of selections.

* Relatives and Friends

These people are always willing to help you in your job search or business venture. They will be able to provide you information if they have some, or refer you to trustworthy people who will be able to help you. If they will introduce you to some of their contacts, they can surely provide honest information to you regarding the person you are going to associate with.

* Members of the church, political party, social club or fraternity or

sorority

You probably did not expect it, but people who share the same faith, beliefs or hobbies may also help you with finding a job. You may have a different career from theirs, but they might know somebody who is in the same field or will be able to help you in your career.

However, depending on your level of association with them, they may think twice about giving their opinion or thoughts about their contacts. Their opinion can sometimes help you in making a strategy on how to approach and ask for help from their contacts.

* People who sell you things

You may think that your relationship with these people is purely based on trading goods and services, then paying for them. However, people who sell you things are also sources of information when networking.

Since these people sell their goods to different types of persons, they may have associated with somebody who belongs to the same field as you do, or have heard information about your target job from their other clients.

These people will also be happy to help you, since they know that maintaining a pleasant relationship with you means a stable business. Also, if you have a good job means you have increased your purchasing power, and then it could also mean that you may purchase more from them.

* Former employers, colleagues or co-workers

Maintaining a good relationship with previous employers and colleagues has more benefits than you can imagine. This is the reason that most people try their best to iron out any difficulties with their previous employers even if they are no longer associated with the company. Aside from the possibility that your potential employer will call previous employers when they review your job history, former employers and colleagues are also a good source of information related to that field.

When you ask for help from family and friends, there is the possibility that the information that they can give to you is just from another source. They may not be able to give you first-hand information or detailed information unless they also work in the same field that you

came from or would like to go into.

This is very different when you consult former employers and colleagues from the same sector. They will be able to provide you with valuable information and may be able to clarify such information and answer your questions.

* Members of your professional organization

If you belong to a professional organization related to the field in which you are looking for a job, you can consult the organization for current postings from the members. If you don't belong to any, consider joining one since this will be beneficial to your career growth.

A professional organization can provide you unbiased information on current job openings from its members. The organization can also give you details on the company profile and even on current market and career trends.

These are the most important people that you should include when creating a list of your warm contacts. It is better if you contact them all so you can have as many options in your job search. When you

talk to them, tell them that you are actively seeking a job.

Tips on Using Your Warm Contact List When Networking

When you are searching for a job, aside from checking the ads in newspapers, internet and bulletin boards, it is also very helpful to ask for information from the people on your warm contact list.

They can provide you with up-to-date information on the company and position vacancies that are not posted on job ads. At times when they cannot provide you information about the job that you are looking for, they may be able to refer you to a person that they know who might be able to tell you something about the job.

This is called networking. Networking is when you start using your warm list to get information or referrals to their other contacts. Many people are repelled by the thought of networking. Some believe that it is not a reliable source of information about the job. Others say networking is more difficult than following the leads on the ads that are posted in the newspaper, internet or ad boards.

Contrary to such beliefs, networking is not that difficult to do. You

may just have to contact or meet some people, and you can get valuable information that can help in your career search. Also, since the people you meet belong to the same industry, they can provide you information about hiring that isn't advertised and first-hand facts about the company.

You are already networking and you just don't know it. When you have seen an ad in the paper posted by a company you know little of, you ask your friends if they know somebody who works for the company. So even if you are not attracted by the idea of networking, it is still essential when seeking a job. To make networking easier and more productive for you, here are a few tips.

- * Prepare your warm contact list

When you have prepared your warm contact list, it will be easier to select the people who you prefer to call first. These are the people who you think have some information about the job.

They may be former employers, colleagues and members of the professional organization belonging to the same industry. They usually have first-hand, up-to-date and reliable information.

* Calling a warm contact

When you call a warm contact, inform them that you are actively seeking a job. Ask them to let you know if they heard of job openings you might be interested in. It is better to inform them what type of job you are looking for. And don't forget to leave your contact number with them, so they can get in touch with you if they hear of anything. It is also better if you can leave a copy of your resume with them so they can show or submit it to someone who will be able to help you in your job search.

* Assess yourself before calling your contact

Your warm contact may ask about your skills, experiences, abilities, interests, expectations and career goals. You should be able to talk about these sincerely and you should be able to describe what information you would like to have from your contact.

To help you prepare, you can practice by drafting a script on what to say. That way, you can articulate what you would like to communicate to your warm contact.

Anticipate questions about yourself, so you should also practice answering questions about your previous job and what you can contribute to the company.

* Ask for referrals

If your warm contact was not able to provide you information that will be helpful to your job search, ask for the names of at least two people who they think will be able to help you. Ask for their contact number, and if possible, the time which they will be free to talk over the phone.

* Contact referrals immediately

When your warm contact gives you referrals, they may even call this person to inform them that you will be asking for more information. Sometimes, the person you were referred to will be calling your warm contact. Therefore, it is better to call your referrals within a few days after you have spoken with your warm contact.

When you make a call, introduce yourself and inform the person who

referred you to him/her and how you are related with the person who referred you. Be polite, but straightforward, in informing the person what information you are seeking.

Networking really isn't a difficult thing to do. With enough practice and experience, you can maximize the benefits that you can get from networking.

How to Get Referrals from Warm Contacts

You may find it hard to use networking to find a job if you can't rely on your warm contacts to give you the information you need. At times, you would have to ask your warm contacts to refer you to at least two people that they know who will be able to give you the information you needed.

However, there are times that your warm contact, particularly those who don't know you well, may not readily provide you with the information. Some of your warm contacts may feel reluctant about vouching for you to their other contacts.

Because of this, you may find it difficult to use your network. To make

networking and getting referrals an easy task for you, here are a few tips.

* Nurture your warm contacts.

Before you even need your warm contacts or before you even ask for help, keep in touch with your warm contacts. You may send notes or greetings from time to time, call to "catch up" on them, invite them to lunch, be interested or help in their business or do anything just to cultivate your connection with them.

In this way, by the time you need help, they can remember you and can more readily give information about their other contacts that will be able to help you.

* Be polite.

Since you might not have close personal relationships with some of your valuable warm contacts, it is inappropriate to just give them a call and ask them for information about your field of interest.

Sometimes, sending a note in advance, or asking to meet them for lunch is a better way to ask for their help.

* Listen to them.

Most of the time, even if your warm contact knows little in the field where you are trying to find a job, they might offer you advice. Be polite and interested in what they are saying. Who knows, the information that they are giving may be valuable to you in the future.

There are times that your warm contacts may be telling you tips on what manner will work best when you talk to the persons to whom you are being referred. Your warm contacts may also imply what qualities and qualifications the person is looking for.

* Ask for at least two referrals.

Before you ask for referrals, make sure that your warm contact had said everything that he or she can say about your field of interest.

Even if they know little about that field, it is impolite if you cut them short while they are speaking to ask if they know somebody who will be able to help you.

If they weren't able to refer you to at least one of their contacts, thoughtfully ask them why they couldn't do so. They may give you answers that may include indirect comments or suggestions. They may also indicate a lack of confidence in your work strategy. If this is so, you may have to make follow ups with them to prove that you are indeed credible and match their requirements.

However, there are also times when they can't refer you to their contacts because they just don't know anybody who might have the information or might be interested in the product.

In this case, ask them to keep their eyes open for opportunities that you might be interested in. You can also leave with them copies of your resume.

* Just ask for two referrals.

Two referrals are enough from each warm contact. This is to have

another option in case the first one didn't work out. Asking for more than two referrals could be impolite as it can take much time from your warm contact. Also, that will make your warm contact feel that you are relying mostly on him or her for your job search. So, unless they volunteer the information, don't ask for more than 2 referrals.

* Contact referrals as soon as possible.

When your warm contacts give you referrals, there are times that they also call these people personally to give more information about you. On the other hand, when you contact the people to whom you were referred, your referrals may call your warm contacts to verify the information or to ask more information about you.

Either way, you have to contact your referrals soon enough that these people can still remember their conversation with your warm contact, or your warm contact can still remember that you have talked.

At times, after your referrals were called by your warm contacts, they anticipate your call and even prepare questionnaires and exams for you to take. Do not waste this opportunity by delaying follow-up on referrals.

Keeping these tips in mind will be able to help you in asking for good referrals from your warm contacts.

Getting Started for a Cold Call

There's a little Girl Scout on the street carrying boxes of different flavored cookies, timidly trying to knock on her neighbors' doors worried that somehow she'll be booted out and that doors would just slam shut on her face after offering her cookies for just a few cents? Such a pitiful sight eh?

But imagine what this little girl could be feeling even before approaching doors. Will they know that she is on official business and would just be selling cookies for the good of humanity? Will she be able to speak her rehearsed cookie scripts? Will she make her first order?

Little that we know that a lot of grown ups, even professional salesmen, experience anxiety the idea of making their own cold call. It's so normal to feel butterflies hitting big time up and down your belly, that just thinking of making the call (whether personal or

business) would even want to make you throw up.

But, let me give you the exact explanation of what a cold call means.

A cold call is a personal call, it can be a visit or phone call to someone you know a little or someone whom you really don't know. The main reason for the call is that you are selling something for personal or official business.

Others think that a cold call is only being made to total strangers, taken from phonebooks or referrals from other persons. On the contrary, this cold call can be made to someone you already know or to a prospect you're already familiar with. It can be someone you met last month at a party or maybe a friend introduced him to you before and you found him to be a good prospect to sell the product. But still, contacting someone you know breaks the ice for a moment. Try to narrow your prospects at first where you feel comfortable, once you've mastered the technique that's the time you can move on to a more challenging prospects you never even thought of approaching.

The ordeal that you have to go through first is making that personal, meaning one on one, physical appearance or telepresence. This can make you so tense that you feel like quitting everything. There are

even cold calls that make you feel like you will disappear in a heartbeat.

Even professionals like doctors, lawyers and professors feel the same, which is why they depend on friends or clients' referrals for fear of losing their dignity and good name after making an unsuccessful cold call. One deep breath can help do the trick.

Nothing can be as uncomfortable as prospecting someone for your cold call. The fear of being shouted at or making a fool out of yourself, are roadblocks and keep you from selling. This can be overcome with the right attitude together with guarded planning, preparation and if possible - Training. Believe it or not, salesmanship is possible for everyone.

Take these simple tips on how to Cold Call

Always be Positive

Remember that cold calling is a powerful business strategy. First be positive with your self. Your co-workers and your prospects you're about to make the cold call should be next to feel positive about.

There must be enthusiasm in your voice the people can feel right away.

Prepare to be Prepared

It's not enough to know the procedure and having the right attitude. Prepare the list of whom to be called or visited, how the introduction should be done, learn what prospects do and the most important part of all is that your offered product or service should be something that could be of good use for them. Being well prepared can turn a simple cold call into real business.

I am what I am

Never sound too over reactive or obviously nervous on the phone or when you shake your prospect's hand. Never try to be somebody you are really not with an aim to getting the attention you need. Assume that talking to your prospective customer for the first time should be the key to a lasting relationship.

Calm Down

Anticipate that you'll be declined. That's it. It's really hard but never take it as a personal attack on you. Don't let the feeling of being dismissed put you down and roll you back. Be patient and learn from your mistakes. You will reap a good harvest if you commit yourself to being persistent. This will also help you find a strategy that will work in the long run. Look at each turn down as if it were the next stepping stone.

The Art of Questioning

You cannot expect someone to believe you right away and just sign up after describing your company's objectives. You have to ask the right questions. Ask what they do correctly and promptly to help you use it along the conversation. A sure attention getter when opening a conversation can be "May I ask you about something Ms/Mr?" People want to help and this question lowers their guard. The next question will be "Can you help me out about this thing sir/ma'am?" This question does not ask for a yes or no answer but would definitely give you a valuable response that you can use all through out the interaction.

It's possible that the little Girl Scout on the street asked the same question and left the doorway with 2 less boxes of cookies at hand!

Jobseeker FAQs on Thank You notes

Career advisers tell jobseekers to send a thank you note after an interview. To address the most frequently asked questions on how and what to send in a thank you note, here are some give aways.

Won't the employer think that an applicant is desperate and a sissy applicant if he sends a thank-you letter?

Of course not. Rarely does an employer not pleased to receive a thank-you letter. It is considered as a common way of showing politeness, a gesture of courtesy, one way to outshine the rest of the interviewees, and a way to keep your name upfront.

Will it not jeopardize the possibility of getting the job?

Not in most cases, but it could in some point of time. So why take the chance? (so they ask) The answer: Most bosses wavers between the

last two most promising applicants, a student and experienced officer for example, after the final interview for a certain position. But when the boss gets a thank-you letter from the student, it made all the difference. Because of that simple well mannered gesture, the student lands on the job.

Can it be handwritten or should it be typewritten?

Actually, it does not matter. What's important is the thought of doing it. It must be tailored to your prospective company and the officer who made the interview. Thus, respect is further established.

However, if the company, interviewer or the position being applied calls for a formal business letter, then do so. Mostly, a handwritten note is okay if the interviewer and the applicant have built rapport.

Will it be okay to e-mail the thank you note?

First thoughts indicate that this is a big NO. However, it depends on the company's culture. If the people in the company use e-mail in all of their communication and correspondence, then it should be acceptable. This will also apply if the company is into fast decision making when hiring applicants. Always remember that even if e-mails

fit in with the culture of the company, it's still a better idea to follow up the email with a hard copy of your thank you.

So you can just save yourself from trouble since "anything goes" right?

NO. On the other side of the previous story, there are prospective applicants who were almost on the verge of being hired but suddenly hit the skids after sending in a sloppy, ill-fixed thank you letters, with many typographical errors and misspelled words. A part of having a good communication skill is being able to write effectively and companies do not need employees who have to be taught simple writing skills.

Will a borrowed thank-you letter do?

Yes, borrowing is one thing. But make sure to look at the basic structure of the letter. Never plagiarize the whole letter as it may be applicable to the one person but not for the other. Surely, there are employers who can distinguish a thank-you note that has been copied or not.

If it was a panel interview should thank you letters be sent to all

interviewers?

Frankly, that's the best. The same letter to each is as essential as making one for each. All you have to do is edit some phrases for individuality in case the interviewers would bump in to each other and compare the notes they received.

How soon should a thank-you note be sent?

The golden rule is to send thank you notes within 24 hours after the interview.

Will it still be okay to mail the thank you note if the hiring decision will be made sooner than when the mailed thank you note is received?

Come to think of it, if the mail is too pre-historic for the hiring decision makers, then find a much speedy way: it can be via e-mail, fax, express delivery or personal delivery. In fact, if you have hand delivered the thank you note, it can leave a great impression.

What if there's already an offer before even sending the thank you notes?

It's still better to send the thank you notes as this can be used to accept or decline the offer. This could also be a confirmation of your agreement and/or understanding of the offer they have given (salary, benefits, other compensation, starting date, vacations, etc.), this way any discrepancies can be straightened out before even starting for the job.

Always find a way to make it as personalized as possible. Try to think out of the box, you may even adapt what you have observed the interviewer has in the office during the interview. Sending an article that you think the interviewer could be interested in is also another suggestion.

Whatever method you use, make it fast and professional.

Positively Thinking Out of the Box

How can one person "think out of the box?" This should be done independently, but how? Here's an example: Cut a cake into eight slices but you have to make no more than three cuts. Most people will have trouble coming up with a way to cut the cake. But to solve this,

you have to change the way you look at the cake and how to cut it. One perfect solution is to cut the cake into two equal sizes and put the other half on top of the other. Cut it again in half then stack the other half pieces on top of one another and cut them again. There you go, that's thinking out of the box.

Another example of thinking out of a box is this: Here are four words... subtract, multiply, add, decrease... Now which one does not belong to the group? Mostly people would right away say that the word "decrease" does not belong. Why? Because all the other three words are mathematical jargons and the latter is not. Well, that's not thinking out of the box, if you think out of the box, the answer would be the word "add" since it only has three letters while all the other have six and more. You could give a lot of right answers but the one that shows more creativity stands out.

The prevailing component in the way our minds work is inserting some changes from past experiences and processes. Another good sample is when you are asked two days that starts with the letter "T". Your answer would probably be Tuesday and Thursday. Hey, how about Tomorrow and Today? Well, that is out of the box all right.

Companies try to test a new product and are sure they are getting a

design at a reasonable cost. They look at things in the business and think that objectives will work just as planned. But these things sound monotonous already, for they only think using the past as patterns. Patterns are helpful since they help finish tasks such as driving, eating or drinking. However, these are the same patterns that make it hard for people to think out of the box and create alternative solutions to a dilemma especially when challenged with unwanted data.

One important move to break the pattern is trying to reverse patterns, designs or solutions and arouse new interest. Take thing as they are and turn them inside out, upside down, or simply turn them around and you'll be surprised with the result. This was Henry Ford's personal experience. His conventional plan was to just "bring people to work." He tried to change all this into: "bring work to the people." This plan generated more revenues.

Another way to bring out other solutions to simple problems and situations is to not think about the subject. If you want to bring about something more creative, think not of the part of the problem itself, rather, think of people or subjects in motion and then use the abstract formation or design as a stimulus for a new design.

But to think out of the box, never shy away from the fact that some of your ideas could really be crazy enough. This could break rigidity of thinking and present a way to sift the harebrained and irrational. This gives the thinker more freedom to think out of the box and reinvent things in way they have never been arranged before. What you could do is list several odd or absurd ideas about a certain problem.

Letting go of the question will release the stress you are undergoing by trying to "squeeze" the creativity. Once you let it go, all the power of the universe is free to find a solution and the solution will come to you when you least expect it.

In much more real life scenarios, you could think out of the box for fun. You can practice fun trouble-making stuff without hurting anyone by saying or doing the unexpected. But make sure that you do this first to persons you already know to avoid conflicts and negative confrontations. Say, a buddy asks for the time, automatically you would look at your wrist watch which is a result of the stimulus-response theory. Thinking out of the box, why not say something crazy like, "Oh it's time for a vengeance," then head toward the door. Watch their reaction as they go into total confusion and trance as you have totally mixed things up in their heads and interrupted their

thinking pattern. (Don't forget to apologize afterwards)

Thinking out of the Box or usually known as creative thinking seeks to design new and really creative arrangement of elements to produce a work of art. Being an out of the box thinker can be a rewarding profession. This is dangerous, but it could be one of your strengths in no time. If the herd is going to the right, you go the other way.

Remember that you could be genius in your own way. Your thoughts come from deep reaches and these totally different ideas are clever enough to make a difference in the end. Being creative and out of the box is wild sometimes, but could move you through growth and self-development. You'll be surprised at how easy and differently it will be for you to fix and try to solve things away from the tried-and-true habits. Let your thinking out of the old box be your guide to a new and better, wonderful approach to life.

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