

RUNNING HEAD: Career Development

Basic Career Development Skills Training

International Care and Community Development

By Tricia Burt
Master's Thesis Project
Northwest University ICCD
Dr. Forrest Inslee
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Introduction

I was laid off at the peak of the economic crisis from a cushy high-paying job in the financial industry – a job which I absolutely hated. Ironically, at the time I was laid off, I was in the middle of my Master’s Degree with an emphasis on career development strategies and training. The circumstances provided me with firsthand experience within the world of unemployment and all the stress and anxiety that goes with it.

Besides relieving the stress of unemployment or dissatisfaction, there are four main reasons why I am driven to promote quality career development for individuals: a) to challenge humankind to be good stewards of our time, money, and resources, b) to celebrate each person’s unique purpose within each culture and to generate an understanding of the weightiness of discovering one’s identity, c) career development serves as a holistic approach to serving individuals by discovering productive and enjoyable ways to provide for basic needs, d) career development releases the oppressed by providing improved options and resources for employment and education.

In the 1970s, a common man named Vince Papale became an American hero at age 30 when he joined the Philadelphia Eagles as the oldest rookie. The 70s proved to be tough economic years due to the oil crises and inflation, but Papale’s story inspired Americans to cast vision beyond their struggles. Papale wasn’t planning on a high profile football career; in the 70s, many people simply hoped for any career at all. There are many people in history who’ve

risen above economic downfalls, generational poverty, and physical challenges in order to build the life no one had expected of them. Many people in the United States today need an American hero fairytale story to cling to for hope of a brighter future. My goal is not to create fairytales or to fashion heroes out of the rough - episodic encouragement that flickers out with the fads. My goal is to help people recognize that, like Vince Papale, each individual has talents, experiences, and uniqueness that, when exposed and cultivated, can jumpstart a future that has so far been a distant dream.

As intelligible keepers of an imperfect and vacillating world, we must be good stewards of our limited resources. If a person believes that God has created each of us uniquely, within a culture, in this century, this decade, with these abilities, we must learn to recognize what He would like us to do with these abilities; we must not allow them to be buried deep within ourselves, untapped and uncultivated (Groody, 2007).

There is always a standing option to do nothing with what we have. However, we can also do a lot which amounts to nothing. Brian McLaren uses a metaphor of the suicide machine, "... the systems that drive our civilization toward un-health and un-peace" (p. 53). It's a cycle that starts with traveling information, sparked interest, equity, greed, and the need for security to protect all the plunder. The cycle continues as long as each individual participates. Thomas Friedman (1999) refers to the information insurgency among the world as the ever-growing economic herd. As long as the herd sticks together, then McLaren's suicide machine is in control. When a few stragglers decide to take a different approach, they will either cause a rift in the expansion process, be demolished by the herd, or simply get left behind. The challenge

then, is knowing what it takes to successfully carve a new path, one that is healthy, productive, and successful – for the one and only me (and you).

Understanding identity starts with cultural awareness. For example, in Africa, a person's identity is wrapped carefully in the web of relationships and community, to the extent that, as Long (2000) states, "Alienation from the family community often brings death or illness..." (p. 100). Americans, however, fall into the individualism side of Hofstede's indices (2005). Africans find their life's purpose in community, but Americans are driven to personal success and individual freedoms. If lack of community could bring death to an African's identity, then an unsuccessful, freedom-starved American may be hanging from his or her last rope. As long as there are opposite sides of the identity coin, the best way to leverage identity is the belief that each person is on earth *with* a worthy purpose, *for* a worthy purpose. Wolterstorff (2008) argued that treating people according to their worth is not due to obligation but rather out of desire to receive equal treatment. He stated, "Human beings have worth. Respect for their worth requires that they be treated certain ways. Those ways of being treated are what they have a right to. Correlative to those rights are obligations. Hence obligations are also grounded in what respect for worth requires" (p. 374-375). Career development skills provide options, generate hope, fashion equality, and increase the basis of worth.

When I experienced losing my job due to a layoff, my first reaction was embarrassment; why me? It felt as though I had been betrayed, a woman scorned. I was relating my identity to my current job position. I felt lost, discouraged and at times, hopeless. I almost felt like a failure. It took prayer, focus, and consideration before I acknowledged that the situation could not have been prevented through my performance. Each culture will react differently when

identifying factors are stripped away. Instead of wallowing in self-pity for a situation that was out of my control, I decided to take a new direction. I was ready to see the bigger picture and perhaps witness a new chapter in my life. A new life can begin!

When an individual gains a solid understanding of his or her identity, the next step is discovering productive and fulfilling ways to provide for basic needs (Sabatino, 2004, p. 4-5). Career development serves as a holistic approach to serving individuals by focusing on natural strengths, goals, and interests coupled with life experience and education for the purpose of finding desirable employment which will provide income. During my period of unemployment, I took a personality assessment at WorkSource called *True Colors* which helped me understand the unique ways I interact with people in relationships, conflicts, at work, and at home. At the end of the assessment, I was given a list of careers that may fit best with my personality and interests. I happened to already know what I wanted as a career, and according to the personality assessment, it fit me like a glove. However, many people struggle with just the very thought of having career options to choose from, let alone an avenue to make those options a reality. All aspects of an individual's personality contribute to optimum job satisfaction and must be taken into consideration.

Career development releases the oppressed by providing improved options and resources for employment and education. People often see the bloom of a person's career but never consider the seed it started from. The majority of people who are living their dream job started from scratch and worked their way up the ladder with determination. However, many of the working poor live in the vicious cycle of poverty, doing the work their parents did, with

little education - no one leads the way out. Additionally, with globalization on the rise, many companies opt to outsource lower skill positions for low wages in other countries, leaving uneducated and unskilled Americans without options. A lack of education and known resources makes it nearly impossible for impoverished Americans to advance in a globalizing world. Ron and Anil Hira (2005) stated, "We need to overhaul the systems that identify and help displaced workers, and we need to track their outcomes. That means that we need to spend significant resources on programs whose singular focus is to get people back to work" (p. 181). If Americans living in poverty have little opportunity to advance technologically, and they are not provided opportunities to learn a trade at the high school level, they are likely to struggle financially for a substantial part of their lifetime – possibly their entire life. With consideration of the culture of local communities, educational programs with practical values could be implemented for the working poor in light of their future vocational options.

My job as a community-focused career development strategist is to partner with organizations to provide solutions to glitches in the present systems which are designed to help the working poor, and to implement new systems based on the needs of local communities. My goal is to continue developing a career coaching organization that functions as a bridge between economic and educational opportunities for the working poor, and which implements new methods of educational funding for poor Americans through the government or companies that need trained workers. It is my deepest desire that the materials within this workbook serve as tools to help you move forward in professional successfulness, sustainability and satisfaction. May you find the willingness to push forward when all seems lost, and may all the best of life become your possibility.

“Opportunity is missed by most people because it is dressed in overalls and looks like work.”

- *Thomas A Edison*

Choosing a Career

Introduction

Now is the time to get down to the nitty-gritty with your job search process. The introduction to this workbook serves as motivation and encouragement that you are capable and deserving of a career that suits your skills and interests. In the following sections, we will begin a more direct, guided approach for how to win the job you want. Take a deep breath. Remember, your hard work will pay off!

For most people, the majority of our waking hours are spent at work. We carry our baggage, hard times and good times into our work day because they are all a part of who we are. We aren't always joyful and delighted to walk through the doors at work, but the key is to have or create an environment at work where you can feel like what you do and who you are matters. This is your job, your life. Make it count!

How do you know what jobs are right for you?

Growing up, we decide our fate based on how good we look in our fireman costume, how well we play Operation, command the Army of our little green men, or how attentively we care for our dolls. For me, I decided to be a teacher because I loved bossing around my little brother, making him do homework and disciplining him for "talking in class." 25 years later, I am not the teacher I envisioned. Sometimes others decide for us what we will do for a living. Family members, social class, income levels, and even zip codes may determine what kinds of jobs we are "qualified" for (Galisky & Nuxoll, 2011, p. 11-12). However, the truth – the bottom line – is that you are the only one who lives your life. No one else can legally accept, decline, or be fired from a job in your place. You are the only person who will ever fully know how it feels to be you, to go through what you've gone through. Herbert Gans (1995) stated,

“Talking down to people, judging them, or taking away resources will not work, because it will not change the context in which they live nor improve the conditions under which they suffer” (qtd. in Beegle, 2007, p. 61). My encouragement to you is that you are not alone in your struggle. The keys to meaningful, successful employment are determination and confidence.

Ask yourself, what it is that others do that make you feel appreciated and valued? Then ask yourself what you do to show others that you appreciate and value them. For the best job satisfaction, the items on this list are the characteristics you need in your job and workplace (Kanchier, 2000, p. 181).

People will find more satisfaction in their professional lives if at least 1/3 of their job responsibilities involved doing things that made a difference to someone. If money wasn't an issue, what would you do with your time that would benefit others? This question helps you consider things that you *enjoy* doing which you could be paid to do. The world revolves around the needs and wants of people. Think about it this way: most accountants are ordinary people who enjoy numbers - they get paid for solving money issues for others. Teachers want to impact the lives of young people, and skilled organizers may work as event planners or office managers. What do you like to do? What do you know about? What are you good at? How can you use your talents to benefit those around you? Think of the things that make you tick – and then think about jobs that involve doing those things (Smith, 1999, p. 157).

Next, consider the environment in which you want to work. Choose a workplace that provides an atmosphere that will offer you the feedback you need. You can find this out by browsing the company's website, mission statement, and history of success, and asking people who work there. You may also ask questions during an *interview* that will help you decipher if the workplace provides a quality work environment that you will enjoy. With that said, do your part in adding to the positivity of your workplace by showing up with the best of your ability, with integrity, always putting your best foot forward.

Know your Strengths

Personality Assessments

At some time in your life, you may have taken a survey or quiz that was designed to help you discover your personal strengths. These tests are called “personality assessments,” and they are helpful in your job search because they help illuminate the relationship between your skills, personality, learning style, adaptability, interests, and give you a list of professions that are a best fit for your unique personality (Moses, 2003, p. 14-15). Isabel Briggs Myers, cofounder of the Myers-Briggs Foundation for discovering personality types stated, “Whatever the circumstances of your life, the understanding of type can make your perceptions clearer, your judgments sounder, and your life closer to your heart’s desire” (2011).

The great thing about personality assessments is that there is no right or wrong *answer*, just like there is no right or wrong *you*. There are several reputable personality assessments available. I encourage you to research personality assessments online or ask your local library or college career center to point you in the right direction.

Creating Your Mission Statement

Once you’ve finished your personality assessment, begin considering the people, possessions, activities, and causes that are most important to you. At the end of your life, what would you want said about you? What are your major accomplishments? – not just what you said you would do, but what you *actually* do! On a blank sheet of paper, write a list of all the things that come to mind. Let go of inhibitions and be real with yourself. Commit to working your way into a career that helps you complete your goals and build upon your life satisfaction. Despite where you’ve been, the rest of your life is a blank slate! Make a statement (FranklinCovey.com, 2011).

Job Search Preparations

Introduction

When filling out an online application, nothing is worse than having to stop halfway through because you're missing pertinent information, and realize you're unable to save your work. Maximize your time by gathering all of your pertinent data prior to beginning your job search. You may not use all the information listed in these directions, however, you will ultimately save time and avoid interrupting your process by following these instructions. Additionally, with all necessary data at your disposal, you will fully visualize all experiences that may be beneficial to your job search.

To begin, create an accessible storage space for your job search process, such as a clearly labeled file folder. Keep your workbook or folder stored in a safe place that is easy to remember.

Print a current hard copy sample of your resume and cover letter and make extra copies of each. Printed copies allow you to track your progress as you make correctional marks on the documents. If you have the technological capabilities, scan or save the originals on your computer or a storage device for your records.

Get a highlighter, black ink pens, sticky notes, and a notebook. You'll need a highlighter to feature essential information on the job posting. Black ink is more professional and works better for faxing and photo copies. You'll use a notebook to keep track of the details of your job search, using sticky notes to mark pages. Always have your notebook and a pen in front of you when you make calls about jobs. Keep check-off lists handy and write down what you want to ask or say before you call.

Personal Information

Keeping all of your information in one place maintains organization and easy accessibility. Using the space provided in this workbook, jot down the following information:

Email

If you do not already have an email account, create one. Take advantage of the free websites available online (e.g. Yahoo, Hotmail, Google). Your old email address from the tenth grade “Hotbod83,” with all its sentimental and social value, will simply not do. Elevate professionalism by using a neutral, professional email name (i.e. a combination of your first and last name), even if you only use this email address for your job search purposes. Don’t forget to check your email regularly.

Phone Number and Mailing Address

Use a reliable phone number and mailing address for your job search. Use them consistently during your job search process.

Employment History

List your past 5 jobs, starting with the most recent. Include the following information:

1. Name of company of employment
2. City and state where employed with this company
3. Dates of employment, month/year to month/year (if you are presently employed there, write “present” over the end date spaces)
4. Your job title
5. Five short and descriptive main tasks (include special training you received while employed)

Education

If applicable, list your formal education starting with high school through college. List any training classes or schools you've attended for training purposes. Include the following:

1. Name of school
2. City and state of school
3. Your major
4. Degree received (GED, Certifications, AAUCT, BA, MA, DR)
5. Enrollment dates (month/year to month/year)

Qualifications

List 10 qualities that you possess that make you the best candidate available for the position. Consider the essential qualities of the type of job you want. Are you organized? Are you timely? Do you pay attention to detail? Do you work well in a team setting? Do you provide great customer service? These are great questions to ask yourself in this process. Be honest with yourself; do you have the abilities you say you have? If not, how will you acquire them?

Volunteer Experience

List any volunteer experience in the past 5-7 years. This may include coaching your son's basketball team, organizing a golf tournament, participating in a fundraiser competition, volunteering at a food bank, church mission trips, etc. If you cannot recall any volunteer experiences, consider visiting a community services agency or a local church to find out how you can serve your community. Not only is this great life experience, but it demonstrates your willingness to be selfless.

Interests

List a few things that you enjoy doing with your free time. This may include sports activities, reading, cooking, spending time with friends and family, home improvement projects, traveling, etc. As a method

to learn more about you as a person, you may be asked in an interview how you like to spend your free time. This is usually to determine your personal values. Even the easiest answers can slip your mind when you have to think on the spot. Now is a good time to start jotting down the small details.

References

Many times, your references are the key to your hiring success, so choose carefully! When asking permission to your references, let them know where you're applying and for which position. Be upfront; tell them which specific qualities you would like them to discuss about you. Eliminate their imposition by offering as much information as you can. Allow them an opportunity to express any feedback for you. Don't take feedback lightly, but consider what is said and glean whatever you can in order to better your experience in your job search process.

List four references (two personal and two professional). Here are some guidelines for carefully choosing your references:

1. No family members
2. These are people you feel comfortable asking to use as references for employment
3. You must ask them for permission *before* using them as a reference
4. Choose references whom you can trust to give the most professional and satisfactory review
5. For every reference (even personal) gather the following:
 - a. First and last name
 - b. Place of employment
 - c. Job title
 - d. Reliable email and phone number

Job Search Skills

You've cracked your knuckles, stretched a few times, paced the floor, and attempted yet again to search for the perfect job. Still, the listings are endless, non-descriptive, even shady. You may find yourself hoping for a way to sift through the muck to find a gem. On the other hand, you may have found the perfect job but haven't a clue how to really show them you have what it takes. In this section, you will learn how to find the right job listings for you, and what to look for in each job posting.

Where to Look

Online Search Engines

The internet is the fastest way to find out who's hiring; the trick is knowing where to look. Your most successful searches will be on the actual websites for the companies you wish to work for. Look for the Careers or Employment tab on their websites. When you reach the "search" line, start with specific keywords. If you're unsuccessful, use more general words that still represent what you are looking for.

If you're unsure what company you want to work for, try using an online search engine. Most online search engines have a broad scope, combining smaller, more specific search engines into one giant list of hundreds of careers in countless cities and states. These giant search engines, such as *indeed.com* and *monster.com*, are helpful if you want to explore several career choices in your area or have the option to relocate.

Online search engines are by far the most convenient method of job searching, however, they can sometimes provide unclear information. It's important to know what to look for in order to find the diamond in the rough (Dikel & Roehm, 2009, p. 5).

Employment Agencies

Carefully reading job postings saves time and energy. I can't even count the number of times I've applied to a job ad and received a response from an employment agency recruiter when I expected contact from a representative of the company to which I applied. I was caught off guard when I realized that the time I spent on that application wasn't for a specific job but an ad for paid services. This isn't to say that employment agencies don't serve a very useful purpose; they do! However, some of their ads can be misleading. And the truth is, most employment agencies that use vague wording or withhold information on job postings are agencies that charge a fee for their services. This is a typical scenario: Let's say you reply to a job ad and receive a call back (usually fairly quickly) for a meeting. Sometimes the recruiter explains his purpose over the phone, but may not mention the cost for his services. You set a time for a meeting, which may easily be mistaken as a job interview. However, the initial meeting is usually a presentation to entice you to pay their agency to search for a job for you. They may have a few companies that pay their employment agency to find employees. Often, these agencies only get paid when they find employees in their pool of options.

Employment agencies, like all businesses, have a few lemons in the bunch. Some are just there to make a buck or two. Many provide excellent service, successfully helping people find work that fits their skills and interests. If you are contacted by a recruiter from an employment agency, ask specific questions before meeting, including costs, fees, expectations, and services provided. Be sure of what your meeting is about. Asking questions will save you time and energy.

These are tips to tell whether a job posting is set up through an employment agency:

- The job ad does not include any specific information about the job
- The ad implicates more than one opening for one position or job title

- The name of the company represented on the ad is unknown or may include Group, Recruiter, Agency, or Temp

Location, Location, Location

Organizations like WorkSource are extremely useful resources where you can find help for your job search. They offer several classes to jump start your process, helpful staff, computers available for job searching, and an abundance of local resource materials. Your local library, community center, or city center will have information for local employment resources like temp agencies, unemployment services, free tips and classes.

Go to the location of the places you want to work and find the human resources representative to ask about available jobs. They will likely direct you to check their website. However, inquiring in person allows for the possibility of gathering additional information, tips, or advice from HR representatives. As you present yourself with comfortability and professionalism, the hiring staff is more likely to offer you further guidance. Rather than ask “Are you hiring?” use an open-ended question which allows for more description, such as “What jobs are available?” While you’re there, notice your surroundings. How are the employees dressed? What is their general mood? Does the environment seem inviting? Does this seem like the kind of place you want to be everyday for work? It is important to consider these things as you apply for jobs and before you arrive for an interview so you can better prepare yourself.

Do Your Homework

Research the company website. *Research*, meaning study the website, read their mission statement, click on the history tab and read their story. Familiarize yourself with the company, business, or organization where you want to work. Be mindful of what they represent; consider whether you agree

with their mission and if you want to be part of it. By doing your homework, you will be better prepared during the interview, able to demonstrate interest in who they are and what they do.

How to Read a Job Ad

Highlight Key Words

Thoroughly read the job posting, highlighting all pertinent information and key words most applications are now online, (see the Online Applications section of the Job Search Skills chapter for more information). In the job posting, note the requested method of contact and follow directions. On a separate sheet of paper draw a vertical line down the center. In one column, list all the key terms you've found in the job ad. In the other column, list your matching skills and experiences (refer to your notes from the Preparations chapter).

Notice patterns in the key words. Group the qualifications and job responsibilities listed in the ad into categories. For example, if the job requires a team player, good attitude, communication skills, and project experience, all of those characteristics may be listed together under your "team work" category. When preparing your resume and cover letter, consider your team work experience. Match your experience with the job ad.

Follow Directions

Do they ask you to apply online, phone, email, in person? On your note sheet, jot down the application directions and requested method of contact, then follow through with it. This illustrates your ability to follow directions at an early stage in the process. Employers give these instructions to stay organized, save time, and judge an applicant's ability to pay attention to detail.

Point of Contact

You may come across job postings that do not list a contact name. They may even ask for no phone calls

regarding the job. Is it ok to call to get the name of the individual(s) to whom you should address your cover letter? The answer is yes. If you cannot locate the name of a point of contact on the job posting, you may find a phone number for the company's human resources department on the internet. When you call, tell the receptionist which ad you're applying for, and simply ask for the name of the individual to whom you should address your cover letter. If there is no contact name and no company listed, you may want to reconsider applying to work there. Do some research to gain more information about the company listing the job ad.

Online Applications

These days, most job applications are found online. Hospitals, government service, and giant corporations like Boeing or Microsoft don't offer paper applications at all. That's why it's essential to use the same terminology used in the job posting. Computer-dictated key word searches select the most automatically match key terms from the posting and your application, then electronically send them to the next level eliminating the rest.

Resumes

Introduction

The key to writing your resume and cover letter is professionalism and tact. You're shooting for concise, direct flow of thought, eye catching headings, and attention to detail.

Writing is intimidating for many people, it may be for you. We're going to break it down to the step-by-step process. The amazing part of writing a resume is realizing how much your life experiences really do contribute to its content. Many people have the misconception that the only information they can add to their resume is school, jobs, and volunteer work. The truth is that your life is full of experiences! The key is finding the relevance of your life experience to the job for which you apply.

Now is the time to gather all the notes from your job search preparations, grab a pen and paper, find a spot near a computer and put your thinking cap on. By now, you've printed out your favorite job postings and highlighted key terms, required qualifications, job responsibilities, and application instructions.

Content

First of all, tell the truth. Embellishments on your resume can come back to haunt you in an interview. Robert McGovern, Jobfox Advantage Program CEO and founder of CareerBuilder.com, stated, "While there's a tremendous temptation to "smooth" things over [on your resume], my first bit of advice is to be honest and upfront. Nothing will kill your candidacy for a job faster than having a mistruth discovered during the interview process" (2008). Start with what you know about yourself.

There are two kinds of experience: official and unofficial. Official experiences have paper-trail proof, such as a diploma, employment records, or a certificate of completion. Official experiences carry a lot of

weight on a resume but they are definitely not the only importance. Unofficial experiences include the efforts of a homemaker, whose proof of employment is the wellbeing of her family and daily care of her household, or a carpenter building high quality furniture in his garage just for fun. Unofficial experiences should never be taken lightly – you’ve gained priceless knowledge and transferrable skills from your commitment to your hobbies, pursuing your goals, researching your interests, caring for others and serving your community (Krannich, 2006, p. 79-80).

To avoid age discrimination, document years of experience in terms of collective numbers (e.g. 3 years) rather than actual dates (e.g. 1996-2007). Discrimination is an unfortunate part of human nature. Job seekers are commonly discriminated against due to age; though illegal, age discrimination is difficult to prove. Protect yourself by eliminating dates on your resumes and save photos for your portfolio only.

Format

Fonts

The format should be clearly organized and enticing. Use simple fonts without much detail, rather than cursive or monospaced (typewriter) fonts. Monospaced fonts with “hands and feet” create even spaces between lettering, requiring more space (e.g. In the following sentence, notice the ornamentations on the top and bottom of the letters T K H and L: The tea kettle is hot.). Additionally, cursive and monospaced fonts are less likely to photocopy clearly. For best results, use one font style throughout your Resume and cover letter, with a font size of 10-12 in the body of your resume, up to size 14 for headings (Washington & Kanter, 2009, p. 100-101).

Headings

Headings are used to direct the reader to your main ideas. They should be bolder than the rest of the typing. Use a maximum of two to three headings, with a combination of size, bold, and italic. For your

main header (at the top of the document) include your name using your largest font size of 14, bold.

Under your name, include your contact information in the same size as the body of your resume or one size larger (see examples on pages 26-28).

Profiles and Summaries

You may include a summary or objective paragraph at the top of your resume. Nicholas Lore, founder of Rockport Institute, stated, “This first sentence conveys some very important and powerful messages: ‘I want exactly the job you are offering. I am a superior candidate because I recognize the qualities that are most important to you, and I have them’” (2003). In two sentences or less, give the employer the bare bones basics about who you are and why you are qualified for the job.

Helpful Hints for Content

- Bulleting your main points is an eye-catching and organized way to present your information with clarity. Use small bullets to identify short, descriptive phrases under clear headings.
- Free resume templates can be found online. Use trusted sites such as Microsoft Online.
- Text boxes are helpful to organize your Resume. Using Microsoft Word, you can create text boxes without borders that can be easily maneuvered to help you utilize the space on the page.
- Use narrow margins (1”) when necessary.

Resume Styles

There are three main Resume styles; each layout emphasizes information differently.

Chronological Resumes feature a timeline of experiences. This style is an overview of what you’ve done more so than the skills you gained.

Use Chronological Resumes:

- For job seekers without gaps in employment history
- When searching for entry-level positions
- Applying for jobs for which you are over qualified
- For general use, such as posting on job search websites
- When applying for college

Functional Resumes feature areas of expertise. A functional resume exemplifies skill more than history.

Use Functional Resumes:

- When searching for an experienced position
- When applying for college
- For jobs in a specific profession, role, or with special responsibilities
- For people with several recent past jobs
- For senior citizens
- For people with breaks in employment (significant time between jobs)

Combination Resumes feature a timeline of experiences and emphasize areas of expertise. This style may become lengthy and confusing however organized. The key to using a combination resume is word economy; say what you need to say using the least amount of wording. As always, only include information pertinent to the job for which you apply.

Use Combination Resumes:

- For people with few past jobs
- For first-time job seekers
- For people with little official and unofficial experience
- For people with breaks in employment (significant time between jobs)

Choosing your Resume Style

Certainly, we all have different levels and lengths of experience. After carefully reading the job posting, determine how detailed the job requirements and qualifications are. The more detailed the job posting, the more likely you will need to showcase your skills rather than a chronological job history. Match them detail for detail.

For example, John has a long employment history solely in construction. He started from the bottom working his way to site manager. He can build anything and everything – there isn't one tool untried or blueprint unstudied. Last year, his employees voted him Manager of the Year. With the economy in a recession and the construction industry hard hit, he's having a hard time finding work. He applies for a job at Boeing, the largest employer in his area. He finds a job ad that asks for experience in electric and hand held tools, listing each by type. The job also requires team leadership skills and project management experience. John's best choice is a functional resume. His work history is within the same field. A functional resumes will better exemplify the skills he's gained through his history rather than list his responsibilities at each specific job.

Jane, on the other hand, has dabbled in several different careers, gaining experience. She started as a waitress in high school, working retail during college, and helping her mother with bookkeeping for the family business, unpaid. She's looking for a part-time job while she finishes her degree. She sees an ad for an administrative assistant position in a dental office, requiring customer service skills, organization, and computer proficiency. The short job ad only offers basic information and instructions for applying. Jane's best choice for a resume style is chronological or combination. She has had two official jobs and one unofficial. She can list the jobs she's held, listing experiences which match the job posting requirements. Her bookkeeping job can either be listed under volunteer work *or* employment history. With only a few jobs to list, she has room to elaborate using a combination resume style, if she chooses.

(Functional Resume Sample)**JOHN DOE**

(C) 206-555-3344 • John.Doe@Email.com • 11535 Broadway Road #450 • Jobland, WA 98001

PROFESSIONAL EXPERIENCE**Power Tool Experience**

- Radial arm compound miter saw
- Table saw
- Bandsaw
- Skill saw
- Lathe
- Power drills
- Impact drills
- Disk sanders
- Belt sanders
- Jigsaw

Hand Tools and Mechanical Experience

- Study and Interpret blueprints
- Follow instructions in manuals
- Laser level
- Transit
- Computing
- Hand level
- Sockets and Wrenches
- Speed square
- Scribe
- Precision measuring tools

Management Experience

- Team coordination and project management
- Meticulous attention to detail
- Problem solving
- Natural motivator
- PowerPoint presentations
- Delegation
- Performance management meetings

WORK HISTORY

Project Manager, Jobland Valley Contractors, 7 years
Construction, Self Employed, Jobland, WA, 18 years
Facilitator, Thorough Built, Jobland, WA, 3 years
Laborer, Tom Lowe Construction, Jobland, WA, 2 years

EDUCATION

Construction Management, SVC, Mount Vernon, WA

(Chronological Resume Sample)**JANE DOE**

(C) 206-555-2233 • Jane.Doe@Email.com • 11535 Broadway Road #201 • Jobland, WA 98001

WORK HISTORY**Waitress • *Sunny Side Up* • 2 Years**

- Happily greeting and seating customers
- Taking orders and abiding by requests
- Multi-tasking
- Efficiency working under stress in a fast-paced environment

Sales Associate • *The Market* • 3 Years

- Assisting guests in the fitting room
- Accuracy at the register
- Helping customers find what they need

EDUCATION

Jobland University • BA in Communication, in progress

VOLUNTEER EXPERIENCE**Bookkeeper • *Doe Family Learning* • 3 Years**

- Managed the monthly ledger and tracked expenditures
- sensitive confidentiality regarding client information
- Assisted with fund raising, editing all correspondence; extensive experience with Microsoft Office programs including PowerPoint

QUALIFICATIONS

- Outstanding organizational and communication skills
- Commitment to confidentiality
- Notary Public appointed, bonded (expires 11/20/2010)
- Self-motivated, excellent with multi-tasking and team work
- Proficiency operating computer programs such as Microsoft Word, Excel, Publisher, Outlook, and PowerPoint

(Combination Style Sample)**Jane Doe**

(C) 206-555-2233 • Jane.Doe@Email.com • 11535 Broadway Road #201 • Jobland, WA 98001

PROFILE

I am a natural motivator, enthusiastic, organized, dependable, friendly, and a great team player. With five years of experience in the customer service industry, I understand the complexities of cutting edge quality assurance, time management, working under pressure.

PROFESSIONAL EXPERIENCE**Customer Service**

Waitress, Sunny Side Up / Jobland, WA / 2 years

Sales Associate, The Market / Jobland, WA / 3 years

Five years experience in customer service; food services; maintaining a high level of professionalism in tense situations; providing thorough and professional customer service to clients and customers; multi-tasking; positive and upbeat personality

Administrative Service

Bookkeeper, Doe Family Learning / Jobland, WA / Volunteer 3 years

Managed the monthly ledger; tracked expenditures; sensitive confidentiality regarding client information, finances and health; created award certificates with Microsoft Publisher; assisted with fund raising, editing all correspondence; extensive experience with Microsoft Office programs including PowerPoint, PageMaker, Word, Outlook and Excel

ACTIVITIES AND VOLUNTEER EXPERIENCE

Notary Public Appointed / 2006 - 2010

Bookkeeping, Doe Family Learning / 2009 - Present

EDUCATION

B.A. Communication, in progress / Jobland University

Cover Letters

Introduction

A cover letter should always accompany your resume – consider them a package deal with few exceptions. While your resume is a list of your accomplishments which indicate your aptitude for the job, your cover letter is your opportunity to explain why you deserve it. It also portrays your ability to communicate effectively in writing. Keep it simple and direct, because employers often won't spend time sifting through wordiness. If you feel that you need space for more creativity, consider creating a portfolio including a biography (see the Portfolio chapter).

Key Terms

The first step to writing your cover letter is thoroughly reading the job posting, highlighting all pertinent information and key words. You should use the same wording in your cover letter and resume as found in the posting. This helps the employer see the relevance of your knowledge and experience. Also, as most applications are now online, the computer will automatically match key terms from the posting and your application, weeding out those with least relevance (see the Online Applications section of the Job Search Skills chapter for more information). In the job posting, note the requested method of contact and follow directions. On a separate sheet of paper, list all the key terms you've found in the job ad in one column. In another column, list your matching skills and experiences. Then jot down the application directions and requested method of contact (Enelow & Kursmark, 2010, p. 69).

Edit your Work

Grammatical errors indicate a lack of attention to detail to employers. Before submitting your resume and cover letter, always check your grammar by using spell-check on the computer and print the

document so you can mark it for editing. Spell-check often misses grammatical errors, and reading from a computer screen can be deceiving. You are most likely to catch small errors when you print the document to read and physically mark the paper with edits. After you've edited your work, have someone you trust with excellent grammatical skills check your document as well (Noble, 2007, p. 8). If you don't know anyone who is capable of editing your document, take it to your local library for assistance.

Pertinent Information & Structure

For more details about pertinent information, refer to the *How to Read a Job Ad* section of the *Job Search Skills* chapter.

The following basic information is essential to include in your letter:

1. Your contact information
2. The name of the contact person
3. A greeting and salutation
4. Where you found the job ad (including job title) and the listing ID number
5. Who referred you, if applicable
6. Salary and benefits requirement, if applicable
7. A short synopsis of how your skills match the job
8. Similar terminology as the job ad
9. The time and date that you will follow up
10. A request to meet
11. A thank-you for their time
12. Your signature

Basic cover letters are characteristically formatted like a business letter. You may also match the letterhead to your resume, including your name and contact information. Generally, cover letters include three short paragraphs and may include bullet points to specify a relation between your qualifications and the job requirements (Enelow & Kursmark, 2007, p. 7-9). It is essential that you find the name of the person who will read your resume and cover letter and address it to that person. If the job posting doesn't include a name and requests no phone calls regarding the job, search the business website or visit the location and ask for the human resources department. Phrase your question something like this: "For professionalism, I'd like to address my cover letter to the correct person; who would that be?" Usually, no-call-requests are meant to protect the time of the employer; they would rather spend time answering questions in an interview with qualified individuals than over the phone with dozens of inquiries.

Before you begin writing, have your marked-up version of the job ad and your notes in front of you. Use the following sample to begin writing your own cover letter.

Your Name
1234 Greenleaf Ave
Greenleaf, NY 22334

January 1, 2010

Contact Name
Company Name
1234 Redleaf Ave
Redleaf, NY 22335

Dear Mr. Contact,

In the first paragraph, 2-3 sentences long, mention the job title for which you are applying, including the listing ID. If applicable, tell them who referred you. Tell them you are qualified for the position and excited about the potential of joining their team.

In the second paragraph, use the key words and phrases you've highlighted in the job posting to explain how your skills, education, personality, and experiences make you the best candidate for the job. This paragraph is typically 5-6 sentences; the longest of the three. This is also the space to include any additional information that pertains to the job that didn't fit into your resume.

In the third and final paragraph, thank them for their time and consideration. Tell them you look forward to discussing an opportunity for employment with their company or organization. Give them a date and time that you will follow up.

Sincerely,

(Sign)

Your Name

(Typed)

Creating Your Professional Portfolio

What is a Portfolio?

Think of a portfolio as a smart phone. Smart phones are shiny, compact superpowers. They make ordinary people into heroes with the touch of a finger. They have “apps” for everything. Whatever you need, anytime, anywhere, there’s an app for it. They are all encompassing; and with time, they only get better.

That’s what portfolios achieve for the common job searcher: they make you look better!

A portfolio is a one-stop-shop for employers to learn more about you; it is your ambassador (Thurlbeck, 2007, p. 7). Having access to all of your pertinent information in one place makes the employer’s job easier. It’s added flare to the resumes piling high on their desk. By presenting your portfolio during the first interview for the job you want most, you make a clear statement that 1) you’re willing to go above and beyond, 2) you have serious interest in the job, and 3) you’ve given special attention to showcasing the relevance of your skills and accomplishments to the job requirements. It may take time to pull together a superior portfolio, but your efforts are completely worth it. A great portfolio is not easily forgotten by fastidious employers (Campbell, et al., 2007, p. 6).

What does a Professional Portfolio include?

First of all, don’t be intimidated! You can create your own portfolio by purchasing a report cover at an office supply store (see examples of covers below). Prices typically range from \$2 to \$6 dollars, depending on the quality and characteristics of the cover. Your cover should include five to seven tabs. Often, cover manufacturers make it easy by providing directions within the packaging for designing your

own tab labels from your computer. As we learned in the resume writing section, you definitely want to computer generate all documents used in your application process.

You may also choose to visit a printing services store and have your documents professionally bound. This process is typically more expensive than purchasing a cover and printing documents yourself (ranging from \$7-15 per portfolio). Keep in mind that a bound book is not easily adjusted. Have your portfolio bound as close to your interview as possible to ensure that it is current. Call the printing services store for their expediency average for this type of printing.

Here's a checklist of documents you may wish to include in your portfolio (read the description of each in the paragraphs below the checklist):

- ✓ Your short professional biography
- ✓ Cover letter, specific to the job
- ✓ Resume, specific to the job
- ✓ Three professional references
- ✓ Two or three letters of reference on letterhead
- ✓ Work samples
- ✓ Volunteer samples (optional but encouraged)
- ✓ Professional headshot (Optional)

Professional Biography

How is a biography different from a resume, you may ask? Resumes are cut and dry; to the point. They are geared toward the job, providing a quick, ordered answer to the question of how your skills match the job requirements. Employers typically know what to expect in a resume. Biographies allow room for creativity and expression. They are geared toward *you* and offer a synopsis of who you are and what you're all about. Think of it as added flare.

Writing about yourself can be a tricky task. For some, it may seem that there isn't enough room on the paper to fit in everything they want to write. For others, however, writing about yourself may seem daunting. Follow these guidelines for keeping your biography simple and direct:

- Start with three things you want your employer to know about you (i.e., what you would do with your time if money wasn't an issue, personal goals, accomplishments).
- Make a list of three to five realistic ambitions and possible dates of completion
- Jot down a few volunteering experiences by year
- Narrow down your top three major accomplishments that portray your interests and skills
- Choose a quote that best describes your positive view on life, leadership, or courage

Creatively design your biography however you like, but the key is professionalism and simplicity with minimal colors, side bars, and fonts. Try searching online for templates. Microsoft Office Online is one website that offers free pre-designed templates for flyers, newsletters, and many others that may be used as a base design for your biography.

Resume and Cover Letter

In the Resume and Cover Letter sections of this workbook, we learned how to tailor resumes and cover letters to the job requirements listed in the job posting. Use these same concepts for your portfolio.

Special circumstances may allow for use of a more general resume or cover letter (i.e. for a school assignment) however, using general information for these documents doesn't fully offer specific descriptives for matching the relevance of your skills to the job requirements. The more specific you are, the better your chances are for being chosen for an interview.

Use the same formatting design for your resume and cover letter.

Professional References

Apply the principles listed in the Resume section of this workbook. You may include more than three references that will reflect upon your abilities as a quality employee (no family members). Type your references' information on a separate document using the same formatting design as your resume and cover letter.

Letters of Reference

Think of two or three people in your life that you have closely interacted with that you truly admire professionally. You may or may not be part of your career field or affluent in your familiar terminology or outside the scope of your understanding. Whatever they do in their area of expertise, they do well, and they have participated in and witnessed your efforts to succeed.

Letters of reference are best received when typed onto letterhead from the desk of the one referring you. If your reference is retired or doesn't have letterhead, they may create their own or type the document in a standard business letter format, similar to a cover letter.

Personalize your request for a letter of reference by asking in person or over the phone. Once your reference agrees to write your letter, provide a stamped envelope for the convenience of returning the document to you or offer your email address so they can scan the document and send it over the internet. Be as specific as possible to be respectful of their time; include some information about the job you are applying for and what points you would like them to address (these points should correspond to the requirements and qualities listed in the job ad). Allow enough notice for your references to complete your letters, and give them a "by-when" date which is early enough for you to include the letters in your portfolio. Send them one reminder via phone, email, or letter which includes the by-when date and thank them for their time.

Work and Volunteer Samples

Gather 3-5 pages worth of work samples that portray your best work. Work samples should be representative of skills that match the field of work you are looking for. They may include photos, graphs, tables, written documents, projects, project management experiences, collaborative efforts, etc. Consider purchasing document covers and photo sleeve pages to protect your work. Remember, your portfolio is designed to showcase you at your best; ask people you trust to give you honest feedback regarding the relevance of your work samples.

There is no one right way to feature your best work - countless types of jobs equal a plethora of work samples. To display your work samples in your portfolio, get creative while maintaining professionalism. For example, if you are searching for a high-profile graphic design job, stray away from using clip art and construction paper cut outs. If you don't have samples that are up to par, start now! Don't forget the value of feedback from successful people in the field.

Professional Headshot

A professional headshot is a shoulders-up photo taken of you by a photographer. In a headshot, you should wear appropriate business interview attire. If your last headshot was taken more than 5 years ago, it's time for a new one. No mullets, flamboyant colors, or polyester suits will do!

Interview Preparation

Introduction

What are employers looking for? The answer is simple: The right fit for the job. Employers consider how well they think you will work with the team, your commitment level, your teachability, and if your qualifications match the job responsibilities. Since the interviewer typically knows the team better than you do, the best you can do is demonstrate your ability to work well with others, communicate effectively, and remain positive and professional throughout the interview.

Be prepared. If you do everything within your power to get ready for the interview, take a deep breath and commit to clearly communicating your ability to join their team.

Listening & Speaking with Confidence

The key to a successful interview is confidence. If you don't feel confident, you probably don't appear to be. The great part about interviews is that you're there! Give yourself a pat on the back and breathe easy! Then get serious about practicing your interview.

Have someone take a video of a mock interview between you and a friend. Watch your mannerisms; do you fumble over your words, look them in the eye, use your hands to talk, and does your outfit look professional? Are you prepared for their questions, or do they hit you like deer in the headlights? When listening to an interviewer, it's ok to ask them to repeat what they said if it was unclear. Better to ask than to answer the wrong question and waste everyone's time. Take a quick moment to think about

how you will answer their questions if you're unsure. Sit up! Look at the person who is speaking. Keep your hands in your lap or folded on the desk to avoid nail-biting or fidgeting. Smile.

Helpful hint: If all else fails, look down at your notes and at the job posting. You're bound to see something relevant pop out at you.

What do I Wear?

Interviewers should remember your skills more than your clothes. Make an impression by coming prepared, be on your game – and leave the 70s blue polyester suit and miniskirt in the darkest part of your closet. Your attire should be dark and neutral colors, clean cut and well fitting.

Men

- ✓ Get a haircut, shave, and trim your nails
- ✓ Wear a dark suit and tie, navy or black. If the work environment is casual, opt for business casual attire, such as nice slacks and a button-down shirt.
- ✓ Use a belt
- ✓ Wear polished dress shoes with dark dress socks (no white socks!)
- ✓ Iron your clothing the night before and try it on to make sure everything fits correctly
- ✓ Wear deodorant
- ✓ Wear extremely light cologne or aftershave, if any
- ✓ Do not wear an extravagant tie or bright colors or patterns

Women

- ✓ Do your hair modestly, clean
- ✓ Trim your nails and use light, natural-looking nail polish or no polish

- ✓ Wear light, natural looking make-up
- ✓ Wear a dark skirt or pant suit in navy or black. If the work environment is casual, opt for business casual attire, such as nice slacks and a blouse.
- ✓ Wear polished dress pumps (2" or less) with dark dress stockings
- ✓ Iron your clothing the night before and try it on to make sure everything fits correctly
- ✓ Wear deodorant and extremely light perfume, if any
- ✓ Do not wear an extravagant jewelry, bright colors or patterns

Come Prepared

Try your Route

As soon as possible, take a drive to the interview location. Be sure you have adequate directions and keep track of your travel time. Keep in mind what the heavy traffic hours are and make necessary time adjustments. If possible, enter the building. Notice how employees dress and how the office is operated (if applicable).

What to Bring

The night before your interview, gather the following things to bring with you:

- ✓ Extra copies of your resume and cover letter for your interviewers
- ✓ Your professional portfolio (if applicable)
- ✓ Notes about the company
- ✓ A list of questions (always have at least three prepared)
- ✓ A copy of the job posting, important information highlighted
- ✓ An outline of your experience and qualifications (chronological and categorical), separate from your resume, to assist you with answering the question "tell us about yourself."

- ✓ Water bottle
- ✓ A breath mint, in your mouth
- ✓ Briefcase or professional folder
- ✓ A blank thank-you card to fill out and mail immediately after the interview

What not to Bring

- ✓ Any beverage other than water
- ✓ Chewing gum
- ✓ Jokes
- ✓ Cell phone
- ✓ Children, pets, parents, friends, etc.
- ✓ Anything more than absolutely necessary

Know the Company

In the *Job Search Preparations* chapter, you learned the importance of researching the company to which you apply. Your knowledge of the company not only helps you decide if this is the job and place for you, but it's helpful and impressive during the interview.

Create an Outline

Your resume serves to relate your qualifications with those listed in the job ad, but doesn't necessarily reflect a play-by-play of what you're capable of or who you really are. Interviewers often ask you about yourself in the beginning of the interview. This is your opportunity to give them a quick rundown of your qualifying experiences, which may not be fully represented on your one-page resume. To do this effectively, create an outline that's easy for you to read at a glance. Choose to tell them about significant and relevant information, such as a college internship, travel abroad, volunteer work, special projects, or major accomplishments like completing a marathon. Interviewers are interested in your

skills and abilities more than family life and hobbies. For the sake of time, keep your time limit within two minutes.

Hand out your resume and cover letter

It may not be clear how many individuals will be interviewing you. Have two or three extra copies of your resume and cover letter to offer your interviewers, demonstrating your preparedness and allowing them access to all necessary information about you.

Prepare your Questions

During your interview, it's important that you ask questions — both to show your interest and to gain information. Think of it this way, you wouldn't want to be the team that shows up to a game without practicing, knowing nothing about the skill level of your opponent. You could wing it, but the outcome wouldn't be in your favor.

Have your questions prepared and in front of you during the interview. Leave room to write notes; your questions may be answered during the interview before you even ask them. Be sure to jot down new questions that arise during the interview (Sandoval, 2004, p. 169).

Salary and Benefits

If the job description doesn't mention salary or benefits, ask. Some people have a difficult time asking about pay, however the employer knows you are not attempting to work for free. It's important to ask with tact, toward the end of the interview. You may form the question like this, "What is the salary range for this position?" On the other hand, the interviewer may ask *you* what your pay requirements are. Prior to the interview, you should already have an idea of your expectations for compensation. Give the interviewer a range of numbers, such as "\$30-\$35K, plus full benefits" or "\$16-18 per hour with vacation and sick leave." Ideally, your income should cover your monthly expenses, with some spending

cash left over, plus at least 10% savings. However, not everyone is able to accommodate spending and savings. Just remember to ask for what you are qualified to receive, and be willing to negotiate.

Gaps in Employment

There are countless reasons why you may have gaps in your employment history; some favorable, some unfavorable. If you have gaps in your employment history, you may have chosen a functional style resume to exemplify your experience rather than a chronological list of your past jobs. It's ok! This may be addressed in your interview, so be prepared to answer honestly. Write down your reasons on your notepad and have them available in your interview. Remember to speak positively of your past employers regardless of your experience. Highlight the priceless skills and knowledge you've gained rather than dwelling on negative aspects.

If you have gaps in employment for special reasons – perhaps you've been a homemaker for 18 years, or you were unable to find work in a specific field in your community –Be honest. Choose to demonstrate all that you're capable of, what you've learned, and how it can be applied to the job.

Explaining Terminations, Firings, and Lay-offs

If you were previously fired from a job, and the experience you gained there is relevant to this job, again, be honest. This is your opportunity to learn from your mistakes and try again.

Follow Up

Upon leaving, ask if you can have a business card of the interviewer(s). When you've left the building, fill out the blank thank-you card that you brought with you to the interview. Address it to the business location care of the names of the interviewer(s) (spelled correctly). In one or two sentences, thank him or her for their time (Jacoway, 2010, p. 60). If they gave you a response time, acknowledge it. Let them

know you appreciate the opportunity and look forward to hearing from them. If you want the job, tell them again.

If you gave them a date and time by which you would contact them for an update, do what you said you would do, when you said you would do it.

What NOT to do

Alison Doyle, a writer for About.com stated, "It's sometimes a smaller world than you think and you don't know who your interviewer might know, including that boss who is an idiot... You also don't want the interviewer to think that you might speak that way about his or her company if you leave on terms that aren't the best."

- ✓ The best way to ruin your interview is to speak badly of past employers, staff, or companies
- ✓ Steer clear of sensitive subjects like religion and politics, unless completely applicable
- ✓ Tell jokes, speak crudely, hit on the interviewer, or behave obnoxiously
- ✓ Whip out family photos
- ✓ Come unprepared, with no knowledge of the company or the job
- ✓ Arrive late and blame it on anything other than your own inability to prepare
- ✓ Dress unprofessionally or unbecoming for the work environment

Final Thoughts: Goal Setting

By now, you have learned the ins and outs of the job search process, so let's take it one step further. Individually, each and every one of us has personal goals that we don't always express to others. It's perfectly fine to keep certain things to ourselves, and it's often wise to do so. In some situations, setting goals seems impossible for lack of opportunity. However, the key to accomplishing those goals requires knowing when to speak up, who to talk to, and what questions to ask. Simply dreaming about the future will not make things happen. First, focus on setting realistic, clearly defined goals for yourself. Consider where you see yourself in 10 years (Grappo, 2000, p. 46-52). What are your job responsibilities? To help you learn how to follow through with your goals, use the following illustration:

Let's pretend you have no high school diploma and have worked as a landscaper for six years, ready for a change. Your ideal career is to become a nurse. Title a blank sheet of paper "My Career Goal Outline" then list numbers one through five, leaving plenty of space between the numbers. In the #5 spot, write "Become a Nurse." Above that phrase, list numbers 1 through 4. The #1 spot is always "Ask questions and get motivated." Without motivation and curiosity, you may never move forward.

1. Ask Questions and get motivated

Step #2 represents the first thing you need to accomplish in your quest to becoming a nurse. I have always found it helpful to determine what steps are needed to get into a new career by asking someone who already has the job I want. If you don't personally know someone already, look it up on the internet or at the library. It's important to find out what it takes to become a nurse, and get a mentor (Tracy, 2002, p. 125). I recommend talking to guidance counselors at your local community college for more direction.

2. *Visit a local community college and talk to a guidance counselor.*

Ask the guidance counselor what you need in order to begin pre-required classes (called prerequisites) to get accepted into the nursing program. The guidance counselor will probably suggest you work on completing your GED. Most community colleges offer GED preparation courses and tutoring. Keep this in mind as you continue with your goals list.

3. *Get a GED*

Once you finish your GED you will be able to apply for college. Community colleges are typically lower cost than universities or other four-year colleges. You may begin your prerequisites there, and then transfer to another college when you've completed your two-year degree. Once you've finished prerequisites, you need to complete a nursing program during college. Sometimes these programs have waiting lists. They may also be very competitive; however, if you maintain communication with your guidance counselor and keep your grades up, you will have a better chance at acceptance. The guidance counselor will also help you with the application process for financial aid.

4. *Go to College*

While you're in school, you will make connections with others in the nursing community. Keep in touch with internship supervisors, instructors, and peers, they may play a role in helping you find work in your field. They may also provide encouragement and motivation as you begin your career. During your final year in college, you will be directed to begin looking for a job in the nursing field. Don't wait! Use the connections you've made while in school to help you find jobs (Fletcher, 2009, p. 86).

5. *Become a Nurse*

We've looked at goal setting with the intention of reaching a career goal. Now we need to get into the details. Between each step are several small goals that need completion before the next step is possible (Whitcomb, 2008, p. 92). See how they fit into the illustration below.

My Career Goal Outline

1. Ask Questions and get motivated

- Talk to someone I know with the job I want
- Visit the library
- Call a local community college to make an appointment with a guidance counselor

2. Visit a local community college and talk to a guidance counselor.

- Enroll in GED preparation classes
- Sign up for a tutor
- Arrange for childcare
- Pass my tests

3. Get a GED

- Meet with a guidance counselor again
- Research colleges and nursing programs to decide where I want to go to college
- Apply for colleges
- Complete pre-requisites
- Transfer to a four-year college or university
- Apply for financial aid

4. Go to College

- Keep in touch with internship supervisors, instructors, and peers
- Decide what kind of facility I want to work as a nurse: hospital, adult care, etc.
- Apply for nursing positions

5. Become a Nurse

Remember, you are a unique individual. Your personal goals should not be compared to someone else's life accomplishments or aspirations. On the other hand, you may have people in your life that will be directly affected by your life changes, it's important to move ahead with your loved ones in mind. While being mindful of your responsibilities to your children, spouse, mortgage, etc., remain confident in yourself, communicate the changes you're about to make, and encourage the involvement

and support of your loved ones. In the process, you will need their understanding and support to help you through the challenges and you will want them to celebrate with you in your success.

When things begin to seem impossible, take a moment to remember the small steps that you will accomplish daily, bringing you that much closer to your goal. Feel the sense of pride it brings to check one more thing off your to-do list. Ultimately, give yourself grace to learn from your mistakes (Han, 2005, p. 185). You can do it. You are worth it!

“Life isn’t about finding yourself. Life’s about creating yourself.”

- *George Bernard Shaw*

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Personal Budgeting: <http://www.personalbudgeting.com/tips/tips.html>

Way 2 Hope: http://www.way2hope.org/tips_on_budgeting.htm

II. Cover Letter Help

<http://jobsearch.about.com/od/coverlettersamples/a/coverlettsample.htm>

<http://office.microsoft.com/en-us/templates/CT101467921033.aspx>

III. Internet Job Boards

Career Builder: www.careerbuilder.com

Hot Jobs: www.hotjobs.yahoo.com

Indeed: www.indeed.com

Jobfox: <http://www.mycareerfox.com>

Kijiji: www.kijiji.com

Monster: www.monster.com

IV. Interviewing Tips

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Indeed: www.indeed.com

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VI. Resume help

Career Builder: www.careerbuilder.com

eResumes: www.eresumes.com

Proven Resumes: www.provenresumes.com

Resume Edge: www.resumeedge.com

Rockport Institute: <http://www.rockportinstitute.com>

VII. Personality Strengths Assessments

DiSC Profile by William Moulton Marston: <http://www.discprofile.com>

Leading from your Strengths Profile by John Trent: <http://leadingfromyourstrengths.com>

True Colors by Don Lawry: <http://www.true-colors.com/index.html>

The Myers & Briggs Foundation: <http://www.myersbriggs.org/>

VIII. Templates

Microsoft Office Online: <http://office.microsoft.com/en-us/templates/default.aspx>