



# NAVIGATING THE HIRING PROCESS

Your Core To Success

# A Message from Our President and CEO

## Success Starts With You

Our organization operates on the philosophy that “the applicant is the center of the universe.” This belief influences every aspect of how we do business—from the day each and every career seeker contacts us, to the day we place them in a position where they can contribute, grow, and ultimately succeed. We firmly believe that your most valuable resource as a career seeker is YOU, and that when you go on an interview you are indeed selling yourself. We also believe that what you put into any endeavor is what you will get out of it. Since our inception, we have invested time, resources, and faith in our most valued asset—you, the candidate. If you take the time to use *Navigating the Hiring Process* as the comprehensive tool it is, we believe you will reap the benefits of a distinguished and prosperous career.



**Bernie Howroyd**  
Founder and President  
The ACT•1 Group



**Janice Bryant Howroyd**  
Chief Executive Officer  
The ACT•1 Group

# Navigating the Hiring Process

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# Step I: Your Résumé

## Your Résumé

### Your Success Starts Here

Your résumé has one main function—to be impressive and intriguing enough to get you an interview. A résumé reflects the choices you make, and the way you present information is nearly as important as the information itself. Keep in mind that résumés are always changing (for instance, e-mailing résumés is now more the rule than the exception). The best way to stay current is to consult the most up-to-date resources. Your Representative is always a direct line to questions you may have about your résumé.

### Creating Your Résumé

- Take the time to identify your skills, interests, and career goals before creating your résumé.
- Write clearly and concisely. Use power verbs like ‘achieved’, ‘conceived’, ‘coordinated’, ‘created’, ‘developed’, ‘led’, ‘prioritized’, ‘secured’, and ‘supervised’.
- Be specific when you list dates, making sure to mention months as well as the years.
- Always spell-check and thoroughly review your résumé.
- Never lie on your résumé. Even one embellishment can jeopardize your chances of getting hired.
- Honesty does not mean boring—highlight and detail those achievements that are most relevant to the position you are applying for.

### Customizing Content

- Using your sets of skills and experiences, customize your résumé and yourself to fit the position. Remember, interviewers are trying to match the person with a specific job.
- Your résumé must reaffirm in a tailored way, before and after your interview, how hiring you solves the employer’s problem.
- Use search-friendly words. Many employers use electronic scanners that search for key words in résumés. Review the job description or requirements to determine which key words to use.
- When submitting a printed résumé, make sure to use paper that has a scanner-friendly color and texture. Use white or very light-colored paper and avoid using stationery with designs. Printing your résumé on somewhat thick, lightly textured paper can help it stand out in the pile.



## Résumé Tips

- Remember your audience. Tailor your résumé to each specific job or employer you submit it to. Feel free to move or replace elements to highlight information that is most relevant to the specific employer you are sending your resume to.
- Make sure to bring several clean, presentable copies of your résumé to your interview.
- Instead of simply writing “Dear Hiring Manager,” or worse, “To Whom it May Concern,” find out the name of the person to whom you are sending your résumé. This not only increases the chances of your résumé being seen by the right people, it also gives you the advantage of addressing the person in your cover letter.
- Always provide your Representative with an electronic copy of your résumé.

*Success Starts With You*

# Preparing a Professional Résumé

## Appearance: Look Polished and Professional

- Overall appearance should look clean, organized and easy to read.
- Keep it to one page and edit so the information is complete yet concise.
- Margins should be at least an inch wide on each side.
- Fonts should be a readable size. Avoid playful or fancy fonts like Comic Sans.
- Choose a format that highlights your suitability to the job.
  - Use the Chronological format to emphasize Work Experience.
  - Use the Functional format to emphasize skills.
- Use high-quality paper; the lighter the color and texture, the better.
- Name, address, email address, and phone number should be clear and distinct.
- Always double-check for spelling, grammatical or punctuation errors.
- Always triple-check for spelling, grammatical or punctuation errors.

## Content: Sound Concise and Results-Oriented

- Make an impression within 5 seconds.
- Give a good description of the scope of responsibilities.
- Convey that you are accomplishment-oriented.
- Use action words to communicate results.
- Edit strategically to eliminate unnecessary information.
- Demonstrate your ability to produce and succeed.
- List certification/membership/participation in pertinent organizations.
- List relevant skills such as software proficiencies.

# Sample Résumé

Make your objective generic

**Jennifer A. Wright**  
123 Downey Street  
Chicago, IL 60606

Include a professional-sounding email address

Make sure voice mail or answering machine has a short professional-sounding outgoing message

Do not abbreviate any information except middle initial

(777) 555-2222  
jwright@email.com

**OBJECTIVE** Seeking a position in which my skills and background can be utilized for mutual benefit.

List most recent job first

## **WORK EXPERIENCE**

Job title

### **ADMINISTRATIVE ASSISTANT**

Bona Fide Entertainment, Chicago, Illinois 11/03 to Present

Include month and year of the job, company and location

Present tense verbs for current employment

- Provide administrative and advisory clerical support, schedule appointments, handle phone calls, prepare time-sensitive information, and work extensively on various computer programs.
- Write and design a pamphlet with statistical information, comparative charts, and graphs.

Optional: list special awards or honors

- Awarded bonus for producing error-free work during 2004.

List the agency and not the company where you were assigned

### **RESEARCH ASSISTANT**

ABC Employment Services, Illinois 12/02 - 10/03

Use action verbs with consistent verb endings

- Generated daily reports and maintained research department logs.

Cite specific numbers

### **CATERING MANAGER**

Grade A Catering, Chicago, Illinois 1/98 - 11/02

Use descriptive adjectives

- Managed operations and delegated work at catering service and increased profit by 20% over the previous year.
- Delivered excellent customer service and coordinated food service for special events including weddings, receptions, holiday parties, and group lunches and dinners.

## **PROFESSIONAL SKILLS**

Can also be called QUALIFICATIONS

- Ability to organize, multi-task, and manage time in an Administrative Assistant capacity.
- Proficient in Microsoft Word, Excel, Access, PowerPoint, and Visio.
- Experienced in Internet research and archiving.

## **EDUCATION**

Northwestern University, Evanston, Illinois  
Bachelor's Degree in Marketing

Do not put the year you graduated

Only list high school if it is your highest level of schooling

List degree or certificate earned

## **AFFILIATIONS**

Member – Northwestern University Marketing Association, 1997 - Present  
Volunteer – Hot Meals for the Homeless, 2002 - Present

## **INTERESTS**

Enjoys Mediterranean cooking, swimming, beach volleyball, high-altitude mountain climbing and reading non-fiction.

# Step II: The Interview

## The Interview

### Preparing for the Interview

The interview is the most important part of your career search. Most of your energy should be devoted to acing it. The 3 Ds of **dress**, **demeanor** and **dialogue** sum up the keys to interviewing success. Like anything, the more interviews you do, the sharper your skills will become.

### Researching

- Learn pertinent facts about the company such as annual sales revenue, principal lines of business and locations.
- If possible, talk to people currently working at the company to get an inside view of specifics such as policies, workload, and the business environment.

### Rehearsing

- Take the time to practice—you can't cram for an interview and hope to ace it.
- You can't over-prepare or over-practice for an interview, but do not get so consumed that you sound robotic and insincere.

### Establishing Goals

- Have at least one written objective to achieve in each interview.

#### Examples of goals are:

1. I will effectively communicate that I am a hard worker/a team player.
2. I will give specific examples to support my responses.
3. I will emphasize my best traits.



## Dressing for the Part

- Convey an image of professionalism, authority, and competence.
- Appearance is a vital part of packaging the product—you.
- Proper attire shows self-respect, respect for the employer, and attention to detail.
- Avoid wearing excessive perfume, jewelry, or loud accessories like colorful pantyhose or neckties.

*Establish Goals*

## Interview Prep Tips

- Develop a brief introduction in which you describe your experience, goals, and suitability for the job in question. Interviewers will often ask you to tell them about yourself, and this is a good, quick way to start selling yourself.
- Practice mock interviews with a friend and, if possible, videotape yourself and study your responses.
- Create a reference sheet that contains the addresses and phone numbers of your previous places of employment, the dates when you worked there, and any other information you may need when filling out the application form.
- If you had someone drive or accompany you to the interview, ask them to wait for you outside of the building to avoid creating the impression that you do not have your own means of transportation.
- Don't wait until you meet the interviewer to be on your best behavior. Exude professionalism as soon as you enter the company premises. Avoid smoking or using your cell phone. In fact, this is a good time to make sure your cell phone is off.
- Arrive five to ten minutes early to be safe and let the interviewer know you are there. While waiting, always smile and be friendly to everyone around you, particularly the receptionist. Start a conversation if possible – not only will you start making a good impression early, you might even learn something useful that you can use during the interview.
- Employers look at the way an application is filled out as well as the information on it. Read the directions before writing, complete the form neatly, and don't write "See résumé." Never misrepresent your education or work experience. Present only the facts, and always write the word "open" in the space for salary desired.
- NEVER cancel on an interview, or worse, do a no-show. These are major red flags that indicate you lack professionalism and cannot be depended upon. If you must cancel, make sure to do so well ahead of time, and through your Representative.

# During the Interview

- Concisely repeating key points gives you a chance to touch on areas you may have overlooked. It can also help you hammer your message home.
- Avoid the tendency to play the hero or heroine: Don't send the message that you can single-handedly turn the company around. Instead, focus on the virtues of teamwork and how your talents and experience would match well with others in the department.

## 5 Interview DOs

1. Smile
2. Listen attentively
3. Make eye contact
4. Maintain an open posture, forward slightly to show interest
5. Ask for the job

## 5 Interview DON'Ts

1. Look at your watch
2. Discuss money
3. Speak negatively of past employers
4. Answer questions with a simple 'yes' or 'no'
5. Fold your arms

## Asking Questions

- Always ask questions when the interviewer asks if you have any. This is critical—it's a further chance to interact, gather information, and impress that you are the best person for the job.
- Many employers evaluate applicants by the questions they ask. Employers like specific questions about the nature of the job, the company's goals and plans and the abilities considered most important for the position.
- A good sample question: "When I start, what is the first thing you would like me to accomplish?"

## Good Questions to Ask the Interviewer:

1. Why is your company successful?
2. Describe your typical workday.
3. What would I be expected to accomplish in this position?
4. What would you like done differently by the next person who fills this position?
5. What are the greatest challenges in this position?
6. How is one evaluated in this position?
7. How many people work in this department?
8. Describe how you see this company developing over the next few years.
9. How would you describe the management style here?
10. What traits or skills would your ideal candidate possess?

## Be Prepared to Answer Questions Such As:

1. Tell us about yourself.
2. Why should we hire you rather than anyone else?
3. How would you describe your own personality?
4. Can you work under deadlines/pressures?
5. What are your strengths? Weaknesses?
6. Do you consider yourself dependable? Why?
7. Can you manage people?
8. What are your three biggest accomplishments?
9. What is your long-range/short-term goal?
10. What outside activities are most significant to your personal development?
11. Why do you think you would like this particular type of job?
12. What interests you the least about this position?
13. What interests you the most about this position?
14. What do you know about our company?
15. How long do you see yourself staying with our company?
16. How long would it take you to make a contribution to us?
17. Why do you want to work for us?
18. What interests you about our product/service?
19. What do you think of your previous manager?
20. What is your opinion of the company for which you last worked?
21. Why did you leave your last job?
22. What did you least/most like about your last job?
23. Can you obtain recommendations from previous employers?
24. What jobs have you had, how were they obtained, and why did you leave?
25. In what type of position are you most interested?



## Interview Tips

- When referring to past accomplishments, use the pronouns “we” and “us” to show you are a team player capable of giving credit to others.
- If the topic of negative past job experiences comes up, don’t panic! Stress your ability to learn from mistakes, and your ability to put unpleasant things behind you.
- A good way to establish eye contact is to note the color of each interviewer’s eyes when you first meet them.
- Remember something most job seekers don’t realize—when interviewing applicants, the interviewers usually end up weighing the applicant against others, rather than against the position itself.
- Always get the business card of anyone you meet when interviewing.

*Be Prepared*

# Alternative Interview Scenarios & Important Questions to Ask

## Behavioral Interviews

The basic premise of the behavioral interview is that past performance is a good predictor of future performance. Employers use the behavioral interview technique to evaluate an interviewee's experiences and behaviors. This allows them to determine the applicant's potential for success. As an interviewee, behavioral interviews give you the most opportunity to show prospective employers why you are well suited for the job. You can demonstrate your knowledge, skills, and abilities, collectively known as competencies, by giving specific examples from your past experiences. Some of the competencies the employer may be seeking include:

- **Enthusiasm**
- **Decision Making**
- **Knowledge/Skills**
- **Leadership**
- **Personal Attributes**
- **Team Building**
- **Flexibility**
- **Communication**

## Finding the Best Answers

It's difficult to prepare for a behavior-based interview because of the huge number and variety of possible behavioral questions you might be asked. However, most job descriptions and requirements can give you a clearer idea of what competencies the interviewer might look for. Your Representative is your best bet when it comes to preparing for behavioral interviews. Their familiarity with the client and the position can help you anticipate the questions and therefore prepare good answers. Some of the most frequently-asked behavioral interview questions are listed on the opposite page. Practice by responding to them as though you were in an interview to start honing your skills.

## Examples of Behavioral Interview Questions

- Describe an instance when you had to think on your feet to extricate yourself from a problem.
- Give me a specific example of a time when you used good judgment and logic in solving a problem.

- By providing examples, convince me that you can adapt to a wide variety of people, situations and environments.
- Give an example of a time in which you had to be relatively quick in coming to a decision.
- Give me a specific occasion in which you conformed to a policy with which you did not agree.
- Tell me about a time in which you had to use your written communication skills in order to get an important point across.
- Give me an example of an important goal that you had set in the past and tell me about your success in reaching it.
- Tell me about a time when you had to go above and beyond the call of duty in order to get a job done.
- Describe a time on any job that you held in which you were faced with problems or stresses that tested your coping skills.

## Phone Interview

- Even if you are caught off guard, don't let the interviewer know it. Take time to gather your thoughts and be prepared—with note cards and your résumé near the phone.
- Smile. You will be amazed at how this changes your tone of voice.
- Don't engage in other activities that will hinder your speech such as eating, smoking, or chewing. Have a glass of water handy in case your mouth gets dry.
- Studies show that people are more alert when they're on their feet—stand up during your phone interview if possible.

## Panel Interview

- Remember, your primary goal is to make each member of the group feel totally involved in the interview and your responses.
- If possible, learn how many interviewers will be on the panel so that you know how many copies of your résumé and references to bring (bring at least two extra copies for good measure).
- Eye contact is crucial. Look each panel member in the eye as you speak, directing the most attention to the interviewer asking the question.



## Concluding the Interview

### Effectively Communicating Your Interest

- Ask for the job! The only thing more important than asking your own questions is to ask for the job. Asking for the job increase your odds of being hired by more than 50%.
- At the conclusion of the interview say, “I’m impressed by your company and the people I’ve met today, and this position definitely interests me. What is our next step?”

### Clichés to Avoid

1. “I’m a quick learner” (sounds like you don’t know things).
2. “I’m a people person” (so common that it has become meaningless).
3. “If you’ll just give me a chance” (sounds desperate).
4. “To be honest with you” (you should already be honest).

### Follow-Up

#### Go the Extra Mile

- Immediately after the interview, call your Representative. The client is likely to be calling, and your Representative must talk to you first so they know how to proceed on your behalf.
- Write down your thoughts. These impressions can help with the thank you letter.
- Check if your interviewer's business card contains an e-mail address. If it does, you may wish to send your thank you letter electronically.

#### Thank You Letters

- Always send one within 24 hours of the interview.
- Be gracious. Express appreciation and enthusiasm.
- This is an opportunity to add any important information in support of your application that you may have neglected to mention or emphasize in the interview. Send Thank You letters to everyone you spoke with and reiterate that you want the job.



# Sample Thank You Letter

Mr. Larry Barnes  
Entertainment Attorney  
Trylon Entertainment  
368 W. Temple Blvd.  
Chicago, IL 60622

Dear Mr. Barnes,

Thank you for taking the time to discuss the Administrative Assistant position at Trylon Entertainment with me. After meeting with you and observing the staff's high energy level, I am convinced that my attitude and skills fit well with your needs.

I noticed that you have countless demands on your time, and I truly appreciate the time you took to acquaint me with the company. In addition to the information I shared with you during our meeting, I want to emphasize that I can be trusted to carry out my responsibilities with minimal supervision.

I look forward to hearing from you concerning your hiring decision, and am available to speak with you further regarding this position. Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,  
Jennifer Wright

- 1. In the first paragraph, thank the interviewer and express your appreciation for the chance to meet with him or her to discuss the job and observe the company. Communicate your positive impressions of the company.*
- 2. In the second paragraph, offer an additional reason for the employer to be interested in you for that job. You can either reiterate a specific skill or touch on something you didn't mention in the interview.*
- 3. In the last paragraph, inform the employer that you expect to hear from him or her again and "plant" the idea in his/her mind of a phone call to you. Indicate that you're willing to come in and discuss the position further, if required.*

### Resources

*Knock 'em Dead, 2008: The Ultimate Job Search Guide*  
by Martin Yate

*The Quick Resume & Cover Letter Book: Write and Use an Effective Resume in Only One Day*  
by Michael Farr

*Winning Job Interviews*  
by Paul Powers

*The 2008 What Color Is Your Parachute? A Practical Manual for Job-Hunters and Career-Changers*  
by Richard Nelson Bolles

*Monster Careers: How to Land the Job of Your Life*  
by Jeff Taylor

*I'm on LinkedIn—Now What??? A Guide to Getting the Most OUT of LinkedIn*  
by Jason Alba

*Hello Real World! A Student's Approach to Great Internships, Co-ops, and Entry Level Positions*  
by Jengyee Liang

*Do What You Are: Discover the Perfect Career for You Through the Secrets of Personality Type*  
by Paul D. Tieger

*Career Match: Connecting Who You Are with What You'll Love to Do*  
by Shoya Zichy and Ann Bidou

*Career Distinction: Stand Out by Building Your Brand*  
by William Arruda and Kirsten Dixson

*Dig Your Well Before You're Thirsty: The Only Networking Book You'll Ever Need*  
by Harvey Mackay

*How Hard Are You Knocking? The Job Seeker's Guide to Opening Career Doors*  
by Timothy J. Augustine, Rana Curcio, John A. Challenger

*Courting Your Career: Match Yourself with the Perfect Job*  
by Shawn Graham

## We're Here to Help

Looking for work can be a full-time job in itself and a challenging experience. Don't be discouraged if you don't find the job you want immediately. This is particularly true if you have relocated or are beginning a new career. These situations call for a lot of adjustment.

If you are new in town, the market value of the same job you had prior to moving may be lower. If you are a professional who is making a mid-career switch, you might have to accept an entry level position to get your foot in the door. Please remember that through all these challenges, your Representative will be with you to support and guide you through the entire process. As an expert in the employment field, your Representative is very committed to helping you succeed. Take the time to discuss every opportunity with your Representative. He or she knows the market and will help you make the best possible first impression on potential employers.



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