

# Finding Satisfying Employment

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## Our changing economy

Work places are changing faster now than at any time in our history, and the rate of change apparently will continue to increase. Few of us can still expect to work for the same employer for a lifetime. Today, the average person starting to work can expect to change jobs or careers six times before retirement.

Although many opportunities are disappearing, many more are developing. Your goal should be to find the right opportunity. To do so, it is important to stay in touch with the changing world so you can anticipate changes and prepare to deal with them.

Many of today's opportunities are not found in traditional areas. Yet there are some excellent opportunities available. For example, agriculture is a depressed area of our economy, but the food industry is one of the fastest growing areas. The quantity of food consumed per person is not increasing, but food preparation services are growing because of the increasing demand for convenience foods such as microwaveable items.

The number of U.S. manufacturing jobs will continue to decrease. By the year 2000, only 5 to 10 percent of the work force will be employed in manufacturing, but these jobs will change completely, requiring greater skills and knowledge. The remaining jobs will require considerable skill and training. Simple factory jobs will disappear.

The U.S. economy is becoming part of a world economy. The U.S. no longer has a monopoly on technology, production facilities and skilled workers. This circumstance presents new challenges and competition to all industries as they compete in a worldwide marketplace.

When you analyze your skills, education and interests, take a look at employment in service industries. By the year 2000, the service sector of the economy will employ 85 percent of the work force. The greatest number of opportunities are developing in this area. As in the food industry, traditional industries are adding services to their products to become more competitive. In almost all areas, services can be improved and new services can be added.

Try to anticipate these opportunities and find out where they might be. Most good jobs are not advertised. Although a firm may not be considering hiring for a particular position, your application or inquiry may make them realize that they need a person with your qualifications.

## Your opportunities

In evaluating the many job opportunities available in a changing, dynamic economy, you need to make the following evaluations:

- What opportunities are available? List all possible jobs you can think of; talk to friends and school counselors, as they will point out jobs that you had not considered.
- What type work do you do best and like to do? List all the characteristics you want in your job, working conditions, hours, location, people, etc.

Comparing the two lists, you can narrow possible opportunities down to a manageable number. Next, determine:

- What firms/organizations have such jobs? This requires you to obtain information about the firm, operations, products/services, goals and objectives, its people.

The preceding evaluation leads you to:

- work that you find satisfying;
- work you can do well;
- apply at places where you have good, convincing reasons for seeking employment.
- apply where you come across as someone who can make a valuable contribution.

This improves your chances of getting hired and helps you find the right job as quickly as possible.

## Preparing for new endeavors

Informational interviewing can help you learn about jobs you are interested in. This involves talking with people who either do this kind of work or hire others to do it. Sometimes people spend a lot of time preparing for a particular kind of work, then discover they don't really like it for reasons that would have been obvious if they had begun by asking a few questions.

Before deciding what kind of work is right for you, talk to people employed in positions you are interested in. Find out what these jobs are really like. Some good questions to ask include:

- What qualifications are required, including education and experience?
- What working conditions normally go with this kind of work?

- What happens during the normal workday?
- Will the number of jobs like this increase or decrease?
- What is the normal career path, including salary increases and additional responsibilities?
- What are the monetary and non-monetary advantages of this kind of work?

Finding people to talk to is not as difficult as you might think. Start by asking family members and friends if they know anyone who is employed in a job you are considering, or who can refer you to someone who is. This usually will produce one or two people.

If this approach fails, call people employed in this kind of work. Ask them if they would spend a few minutes talking with you. If you are sincere and make it clear that (1) you are not trying to get them to hire you and (2) you will not take more than a few minutes of their time, many people will be quite willing to talk with you.

## Looking for a job

When looking for a job, keep a positive attitude. Maintain this attitude even if you receive rejections. Remember that you have valuable assets to offer an employer. Your education, experience, health and willingness to do your best to get the job done are important assets.

Don't lower your opinion of yourself just because you have to talk to many employers before locating the right situation. You can expect that you will not handle some interview situations early in your job search as well as you will after you have had some practice.

Rather than becoming discouraged when you do not get a job offer, analyze how you approached the employer and what you did during the interview so you can do a better job next time. Recognize that in some cases you will not get a job offer for reasons beyond your control. Do not be too hard on yourself — just keep looking!

Normally, you should expect to spend several hours each day for several weeks or months to find the best place to work. Until you find the job you are seeking, your job is to keep looking.

Although it is time-consuming and often difficult, finding the right job is as important as anything you do. After all, you will spend most of your life at work. Give your job search the time and effort necessary to do it right. Too many unemployed people spend most of their time wishing they had a job and hoping that eventually fate will cause the right situation to find them. It rarely happens.

Job search experts agree that looking for a job is itself a full-time job. Sometimes this isn't possible, but set a goal for yourself such as dedicating four hours a day to the job search.

# Your resume

It is important to have a neat, accurate personal resume that summarizes your background for a potential employer. By looking at your resume, employers should be able to quickly determine whether you are likely to be qualified to work at their firm.

Your resume can be useful in a variety of circumstances. You can give copies to family and friends or anyone else who might be able to tell you about a good employment opportunity. As you look for work, leave a copy of your resume with people as a calling card. While they may not have a suggestion for you at that time, they may think of something later and use the phone number on your resume to reach you.

A good resume will help you stand out from others applying for the same job. Simply mailing your resume to hundreds of employers without first talking with them is not recommended.

The following information should be included in your resume:

**Personal data.** Include your name, address and phone number. Additional information such as sex, age, race, marital status, number of dependents, hobbies, religion, height and weight are not necessary unless directly related to your job performance.

**Professional objective.** It is often helpful to have a concise, positive statement about the type of work you are seeking, including immediate and long-range career goals. However, if you are considering more than one kind of work and want to avoid the need for several different versions of your resume, you can omit the specific objective from your resume and include information advising the employer of your goal in your cover letter.

**Education.** List your educational achievements, starting with your highest level of formal education. Include the institution, major and minor areas of study, degree of diploma earned, special courses, seminars and other steps you have taken to update your knowledge and skills. You can place this section either before or after your work history. Whichever is stronger should come first.

**Work history.** Include your relevant work experience. There are a couple of ways to approach this. One way is to list the jobs you have held, starting with the most recent and specifying your title, duties and responsibilities, names of employers and dates of employment.

Another way is to list your skills and work experiences by functional category. The functional format is especially helpful to job changers, since it emphasizes transferable skills rather than job title. The functional approach may be useful if you have been involved in other pursuits, because some employers have an initial preference for candidates who have been continuously employed in the same kind of work

**Related professional information.** This can include licenses, certificates, honors, awards, organizational memberships and special skills.

**References.** It is important to have people that employers can contact for a personal reference about your ability, dependability and productivity. Include former employers who will comment favorably about your work. Former teachers are also good references, as well as anyone you know personally, particularly if they are in a leadership position. Stay in touch with people who can give you a good reference.

Before giving people's names as references, **let them know you** are looking for employment and would appreciate their cooperation in serving as a reference for you. Make sure they are interested in helping you, and give them a copy of your resume.

An alternative is to indicate that references are available on request. This may prevent your references from being contacted unnecessarily. It is good, however, to have addresses and phone numbers of your references neatly typed on a separate sheet so they can be provided when necessary. Telephone numbers are especially important, as many employers prefer verbal references to written references.

## Applications

Most employers will require you to complete an application form. They do this to ensure that they have the information needed to evaluate your qualifications, and they find it helpful to have the information presented in a standard format.

If the employer will allow, take the application home to complete because you will have more time to do it neatly and completely. Be prepared, however, to complete the application at the employer's office. Take along all the information you might need, including dates of past employment, amount of pay received, names of former supervisors and addresses and phone numbers of past employers and references.

You might want to attach your resume to the application to help you stand out from other applicants and to allow you to present additional positive information.

Complete the application as thoroughly as possible. If some information called for is not relevant to your application, write "not applicable" in the blank to ensure that no one thinks you are concealing negative information. The employer expects your application to be a sample of the quality of work you would do on the job.

If the application calls for a desired salary figure and you don't know what the best specific amount would be, put the word "open" in the blank. This may allow you to postpone your answer until the interview. It is often best to delay mentioning salary requirement as long as possible. Try to get information about the typical salary range for a job like the one you want so you have this information when applying.

# Interviews

When you interview, look your best. It is better to dress a little better than necessary than to take a chance on appearing too casual. Job interviews are important. By looking your best, you show employers you are interested and care about their evaluations. Allow plenty of time to get to the interview, and plan to arrive 10 minutes early.

Interviewers are often more nervous than the people they are interviewing. Try to cooperate with your interviewer by giving complete answers rather than a simple yes or no. Don't ramble about irrelevant details, but try to maintain a comfortable conversation.

The more you know about the employer's firm before the interview, the better you will be able to handle the situation. There are useful books in the reference room of most libraries that include information about companies including how big they are, what their products and goals are, their annual sales and names of key personnel.

Avoid saying anything negative during an interview, particularly about former employment situations. Even if a situation was unpleasant, you can usually say something good about what you learned while working there.

You will get more job offers if your first goal for an interview is to learn the employer's needs and to talk about how you can satisfy those needs. By asking about salary and benefits, you may cause the employer to think you are mainly interested in what you will get from the job. It is better to focus on what you will contribute to the employer's operation. Wait until the employer is convinced of your qualifications, then let the employer be the first to mention salary.

Look at every interview as an opportunity to practice your interviewing skills. Try to make the best impression you can. Most people do not get as many interviews as they would like. It may be worthwhile to interview even if you are uncertain about the desirability of a particular situation. During the interview, you may learn that the job is more attractive than you thought.

If you are qualified for the job and you would accept a job offer, it is extremely important to make a plain, unequivocal statement such as, "I believe I am qualified for this position and I would very much like to have the job," before the interview is over. Employers often make the decision based on the interest and enthusiasm of the candidates.

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