A PRE-EMPLOYMENT TRAINING CURRICULUM FOR WORKING-AGED ADULTS WHO ARE BLIND OR VISUALLY IMPAIRED

A Project

Presented to the faculty of the Department of Special Education, Rehabilitation, School Psychology, and Deaf Studies
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by
Rhonda M. Olson

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Department of Special Education, Rehabilitation, School Psychology, and Deaf Studies
Abstract

of

A PRE-EMPLOYMENT TRAINING CURRICULUM FOR

WORKING-AGED ADULTS WHO ARE BLIND OR VISUALLY IMPAIRED

by

Rhonda M. Olson

Statement of Problem

The purpose of this project was to develop a curriculum for individuals with blindness or low vision to provide pre-employment skills and job search skills. This curriculum is intended for use by community rehabilitation providers (CRP) as well as Senior Vocational Rehabilitation Counselors (SVRC) working with California Department of Rehabilitation Blind Field Service’s (DOR-BFS) consumers in Northern California who have vocational goals. Currently the DOR-BFS unit located at the Central Office in Sacramento, California, does not utilize or provide any pre-employment or job placement training materials to consumers served by the Northern Sierra District BFS. Additionally, the single CRP in the greater Sacramento, California area – Society for the Blind (SFB) – does not currently utilize any standardized curriculum for guidance or education in the areas of development of pre-employment and job search skills for consumers choosing to participate in the Career Development program at SFB as part of their pre-employment training and job placement services.
Sources of Data

Data for this project were obtained through professional journals, library resources, EBSCOHost, Eric databases and a variety of other Internet resources. The data includes peer-reviewed journal articles, textbooks, information from relevant websites, manuals, and workbooks that provide information on agencies that provide vocational rehabilitation services to individuals with blindness or low vision and instruction on pre-employment job search skills activities.

Conclusions Reached

A curriculum providing pre-employment skills training and job search instructions for individuals with blindness or low vision was developed. The curriculum includes lessons on life skills important to obtaining and maintaining employment, discussing disabilities with employers, and discussing accommodation with employers. In addition, the curriculum includes instruction on developing a master application, writing effective resumes, cover letters, and follow-up after interviewing. The curriculum also includes an assorted array of information and resources specifically relevant to job seekers with blindness or low vision.

_______________________, Committee Chair
Guy E. Deaner, PhD

_______________________
Date
DEDICATION

This Project is dedicated in loving memory of my Dad who taught me there are times to hold on and fight, times to let go and let life happen the way it will, that each person must decide these times for themselves, and that it is okay.

This Project is also dedicated to my Mom and my wonderful husband for all their love and support and for always reminding me that it is okay.
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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I would like to acknowledge California Department of Rehabilitation Blind Field Services staff at Central Office in Sacramento, California, for giving me the opportunity to intern. Thank you to all the Rehabilitation Counselors for the Blind for sharing their knowledge with respect to the field of Vocational Rehabilitation and Blind Field Services. I would like express a special thank you and much gratitude to my internship field supervisor, Bennet Kim, for all the wonderful guidance, opportunities, insight, and most especially, her special humor that helped me keep my perspective.
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Chapter 1
INTRODUCTION

During the year of 2011, this author was employed at Society for the Blind (SFB) in Sacramento, California, as a Vocational Assessment Specialist (VAS). As a VAS, this author was responsible for assessing current blindness skills of consumers with vocational goals who were referred for evaluation by the California Department of Rehabilitation Blind Field Services (DOR-BFS) unit located at Central Office in Sacramento, California. The purpose of the evaluations was to provide written recommendations for training, equipment, and other aids that would assist consumers in adjustment to blindness and the attainment of their vocational goals. Additionally, the author worked with DOR-BFS referred consumers during the pre-employment and job placement phases of their Individualized Plan for Employment (IPE).

It was during the time the author was working with consumers on pre-employment and job placement that the author realized a need for a curriculum that would provide consumers with a structured way to acquire pre-employment training and job search skills. DOR-BFS relies heavily on community rehabilitation providers (CRP) for the provision of specialized training and services to meet the needs of consumers with blindness or low vision. Currently, SFB is the only CRP in the greater Sacramento Valley area.
In 2011 SFB earnestly began the process of expanding the services provided for consumers pursuing a vocational plan through DOR-BFS, including job readiness training and job placement services.

The proposed pre-employment training curriculum will include lessons on soft skills important to obtaining and maintaining employment and discussing disabilities and accommodations with employers. In addition, the curriculum includes instruction on developing a master application, writing effective resumes, cover letters, and follow-up after interviewing. The curriculum also includes an assorted array of information and resources relevant to job seekers, with many specifically relevant to job seekers with blindness or low vision.

The curriculum will provide a structured format for consumers to develop soft skills as well as provide consumers with tools for developing a master application, an effective resume, and job search skills.

Statement of the Problem

A search for a comprehensive, pre-employment, guided workbook-style curriculum specifically created for working-age individuals – post-primary school ages 18 and over - with blindness or low vision was unsuccessful. Information on work adjustment and social skills training for individuals with blindness or low vision was located; however, the information located referenced curriculums designed prior to 1992. Information was located on recent research regarding pre-employment training for working-age individuals with blindness or low vision; however, the findings had not been
published at the time of this project and the training used during the research had not been released. Information on curriculums, such as expanded core curriculums, were located, but were intended to supplement the standard core curriculum education of youths with blindness or low vision during primary school years and were not designed to address pre-employment training needs of working age individuals with blindness or low vision no longer in primary school. Programs were located which introduced pre-employment trainings that were targeted towards transition age youth – ages 16 to 22 – offered by various foundations and organizations that provide resources and information to individuals with blindness or low vision. However, these programs were not available to individuals over the age of 22 who may require similar pre-employment training.

Resources that included instructions on pre-employment training and job search training for job seekers in general and for individuals seeking employment in specific careers such as banking or customer service were found. Resources were located that included instructions on job search skills for job seekers with disabilities other than sensory related disabilities. There were resources located that provided employment immersion programs and services for job seekers with blindness or low vision, however, these programs were not easily accessible from a geographic perspective for job seekers within the greater Sacramento area. While all of these resources are of value, a comprehensive training curriculum that provides accessible pre-employment soft skills training and job search training to individuals with blindness or low vision is needed for use by CRPs and DOR-BFS located in the greater Sacramento area.
Definition of Terms

*Assistive Technology:*

Also referred to as Adaptive Technology or Rehab Technology. Assistive technology is technology used by individuals with disabilities in order to perform functions that might otherwise be difficult or impossible. Assistive technology can include mobility devices such as walkers and wheelchairs, as well as hardware, software, and peripherals that assist people with disabilities in accessing computers or other information technologies. For example, people with limited hand function may use a keyboard with large keys or a special mouse to operate a computer, people who are blind may use software that reads text on the screen in a computer-generated voice, people with low vision may use software that enlarges screen content, people who are deaf may use a TTY (text telephone), or people with speech impairments may use a device that speaks out loud as they enter text via a keyboard. (http://www.access-board.gov/sec508/standards.htm)

*Blindness*

“One is blind to the extent that the individual must devise alternative techniques to do efficiently those things which he would do if he had normal vision. An individual may properly be said to be blind or a blind person when he has to devise so many alternative techniques--that is, if he is to function efficiently--that his pattern of daily living is substantially altered.” – Dr. Kenneth Jernigan, President of National Federation of the Blind, 1968 – 1986.
**Daily Living Skills**

Also referred to as Independent Living Skills. Instruction for individuals with blindness and low vision to enable confidence to carry out their daily activities. Instruction takes place in the home or in a structured classroom setting.

(http://vrt.aerbvi.org/)

**Homemaker**

An individual who has the skills and abilities to maintain a home and actively functions in that capacity as a result of substantial Vocational Rehabilitation service provision to improve the individual’s homemaking abilities. To achieve a successful employment outcome as a homemaker, an individual must satisfy one of the following criteria: (1) performs activities that enable another household member to be the primary wage earner; (2) enables the individual to remain in the home; or (3) acts as primary caregiver for another member of the household and bears the primary responsibility for the majority of the following: bill paying, household laundry, handling mail, cooking, grocery shopping, house cleaning, and home maintenance.

(http://info.dhhs.state.nc.us/olm/manuals/dsb/VR/man/Definitions.htm)

**Legally Blind**

Legal blindness is a level of vision loss that has been defined by law to determine eligibility for benefits. It refers to central visual acuity of 20/200 or less in the better eye with the best possible correction, or a visual field of 20 degrees or less.

(http://www.ssa.gov)
**Low Vision**

A term often used interchangeably with the term Visually Impaired. These terms are used to describe people with significant vision loss that cannot be corrected medically or surgically. These vision problems impact work, school, recreation and other activities of daily living. People who are partially sighted and/or legally blind are often described using these terms. ([http://low-vision.org/en/About_Low_Vision](http://low-vision.org/en/About_Low_Vision))

**Orientation and Mobility**

Also referred to as O&M. Refers to services provided to blind or visually impaired students by qualified personnel to enable those students to attain systematic orientation to and safe movement within their environments in school, home and community; and includes teaching students the following, as appropriate: (1) To understand spatial and environmental concepts and use of information received by the senses (such as sound, temperature and vibrations) orientation and mobility to establish, maintain, or regain orientation and line of travel (e.g., using sound at a traffic light to cross the street); (2) To use the long cane to supplement visual travel skills or as a tool for safely negotiating the environment for students with no available travel vision; (3) To understand and use remaining vision and distance low vision aids; and other concepts, techniques, and tools. ([http://definitions.uslegal.com/o/orientation-and-mobility/](http://definitions.uslegal.com/o/orientation-and-mobility/))
Partially Sighted

Best-corrected visual acuity of 20/70 or less in the good eye. Even when wearing regular corrective lenses, partially sighted people cannot read standard newsprint, or see expressions on a person's face. (http://low-vision.org/en/About_Low_Vision)

Skills of Blindness

Also referred to as disability-specific skills, alternative techniques, or adaptive techniques - braille, orientation and mobility, technology, and daily living - which are taught to individuals with blindness or low vision by instructors who specialize in working with individuals with blindness or low vision. (http://sdsbvi.northern.edu)

Visual Impairment

The term visual impairment refers to impairment in vision that, even with correction, adversely affects an individual’s daily life or work performance. The term includes both partial sight and blindness. (http://low-vision.org/en/About_Low_Vision)

Limitations of the Project

One limitation of this project is the intended audience. This project was specifically designed for use by consumers of DOR-BFS under the guidance of a Community Rehabilitation Provider (CRP), a Senior Vocational Rehabilitation Counselor (SVRC), or Rehabilitation Counselor for the Blind (RCB). This project is also limited based on when it was designed as the approaches - particularly with regards to job searches and resumes - reflect currently accepted trends at the time of the project creation. Additionally, this project is limited geographically, as it was designed for the
use of consumers seeking employment within the greater metropolitan area of Sacramento, California. The final limitation of this are the author's view's on pre-employment and job search skills training, counseling theoretical perspectives, personal experiences, and biases. Biases of the author include the author’s perspectives regarding consumer responsibility and accountability; the role of the SVRC, RCB, and CRP in the rehabilitation process; and the author’s expectations of consumers to demonstrate competence and efficiency in learning and use of skills of blindness.

Organization of the Project

Chapter 1 is comprised of the introduction, statement of the problem, definition of terms, limitation of the project, and the organization of the project. A review of related literature is contained in Chapter 2. Chapter 3 describes the methodology utilized to collect data used for the project. Chapter 4 provides a summary of the project and recommendations. Appendix A contains the pre-employment training curriculum. All references used in this project are contained in the concluding reference section.
Chapter 2
LITERATURE REVIEW

Introduction

A review of literature related to vocational rehabilitation services to individuals with blindness and low vision is presented in this chapter. Statistics regarding unemployment among working age individuals with blindness and low vision indicates low percentages of employment of individuals with blindness or low vision. Research indicates negative attitudes by employers and the public and lack of soft skills are the most often cited barriers to employment of individuals with blindness and low vision. Factors contributing to improved employability include employment opportunities and experience, particularly during high school and proficiency in the use of adaptive technology according to the reviewed research. Training, pre-vocational services and education resulting in a degree or certificate have also been reported as integral components for increasing employment opportunities for individuals with blindness or low vision. Finally, the role of rehabilitation professionals as educators of the public and employers continues to be a necessary process to continue to provide opportunities for competitive employment of individuals with blindness or low vision.

Statistics

The statistics regarding unemployment among working age individuals with blindness and low vision are dismal despite more than a century of educational programs,
more than a half century of vocational rehabilitation program inclusion, and more than
ten years of ADA protection (Omvig, 2002). With current labor market trends within
California and the greater Sacramento area indicating unemployment rates of 11.4
percent and a previous California Employment Development (EDD) report from 2009
indicating higher rates of unemployment of disabled persons, the statistics become even
more troubling (AFB, 2012; California Employment Development Department [EDD],

According to the 2009 Disability Status Report (www.disabilitystatistics.org),
nationally only an estimated 38.7 percent of working-aged adults - ages 21 – 64 - with
visual disabilities currently are employed. According to the 2010 American Community
Survey (www.census.gov/acs) there were 666,519 people in the state of California who
reported vision loss. Of that number, 317,552 were between the ages 18 – 64. The
American Community Survey (ACS) defines vision loss as individuals who reported
having serious difficulty seeing even when wearing glasses as well as those who are
blind. According to the 2010 National Health Survey (www.cdc.gov/nchs/nhis.htm),
21.5 million American adults age 18 or older reported experiencing vision loss. This
same survey reported that 16.1 million of the 21.5 million American adults who reported
experiencing vision loss were between the ages 18 – 64. The National Health Survey
(NHS) utilizes a similar definition of vision loss as that used by the ACS.

According to data retrieved March 20, 2012, by DOR-BFS Central Office staff at
the request of the author, in the state of California a total of 7,033 consumers with
blindness or low vision were served for the state fiscal year (SFY) 2010-11, ranging in age 16 - 90+ years old. During that same SFY there were 1,579 new applications for services. Of the 7,033 consumers served during the SFY 2010-11, there were 1,048 successful closures. Of these successful closures, 335 (approximately 32 percent) were competitively employed closures - 20 of these being self-employed - and 713 (approximately 68 percent) were Homemaker closures. These percentages would indicate a slightly lower trend of employment for individuals with blindness or low vision within California - 32 percent - compared to national estimates of 38.7 percent.

Employment Barriers

Negative attitudes by employers and the public in general regarding individuals who are blind or visually impaired have been often cited as one of the most significant barriers to employment (Conley-Jung & Olkin, 2001; Crudden, Sansing, & Butler, 2005; Omvig, 2002). Employers' negative attitudes were particularly focused on the areas of transportation and access to print (Crudden et al., 2005). Nagle (2001) reported that negative attitudes by potential employers may be swayed into positive when individuals with visual impairments are provided with strategies that enable them to educate employers regarding the positive aspects of hiring an individual with blindness or low vision. Some examples for changing negative perceptions into positive - as provided by Nagle (2001) - included "placing emphasis on highly developed listening skills to compensate for the loss of access to nonverbal body language" or "demonstrating knowledge of public transportation systems to compensate for the inability to drive."
The ability of individuals with blindness or low vision to show confidence and competence in the use of alternative techniques - particularly Orientation & Mobility (O&M) and adaptive technology (AT) - addresses several key areas often cited by employers as concerns regarding hiring of individuals with blindness or low vision (Nagle, 2001).

Additional barriers, such as lack of soft skills - communication skills, ability to interact in a socially appropriate manner with peers and co-workers, positive attitude, and dependability on the job - may also be experienced, particularly by individuals who are adventitiously blind or visually impaired (Cruden et al., 2005; ). Nagle (2001) commented that "individuals with visual impairments need to develop good social skills." She goes on to note the development of good social skills provides the foundation for not only being aware of personal grooming habits and attention to work-appropriate clothing, but more importantly provides the skill set necessary to get along with colleagues and supervisors, all of which are essential for obtaining and retaining employment. McDonnell and Crudden (2009) suggested that providing transition-age youth with blindness or low vision opportunities to make decisions and actively participate in educational planning in order to allow the youths to develop their decision- and choice-making skills. They suggest that providing these opportunities provides the foundation for the transition-age youth to become an adult with enhanced self-determination and a more defined sense of locus of control.
While employers' attitudes towards hiring an individual with blindness and lack of public education regarding blindness, are often cited as contributing factors to trends of unemployment among individuals with blindness (Crudden, 2002; McDonnall & Crudden, 2009), Omvig (2002) emphasized that in order to begin replacing negative information about blindness, it is necessary for positive, well defined philosophies to become the focus of the consumers' thinking. He further states that this, in turn, empowers the consumer to contribute to effecting positive education and change with attitudes of employers and the public.

**Employment Experience Opportunities**

McDonnall (2010) analyzed data that were gathered in the National Longitudinal Transition Study-2 (NLTS2) to study employment-related activities and education status of transition-age youths whose primary disability was visual impairment. The data from Waves 1 (2000-2001), 2, and 3 (2004-2005) provided a sample group of 502 students common for all three waves. Variables McDonnall (2010) reported using in the study were employment-related: currently working, number of hours worked per week, hourly wage earned, type of job held, and transportation to work. Additionally, education related variables - employment by educational status and educational status - were used. Data analyses were conducted for the total group of students with visual impairment with additional data analysis conducted separately for two groups: youths without secondary disabilities and youths with secondary disabilities. Data for a comparison group of
transition-age youths from the general population were obtained from a 2005 U.S. Department of Labor report.

The analyses of data showed that 67% of the youths reported working for pay at some time during the five years the data were reported. Youths without secondary disabilities reported a higher percentage of employment with 77% reporting having worked for pay at some time during the five years the data were gathered. Further analysis of data showed, however, that the work was generally not continuous and only 43.3% reported working during more than one wave. Although 67% reported working for pay at some time, the actual work experience was reported as being limited with approximately one-third of the students reporting they worked five or less hours per week. For youths with secondary disabilities, the data indicated they were less likely to have worked for pay and the hours worked were fewer than five per week. When comparing youths with visual impairments to the general population, data showed that they were less likely to be employed. For youths with visual impairments who reported an educational status of not in high school and not attending a postsecondary school, only 38.2% were employed in comparison to 72.6% of youths in the general population.

Follow-up research by McDonnell (2011) again used data from the NLST2. The purpose of the research was to identify predictors of employment of transition-age youths with visual impairments. McDonnell (2011) stated the goal of the study was to provide empirical research to aid professionals in the rehabilitation field in understanding factors that impact employment prospects of transition-age youths with visual impairments. She
reported that analysis of data showed those youths with visual impairments who obtained employment during high school and who reported multiple employment experiences were 1.6 to 2.1 times more likely to be employed following high school than those who did not have the same experience. Other factors identified as significant predictors of employment of transition-age youths with visual impairments were ease and availability of transportation, ability to travel independently, completion of postsecondary education, and peer social skills (McDonnell, 2011). McDonnell (2011) reported that of parallel significance were the expectations of the youths’ parents. Youths whose parents encouraged independence, including travel outside the home, were three times as likely to be employed once they had completed high school.

Employment and Technology

The workplace of today is highly dependent upon technology (Kelly, 2011; Malakpa, 2007; Omvig, 2002). It is therefore, imperative that individuals who are blind or visually impaired have access to technological equipment and the training to use said equipment in order to be part of a competitive workforce. Malakpa (2007), citing the author’s own previous research, stated that many factors are indicated as impacting employment prospects for individuals who are blind. Among the factors identified by Malakpa (2007) are employer concerns of poor job performance from employees with visual impairments.

Wolffe and Candela (2002) analyzed data that were gathered through interviews of nine employers who have employed individuals who are blind or visually impaired.
The interviews with employers indicated that the employers placed a high level of importance on the proficiency and use of assistive technology by individuals who are blind or visually impaired. Kelly (2011) reported that an analysis of data that were obtained from the NLST2 showed that youths with visual impairments who were provided with assistive technology and training during primary school and into high school were more likely to obtain paid employment after high school. An even higher correlation between assistive technology training and employment was indicated for high school students who were transitioning into adulthood (Kelly, 2011). Wolffe and Kelly (2011) in a secondary analysis on data that were gathered by the NLST2 studied the relevance of core blindness skills instruction - orientation & mobility (O&M), daily living skills (DLS), braille, and assistive technology (AT) - in regards to obtaining paid employment. They reported a significant relationship between the proficient use of assistive technology and attainment of a post-secondary education or paid employment following high school. Omvig (2002) states that in order for an individual with blindness to be truly independent and self-sufficient, they must master alternative techniques, including adaptive technology. He further states that for individuals with blindness or low vision in the 21st century, computers have moved from being a mere tool useful for communicating with sighted individuals and have become a necessity. Consumers must not be simply introduced to various kinds of technology, it is imperative that the latest technology and adaptive devices be mastered if the individual with blindness or low
vision is to be competitive in jobs and professions that now demand excellent computer skills (Omvig, 2002).

Training and Pre-Vocational Services

Bowman (2007) reported that traditionally, the curriculum utilized in providing core blindness skills training for individuals who are blind or visually impaired, both youths and adults, has focused on the basic core skill areas of O&M, DLS, braille, and AT. He reported that basic core skill areas traditionally have not been taught from the perspective of pre-vocational services training.

Bowman (2007) discussed changes implemented by the Texas Division for Blind Services (TDBS) that were intended to increase the opportunities for competitive employment for individuals who are blind or visually impaired. He reported that the vocational rehabilitation program provided by TDBS implemented changes to existing core skill training by incorporating employment-centered learning. These changes emphasized skills such as communication, social interaction, and travel during blindness skills training rather than typical home skills, such as cooking. A subsequent review of case closures by TDBS showed that prior to the implementation of employment-centered learning into the core skill training, 43% of all legally blind clients had their cases closed as homemakers. Cases closed by TDBS after implementation of a statewide initiative focusing on incorporating employment-centered learning showed a significant decrease in cases closed as homemaker - 510 homemaker closures in 2003 compared to 71 in 2007. Based on reviews of case closures by the TDBS, Bowman (2007) reported that the
provision of employment-centered lifestyle training such as that implemented by the TDBS could be considered an effective training method to meet the needs of vocational rehabilitation consumers who are blind or visually impaired and seeking to enter the workforce.

Miller and Thompson (2005) designed a prevocational program at Saint Joseph's School for the Blind. This program was designed to offer training, not employment, and to provide students with opportunities to explore and practice work-related activities on and off campus. The pilot program for providing prevocational services was a lunch delivery service. Faculty and staff at Saint Joseph's were able to order lunch from one of six restaurants located near the school and students participating in the prevocational program would pick-up and deliver the lunches. In reporting the outcomes of the students participating in the prevocational program, Miller and Thompson (2005) stated students were observed to have gained opportunities to observe a variety of jobs within the community, which encouraged the students to explore future work possibilities and to set realistic work goals. Students were also observed to have increased their proficiency in orientation & mobility and their communication skills. Wolffe and Kelly (2011) in reporting the analysis of data that were obtained from the NLTS2, reported similar positive outcomes for transitioning students who are blind or visually impaired and who received expanded core curriculum training.
Education Resulting in a Degree or Certificate

While work-centered education, training, and experience are reported to be important for individuals who are blind or visually impaired and who are seeking to enter and/or re-enter the workforce, Capella-McDonnell (2005) reported that receiving education resulting in a degree or certificate as part of the vocational rehabilitation process is an equally significant predictor of employment. She analyzed data obtained from the Longitudinal Study of the Vocational Rehabilitation Services Program (LSVRSP). Data were collected during a five-year period from January 1995 to January 2000 from over 8,500 consumers throughout the United States who were in various stages of the vocational rehabilitation process. The population of interest for this study were those vocational rehabilitation services consumers who are blind or visually impaired and who were age 65 or younger. Further limitation were placed on the sample to only include consumers who were not competitively employed at the time of their application for services and those for who data on all variables used in the analysis were available. The total respondents for the study fitting all criteria were 181. Analysis of the data showed that four variables were found to be significant predictors of a consumer obtaining a successful employment outcome: (1) having worked since the onset of the disability, (2) reason for applying for vocational rehabilitation related to obtaining a job, (3) the relationship between the counselor and the consumer being rated as high quality, and (4) the receipt of education as a service resulting in obtaining an educational certificate or degree (Capella-McDonnell, 2005). She further reported that analysis of the
data showed that only those consumers who completed education resulting in a certificate or degree saw a positive effect in the area of successful employment outcome, with odds identified as being more than nine times higher of attaining competitive employment for those who obtained an educational certificate or degree.

Wolffe and Kelly (2011) reported that an analysis of data that were gathered in the NLTS2 - Waves 3 and 4 - showed that transition age youth with higher degrees of proficiency in access skills, such as use of adaptive technology and orientation and mobility skills, participated in career counseling and pursuit of a higher education at a higher rate than their peers who had lower degrees of proficiency in access skills. Those youth working towards a degree or certificate from a post-secondary education institution were also reported to have higher instances of employment experiences and volunteer experiences during high school (Wolffe & Kelly, 2011)

Service Providers and Employers

Specialized education and training regarding the abilities of individuals with blindness or low vision and the barriers to employment they face should extend to providers of services to individuals who are blind or visually impaired (Crudden, Sansing, Butler, & McBroom, 2004; Omvig, 2002). Crudden et al. (2004) conducted two focus groups which contained participants recruited from providers of rehabilitation services who were not directly employed by a DOR and who were preregistered to attend an employment conference. The participants of the focus groups were all asked a series of four questions: (a) What is one of the major barriers to employment for people who
are blind? (b) What methods are successful in overcoming barriers to employer's attitudes? (c) What methods are successful in overcoming transportation barriers? (d) What methods are successful in overcoming print access barriers? The participants identified employer's attitudes regarding transportation and the abilities of the individuals with blindness as a significant barrier to employment. Methods noted by participants as successful to overcoming the negative attitudes were: consumers and rehabilitation providers acting as a team to educate employers; consumers’ confidence in verbalizing and demonstrating alternative techniques for accessing print; and consumers' knowledge of public transportation options.

Crudden, Sansing, & Butler (2005) conducted two additional focus groups with participants recruited from those rehabilitation providers employed by the Mississippi Department of Rehabilitation Services, Office of Vocational Rehabilitation for the Blind with twenty-five total participants. They reported that the participants identified one of the major barriers to employment as attitudes of employers. The participants of the focus groups from both the 2004 and 2005 studies were reported as being united in believing that rehabilitation providers need to provide assistance in breaking down employment barriers experienced by individuals with visual disabilities by educating employers and the public about the abilities of individuals with visual disabilities. Crudden et al. (2005) further reported that after employers have been provided with education about blindness and visual impairments, they are often more interested in engaging with potential employees who are blind or visually impaired.
Summary

Based on previous research, there would appear to be a significant correlation between the provision of education, training, and prevocational services during the rehabilitation process and successful employment outcomes for individuals who are blind or visually impaired. Of particular significance is providing opportunities for actual work experience. Further research regarding the efficacy of expanded curriculums could be effective in further developing the provision of rehabilitation services for individuals with blindness or low vision. Technology education, in particular, appears to have crucial importance for individuals who are intending to enter the workforce and who are visually impaired. Learning assistive technology in order to function effectively in the workplace might assist in overcoming some of the barriers faced by individuals with visual disabilities.

More research is also needed on the efficacy of further education of employers and the public about the abilities of individuals with visual disabilities. This is particularly important, as research showed this consistently to be the highest ranked barrier to employment by not only individuals who are blind or who are low vision, but by rehabilitation providers and employers as well.
Chapter 3

METHODOLOGY

Methods

In January 2011, the author was entering her second academic term as a Master’s degree student in the Vocational Rehabilitation Program at California State University, Sacramento (CSUS). At the same time, the author gained employment with SFB as a Vocational Assessment Specialist. Among the author’s job duties was the provision of job readiness training and job placement services. The author noted that no standardized curriculum for the provision of pre-employment training or job search skills training was being utilized by SFB and various searches of materials within the archives of SFB made it evident that there was no standardized training method or curriculum available. Upon inquiry, RCBs at the DOR-BFS unit at Central Office in Sacramento, California, indicated that an accessible curriculum was not readily available for the DOR-BFS consumers in the Sacramento, California, region. Internet searches were conducted to determine the availability of accessible pre-employment and job search training curriculums for working-age adults with blindness or low vision who were seeking to re-enter the workforce after long-term unemployment or who had no prior employment experience and may require training to address enhancing or developing soft skills and other pre-employment training needs.
While the author was able to identify curriculums designed for transition age youth, ages 16 – 22, the programs offering these curriculum were only available limited times during the year. The author was able to identify mentoring programs for working-age adults with blindness or low vision in geographic areas other than Sacramento, California. The author was able to identify Expanded Core Curriculums designed for primary school-age students with blindness or low vision to enhance standard core curriculum offerings of primary school. The author located soft skills training curriculums designed for English Second Language workers and other workers with non-sensory related disabilities. Curriculums were located to provide pre-employment training to deafblind individuals, with focus on tactile communication skills. The author was able to locate work adjustment training and interactive capability trainings for individuals with blindness dated prior to 1992. The author was not able to locate a single, currently dated curriculum for pre-employment training for working age adults with blindness or low vision, which addressed soft skill, and other pre-employment training needs identified as needing to be acquired by individuals with blindness or low vision.

In the United States are a number of national organizations whose purpose is to provide resources for individuals with blindness or low vision. Among these are the National Federation of the Blind (NFB), American Foundation for the Blind (AFB), and Lighthouse. In the Northern California area, the nearest Lighthouse location is in San Francisco. During the time the author was employed by SFB, it became apparent that within each organization exist often-similar philosophies, but different approaches to the
philosophies, regarding provision of services to and expectations of individuals with blindness, which creates a highly charged political current among members of the blind community. This extends to the above-mentioned organizations and other smaller, local organizations such as SFB. Over time, disagreements over these differences in approaches have created divisions and tensions that at times resulted in an unwillingness to share program designs between the various organizations.

The author became aware through conversations with members of the blind community in Sacramento, California, that there may have been previous bad history between executive members of the local CRP in Sacramento and one of the local CRPs in San Francisco. This made accessing and viewing possible curriculums or training materials being utilized by these other organizations an impossibility during this author’s time of employment with SFB.

In Spring 2011 the author engaged in weekly discussions with the Employment Services Specialist (ESS) at SFB regarding an expansion that was planned for the Career Development program that was in its infancy at SFB. There were a number of factors during the year of 2011, which made the process of rolling out of this program slow. Among these were delays in the build out of the area which was to house a work area for consumers involved in the program and an injury suffered in Summer 2011 by the ESS which placed him on extended leave until early Fall 2011.

During the weekly discussions the author had with the ESS during the Spring of 2011 one topic heavily discussed was provision of pre-employment skills training and job
search training to program participants. These discussions were prompted by the author’s experiences working with consumers referred for pre-employment services and job placement services. The author initiated the discussions with the ESS as the author noted that many of the consumers referred were not employment ready. The author noted many of the consumers were in need of acquiring crucial soft skills – including using appropriate verbal and written communication and the use of appropriate non-verbal communication skills – and being able to adjust the use of different communications styles appropriately depending on the situation and person with whom they were communicating. The author also noted many consumers often had little or no employment search experience. It was during these discussions that the idea for this project came to the author. Over the course of the discussions during the spring of 2011, the method for this project became clear to the author.

In the spring of 2012, as the author was entering her final term as a Master’s degree student, she was required to complete an internship with an organization that provided vocational rehabilitation services with a focus on counseling. The author vacated her position with SFB in order to secure an internship with the DOR-BFS unit located at the Central Office in Sacramento, California. During the course of the internship, the author discussed the project with RCBs and with the DOR-BFS Rehabilitation Supervisor (RS), Bennet Kim. The author was encouraged by the RCBs and RS to finalize the curriculum and it was indicated to the author that having an accessible curriculum available that focused on pre-employment training for individuals
with blindness or low vision would be invaluable to the RCBs at Central Office and the local CRP, Society for the Blind.

The author found that weekly discussions with RS Bennet Kim were particularly valuable as RS Bennet Kim is an active member within the blind community and was able to provide further insight to the author from the perspective of a provider of services, as a former DOR consumer, and as an individual with blindness. During one of the discussions, RS Bennet Kim stated that at a Blind Advisory Committee she recently attended there was significant discussion regarding reports from RCBs in California, which noted that consumers of DOR-BFS were often difficult to place in competitive employment due to deficits in soft skills. In subsequent discussions with RS Bennet Kim regarding soft skills and individuals with blindness or low vision, the author learned that, from RS Bennet Kim's perspective, reinforcement of expected social behaviors often does not occur as sighted individuals often overlook or excuse the behaviors as unavoidable due to an individual’s blindness or low vision. These discussions assisted the author in developing a series of strategies for finalizing the content of the curriculum for the pre-employment skills training.

During the author’s internship, the author participated in regularly scheduled DOR-BFS unit meetings. During one meeting early in February 2012, the author was introduced to Richard Rueda, Director of Transition Services with Junior Blind of American (JBA). The author was later able to conduct a personal interview with Mr. Rueda, which provided valuable information for the project. Mr. Rueda provided
information regarding the Student Transition & Enrichment Program (STEP) provided by JBA. This program serves young adults ages 16 - 22 who are visually impaired and interested in advancements in their careers or education. Mr. Rueda stated during the interview that the program provides a variety of opportunities for the participants to develop job search and interviewing skills, to reinforce soft skills, and to provide participants with real-life work experiences through internship opportunities. In response to a question from the author regarding what instructors in the program reported regarding the soft skills of participants, Mr. Rueda responded that instructors have noted that participants in the program often show deficits in soft skills, particularly in the areas of socialization, communication, and expectations. Mr. Rueda reported that from his perspective and personal experiences as an individual with blindness, youth with blindness are often held to lower standards, and expectations and often behaviors and transgressions are excused or overlooked because “they are blind.”

Review of Sources

The author started her research at the CSUS Library. Research gathered included information presented in books, periodicals, peer reviewed journal articles, websites (edu, gov, and org), and projects from CSUS Vocational Rehabilitation graduate students. The research was separated first by subject or theme and then subsequently placed in chronological order. Research dated prior to the year 2000 was removed and not used for the purposes of this project.
The author accessed Disability Benefits 101 (DB101), Social Security Administration (SSA), Job Accommodation Network (JAN), California Employment Development Department (EDD), websites in order to obtain information. Other websites accessed were Mississippi State Rehabilitation Research and Training Center on Blindness and Low Vision (MSU-RRTC), National Federation of the Blind (NFB), American Foundation for the Blind (AFB), Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC), California Department of Rehabilitation (DOR), and the Texas School for the Blind and Visually Impaired (TSBVI). Information retrieved included research articles and statistics regarding blindness in the United States, information on services provided to individuals with blindness or visual impairment; accommodations for individuals with blindness or low vision in the workplace; information on websites for conducting job searches; and incentives for employers to hire individuals with disabilities.

Design of the Curriculum

The author reviewed job readiness training curriculums utilized by organizations providing services to ESL workers and workers receiving public assistance. Additionally, information regarding providing social skills training for primary school age youths with blindness or low vision was reviewed. Other information reviewed were commonly available templates and guides regarding resume designs, master applications, and thank you note. Reviews were also conducted on commonly available recommendations for performing job searches.
The author decided to focus on a curriculum that was activity based which would target several key soft skill areas: communication, attitude, teamwork, networking, problem solving and critical thinking, and professionalism. The remainder of the curriculum provides information, guides, and worksheets for developing job search skills, including resume building, developing a master application, appropriate dress for interviewing and the workplace, and interviewing skill building.

For the soft skills sections of the curriculum, the author developed short activities, designed as a self-study format for the consumer. The activities are designed to be completed in a self-study format under the guidance of a facilitator. The activities are also designed in a manner that a facilitator could easily adapt them for use with small groups. The curriculum is intended for use by consumers actively participating in the vocational rehabilitation process and who attend regularly scheduled meetings or appointments with an employment specialist or job developer at a local CRP or those consumers in regular contact with their SVRC or RCB. A team approach between the consumer and a rehabilitation professional is crucial in order for the consumer to have an avenue to discuss the activities and to receive feedback. Receiving feedback during the process would enforce many of the skills being learned during the use of the curriculum by the consumer.

The style of the activities developed for use in the curriculum is modeled after those commonly used in textbooks with scenarios or case studies being provided followed by discussion questions. Consumers are encouraged to review each activity and
answer the discussion questions. Suggestions for journaling activities pertinent to the activity just completed are also included. This is to provide the consumer with a method of documenting their experiences, feelings, and progress throughout the training process.

Worksheets provided throughout the curriculum allow the consumer to take steps towards gathering information necessary for the job search process. These worksheets encourage the consumer to plan and develop organized information regarding previous skills and experience acquired including education, volunteer experiences, and work experience. Once the consumer has developed a master application, a resume, and a list of references, the consumer is encouraged to keep the items in a folder or portfolio that will keep all documents in order, neat, and easily accessible when needed. The consumer is then encouraged to take this with them to utilize when applying for employment or interviewing. Also included are activities for developing cover letters and thank you notes.

A resource section is included to provide consumers with information regarding various job search and other information websites. Guidelines for keeping their identity safe when corresponding with unknown employers is also included. Consumers are also provided with information on other topics pertinent to job searching, including dressing appropriately for interviews and the workplace.
Chapter 4

SUMMARY AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Summary

The purpose of this project was to develop a pre-employment skills training curriculum for individuals with blindness or low vision. Job readiness training and job placement services are often referred by RCBs to the local CRP. The CRP for the greater Sacramento area is SFB. During the time this author was employed by SFB, no standardized curriculum existed to utilize with individuals who were receiving pre-employment or job placement services.

In order to better serve individuals with blindness or low vision it is recommended that a training curriculum addressing pre-employment skills and job search skills be developed and utilized not only by the CRP but by RCBs for consumers located in areas that do not have access to SFB or other CRPs. Currently consumers of DOR-BFS in the Northern Sierra District have no access to curriculum materials designed to assist a consumer with blindness or low vision in the development of pre-employment skills and job search skills.

A search for comprehensive pre-employment skills training curriculum created specifically for individuals who are blind or low vision was unsuccessful. There were no resources located locally that were utilizing accessible, comprehensive pre-employment training or job search training curriculums for individuals with blindness or low vision. The review of literature began with a discussion regarding statistics on employment and
individuals who are blind or low vision. Literature related to education assistive technology and prevocational training was then reviewed. This literature included peer-reviewed journal articles and books on job searches and a variety of Internet sources to provide content and organization standards for a pre-employment training manual.

A pre-employment training manual providing pre-employment skills training and job search instructions to individuals who are blind or low vision was developed. The curriculum includes lessons on communication, team work, work ethics, and attitude. In addition the curriculum includes instruction on writing effective resumes, cover letters, developing a master application, and writing thank you notes. The training manual also includes information and resources specifically relevant to job seekers with blindness or low vision.

**Recommendations**

The author recommends that the information included in the pre-employment training curriculum be updated on an ongoing basis. Vocational rehabilitation delivery systems are subject to constant change. The nature of job searches also changes on an ongoing basis as evidenced by transitions from utilizing help wanted ads in the newspaper to now conducting most job searches online. Issues relevant to individuals with blindness or low vision may also be subject to change as they are faced with changes in their life circumstances including possible changes in their current vision. Due to the unique barriers faced by individuals with blindness and low vision, it is important to continue to develop new strategies for job searches and pre-employment training.
Outreach into the community and further education of employers and the public must be undertaken by vocational rehabilitation professionals in order to continue to minimize barriers faced by individuals with blindness or low vision.

For further research, this author recommends that statistical data be gathered and analyzed by programs providing pre-employment training specifically to transitional age youth with blindness or low vision to track the efficacy of such programs and the impact the programs have as the youth enter adulthood.
Appendix A

Pre-Employment Training
PRE-EMPLOYMENT TRAINING FOR
WORKING-AGED ADULTS WITH
BLINDNESS OR LOW VISION

Developed by
Rhonda M. Olson
For
Consumers of Department of Rehabilitation Blind Field Services
Author’s Note

Some of the exercises and activities within this curriculum were adapted from other sources. The author would like to acknowledge that information was adapted from: *The East Baltimore Pipeline Job Readiness Training Curriculum* developed by Professional Training Systems, Inc.; *What Color is Your Parachute* by Richard N. Bolles; and the *Job Search Workshop Curriculum* by the Seattle-King Private Industry Council.

Information contained within the curriculum in regards to resume building and preparing for job search was adapted from information found through standard internet search methods and on websites providing such information for general public consumption.
A Note to Participants

Before beginning this training, it is important to recognize that we all have our own learning styles. These styles influence how we learn and what our expectations of learning are. The first section of this training addresses differences in learning styles to help you identify which learning style you prefer and to provide ideas for adjusting to other modes of learning if necessary.

The material for this training is currently available in a format accessible through use of a CCTV, screen enhancement software, or text-to-speech software. If you find that the format in which you originally receive the training does not meet your current accessibility needs, please make a request to your facilitator for an alternative format.

This training is to be used under the guidance of a facilitator, either your counselor or other professional working with you during the job development and placement phase of your plan. Activities presented may be in the form of individual work or small group work. Additionally, you are encouraged to keep a journal as you progress through this training. The purpose of the journaling exercises included in this training is to provide you with opportunities to reflect on the activities within this training and your experiences.

You are encouraged to be an active participant in the training process and to share your thoughts and opinions throughout the activities. If at any time during the training you have any questions or concerns, you should make contact with your facilitator.

You are also encouraged to take the opportunity during these activities to demonstrate your use of the adaptive technology you have available to you. This technology will enhance your learning and performance during the activities.
Expectations of Participants

- Be Punctual—Punctuality is a top priority. You will be given specific appointment times and will be advised of small group activities which will have designated start times. All appointments and activities will start promptly at the designated time, please be present and ready to work at that time.

- Dress Expectations—As this training is intended to provide you with skills and tools in preparation of conducting job searches and interacting with employers, it is expected that you will come to all appointments dressed in appropriate work attire. If you have any questions about this, please discuss it with your facilitator.

- Personal Goals and Objectives—You will be required to set personal goals and objectives indicating what you want to get out of the pre-employment training and for how you want to perform on the job.

- Act Responsibly—Take personal responsibility for yourself and achieving your goals and objectives.
  - Call if you cannot attend or keep an appointment
  - Conduct yourself professionally at all times
  - Demonstrate that you want to be here
  - Come prepared
  - Finish what you start
  - Communicate openly and honestly—Employers often base their hiring decisions around this quality—there will be many opportunities to improve communication skills and boost confidence in this area.

- Listen Actively—this skill is as important as communication in the workplace and is often the basis for shaping our thoughts and actions. You will be encouraged to listen for information and feelings.
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Section 1 - Knowing How You Learn Best:

As you review this section, remember to focus on the way that you learn best!

If you learn best by listening...

- Read aloud the information you are studying. If the information has been provided in electronic format, utilize your adaptive technology text-to-speech capabilities.
- Use a recording device to record classes or trainings, and listen to the recordings to review the information.
- Ask people to explain things to you that you don't understand.
- Study with other people.
- Ask to have oral examinations instead of written tests.
- Call people on the phone instead of writing to them.
- Ask people about upcoming events instead of relying on memos.
- Choose a job where listening plays an important role.

If you learn best by seeing...

- Watch other people do the things that you are going to need to know how to do. You will be able to visualize their actions later on.
- Calm yourself by imagining you are in a comfortable environment and that nothing can interfere with your peace.
- As you read something imagine what it would look like if it were happening in real life, or on TV.
- As you study maps, pictures, charts or diagrams, look at them once and then close your eyes and "see" them again.
- Watch videos on a subject so that you will have an easier time "seeing" the information again.
- Visualize the things that you are going to need to do in a day.
- Take note of the shape and color of the things that you will want to remember.
- Visualize telephone numbers and words in your mind.
- Use charts, graphs, and pictures.

If you learn best by doing...

- If given a choice, show others that you know how to do something by showing them how you do it rather than taking a test or describing to them how you do it.
- Arrange site visits to see how things are actually done in the job you want.
• When you have to learn how to do something new, watch someone who is actually doing it and ask them to coach you while you do it.
• Choose a job that lets you work with your hands and move around.
• Be sure that your work area has room for you to move around.
• Try moving/walking around when problem solving or when you need to remember information.
• Use your fingers or small objects when working with numbers.
• Act out instructions someone gives you. If they say go right, move your right hand to go right.

If you learn best by writing...

• When you read, have a pencil or pen with you so that you can underline and take notes as you read along.
• If the document you are reading is in electronic format, learn to utilize highlighting functions and notation features that may be available in the programs you are using.
• Use your recorder when listening to instructions. Transcribe your notes on your computer later on.
• Write down the things that you need to do. Make lists. Keep a written schedule.
• Get a job that involves writing.
• Write people memos or emails in order to convey information.

If you learn best by reading...

• Read a book that describes what you need to learn before attending a training class.
• Take good notes and then read them later on.
• Make plans for the future by reading about your options. Read travel guides for example.
• Read instructions instead of having someone tell you or show you how to do something.
• Have people write down or email directions for you to read.
• Choose a job that requires reading.

If you learn best by speaking...

• Ask questions when you don't understand something or need clarification.
• Have a mental talk to yourself when you are problem solving or learning something new.
• Study with other people so that you can talk to them about the new information.
• Dictate into recording device the things that you need to remember and play back the recording to remind yourself.
• Repeat things right after you hear them in order to better remember them.
• Repeat phone numbers and names out loud.
• Choose a job that requires a lot of talking.

Many people don’t realize that they have a unique way of learning—one that helps them learn best. Other people are usually not aware of what your learning preference is. Let them know. Feel free to share with them what you know about your own learning style. Some ideas for communicating your learning preference to other people are:

• **Doing:** "I wonder if you could show me how this works?"
• **Listening:** "Could you explain to me how this works?"
• **Reading:** "Would you mind giving me written instructions of how this works?"
• **Seeing:** "Would you mind giving me a diagram of how this works?"
• **Speaking:** "Let's talk through this together."
• **Writing:** "Let me record what you are saying about how this works so I can write it down later."
Section 2 - Setting a Personal Goal

Why Set Goals?

Goal setting is a powerful process for thinking about your ideal future, and for motivating yourself to turn your vision of this future into reality.

Goal setting is used by top-level athletes, successful business-people and achievers in all fields. Setting goals gives you long-term vision and short-term motivation. It focuses your acquisition of knowledge, and helps you to organize your time and your resources so that you can make the very most of your life.

By setting sharp, clearly defined goals, you can measure and take pride in the achievement of those goals, and you'll see forward progress in what might previously have seemed a long pointless grind. You will also raise your self-confidence, as you recognize your own ability and competence in achieving the goals that you've set.

Starting With A Goal In Mind

You must know how to set and achieve goals if you are to get to your “ideal future.” As you develop this skill, you will find that your goals are not “set in stone” they may change, as you change and grow. The important thing is that you have a vision for yourself and begin the planning process to make that vision a reality.

Think about what you want to get out of this training, and the type of job or career that you want.

Worksheets to help you in learning to set goals are provided. At the end of this section you will have developed all the information you need to write a personal goal statement.

S.M.A.R.T. Goals

A useful way of making goals more powerful is to use the S.M.A.R.T mnemonic. S.M.A.R.T. stands for:

- S - Specific
- M - Measurable
- A - Attainable
- R - Relevant
- T - Time-bound
For example, instead of having "To learn a new language and travel to another country" as a goal, it’s more powerful to say "To have learned to speak Japanese and have traveled to Japan by December 31, 2015." Obviously, this will only be attainable if a lot of preparation has been completed beforehand!

**Goal Setting Step #1: Completing the Goals Worksheet**

This worksheet will help you begin the process of developing the skill of goal setting.

**Goals Worksheet:**

**Who Am I And What Do I Want?**

1. Who am I?

   Subjects I like(d) in school:

   Activities that I like:

   Things I like to do in my free time:
My strengths are:

My weaknesses are:

2. What is my dream?

What goals do I have for myself?

What would be my ideal job? Why?

What is important for me to be happy?
3. How do I see my life in 5 years?

4. My goals and dreams for the future are:

**Goal Setting Step #2: Picture Yourself Already There -- Think Positive!**

Our present attitudes are habits that were formed from messages from parents, friends, society and self. These messages form our self-image and our image of others.

Our attitudes are reinforced by the conversations we constantly have with ourselves, or “self-talk.” If most of your self-talk is negative, it will be impossible to achieve your goals. You must replace negative self-talk with positive conversations.

**Steps to Positive Self-Talk**

**Step 1: Listen**

Listen to the language in your head. Make a commitment to yourself to replace negative self-talk with positive thoughts. Praise yourself and others. Dream of success. Be enthusiastic.

**Step 2: Focus**

Stay focused on your goals and priorities, and positive actions. Concentrate on doing those things. Don't allow yourself to get distracted by negative thoughts, negative people or old habits.
Step 3: Challenge


Goal Setting Step #3: Write Your Goal

Write a S.M.A.R.T. Goal Statement Here:
(Specific, Motivational, Achievable, Realistic and Time-Bound)

Write Your Measures of Success Here:

Outstanding:

Expected:

Could do Better:
Learning to use a To-Do List will benefit you not only in achieving the goals you set, but in managing your time effectively. To-Do Lists are prioritized lists of all the tasks that you need to carry out. They list everything that you have to do, with the most important tasks at the top of the list, and the least important tasks at the bottom.

By keeping a To-Do List, you make sure that your tasks are written down all in one place so you don't forget anything important. And by prioritizing tasks, you plan the order in which you'll do them, so that you can tell what needs your immediate attention, and what you can leave until later.

To-Do Lists are essential if you're going to beat work overload. When you don't use To-Do Lists effectively, you'll appear unfocused and unreliable to the people around you. When you do use them effectively, you'll be much better organized, and you'll be much more reliable. You'll experience less stress, safe in the knowledge that you haven't forgotten anything important. More than this, if you prioritize intelligently, you'll focus your time and energy on high value activities, which will mean that you're more productive, and more valuable to your employer.

To create a To-Do List specific to the goal you have set, you will want to create a daily list of things you should do "today" to work towards your goal. In the early stages of
your goal and your To-Do List, you may list items such as reading books and gathering information about your planned goal. Creating and using a To-Do List will help improve your goal setting, provide you with a tool for ensuring your steps towards your goal are realistic, and allow you to measure your progress towards your goal. You should review and update your goal-related To-Do List on a daily basis.

There are two steps for creating and using a To-Do List.

- **Step 1:** Write down all of the tasks that you need to complete. If they're large tasks, break out the first action step, and write this down with the larger task. (Ideally, tasks or action steps should take no longer than 1-2 hours to complete.)

- **Step 2:** Run through these tasks allocating priorities from A (very important, or very urgent) to F (unimportant, or not at all urgent). If too many tasks have a high priority, run through the list again and demote the less important ones. Once you have done this, rewrite the list in priority order.

To use your To-Do List, simply work your way through it in order, dealing with the A priority tasks first, then the Bs, then the Cs, and so on. As you complete tasks, tick them off or strike them through.

You may find it helpful to spend about 10 minutes at the end of the day organizing tasks on your To-Do List for the next day.

**Goal Setting Step #5: Review Your Progress**

Reviewing your progress is a very important part of achieving your goal. Periodically checking your progress allows you to reflect on what is working and what is not, so you can adjust your actions or change a goal if you are not achieving what you want. You may discover that you need to work on more things than you thought or that it is taking longer than expected to reach your goal – that’s okay. Remember, your goal should not be etched in stone. Use the outline below to check your progress.

**What’s Working?**

**What’s Not?**
What Changes?

What Actions?

Goal Setting Tips

The following broad guidelines will help you to set effective, achievable goals:

- **State each goal as a positive statement** - Express your goals positively – "Execute this technique well" is a much better goal than "Don't make this stupid mistake."
- **Be precise**: Set precise goals, putting in dates, times and amounts so that you can measure achievement. If you do this, you'll know exactly when you have achieved the goal, and can take complete satisfaction from having achieved it.
- **Set priorities** - When you have several goals, give each a priority. This helps you to avoid feeling overwhelmed by having too many goals, and helps to direct your attention to the most important ones.
- **Write goals down** - This crystallizes them and gives them more force.
- **Keep operational goals small** - Keep the low-level goals that you're working towards small and achievable. If a goal is too large, then it can seem that you are not making progress towards it. Keeping goals small and incremental gives more opportunities for reward.
- **Set performance goals, not outcome goals** - You should take care to set goals over which you have as much control as possible. It can be quite dispiriting to fail to achieve a personal goal for reasons beyond your control!
- In business, these reasons could be bad business environments or unexpected effects of government policy. In sport, they could include poor judging, bad weather, injury, or just plain bad luck.
- If you base your goals on personal performance, then you can keep control over the achievement of your goals, and draw satisfaction from them.
- **Set realistic goals** - It's important to set goals that you can achieve. All sorts of people (for example, employers, parents, media, or society) can set unrealistic goals for you. They will often do this in ignorance of your own desires and ambitions.
- It's also possible to set goals that are too difficult because you might not appreciate either the obstacles in the way, or understand quite how much skill you need to develop to achieve a particular level of performance.
Section 3 – Self Assessment of Your Soft Skills

Before you can convince an employer to hire you, you need to learn how to describe yourself to the employer. You need to be able to describe what skills and talents you bring to the workplace that would make you a better worker than the next person.

Look at the following statements and write yes, no or don’t know after each statement to learn the skills and attitudes that you would bring to the workplace. Remember to write the word that best describes your skills and attitudes.

Employability Skills
Communication
• I can speak and write clearly so that others can understand
• I can read and understand information in words, charts, or graphs
• I can listen and ask questions to better understand instructions and other’s ideas
• I’m am able to share information using voicemail, email and computers
• I can figure out when something needs to be measured or calculated.

Thinking
• I can figure out what’s happening in a situation, identify problems and solutions
• I am not afraid to try new and creative things

Learning
• I like to learn new things
• I like to set goals to improve myself
• I learn from my mistakes and the advice of others

Attitudes and Behaviors
• I am a confident person
• I am an honest person
• I am a responsible person
• I can adapt to changes and new information
• I plan and manage my time, money and other resources
• I am motivated and have the energy to get the job done
• I respect the thoughts and ideas of others
• I do a good job of balancing work and home
Working With Others
• I enjoy being on a team
• I like to contribute to common goals
• I try to understand the needs and styles of others
• I value and respect differences
• I take instructions and follow through
• I do whatever is needed to get the job done

Section 4 - Soft Skills

What are soft skills and why are they important?

Our personal qualities, habits, and attitudes influence how we interact and work with others. Companies value soft skills because they are often linked to job performance and career success. Soft skills may mean the difference between who can do the job and who actually gets the job. Learn how to succeed at work.

Soft skills may also be referred to as applied skills or workplace readiness skills. Soft skills include communication, networking, attitude, teamwork, problem solving, critical thinking, and professionalism.

When employers are asked what the qualities they expect from new employees are, the top four listed by most employers are:

• Critical thinking and problem solving
• Communication
• Teamwork
• Professionalism and work ethic

The information and exercises that follow are designed to assist you in strengthening your soft skills so that you will be better prepared for employment.
Section 4-A - Communication

Communication skills are how we give and receive information and convey our ideas and opinions with those around us. Communication comes in many forms:

- verbal (sounds, language, and tone of voice)
- aural (listening and hearing)
- non-verbal (facial expressions, body language, and posture)
- written (journals, emails, blogs, and text messages)
- visual (signs, symbols, and pictures)

It is important to develop a variety of skills for both communicating TO others and learning how to interpret the information received FROM others. Knowing our audience and understanding how they need to receive information is equally important as knowing ourselves.

To an employer, good communication skills are essential. In fact, employers consistently rank good communication skills at the top of the list for potential employees.

During an interview, for example, employers are impressed by a job candidate who answers questions with more than one-word answers, demonstrates that he or she is listening, and shares information and ideas (by asking questions for clarification and/or follow-up). The interview can be an indication to employers of how the candidate or employee will interact with supervisors, co-workers, and customers or resolve conflicts when they arise. Remember, non-verbal communication is also critical in an interview. Employers expect good eye contact, good posture, and “active” listening.

One of the challenges in the workplace is learning the specific communication styles of others and how and when to share your ideas or concerns. Though some supervisors may specifically ask for your opinion, others may assume if there is something important they need to know, you will bring it to their attention – or if there is something you are unsure about, you will ask. Knowing how to listen carefully and when to ask for help is important. If an employee and a supervisor learn to communicate well (in whatever method that works), there is a greater likelihood of job retention and promotion.

Non-Verbal Communication

Vision plays a huge role in human non-verbal communication. Our full body and arm gestures, facial expressions, eye movements, even pupil fluctuations, send culturally coded signals. We send these signals, and we read those being sent from others. We typically learn these cultural non-verbal codes from observation. These signals are
important in the work place, signaling cooperation, competitiveness, humor, worry, the full gamut of human emotion. Blindness may require learning alternative techniques to interact non-verbally.

Some important considerations regarding non-verbal communication:

- Eye contact is important when you are communicating. It is important that you turn and face the person you are speaking with. If this is a skill area you require practice in, discuss this with your facilitator.
- Understand and respect the personal space of others. Know how to ask others, courteously to respect your personal space.
- While it may be important to explore objects tactually to gain information and form accurate concepts, remember to consider when it is acceptable or not acceptable to touch, particularly when this relates to appropriate and inappropriate physical contact.
- Learn to communicate your needs. If you require information about what is going on around you, ask. Be sure to be considerate of others and the setting.

**Exercise 1 - Communicating Effectively**

When communicating, it is very important to be specific when offering and receiving communication. When we are not specific enough or haven’t asked questions to clarify our understanding, meanings may be lost, become twisted, or be misunderstood.

The following two scenarios are designed to show the value of being specific in your communications TO others and in communication received FROM others. Read the scenarios and then answer the discussion questions.

**Scenario 1. Getting to the Point**

Deena has her first job doing yard work. She works for a landscaping company. She’s had the job for about three weeks and feels it’s the perfect job for her. She loves working outdoors and being able work on her own. This morning Deena has been asked to begin her day at the home of an existing customer, Mr. B. This is the first time Deena has done any work at Mr. B’s home. Deena arrives early and begins getting ready to start working in Mr. B’s yard.

*Mr. B.:* I see you’re finally here!

*Deena:* Good morning Mr. B. I’m Deena. I’m here to work on your yard today.

*Mr. B.:* Well, I hope you do a better job this week than you did last week!
Deena: I’m sorry to hear that you were unhappy with what was done last week. This is the first time I’ve had the opportunity to work on your yard, but I’d like to hear what you didn’t like about the job that was done last week.

Mr. B.: It was a mess!

Deena: Can you explain more about it? What exactly didn’t you like? How was it a mess?

Mr. B.: Well, it just looked awful.

Deena: Mr. B, I can tell you are really upset about the quality of the work that was done last week. I really want to make sure that whatever happened last week that upset you doesn’t happen in the future. If you will tell me exactly what you would like done differently in the future, it will help me be able to be sure I do the yard work the way you like it.

Mr. B.: Well, there were trimming left on the ground around the shrubs and the sidewalk had grass trimmings all over it.

Deena: Okay, just to be sure I understand, you want us to make sure that all the clippings from any pruning are picked up and discarded and for us to be sure to sweep the sidewalk and clean up the grass trimmings.

Mr. B.: That’s exactly what I expect!

Deena: Thank you for clarifying what you didn’t like about the job that was done last week Mr. B. I will be sure those things are done today and I will let my supervisor know that is what you’d like done in the future.

Scenario 2. Getting to the Point

Joe works part-time in a large insurance office. His job includes filing, making copies and answering the phone. Joe is currently taking classes at the local community college. He has a class that gets done at 2:00 pm each day and he is supposed to start work at 3:15 pm each day. Ms. M., the office manager, has asked to speak with Joe about his time sheet.
Ms. M.: Hi, Joe. I would like to talk with you.

Joe: Sure, Ms. M.

Ms. M.: I’ve been watching your time this week and I am very concerned.

Joe: I can see that you are unhappy about something regarding my time, but can you be more specific?

Ms. M.: You have been getting to work late.

Joe: I’m sorry, I realize I’ve been getting here late.

Ms. M.: You are supposed to be here at 3:15, Joe. Today you didn’t get here until 3:30. We depend on you to be here at the time you are scheduled for work.

Joe: I understand you expect me to be at work on time. I have to take the bus here from class and I get here as quickly as I can. Would it be possible to change my start time to 3:30 and end my workday 15 minutes later?

Ms. M.: I suppose we can try that. Are you absolutely sure you can be here by 3:30 on your workdays?

Joe: I’m sorry I’ve been coming late and upsetting you. I am sure I can be here every day by 3:30. If for some reason I can’t make it here by that time, I will be sure to call and let you know.

Ms. M.: Thank you Joe, that would be very helpful.

Discussion

Consider each of the previous scenarios. In both scenarios, the employee worked at making sure they understood what the other person was upset about. Note that in each scenario the employee reacted calmly and asked questions to help them understand the situation. Each was able to communicate with the other person in order to clearly identify the problem.

Question 1: How do you think the conversations would have changed if Deena or Joe had gotten defensive when confronted by Mr. B. or Ms. M.?

Question 2: How would you have reacted if you were Deena or Joe?
Question 3: Would you have been able to stay calm easily?

Question 4: What strategies would you use to help you stay calm?

Question 5: If you would have found it difficult to stay calm, what might you have to try and do differently?

Journaling Activity

Think about a time when you were criticized by someone. It could be a friend, a teacher, or an employer. What happened? How did you feel? How did you handle it? If you didn’t handle it well, what might you do differently if something similar happened in the future? Did the experience change how you offer feedback to other people?

Exercise 2 - Different Types of Communication

Different types of communication are used in different situations and environments. Communication varies by context – and it is important to understand what might be acceptable and expected in one setting may not be appropriate in another.

Take a moment to consider how you communicate with your friends. How is your style of communication different with your friends from your family members? If you were at a job interview, how would you communicate with an employer?

Knowing how to adjust your communication style depending on situations and people is an important skill, as there are often unspoken rules and standards that are just expected. For example, it is common practice in the professional world to shake hands with people when meeting, rather than offering a hug. We might use slang or more casual terms with our friends when talking about what happened over the weekend, but we would usually use different words and mannerisms when telling our parents the same information.

The following activity will help you compare and contrast how you might share similar information with different groups of people.

Activity 1 - Switching Communication Styles

Consider the following situations. Create a list, discuss, or act out the different ways you might communicate with each of following groups:

- FRIENDS
- FAMILY
- PROFESSIONAL (INTERVIEWER, EMPLOYER, TEACHER, ETC.)
Be sure to think about and include BOTH verbal language (what we say and how we say it, i.e., tone of voice) and non-verbal language (facial expressions, behavior, body language, etc.)

**SITUATION 1: Saying hello or goodbye**

Friends:  
Family:  
Professional:

**SITUATION 2: Asking for help**

Friends:  
Family:  
Professional:

**SITUATION 3: Emailing or texting**

Friends:  
Family:  
Professional:

**SITUATION 4: Showing excitement**

Friends:  
Family:  
Professional:

**Discussion**

Now that you have completed the previous exercise, consider the following questions. Take note of your answers to discuss with your facilitator or small group.

**Question 1:** When the group changes, does the message change? Why or why not?

**Question 2:** What are some examples of communication (both verbal and non-verbal) that you should always try to practice when communicating with an employer?

**Question 3:** How are you able to know if your non-verbal communication fits the situation?

**Question 4:** What are some ways you can think of to determine non-verbal communication from the person you are communicating with?

**Question 5:** How would your friends react to you if you communicated with them in the same way you would to an employer?
Journaling Activity

We all communicate differently with different people in our lives. Does the way you communicate (or say things) affect how others perceive you? Explain.

Concept Building

We build great relationships by learning to become great communicators. This is not always an easy task as we sometimes may experience barriers to communication – especially in the workplace. Take some time to consider following eight barriers. Think about what they are and ways in which these barriers can be lessened or eliminated for successful communication. Which barriers do you identify with the most in your life? Do you use the ideas you wrote down in your own life?

• Physical
• Perceptual
• Emotional
• Cultural
• Language
• Gender
• Interpersonal
• Generational

Exercise 3 - The Impacts of Non-Verbal Communication

The purpose of this activity is to help you gain a better understanding of how non-verbal communication (both intended and unintended) can be interpreted by others and the impact and effect of this form of communication.

Have you ever been caught rolling your eyes at a teacher, parent, co-worker, or supervisor? Or, has someone heard you sigh when you are asked to do something? Whether you did either intentionally or did not even realize you did it, how do you think your action was interpreted?

There are all types of communication. Unbelievably, the type that uses no words is the kind that is often considered the most important. When it comes to communication, what people SEE is often more memorable than what they read or hear. This is often referred to as body language. Body language includes facial expressions, eye behavior, gestures, posture, and more. Body language can express your emotions, feelings, and attitudes. It can even contradict what you say verbally! When you are interviewing, employers will be considering not only what you SAY verbally during the interview, but what your body language is saying.
Types of Non-Verbal Signals and Cues

Consider the following seven types of non-verbal signals and cues we often use to communicate our interest in and to others. Creating a list of Do’s and Don’ts for avoiding common body language mistakes on the job may be helpful.

1. **Facial expressions**: The human face is extremely expressive, able to convey countless emotions without saying a word. In addition, unlike some forms of non-verbal communication, facial expressions are universal. The facial expressions for happiness, sadness, anger, surprise, fear, and disgust are the same across cultures.

2. **Body movements and posture**: Consider how your perceptions of people are affected by the way they sit, walk, stand up, or hold their head. The way you move and carry yourself communicates a lot of information to the world. This type of non-verbal communication includes your posture, bearing, stance, and subtle movements.

3. **Gestures**: We wave, point, plead, and often use our hands when we are arguing or speaking in an animated way. However, the meaning of gestures can be very different across cultures and regions, so it is important to be careful to avoid misinterpretation.

4. **Eye contact**: Remember that the visual sense is dominant for most people. Under many circumstances during your day you will be interacting with sighted individuals. This is particularly important to remember when seeking employment and during job interviews. Sighted individuals (i.e., interviewers) consider eye contact as an especially important type of non-verbal communication. The way you look at someone can communicate many things, including interest, affection, hostility, or attraction. Eye contact is also important in maintaining the flow of conversation and for assessing another person’s response.

5. **Touch**: We communicate a great deal through touch. Think about the messages given by the following: a firm handshake, a timid tap on the shoulder, a warm bear hug, a reassuring pat on the back, a patronizing pat on the head, or a controlling grip on your arm.

6. **Space**: Have you ever felt uncomfortable during a conversation because the other person was standing too close and invading your space? We all have a need for physical space, although that need differs depending on the culture, situation, and closeness of the relationship. You can use physical space to communicate many different non-verbal messages, including signals of intimacy, aggression, dominance, or affection.

7. **Voice**: We communicate with our voices, even when we are not using words. Non-verbal speech sounds such as tone, pitch, volume, inflection, rhythm, and rate are
important communication elements. When we speak, other people “read” our voices in addition to listening to our words. These non-verbal speech sounds provide subtle but powerful clues into our true feelings and what we really mean. Think about how tone of voice, for example, can indicate sarcasm, anger, affection, or confidence.

Activity 1 - Expressing Emotions Non-Verbally:

Consider the following "emotion" words. What types of non-verbal actions might occur in the expression of these emotions? Describe what you might do as a non-verbal expression of these emotions. An example is given to start you off.

*Example: ANGRY*:
I frown or grimace, I cross my arms, I stomp my foot, I clench my fist.

AFRAID
ANGRY
ANXIOUS
BORED
CONFUSED
CONTENT
CURIOUS
EXCITED
FRUSTRATED
HAPPY
INTERESTED
JEALOUS
LONELY
OFFENDED
OVERWHELMED
PROUD
SAD
SCARED
SHOCKED
SHY
STRESSED
SURPRISED
THANKFUL
WORRIED
Discussion:

Read the following expression and answer the discussion questions.

**ACTIONS SPEAK LOUDER THAN WORDS**

**Question 1:** Have you heard this expression before? When/where?
**Question 2:** What does it mean?
**Question 3:** How is this possible when actions do not “speak”? 

**Journaling Activity**

Many people dream of being successful, but their actions can sometimes hold them back. What are some ways you can be sure that your actions help you to achieve your goals in life?

**Exercise 4 - Understanding Directions**

The next exercise is a quiz. Set a timer for Five Minutes and then do what is asked of you in the quiz.

**Five Minute Quiz**

1. Read everything before you do anything.
2. Write your name after this sentence.
3. Circle or highlight the word “name” in sentence two.
4. Write the word SQUARE five times following this sentence.
5. Delete or cross out the words SQUARE that you just wrote.
6. Write the word CIRCLE one time.
7. Write your name underneath the title Five Minute Quiz.
8. After the title Five Minute Quiz, write, “yes, yes, yes.”
9. Underline sentences number seven and eight.
10. Put an X after this sentence.
11. Make the X you have just made BOLD.
12. Stand up and (loudly) call out your first name.
13. Write down the answer to 5 times 4.
14. Find the word Top in sentence four and cross it out.
15. Add the numbers 25 and 100 and write the answer here.
16. Count out in your normal speaking voice from one to 10.
17. When you get this far, say, “ME, ME, ME!”
18. If you think you have carefully followed these directions, stand up, turn around and whisper, “I have carefully followed the directions.”
19. Now that you have finished reading the directions carefully, do only sentences one and two.

**Discussion:**

**Question 1:** How did you feel about this activity?
**Question 2:** Was it fun, frustrating, easy, or difficult?
**Question 3:** What aspects of the activity made you answer Discussion Question 2 the way you did?
**Question 4:** What is the message of this lesson?
**Question 5:** How does this message relate to work?

**Journaling Activity**

Give an example of a time when you really thought you knew what you were supposed to do but did not. What happened?

**Section 4-B - Enthusiasm and Attitude**

What is the difference between “You’re hired!” and “Thank you for your interest, but…”? In a word: enthusiasm. Enthusiasm can mean the difference in not only getting a job, but succeeding in a job and even advancing in your career. A positive and enthusiastic attitude is a critical component of workplace success.

When employers look at prospective candidates, beyond skills, experience, and training, they look for those who demonstrate enthusiasm – those they believe will complete assigned tasks in an upbeat and cooperative manner. All other things being equal, a candidate who can demonstrate a positive attitude and eagerness to tackle the job will have an advantage over one who displays an attitude viewed by the employer as negative or disinterested. In fact, many employers would rather provide job skills training to an enthusiastic but inexperienced worker than hire someone with perfect qualifications but a less-than-positive attitude. Managers sometimes worry that this type of person will not get along with supervisors and co-workers, treat customers disrespectfully, and not put much effort into his or her work. On the other hand, employees who are viewed as enthusiastic are known to provide good customer service, resolve interpersonal conflict effectively, and work productively with others.

There are many ways you might demonstrate enthusiasm in the workplace. For example, in a job interview, you might smile, sit up straight, make eye contact, and discuss training and work experiences in an upbeat manner. Once hired into a position, you might show enthusiasm by showing up on time, showing interest in your job, and by demonstrating a willingness to listen, learn, and try new things. In customer service settings, an enthusiastic employee will approach customers proactively and offer assistance or seek
out tasks and projects when there is down time. This positive attitude helps you go above and beyond to get along with co-workers and managers – even difficult ones – and respond to constructive criticism with maturity and willingness to improve. Overall, when you show enthusiasm you come across as someone who wants to be at work and who is willing to do what it takes to get the job done.

The activities in this section emphasize the importance of enthusiasm and a positive attitude in the workplace. There are strategies for turning negative thinking into positive thinking and displaying and discussing enthusiasm during an interview and on the job.

**Exercise 1 - Positive Mental Attitude (PMA)**

PMA, or Positive Mental Attitude, is one’s ability to maintain the belief that he or she can transform or change a tough situation into something better.

What is a positive attitude? If I have a positive attitude, what actions might I display? What does a positive attitude “look” like to others?

- What is a negative attitude? If I have a negative attitude, what actions might I display? What does a negative attitude “look” like to others?

Developing a positive attitude starts from learning to believe in one’s self. In order to believe in ourselves, we must first understand our personal strengths. In this activity, you will be considering and sharing your personal strengths.

**Activity 1- Developing Positive Statements**

Complete the following statements. Try to come up with two or three ideas for each statement.

1. I am thankful for…
2. Other people compliment me on my ability to…
3. Something I would like other people to know about me is…
4. I feel really good about myself when…
5. I am proud of my ability to…
6. Something nice I recently did for someone else was…

**Discussion:**

**Question 1:** Why do you think statement 6 was included in this activity?

**Question 2:** How do you think internal feelings have the ability to impact those around us?
Question 3: How might a positive attitude help you on a job?

Journaling Activity

Activity 1: Do you think our attitude (whether positive or negative) is something we are born with or that we have power to control within ourselves? Think about a time when your attitude (either positive or negative) impacted you and those around you. When is it most challenging for you to keep a positive mental attitude? What do you do to help keep yourself positive during difficult times?

Activity 2: Keep a log for one week. Write down 50 (or 40 or 30) great things that happen each day. Include even the small things like: someone held the door open for me or when I went shopping, the clerk at the store was really friendly and helpful. Focus on the positive! At the end of the week, think about whether or not you felt any different during the week by focusing on the positive. Did you see a difference in how your interacted with others or in how you felt about yourself?

Exercise 2 - The Role of Failure in Achieving Success

Failing is a part of life. In fact, it accounts for many, many successes – for without failing, success is almost impossible. Learning how to bounce back from failure is not always easy, but it is necessary. Enthusiasm for goal attainment is a necessary characteristic for success.

Activity 1 – The Road to Success

The Road to Success is Paved with Failure.

Think about the statement above and what it means to you. Now, read the following and decide if these situations happened to you would you consider it a success or a failure. Write Success or Failure after each situation.

1. You decide to go into politics. You are defeated a number of times while running for political office.
2. You love to draw and want to become a cartoonist. You work for a newspaper and the editor tells you, “It’s easy to see from these sketches that you have no talent.”
4. You want to have a career as a singer. After your first performance at the Grand Ole Opry you are fired.
5. You have dropped out of high school and held a variety of odd jobs, including doing the hair and make-up for corpses. Now you've decided to try and get into show business.

6. You've received public assistance for years and live in an apartment infested with mice. Now you've decided to try writing a book.

7. You love to play basketball. You are a sophomore in high school and you decide to play on the varsity basketball team. You get cut from the team.

8. Your teachers decide early on during your schooling you just can't learn.

9. You get into Harvard University and end up dropping out.

10. You think you have a recipe that people can't resist. You try and get restaurant owners to try it and it gets rejected by more than 1000 restaurant owners.

Now that you have decided whether you would consider the above situations as successes or failures, let's consider them from a different perspective.

1. **Abraham Lincoln** was defeated in several times in different elections. Yet he persisted and succeeded in becoming the 16th, and one of the most respected, presidents of the United States.

2. **Walt Disney** was told he had no talent and fired from a newspaper job. He wound up doing volunteer work for a church in an old run down garage. One day he decided to sketch one of the many mice that were running through the garage. This mouse became the famous “Mickey Mouse.”

3. **Dr. Seuss's** first book was rejected by twenty-three different publishers. The 24th accepted and sold 6 million copies of it.

4. **Elvis Presley** was fired after his first performance at the Grand Ole Opry. The manager told him, “You ain’t going nowhere, son. You ought to go back to driving a truck.” He went on to become one of the most famous American singers of the 20th century.

5. **Whoopi Goldberg** dropped out of high school, was on welfare and worked as a bricklayer, bank teller, and licensed cosmetician. After graduating from Beauty College, she took a job at a mortuary fixing the hair of and applying make-up to the corpses.

6. **J.K. Rowling**, author of the Harry Potter series, lived on welfare for years, in an apartment infested with mice, and was rejected by 12 publishers before going on to fame and fortune.

7. **Michael Jordan** was cut from the varsity basketball team in his sophomore year of high school. Angry and embarrassed, he began to get up early each morning to practice with the junior varsity coach. Eventually he not only made the varsity team, but also became one of the most popular athletes in the world. Michael Jordan is quoted as saying, “I have missed more than 9,000 shots in my career. I have lost almost 300 games. On 26 occasions I have been entrusted to take the
game winning shot, and I missed. I have failed over and over and over again in my life. And that is why I succeed.”

8. **Thomas Edison** was kicked out of school. Following this, he was homeschooled by his mother. It took him over 700 tries before he got the filament right for the light bulb. Edison is quoted as saying: “I have not failed seven hundred times. I have not failed once. I have succeeded in proving that those seven hundred ways will not work. When I have eliminated the ways that will not work, I will find the way that will work.”

9. **Mark Zuckerberg** dropped out of Harvard University. He went onto become the youngest millionaire (at the age of 26) and is the CEO of Facebook.

10. **Harland David Sanders** (better known as Colonel Sanders) had his fried chicken recipe rejected by more than 1,000 restaurant owners before it was accepted by one. Today, people still eat it at KFCs across the world.

**Discussion**

We can visualize the differences between how people react to obstacles that may be encountered on the path to our goals by picturing the difference between what happens if you were to throw a raw egg against a wall or a ball against a wall.

**Question 1:** When you throw a ball against a wall, what happens?

**Question 2:** What happens if the ball is thrown harder against the wall?

**Question 3:** What happens if you throw a raw egg against a wall?

**Question 4:** What happens if the raw egg is thrown harder?

By visualizing the differences above, we can then picture two very different types of people: raw egg people and ball people. When raw egg people hit a “bump in the road,” they splatter. The harder they hit, the harder they splatter, usually giving up on their goal. When ball people hit an obstacle, they bounce back. The more difficult the obstacle, the harder they bounce back. All of the people in the activity above would be ball people. With every failure they experienced, they kept bouncing back.

**Journaling Activity**

Think about a time when you wanted to give up on something but didn’t. What was the situation? Why did you want to give up? Why didn’t you? How did you deal with it?

**Concept Building**

Find a creative way to describe what success means to you. You might express this by writing a poem, through artwork, by creating a song, etc.

**Exercise 3 - Attitude and Enthusiasm Just Might Get You the Job**
According to many sources, the enthusiasm you display on a job interview can make the difference between getting the job and not getting the job. Some even say that attitude can account for up more than 40% of your rating! This activity will focus on the different attitudes that can be (and have been) displayed during a job interview. In a job interview, enthusiasm comes across as showing a genuine interest in the job.

Did you know that often an employer will decide within the first 30 seconds if an applicant is right for the job?

There are two interview scripts below. Read both scripts and then complete the discussion questions.

**Activity 1 – The Interviews**

**Interview 1**
The applicant is dressed appropriately for the interview in slacks and a dress shirt. All the applicant’s clothes are neat and pressed. The applicant has arrived approximately 15 minutes early and is attentive and well prepared with his resume and other important paperwork neatly contained within a folder. The applicant made sure to turn his cell phone off prior to entering the building.

*Interviewer:* Good morning, my name is Ms. M. and I will be conducting your interview this morning. (The applicant extends his hand to shake hands with the interviewer – this helps prevent the awkwardness of the applicant possibly not knowing the interviewer has extended his or her hand when the applicant has blindness or low vision)

*Interviewer:* Please have a seat. We are interviewing for the position of a restaurant host/hostess. We are looking for someone with good customer service and communication skills, someone who is dependable and gets along with others. This person will be the first person to greet guests when they come into our restaurant, so it is very important to us that the host displays a positive and welcoming attitude.”

*Interviewer:* Did you bring a copy of your resume?

*Applicant:* Yes, I did. [Applicant opens up a folder containing copies of his resume and hands one copy to the interviewer.]

*Interviewer:* Tell me a little bit about yourself.

*Applicant:* I have lived in Sacramento all of my life, I love being around people, and I love learning new things. Right now, I’m learning a new language because I think it is important to be able to communicate with a variety of people. I also like doing physical work and enjoy gardening and landscaping. I’m quite proud of my yard.

*Interviewer:* What are your strengths?”

*Applicant:* I’m a really good listener. Don’t get me wrong, I’m a good talker too, but I think listening skills are even more important. I’m also a good organizer. It doesn’t
make any difference if it is organizing my closet or a trip with my family; I love all the planning and organizing that goes into it.

Interviewer:  What are your weaknesses?
Applicant:  I like things to go according to my plans so when something comes up that may make my plans go off schedule it sometimes stresses me out. But what I have learned about myself is that coming up with a plan B helps a lot! So, if I plan ahead for potential problems, then I don’t stress out at all because I have a good idea of what to do next.

Interview: Why do you want to work here?
Applicant:  As I said earlier, I love being around people and in this job I’d get to meet every person that walks through the door. Your restaurant has a good reputation for quality food and service and that’s the type of restaurant I’d be proud to work in. I think my qualities will fit nicely here.

Interviewer:  Tell me about a recent job or volunteer position you had.
Applicant:  I at Loaves & Fishes serving food. Sometimes I worked in the kitchen but I really loved working as a server. I got to meet a lot of people. Some days were easier than others. I set a goal for myself to smile at everyone I served, especially those people who seemed upset or depressed. It may seem like a boring job to some people but not me.

Interviewer: Are you still volunteering there?
Applicant:  I do still volunteer there on occasion. I began taking some computer training to improve my skills. This meant I didn’t have as much time. I left because I had started school and couldn’t do both school and work at the same time.

Interviewer:  Do you have any questions for me?
Applicant:  Your staff has a great reputation for customer service, so I thought perhaps I’d ask if you have a training program you put your staff through to achieve that?

Interview 2

The applicant arrives dressed in jeans with holes and a wrinkled shirt. She is also chewing gum, displaying poor posture, disorganized, late, etc. In fact, the applicant is so busy with her cell phone she misses the opportunity to extend her hand, and can’t see that the interviewer offered to shake hands. This leaves the interviewer feeling awkward and with a bad initial impression of the applicant.

Interviewer: Did you bring a copy of your resume?
Applicant:  Resume? Um, yeah…it’s in here somewhere. [Applicant digs around in her purse until she finds a crumpled resume. She smooths out the paper and hands it to the interviewer.]

Interviewer:  Tell me a little bit about yourself.
Applicant: Well, I’ve been taking a little time off lately – traveling around the United States. I’m trying to get one tattoo from every state. I’ve already got a pretty good start, see? [Applicant holds out her arm and shows some of her tattoos to the Interviewer.]  
Interviewer: What are your strengths?  
Applicant: I can talk to anybody…and about any subject! There’s never a dull moment when I’m in a room.  
Interviewer: What are your weaknesses?  
Applicant: Hmmm, I can’t think of anything. Oh yeah, I do have a weakness for Rocky Road ice cream. I bet I could eat an entire gallon in one sitting. I also like to sleep late. Really, I’m much more of a night owl than an early bird. Sure the early bird gets the worm, but who wants worms anyway?  
Interviewer: Why do you want to work here?  
Applicant: I figured I’d be able to get free meals if I worked for a restaurant. Plus, I’m living at home with my mom and she wants me to pay rent…why, I don’t know.  
Interviewer: Tell me about a recent job or volunteer position you had.  
Applicant: Uh, the last job I had was at a sporting goods store. That was a while ago, though – and it didn’t last too long.  
Interviewer: Why did you leave that position?  
Applicant: Well, me and the manager didn’t always see eye to eye. Sometimes customers were pretty rude when we didn’t have the sports equipment they wanted and my manager expected me to be nice to these people when they clearly didn’t deserve it. Let’s just say I left by mutual agreement.  
Interviewer: Do you have any questions for me?  
Applicant: Do your employees get free meals?  

Discussion

These examples of interviews are both ends of the extreme.

Question 1. What are your thoughts about these interviews?  
Question 2. Both applicants had times of enthusiasm. Why was the enthusiasm in Interview 2 not appropriate for the situation?

Journaling Activity

You have a friend who is getting ready for a job interview. This friend is not feeling too positive lately, and you want to help her get ready for this interview. What are some things you might do to help your friend prepare?

Concept Building
Go to:  http://thoughtprovoker.info/tp149.htm. Read the story. Before reading the responses, take a moment to write down some of the things you were thinking about as you read the story. Read the responses and compare and contrast those response to what your thoughts were.

**Exercise 4 - Translating Features to Benefits**

Marketing executives translate features to benefits when they are preparing to sell products and services. For example, your cell phone plan offers call forwarding (a feature). This means you will never miss another important call (a benefit). In another example, the new car you want to buy has a built-in GPS system (feature). The salesperson probably tells you that with built-in GPS you will never get lost or need to print out Internet directions again (benefit).

Consider the following:

- 40% - Attitude
- 25% - Image and appearance
- 25% - Communication skills (verbal and non-verbal)
- 10% - Job skills

Why do you think attitude is rated highest?
How does an employer get a sense of your “attitude” during an interview?

Part of a job interview is actually a sales job. You are “selling” yourself and your skills to an employer. This is not an easy task for many of us because we may not be sure about our skills, lack a bit of self-confidence, or are just plain nervous. This is one skill that will definitely get better the more it is practiced.

In order to begin thinking about how you might “sell” yourself in a job interview, you need to learn how to turn your personal FEATURES into BENEFITS for the employer. This is how you tell an employer what you have to offer while also giving the employer a reason why this feature is good for his or her business.

Take a few minutes to brainstorm some positive personality traits. Examples of positive personality traits include, but are certainly not limited to: friendly, creative, honest, dependable, trustworthy, enthusiastic, upbeat, patient, polite, helpful, etc.

Make a list of positive personality traits (Features) you possess and the benefit it would be to an employer.

**Discussion**
Question 1: Attitude: Do you demonstrate confidence and enthusiasm, are you on time or early?

Question 2: Image and appearance: Do you wear too much perfume or cologne, are your clothes wrinkled or inappropriate for the work environment?
**Question 3:** Communication skills: Do you look the interviewer in the eye, is your handshake firm, do you speak clearly?

**Question 4:** Did you find this activity easy or difficult?

**Question 5:** How might the skills you’ve learned to adjust to blindness or low vision be a benefit to an employer?

**Journaling Activity**

Describe how it makes you feel talking about yourself in a positive way. Is it easy, difficult, awkward, etc.? Since this is important when it comes time getting a job, what might you do to improve your ability to do this? If this is already easy for you, how can you be sure you don’t come across as “full of yourself” or conceited? Mastering Soft

**Concept Building**

Developing a 30 Second Commercial

This commercial is a thirty-second chance for you to sell yourself! Your commercial will help the listener become aware—very quickly—of the specific and unique talents that you can bring to the job.

Tips for developing your commercial:

- Use crisp, clear language—don’t ramble!
- Say what position you are seeking
- Talk about your abilities and experience
- Emphasize your individual strengths
- Use good eye contact and body posture
- Make a good first impression!

Samples of sentences to help you write your commercial:

- Hello, my name is…
- I am a…
- I do several things well, but I am best at…
- My strongest skills are…

Write your commercial in your Journal
Section 4-C - Teamwork

Teamwork is an essential part of workplace success. Like a basketball team working together to set up the perfect shot, every team member has a specific role to play in accomplishing tasks on the job. Although it may seem as if one player scored the basket, that basket was made possible by many people’s planning, coordination, and cooperation to get that player the ball. Employers look for people who not only know how to work well with others, but who understand that not every player on the team can or will be the one who gets the ball. When everyone in the workplace works together to accomplish goals, everyone achieves more.

Teamwork involves building relationships and working with other people using a number of important skills and habits:

- Working cooperatively
- Contributing to groups with ideas, suggestions, and effort
- Communication (both giving and receiving)
- Sense of responsibility
- Healthy respect for different opinions, customs, and individual preferences
- Ability to participate in group decision-making

The ability to work as part of a team is one of the most important skills in today’s job market. Employers are looking for workers who can contribute their own ideas, but also want people who can work with others to create and develop projects and plans.

When employees work together to accomplish a goal, everyone benefits. Employers might expect to “see” this in action in different ways. For example, team members in the workplace plan ahead and work cooperatively to assign tasks, assess progress, and deliver on time. They have professional discussions during which differing approaches and opinions might be shared and assessed in a respectful manner. Even when certain employees end up with tasks that were not their first choices, jobs get done with limited complaints because it is in the spirit of teamwork and with the overall goal in mind. A leader or manager may often serve as the teamwork facilitator. In this case, team members participate respectfully in discussion, carry out assigned tasks, and defer to the leader in the best interest of the goal. Consensus is wonderful, but not always possible, and an assigned leader will often support and facilitate the decision-making necessary for quality teamwork to exist.
Exercise 1 - There is No “I” in Team

Read the following quote about teamwork. Once you have read the quotes, choose the quote you liked best. Spend 10 – 20 minutes writing about why you liked it the best.

Teamwork Quotes

“Individual commitment to a group effort - that is what makes a team work, a company work, a society work, a civilization work.” - Vince Lombardi (football coach)

“Coming together is a beginning. Keeping together is progress. Working together is success.” - Henry Ford (pioneer of the assembly-line production method)

“There is no such thing as a self-made man. You will reach your goals only with the help of others.” - George Shinn (former owner of Charlotte, now New Orleans, Hornets basketball team)

“It is amazing what can be accomplished when nobody cares about who gets the credit.” - Robert Yates (politician in the 1700s)

“Teamwork divides the task and multiplies the success.” - Author Unknown

“I am a member of a team, and I rely on the team, I defer to it and sacrifice for it, because the team, not the individual, is the ultimate champion.” - Mia Hamm (retired American soccer player)

“Respect your fellow human being, treat them fairly, disagree with them honestly, enjoy their friendship, explore your thoughts about one another candidly, work together for a common goal and help one another achieve it.” - Bill Bradley (American hall of fame basketball player, Rhodes scholar and former three-term Democratic U.S. Senator from New Jersey)

“Talent wins games, but teamwork and intelligence wins championships.” - Michael Jordan (former American basketball player, businessman and majority owner of the Charlotte Bobcats)

“Alone we can do so little; together we can do so much.” - Helen Keller (American author, political activist, lecturer, and the first deafblind person to earn a Bachelor of Arts degree.)
“The strength of the team is each individual member...the strength of each member is the team.” - Phil Jackson (widely considered one of the greatest coaches in the history of the NBA)

“Unity is strength... when there is teamwork and collaboration, wonderful things can be achieved.” - Mattie Stepanek (advocate on behalf of peace, people with disabilities, and children with life-threatening conditions who died one month before his 14th birthday)

“Lots of people want to ride with you in the limo, but what you want is someone who will take the bus with you when the limo breaks down.” - Oprah Winfrey (American television host, actress, producer, and philanthropist)

“Finding good players is easy. Getting them to play as a team is another story.” - Casey Stengel (baseball hall of famer)

Discussion

Employers rate the ability to be a “team player” as one of the most important qualities and characteristics of their current (and future) employees.

Question 1: Why do you think this might be so important to employers?

Journaling Activity

A friend comes to you seeking advice. He got into trouble at work for not being a team player. He really likes his job and isn’t quite sure what to do. What suggestions would you give to your friend to help him improve? How might he respond to his boss?

Concept Building

Create your own personal quotes about teamwork. Include why teamwork is important, what can be accomplished through teamwork, etc. The quote should be one that encourages others to gain a better understanding and perspective on the importance of teamwork AND why it is often a core value shared by many different cultures, populations, and groups.

Exercise 2 – What Do You Bring to the Team?

Part of becoming a functional member of a team is learning to understand what you bring to the group and what you might need from others.
Activity 1 – What defines a good team player?

1. Reflect on some of the quotes discussed in the previous exercise.
2. Make a list of some of the characteristics you think make up a good team player. In other words, “What do you think it takes from each person on a team to make a team really work?”

Activity 2 – Individual Inventory of Teamwork Skills

Part of being a good team member is learning how to understand your personal strengths (what you have to offer) AND where you might need to draw assistance from others. Listed below are 10 of the characteristics that make a productive team member. Rate your level of confidence in each skill (HONESTLY!) by writing down: Not So Confident, Sort of Confident, or Really Confident after each skill. Then devise a plan for how you can improve some of the areas you think might need work.

**SKILL #1: RELIABLE**
This means: You can be counted on to get the job done. **Rating:**

**SKILL #2: EFFECTIVE COMMUNICATOR**
This means: You express your thoughts and ideas clearly and directly, with respect for others. **Rating:**

**SKILL #3: ACTIVE LISTENER**
This means: You listen to and respect different points of view. Others can offer you constructive feedback – and you don’t get upset or defensive. **Rating:**

**SKILL #4: PARTICIPATES**
This means: You are prepared – and get involved in team activities. You are regular contributor. **Rating:**

**SKILL #5: SHARES OPENLY AND WILLINGLY**
This means: You are willing to share information, experience, and knowledge with the group. **Rating:**

**SKILL #6: COOPERATIVE**
This means: You work with other members of the team to accomplish the job - no matter what. **Rating:**

**SKILL #7: FLEXIBLE**
This means: You adapt easily when the team changes direction or you’re asked to try something new. **Rating:**

**SKILL #8: COMMITTED**
This means: You are responsible and dedicated. You always give your best effort! **Rating:**

**SKILL #9: PROBLEM SOLVER**
This means: You focus on solutions. You are good about not going out of your way to find fault in others. **Rating:**

**SKILL #10: RESPECTFUL**

This means: You treat other team members with courtesy and consideration - all of the time. **Rating:**

Review your answers and count the number of times you wrote each of these as a rating:

- Not So Confident
- Sort of Confident
- Really Confident

Did you mostly write “not so confident”? If so, you are still developing your confidence as a team player. These skills often take some time to develop – so don’t worry. It might be helpful to reach out to someone you know and trust to help you focus on developing a plan for working on some of the skills in which you would like to be more confident. Don’t be afraid to ask for help. Asking for help when you need it is another great skill of a productive team player.

Did you mostly answer “sort of confident”? If so, you are pretty confident in your teamwork skills – but could probably use a little extra support or development in a few areas. Invite someone close to you (someone you know and trust), to work with you on the areas you would like to improve. Most people would be really happy to help you! Learning the strategies to become a good team member takes time, energy, and dedication.

Did you mostly state “really confident”? If so, you are truly confident in your ability to be a good team player. That’s great! Figure out an area or two where you would like to continue to see improvement (since we should always be striving to be the best we can be) and develop a plan for how to further grow those skills. Also try to offer support to someone you know who might be struggling with building his or her own level of teamwork confidence.

**Discussion**

Consider your teamwork skills confidence levels and answer the following:

I am most proud of my ability to:
I want to improve my ability to:
I will reach out to some of these people for guidance:

**Journaling Activity**
Consider your score on the Teamwork Inventory. Were you pleased with your results? What are some of the areas you would like to improve? How will you attempt to do this?

**Concept Building**

Ask someone you know and trust to rate you using a blank copy of the Teamwork Inventory. Were the scores similar or different? What does this tell you? Does this change any of the notes made related to skills to improve?

**Exercise 3 – The Shapes of a Team**

It takes all types of team members to create a balanced, cohesive team.

Teams are all made up of people who perform different roles. Think about a sports team (football, basketball, soccer, hockey, etc.). What might happen if one basketball player kept the ball all of the time? What might happen if the quarterback tried to run the ball all of the time instead of passing? Would a team be an efficient and winning team if this happened?

It doesn’t just take all different types of players to make a team effective; it takes all kinds of shapes, too. Think about the following five shapes: a square, a rectangle, a circle, a triangle, and a squiggle. Knowing whether you, your co-workers and friends are squares, rectangles, circles, triangles, or squiggles could help you build better teams and better careers.

Take a few moments to think about the shape you like best or find most appealing. Write the name of the shape. Once you have chosen your personal shape, read Activity 1 – Which Shape are You to learn about each shape’s “personality.”

**Activity 1 - Which Shape are You?**

There are some people who believe there are five basic personality types, and each type tends to prefer a different shape. Knowing whether you, your co-workers and friends are squares, rectangles, circles, triangles, or squiggles just might help you build better careers, teams, and friendships. Here is what each shape might say about you – and how you can recognize other people for their shapes.

**SQUARE:** If you are a SQUARE: You are an organized, logical, and hardworking person who likes structure and rules. But sometimes you have trouble making decisions because you always want more information. You feel most comfortable in a stable environment with clear directions on what to do. You tend to like things that are regular and orderly. You will work on a task until it is finished, no matter what. How to spot a
square: They appear to move “straight,” use precise or specific gestures, love routine, and are very concerned with detail. They are also very neat in their appearance and their personal workspace. They do a lot of planning and are always prompt.  

**RECTANGLE:**  If you are a RECTANGLE: You are a courageous (brave), exciting, and inquisitive explorer who always searches for ways to grow and change. You enjoy trying things you’ve never done before and love asking questions that have never been asked. You like structure, and will often be the person to be sure things are done the proper way, taking all rules and regulations into consideration. When you are given a task you will start organizing it to be sure it can be done in the most systematic way. How to spot a rectangle: These people often have “fleeting eyes and flushed faces.” They also tend to giggle and they like variety. For example, they’ll come into work early or late — but not on time. And those who have offices tend to be disorganized with a mishmash of furniture.  

**TRIANGLE:** If you are a TRIANGLE: You are a born leader who’s competitive, confident, and can make decisions. You also like recognition. You are goal oriented and enjoy planning something out and then doing it (you are motivated by the accomplishment). You will tend to look at big long-term issues, but might forget the details. When given a task you set a goal and work on a plan for it. American business has traditionally been run by triangles and, although usually men, more women are taking those roles today. How to spot a triangle: They have powerful voices, love to tell jokes, and they play as hard as they work. They also tend to be stylish dressers.  

**CIRCLE:** If you are a CIRCLE: You are social and communicative. There are no hard edges about you. You handle things by talking about them and smoothing things out with everybody. Communication is your first priority. When given a task, you will want to talk about it. You are a “people person,” with lots of sympathy and consideration for others. You listen and communicate well and are very perceptive about other people’s feelings. You like harmony and hate making unpopular decisions. How to spot a circle: They are friendly, nurturing, persuasive, and generous. They tend to be relaxed and smile a lot. They’re talkative, but have a mellow voice. They also have a full laugh and like to touch others on the shoulder and arm.  

**SQUIGGLE:** If you are a SQUIGGLE: You are “off-the-wall” and creative. You like doing new and different things most of the time and get bored with regularity. When given a task, you will come up with bright ideas about to do it. But you don’t think in a deliberate pattern from A to B to C. Instead, you tend to jump around in your mind, going from A to M to X. How to spot a squiggle: They can be “flashy,” dramatic, and extremely creative – and they don’t like highly structured environments. Both men and women squiggles tend to be funny and very expressive. They also have great intuition. Most performers and writers are squiggles.
Discussion

**Question 1:** Do you think people have the characteristics of more than one shape?

**Question 2:** Why do you think it is important to have all different shapes working on the same team?

Journaling Activity

Do you think it is easy or difficult for different types of personalities to work together? Why is it important to not only understand how you work best, but to learn how others work best?

**Exercise 4 - Teamwork on the Job**

For this activity, read the two scenarios then answer the questions that follow.

**Scenario 1 – The Library**

Shawn works in a library. She and three other co-workers have been tasked to work together on a project. Shawn turns in the completed product, but she completed it without input or help from the others. Shawn said it was really tough to find time to meet together. She did text the others (asking about working together), but got no responses. Her supervisor, Nathaniel, knows that she is a promising young librarian who wants to advance to a leadership position. Nathaniel also believes that Shawn has the potential to be a good leader, but feels she is impatient when it comes to working with others.

**Scenario 2 – The Coffee Shop**

Jason and Chantelle work at a local coffee shop. Chantelle is the newest employee at the coffee shop and her shift starts at 10 a.m. Jason has a shift that starts at 7 a.m. When Chantelle arrives at work one day, the following discussion occurs:

Jason: It isn’t my job! It’s your job Chantelle! The policy around here is that the new employee restocks cream and sugar station. You’re the newest employee. It’s your job!

Chantelle: I don’t get to work until 10:00. By the time I get here, the station should already be stocked. Otherwise, customers won’t have the stuff they need for their coffee.

Jason: You’re just trying to get out of doing your job.

Chantelle: No! You get here at 7:00. You should already have it done by the time I get here.

Jason: You’re the newest employee!

Chantelle: What’s your problem?
Jason: What’s your problem?
Chantelle: I do my job.
Jason: But you’re the newest employee. It’s your job to restock.
(At this point their voices are getting louder)
Chantelle: But you get here earlier. I am only trying to think about our customers.
Jason: You’re impossible.
Chantelle: No, you are!
Manager: Okay, okay! What’s the problem? Chantelle, continue restocking the condiment station. Jason, go ring up the customers.
(Later in the day, the manager speaks to Jason and Chantelle)
Manager: Chantelle, Jason is right. The new person stocks the cream and sugar station.
Chantelle: So you mean Jason shouldn’t have to do this anymore?
Jason: Told you!
Manager: Jason! On the other hand, that rule was made when everyone came to work at the same time. However, since Chantelle doesn’t come into work until later in the day, the customers have a right to have a fully stocked station.
Jason: So Chantelle doesn’t have to do this job either?
Chantelle: No, I get it! Whoever comes in earliest should restock the station from the night before.
Jason: Okay, so I don’t have to restock the station all day? Just replenish from the night before. Chantelle should then do it throughout her shift?
Manager: Exactly! Also, I would like you two to start treating each other with a little respect. It’s good to have a sense of humor. What happened to yours? Every customer and employee that comes in here deserves to be treated with courtesy. Okay? And, by the way, the customer is always right and always comes first.
(The next day)
Chantelle: Hi Jason, I’m here now. I’ll finish those. Why don’t you go take a break?
Jason: Okay, thanks! I think I will. Hey look, there’s a whole new kind of sugar that just came in. The boxes are in the back. I thought you might want to know.
Chantelle: Thanks, Jason.

Discussion

The Library:
Question 1: What did Shawn do well?
Question 2: What could she have done differently?
Question 3: How might she handle herself in the future?
Question 4: How should Nathaniel handle this situation?
The Coffee Shop

Question 1: What was the real problem at the coffee shop?
Question 2: What could Jason and Chantelle have done differently?
Question 3: Do you agree with how the manager handled the situation?
Question 4: What might you have done in this situation?

The importance of teamwork is undeniable. Write a list of the benefits of teamwork and give examples of each.

Journaling Activity
Think about a time when you were part of a group/team and things worked really well, and a time when things didn’t work out so well. What were the situations and what made the differences?

Section 4-D – Networking

“It’s not what you know, it’s who you know.” This common expression is the basis for understanding the importance of networking as a strategy for career development and exploration. Everyone has a network, even if you don’t realize it, and when it comes to job searching, this network may be just as important as your skills and experience. A personal network is that group of people with whom you interact every day – family, friends, parents of friends, friends of friends, neighbors, teachers, bosses, and co-workers. With these people, information and experiences are exchanged for both social and potential professional reasons. Networking occurs every time you participate in a school or social event, volunteer in the community, visit with members of your religious group, talk with neighbors, strike up a conversation with someone at the store, or connect with friends online.

When networking for the purpose of career development, this means talking with friends, family members, and acquaintances about your goals, your interests, and your dreams. Most people actually learn about job openings through friends, relatives, or others who are part of their personal network, and because each person in your network has a network of his or her own, your potential contacts can grow exponentially. This is important because more often than not, hiring managers would rather talk to a potential candidate who has been recommended by someone they know or already employ. Even if a position is not currently available, networking can lead to informational interviews that can help you not only learn about possible career paths, but also be great exposure for you to be thought of as a potential candidate when a job opens up.
Exercise 1 - An Introduction to Networking

1. Write a list of ways people use to find jobs.
2. Did your list include any of these? Personal contacts, secondary or post-secondary career centers, employer websites, Craigslist, Internet job sites (such as monster.com, snagajob.com, simplyhired.com or indeed.com), One-Stop Career Centers, walk-ins, professional or trade associations.
3. Did you know that approximately 80% of jobs today are NOT advertised?
4. If employers are not advertising, how are people finding jobs?

Discussion

- Talking to or contacting people you know to find job leads is the most effective way to find a job.

- Most of us find a job through personal contacts—people we already know such as our friends and family, doctor, dentist, and people we meet when we go shopping and during our normal everyday lives. Personal contacts are also the people that our friends and family know.

- Approximately 60% of job hunters find their new job with the help of friends, family members, and acquaintances.

Considering the fact that people most often find jobs by interacting with other people, developing a list of five strategies you might use when looking for a job (who could you talk to, what could you say, etc.).

Journaling Activity

There are three types of people in this world: those who make things happen, those who watch things happen, and those who wonder what just happened. A networker is someone who makes things happen. Think about a possible career goal you have. What is it? What can you do to develop your networking skills to get more information about this career?

Concept Building

The purpose of an informational interview is to get information about a field of work from someone who has some firsthand knowledge. When you are on an informational interview you should not ask for a job. This is not to say that an informational interview cannot lead to a job. In addition to helping you learn about a particular career, the informational interview is a way to start building a network. The person who is the
subject of your informational interview today, may be the first person in your network
many tomorrows from now. If you are nervous about going on a job interview, the
informational interview also provides a non-threatening forum in which to get some
practice. Think of it as a dress rehearsal.

How do you know whom you should interview? Anyone is fair game as long as that
person is knowledgeable about the field in which you are interested. Ask friends,
relatives, fellow students, your teachers, and neighbors if they know someone who works
in your targeted field. People love to talk about themselves and what they do. Call
someone you read about who has your "dream job."

Just as you need to prepare for a job interview, preparation for an informational interview
is very important. Searching for information on the occupation is step one. You need to
know as much as possible about your targeted career in order to ask intelligent questions.
When you go on a job interview it is wise to learn as much about the potential employer
and the interviewer as you can. When you go on an informational interview you should
do the same type of research. As mentioned above, people love to talk about themselves.
People also love to hear about themselves (the good things of course!). If your
interviewee was referred to you by someone, ask that person about him or her. Also, see
what you can find out by looking in local business journals and industry publications.
For example, was the interviewee recently promoted or did he or she receive some
special recognition? Research that person's employer as well. You will be prepared for
the interview and therefore make a good impression.

You should research your career of interest in order to ask intelligent questions. Was
there something mentioned in the occupational information you didn't fully understand?
The informational interview is a good forum to get that clarified. Here is a small
sampling of questions you should ask:

- How did you decide on this field of work?
- How did you get into this field of work?
- What do you like best about your work?
- What do you like the least?
- What is a typical day or week like for someone in your occupation?
- What kind of skills, education, and/or training would I need to get into this area?
- What personal qualities are necessary for someone in this occupation?
- What is a typical entry-level salary? (Do NOT ask how much the person you are
  interviewing earns!)
- Do you know someone else doing this kind of work that I could talk to for my
  research?
Once you’ve done your homework and you can walk into the informational interview confident that you will make a good impression and get the information that will help you make a wise decision. Don’t forget to: dress appropriately, arrive on time, keep the interview to the scheduled length, and remember proper etiquette. Finally, remember to send a thank you note to show your appreciation. The interviewee has taken time out of what is probably a very busy schedule to help you.

**Exercise 2 - Using Social Media to Network**

Most of us have heard of Google, Twitter, Facebook, YouTube, LinkedIn, Skype. What these all have in common is they are all types of social networking. The use of social media is so popular it has its very own language! For example, you can “Google” or be “Googled.” You can “friend” or “unfriend” someone on Facebook. You can send tweets to update people on your every activity every moment of the day using your Twitter account. In fact, in the Merriam Webster Online Dictionary, “text,” “tweet,” and “Google” are all listed as verbs!

Recent news reports indicate that many employers run searches of job candidates on the Web to screen them; many of these employers say they have eliminated a candidate based on the information they uncovered.

**Discussion**

**Question 1:** Do you have a Facebook account?
**Question 2:** Do you communicate with others by texting?
**Question 3:** Have you ever Googled someone or something?
**Question 4:** What does this mean for jobseekers with regard to online profiles?

**Journaling Activity**

Think about your own personal texting and social media habits. How do you think the use of these technologies can support and help you feel more comfortable in face-to-face communications? Explain.

**Concept Building**

If you use social networking sites, according to CareerBuilder.com, there are three things you can do to protect your online image – and your job opportunities:
1. **Be careful.** Nothing is private. Don’t post anything on your site or your “friends’” sites you wouldn’t want a prospective employer to see. Derogatory comments, revealing or risqué photos, foul language, and lewd jokes all will be viewed as a reflection of your character.

2. **Be discreet.** If your network offers the option, consider setting your profile to “private,” so that it is viewable only by friends of your choosing. And since you can’t control what other people say on your site, you may want to use the “block comments” feature. Remember, everything on the Internet is archived, and there is no eraser!

3. **Be prepared.** Check your profile regularly to see what comments have been posted. Use a search engine to look for online records of yourself to see what is out there about you. If you find information you feel could be detrimental to your candidacy or career, see about getting it removed – and in the meantime make sure you have an answer ready to counter or explain “digital dirt.”

**Exercise 3 – Email Etiquette**

Read each Email Etiquette and then write the Possible Reasons for it after each one.

**Email Etiquette:** Include a subject line that “helps” the reader.

*Possible Reasons:*

**Email Etiquette:** Include a greeting (Dear…) and a closing (Sincerely,)

*Possible Reasons:*

**Email Etiquette:** Use business language, spell check, and avoid abbreviations

*Possible Reasons:*

**Email Etiquette:** Use business punctuation and formatting

*Possible Reasons:*

**Email Etiquette:** Avoid using ALL CAPS

*Possible Reasons:*

**Email Etiquette:** Do not use jokes, witty remarks, or sarcasm

*Possible Reasons:*

**Email Etiquette:** Avoid gossiping or complaining

*Possible Reasons:*
Email Etiquette: Keep the communication short and to the point
Possible Reasons:

Email Etiquette: Do not use emoticons.
Possible Reasons:

Email Etiquette: Reread before hitting “send”
Possible Reasons:

Following are some possible answers to the above. Are yours similar?

Email Etiquette: Include a subject line that “helps” the reader
Possible Reasons: A meaningful subject line helps to clarify what your message is about – and also might help the reader to prioritize reading your email.

Email Etiquette: Include a greeting (Dear…) and a closing (Sincerely,)
Possible Reasons: Email should mimic a written letter. Always begin with Dear…. – and end with Sincerely. Sincerely is often the best “professional” choice for a closing.

Email Etiquette: Use business language, spell check, and avoid abbreviations.
Possible Reasons: Emails are considered professional or business correspondence. You want to be sure everything is spelled correctly and can be easily understood.

Email Etiquette: Use business punctuation and formatting
Possible Reasons: Same as above.

Email Etiquette: Avoid using ALL CAPS
Possible Reasons: ALL CAPS USUALLY MEANS YOU ARE SCREAMING. NO ONE LIKES TO BE YELLED AT, EVEN IN AN EMAIL.

Email Etiquette: Do not use jokes, witty remarks, or sarcasm
Possible Reasons: Jokes and witty remarks may be inappropriate and often do not translate well in email (since the reader decides the “tone”).

Email Etiquette: Avoid gossiping or complaining
Possible Reasons: Emails can be forwarded to others quickly. You never know who will see/hear what you wrote.

Email Etiquette: Keep the communication short and to the point
Possible Reasons: Anything long or complex should be addressed in person or over the telephone.
Email Etiquette: Do not use emoticons

**Possible Reasons:** Business emails should not use emoticons because they are not considered “professional” – plus not everyone knows what they mean. Additionally, if the recipient of the email is using special software for accessibility, the emoticon may not translate.

Email Etiquette: Reread before hitting “send”

**Possible Reasons:** Once you hit “send,” there is no turning back!

Discussion

**Question 1:** Should you practice Email Etiquette only with people you don’t know?
**Question 2:** How might Email Etiquette benefit you in all your email communications?

Journaling Activity

You own a business and have decided you need an email policy for your employees. What are the three most important factors you would like your employees to understand about using their business email accounts?

Concept Building

Thinking back on the work you have done so far as you have worked on the exercises and activities, why should you avoid using email addresses such as hotfoxychick@xyz.net, itsallaboutme@abc.com, or partyanimal@mno.me when applying for a job?

Exercise 4 – Six Degrees of Separation

Have you ever heard of the concept “six degrees of separation”? This is a networking theory that explains that everyone is, on the average, connected to everyone else by six steps (i.e., friend of a friend). Networking is all about weaving a web of contacts and strengthening relationships (so others can help you and you can help others).

Picture a dart board with three concentric circles (a middle bull’s eye/target with a larger circle around it, and then another larger circle around that).

In the middle circle – or the bull’s eye – are your FIRST DEGREE CONTACTS. These are the people closest to you - those people in your life who you love and can depend on. You see these people often and have good relationships with them. Examples of people in your first degree might include: Parents and siblings, best friends, relatives (including grandparents, aunts, uncles, and cousins), coaches, significant others, etc.
In the next circle are SECOND DEGREE CONTACTS. The people in this circle are those you are acquainted with and you “sort of” know – but you might only feel comfortable interacting with them occasionally. These people are aware of you, and you are aware of them, but you don’t have a close relationship. Some of these people might be those you say “hi” to at the gym, the barista at the local coffee shop, the neighbor who waves to you while walking the dog. EXAMPLES of people in your second degree might include: co-workers (if you have a job), teachers, parents of friends, neighbors, etc.

In the outermost circle are your THIRD DEGREE CONTACTS. These are people who you WANT to meet or know. These are people who could potentially help you with your career dreams. This could be anyone. Don’t underestimate yourself!

Take some time and draw a dartboard and then insert your three degrees of contacts. Alternatively, you could write the words First Degree, Second Degree, and Third Degree and list your contacts for each category this way.

**Discussion**

**Question 1:** What are some ways to strengthen second degree contacts?

**Journaling Activity**

Think about your career dreams. Now, who might you list in your third degree? Who might you want to meet or get to know? Do not limit yourself. You might think some of these people will be impossible to meet – but if you are patient, persistent, and up for a challenge, you just never know. The only thing you DO know is if you don’t try, you’ll never find out.

**Section 4-E – Problem Solving and Critical Thinking**

Everyone experiences problems from time to time. Some of our problems are big and complicated, while others may be more easily solved. There is no shortage of challenges and issues that can arise on the job. Whether in an office or on a construction site, experiencing difficulties with the tasks at hand or with coworkers, the workplace presents ongoing challenges on a daily basis. Whether these problems are large or small, they need to be dealt with constructively and fairly. Having the necessary skills to identify solutions to problems is one of the skills that employers look for in employees.
Exercise 1 – Praise, Criticism, or Feedback

What is the difference between praise, criticism, and feedback? Write examples of each one.

In general:
- Praise is an expression of approval
- Criticism is an expression of disapproval based on perceived mistakes or faults
- Feedback is information about a person’s performance of a task – used primarily as a basis for improvement

Read the following statements. After each statement, decide whether the statement is criticism, praise, or feedback. Write your answer.

1. Mr. Jones told me how much he appreciated your thank you note after the job interview. He thought it was a great personal touch.
2. Your desk is such a mess. Are you sure you are not trying to grow your own paper?
3. I noticed that you’ve been coming in late the last couple of days.
4. How many times do I have to tell you how to file these documents?
5. You look great today.
6. It would work better for me if I could explain my version of the story out loud before you ask questions.
7. You’ve improved a lot this week.
8. I found it difficult to evaluate this resume because it was messy.
9. I liked it much better when we got to choose the projects instead of being assigned to one.

Discussion

Question 1: What are different ways people may react or respond to praise, criticism, and feedback.
Question 2: How do you respond differently to praise, feedback, and criticism.

Question 3: How might rephrasing the statements above get a different response or reaction?
Question 4: If you had to make a rule for how you would like to receive feedback and criticism, what would that rule be?
**Journaling Activity**

How does it make you feel when others criticize the work you do? Are you able to respond to feedback differently? Think about a time when you criticized someone else. What happened? How did that situation ultimately make you feel?

**Exercise 2 - Workplace Ethics**

We all have our own set of values or standards of behavior that we operate by on a daily basis. However, we may not always feel we can apply these same principles or standards while at work.

**Activity 1 – Decisions and Ethics**

Read and answer the following questions.

1. How do you make decisions?
2. Is decision-making a skill that was taught to you?
3. Do you have personal rules for decision-making?
4. If you have rules, do these rules change if you are making decisions at home, at school, with friends, or at work?
5. What are ethics?

Ethics on the job often deal with a code of conduct or a set of principles for BOTH the employer and the employee. Here are some examples of workplace ethics from the perspective of both the EMPLOYER and the EMPLOYEE.

**Employer or Company:**

- To provide a safe work environment for staff and employees
- To treat employees with dignity and respect
- To provide a fair wage for the services rendered
- To handle all business transactions with integrity and honesty

**Employee**

- To show up on time
- To tend to company business for the whole time while at work
- To treat the company’s resources, equipment, and products with care
- To give respect to the company; that means honesty and integrity

**Discussion**
**Question 1:** What types of ethical issues might come up at work?

**Activity 2 – Case Study**

Read the following case study and use the questions that follow to develop a plan for making an ethical decision.

Marcus is an administrative assistant in the Human Resources Department of a large insurance company. His good friend, Shawnte, is applying for a job with the company. Marcus has told Shawnte he will be a reference for her. Shawnte asks Marcus for advice on preparing for the interview. Marcus knows the actual interview questions that all applicants are asked and considers making a copy of the questions for Shawnte to help her prepare for the interview.

What do you think Marcus is going to do? How will Marcus know if he made the right decision?

1. Identify the problem or ethical issue.
2. What are the facts that seem to be the most significant to the decision and who is affected?
3. What are two or three possible solutions and how could these solutions impact each person?
4. Decide on your plan for making your ethical decision.

**Discussion**

**Question 1:** What is the problem or ethical issue Marcus is facing?
**Question 2:** What are the facts significant to the decision Marcus must make and who might be affected?
**Question 3:** What are two or three possible solutions and how could the solutions affect each person?
**Question 4:** If this were your ethical decision to make, what would be your plan for making the decision?
**Question 5:** Do you think this could really happen on the job – in real life?
**Question 6:** Was this an easy problem to solve?

**Journaling Activity**

When it comes to decision-making, there are some people who like to make decisions by themselves, while others would like to talk things through with someone else. Which type of person are you? Give an example or two. What are some of the pros and cons associated with each type of decision-maker?
**Activity 3 – Problem Solving as Part of a Team**

It is hard work to keep a team working well together. What would you say to or do about a team member in the following situations?

1. Is always late.
2. Whispers to others or starts side conversations during discussions.
3. Gets upset when his/her recommendations are not followed.
4. Dominates the conversation/discussion.
5. Leaves before the job/work is done.
6. Constantly tells jokes and gets people off track.
7. Refuses to work with another “certain” team member.
8. Won’t share in the leadership role.
10. Just sits there.

**Discussion**

**Question 1:** Should each person on the team be “dealt” with in the same way?

**Question 2:** Are there ever any exceptions? Explain.

**Journaling Activity**

Think about a time when you were on a team and one member of the team wasn’t contributing. How was the situation handled? What might you have done differently? If you are a team leader, what can you do to help all team members contribute?

**Activity 4.1 – The Difference Between Perception and Reality**

Perception is one’s ability to see, hear, or become aware of something through our senses. It is a way of understanding or interpreting something. Sometimes the way we perceive the actions or statements of those around us may or may not reflect what is actually intended. This is generally due to our previous life experiences and/or what we believe. The purpose of this activity is to get participants to reflect on and consider different perceptions and how to be proactive in making decisions based on those perceptions.
Read the following:

1. Bob’s daughter is on the basketball team, but she doesn’t get to play much. His daughter works hard and never complains, but Bob believes this is yet another injustice in his life and his daughter is not getting a fair shake. Bob becomes annoyed and irritated. He angrily confronts the coach, embarrassing his daughter.

2. John’s daughter is on the basketball team, but she doesn’t get to play much. His daughter works hard and never complains. John believes that the coach wants to win and most likely plays the girls that will help him reach that goal. John feels proud of his daughter’s commitment to the team despite not getting to play very much. John offers to help his daughter improve her basketball skills.

Activity 4.2 – What Would You Do?

1. Your boss is talking to another employee as you walk into work. You have reason to believe they are talking about you. This makes you feel uncomfortable and upset.

2. A close friend is going on a cruise, all expenses paid. You are jealous that this friend does not have to pay a dime – Someone else is paying for everything. You were planning on going on the same cruise, but now consider not going because you have to pay for all of your trip and do not think it is fair.

3. At work, you developed a new way to organize the filing system that makes it easier for the office staff to find documents. You think your supervisor is going to take all the credit.

4. You are a nurse. The patient you are working with is ungrateful and rude, is always finding fault in everything you do, and is making your life miserable.

Discussion

**Question 1**: Is there any difference in the events with Bob and John’s daughters as they were described?

**Question 2**: What is the critical factor in the different ways each person reacts to situations?

**Question 3**: Why might each person perceive the situation differently?

Journaling Activity

Think about how you perceive yourself and how others perceive you. Do you think both are the same? Explain. What are some things you can you do to change others’ perception of you?
**Activity 5 – Behavioral Questions**

Thinking on your feet is an important part of getting and keeping a job. Interviewers will often ask “behavioral” questions in addition to technical questions about actual job skills. Often times, these open-ended questions will begin with, “Tell me about a time when….” Being prepared for these types of questions – and having a plan for answering them – is an important skill.

Have you been on a job interview?
What types of questions were you asked?
Were you ever asked questions that started with, “Tell me about a time when you…?”

The following method can be used to develop answers to behavioral questions asked during an interview. It will help if you remember it as being called STAR (Situation, Action, Result). Read the following example of how the method works.

**Question:** Tell me about a time when you provided customer service to an upset client.

**S - (Situation)** I was volunteering as an office assistant in the payroll department of a local nonprofit organization. An angry employee came to my desk and explained that his check amount was too low and that he wasn’t able to pay rent on time because of the mistake.

**A - (Action)** I promised the man that I would work with him to figure out what happened and what could be done. I compared the payroll records logbook with the computer payroll database. I discovered a data error, which explained the incorrect amount. I explained what happened and was able to put in a request to give the man a check for his missing balance.

**R - (Result)** The employee thanked me and even asked to speak with my supervisor about how helpful I was.

Use the STAR method to answer these sample interview questions.

**TELL ME ABOUT A TIME WHEN YOU:**
- were able to use persuasion to successfully convince someone to see things your way.
- were faced with a stressful situation that demonstrated your coping skills.
- used good judgment and logic to solve a problem.
- set a goal and were able to meet or achieve it.
- had to conform to a policy with which you did not agree.
• had too many things to do and were required to prioritize your tasks.
• were able to successfully deal with another person even when that individual may not have personally liked you (or vice versa).
• tried to accomplish something and failed.
• you motivated others.

Discussion

Question 1: What was the easiest part of this activity?
Question 2: What was the most difficult part of this activity?
Question 3: How might you practice the STAR method?
Question 4: Do you think it would be worth practicing? Why or why not?

Journaling Activity

Part of learning how to answer behavioral questions using the STAR method is recognizing your own skills and the areas where you have improved. Do you feel comfortable talking about your skills? If yes, how did you reach this level of comfort? If no, how can you learn to develop this level of comfort?

Section 4-F – Professionalism

Throughout our working lives, most of us will have many different jobs, each requiring a different level or set of skills. No matter the industry – from customer service to an office job to construction and the trades – all of these jobs have one thing in common: in order to succeed and move ahead, you need to demonstrate professionalism.

Professionalism does not mean wearing a suit or carrying a briefcase; rather, it means conducting oneself with responsibility, integrity, accountability, and excellence. It means communicating effectively and appropriately and always finding a way to be productive. Employers want new workers to be responsible, ethical, and team oriented, and to possess strong communication, interpersonal, and problem solving skills. Wrap these skills up all together and you’ve got professionalism.

As today’s labor market becomes more and more competitive, jobseekers will need to continually find ways to stand out from the crowd. There are few things an employer values more than employees who carry out their duties in a professional manner. Professionalism isn’t one thing; it’s a combination of qualities. A professional employee arrives on time for work and manages time effectively. Professional workers take responsibility for their own behavior and work effectively with others. High quality work standards, honesty, and integrity are also part of the package. Professional employees
look clean and neat and dress appropriately for the job. Communicating effectively and appropriately for the workplace is also an essential part of professionalism.

**Exercise 1 - Professional Work Attitudes**

Imagine it is your first day on a new job. What would you do to make a good impression on your co-workers and supervisors? Why might it be important to make a good impression on your first day?

**Activity 1 – Examining Work Attitudes**

1. Justin is a stock clerk at the local grocery store. Justin does only what he is told to do, no more and no less. Does Justin have a good attitude toward work? Why or why not?

2. One day, one of Justin’s co-workers knocked over a product display. Boxes were scattered all over the floor. At the time, Justin was working close by. He ignored the scattered boxes and left his workstation to tell others what had happened. If you were the co-worker who knocked over the display, what would you have said to Justin?

3. Later the same day, Justin was stocking shelves. The item he was stocking belonged in another part of the store. A co-worker trying to help Justin told him he was making a mistake. Justin insisted he was right and started an argument. Was it right for Justin to argue with his co-worker? What could Justin have done differently?

4. Before Justin went home that night, he overheard a personal conversation between two coworkers and the supervisor. The next morning, Justin told everyone what he had heard. The entire grocery store was soon talking about what Justin told them. Was Justin correct in discussing what he had overheard? Explain.

5. When Justin’s supervisor found out what had happened, she called Justin into her office for a conference. Question: What do you think was said to Justin?
Discussion

Question 1: If you were one of Justin’s co-workers, what advice would you give to him?
Question 2: If you were Justin’s supervisor, what could you do to help him become a better employee?
Question 3: What do you think would be the most difficult part of being Justin’s supervisor?
Question 4: How can a supervisor or boss affect your job performance?
Question 5: How can co-worker attitudes affect your job performance?

Journaling Activity

Imagine you are a supervisor on the job. What type of supervisor would you be? How would you deal with an employee who had a bad attitude? What are some of the skills you would like to develop so, one day, you can be a GREAT supervisor?

Exercise 2 – Rating Your Professionalism

Read each statement and answer by writing Always, Sometimes, or Never

1. I get to work or my appointments on time. If I am going to be late, I call and the proper person know.
2. I rarely miss work, classes, or appointments. If I am going to miss work, classes, or appointments, I let the proper person know ahead of time if possible, or call as soon as I know.
3. I work as hard as I can.
4. I pay close attention to my work.
5. I do my work as I am told. If I am unable to do something or have questions, I ask.
6. I am friendly on the job.
7. I try to solve problems that come up.
8. I follow safety and company rules.
9. I use materials and equipment properly
10. I behave professionally.

NOW, ANSWER THE FOLLOWING QUESTIONS:

1. Based on the descriptions above, I am most proud of my ability to:
2. One area I’d like to improve is:
3. Some strategies I might use as I work to improve this skill is?
Discussion
Question 1: Which skill do you feel the most proud of?
Question 2: What are some ways you could improve two or three of these skills?
Question 3: Are any additional skills missing from this list. What are they?

Journaling Activity
Do you think that the strengths and weaknesses you recognize in yourself are the same as those that others recognize in you? Why or why not? How do you think your behavior impacts those around you?

Exercise 3 – Self-Reflection

Read and answer the following questions.

1. How do you want your life to be?
2. What are the 10 most important work values to you?
3. What would you do if time, money, and experience were not a concern?
4. What would you do or learn if you knew you couldn’t fail?
5. What are you passionate and energized by?
6. What are your current skills, abilities, and talents?
7. What is stopping you from moving forwards and achieving your goals, including any self-limiting beliefs about yourself?
8. What beliefs do you need now to achieve the life of your dreams?
9. What are all of your choices?
10. What will you commit to now to move forwards?

Journaling Activity

Think about a time you needed to solve a personal problem and you acted first and then reflected later. Now think about a time when you needed to solve a problem and you reflected first and then acted. Which way turned out the best for you? Why do you think this is so?
Section 5 – The Job Search

TEN STEPS TO AN EFFECTIVE JOB SEARCH

1. Tell everyone you know you are looking for a job.
2. Spend some quiet time reviewing your interests and qualifications.
   a. What would you like to do?
   b. What are you qualified to do?
3. Seek assistance in writing an effective resume. Most employers require a resume before they contact you for an interview or even take your application.
4. Prepare a master application. This will ensure you have the information available for completing an employer’s application form.
5. Use every means available to look for a job that you would like to do and for which you are qualified. Following are some sources of job leads:
   a. Friends
   b. Online, i.e., craigslist.com, caljobs.ca.gov, indeed.com
   c. Local One-Stop Career Centers
6. Make your resume neat and easy to read. After you develop your resume, ask a sighted person to review your resume. Remember, the person you are sending it to will most likely be sighted and will be influenced by the appearance of the formatting of your resume.
7. Ensure you have a personalized cover letter that introduces you and states your interest in the job advertised.
8. Prepare for the interview. Do not take it lightly; you are competing with other interviewees for the job.
9. Take your master application to the interview with you. This will make it easier if you require accommodation to complete and application at the time of the interview.
10. After the interview, send a thank you note to the interviewer. A thank you note should be sent immediately after the interview.
Section 5-A - The Resume

Your resume is your ticket to an interview. The overwhelming majority of employers expect all job applicants to have a resume.

Why a resume? The resume is the means employers use to select the best applicants for an interview. It is a quick screening tool employers use on which they base their questions for the interviews. Employers receive many resumes for each job opening. Your resume is competing with all the other resumes just to be noticed and read.

Your resume is designed to sell or market yourself to a prospective employer. It should briefly provide sufficient information to get the employer’s attention. Through your resume, you are advertising yourself by giving the employer an instant overview of your interests, skills, educational background, and work or volunteer experience.

A good resume has the following components:

1. Your full name, complete address including city, state and ZIP code, and a phone number. If you have an email address, it should also be included.
2. An objective. This is usually based on the title of the job you are applying for.
3. Summary of experience, areas of effectiveness or summary of qualification.

General Tips on Resume Writing

1. Try and keep your resume to no longer than two pages for an email resume and preferably a single page for a resume you mail.
2. Make sure your resume is job specific. The title of the job you are applying for needs to be in your objective.
3. Use the vocabulary of the occupational field for the job you are seeking.
4. Make sure your resume is written in a clear, concise and well-organized fashion.
5. Use the same tense throughout your resume for consistency.
6. Whenever possible, state your skills and abilities in terms of the accomplishments or results.
7. Make sure you list any courses, degrees, or certificates you have taken or earned after leaving high school to support your qualification for the targeted job.
8. Do not list references or state references are available on your resume.
# Strong Action Words

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Sample Resumes

Sample 1:

Jose A. Adelo
1525 Jackson Street, City, NY 11111
555-555-555
email: abc@abc.com

Objective: To obtain a position where I can maximize my multilayer of management skills, quality assurance, program development, training experience, customer service, and a successful track record in the Blood Banking care environment.

Summary of Qualifications:

Results-oriented, high-energy, hands-on professional, with a successful record of accomplishments in the blood banking, training, and communication transmission industries. Experience in phlebotomy, blood banking industry, training, quality assurance, and customer service with focus on providing the recipient with the highest quality blood product. Fully compliant with FDA cGMP, Code of Federal Regulations, AABB accreditation, and California state laws.

Major strengths include strong leadership, excellent communication skills, competent, strong team player, attention to detail, dutiful respect for compliance in all regulated environment, as well as supervisory skills including hiring, termination, scheduling, training, payroll, and other administrative tasks. Thorough knowledge of current manufacturing practices, and a clear vision to accomplish the company goals. Computer and Internet literate.

Professional Accomplishments:

- Facilitated educational projects successfully over the past two years for Northern California blood centers, a FDA regulated manufacturing environment, as pertaining to cGMP, CFR's, CA state and American Association of Blood Bank (AABB) regulations, and assure compliance with 22 organization quality systems.

- Provided daily operational review/quality control of education accountability as it relates to imposed government regulatory requirements in a medical environment.
• Assisted other team members in veni-punctures, donor reaction care and providing licensed staffing an extension in their duties by managing the blood services regulations documentation (BSD’s) while assigned to the self-contained blood mobile unit (SCU).

• Successfully supervised contract support for six AT&T Broadband systems located in the Bay Area. Provided customer intervention/resolution, training in telephony and customer care, Manpower Scheduling, Quality Control, Payroll, and special projects/plant extensions and evaluations to ensure proper end-of-line and demarkcation signal.

• Reduced employee turnovers, introduced two-way communication to field employees, enhanced employee appearance, and spearheaded the implementation of employee (health) benefits.

• Supervised and maintained the position of System Technician in charge of status monitoring and the integration of monitoring devices in nodes and power supplies. For the reception and transmission of telemetry to the network operation centers (NOC’s) located in Denver, CO and Fremont, CA. Designed plant extensions, improved the paper flow and inventory control for the warehouse. Provided preventative maintenance at the system level, face to face customer interaction when required, and traveled to several telephony/@home systems in the U.S. for evaluation and suggestions in using the status monitoring equipment.

• Chief point of contact for the AT&T telephone and the ABC Affiliated TV stations, as it relates to complaints and diagnosing communicational problems either at the site or remote broadcasting. Also tested/repaired prototype equipment for possible consideration or for future use.

• Reviewed FAA safety requirements and procedures to ensure compliance for aircraft and passenger safety.

• Communication expert and programming specialist for the intermediate range Lance and Persian missile systems. Trained to operate and repair the (FDC) fire direction control computer system and field satellite communications.

• Served as Instructor/Supervisor (during my off time) for military personnel and their dependents in various recreational classes to include; automotive repair/preventative maintenance, wood making, stain glass, photography, and pottery.
Work History:

- Acting Education Manager, American Red Cross, Oakland, CA: 2007 - present
- Education Coordinator, American Red Cross, Oakland, CA: 2006 - 2007
- Phlebotomist, American Red Cross, Oakland, CA: 2004 - 2006
- Multi Craft Instructor, APO NY Germany: 1984 - 1986

Education

- Associate of Art, Administration of Justice, San Jose University, San Jose, CA
- NCTI Certified, CATV System Technician, Denver, CO
- ABM Certified, Cornerstone Technician, Denver, CO
Sample 2:

Paul Jones  
6 Pine Street  
Arlington, VA 12333  
555.555.5555 (home)  
566.486.2222 (cell)  
email:phjones@vacapp.com

Experience

Key Holder, Montblanc  
April 2009 - Present

- Opened new specialty boutique  
- Place orders to restock merchandise and handled receiving of products  
- Manage payroll, scheduling, reports, email, inventory, and maintain clientele book and records  
- Integrated new register functions  
- Extensive work with visual standards and merchandising high-ticket items

Sales Associate, Nordstrom - Collectors and Couture Departments  
July 2007 - April 2009

- Merchandised designer women's wear  
- Set-up trunk shows and attended clinics for new incoming fashion lines  
- Worked with tailors and seamstresses for fittings  
- Scheduled private shopping appointments with high-end customers

Education

Bachelor of Arts, Ramapo College, Arlington, VA

Computer Skills

- Proficient with Microsoft Word, Excel, and PowerPoint.  
- Experience with social media and internet research
Sample 3

Karol Miner
336 W. Chugalug Way, Sentinel, WY  33666
444-222-4339  karmin@southwbell.net

Objective

Process management opportunity that utilizes my communication and analytical skills to influence organizational growth and bottom line profitability.

Achievements

Research Information and Analyze Options
- Researched and purchased better heat exchanger that alleviated our heat loading problem.
- Saved company four to six hours of downtime per eight-hour shift and improved product yield at extruder.
- Purchased and refurbished used gearbox as spare.
- Saved 12 days downtime and eliminated risk involved to rebuild critical pieces of equipment.
- During emergency rebuild we are down 2 days rather than 2 weeks.

Manage People and Projects
- Successfully led refurbishment campaign on all three extruder gearboxes. Pro-active rebuild of gearboxes puts downtime at two days rather than two weeks.
- Reallocated resources during two-week annual shutdown so that no down time was encountered and all projects finished on time.

Extrapolate Essential Data
- Proved that product quality issue was not due to equipment processing parameters. Product design team discovered fault in their print test methods.
- Evaluated trends of real time data on AFG grinder. Proactive identification of problem prevented coarse particle contamination.
- Utilize Subject Matter Expertise to Influence Management Decisions
- Determined capital project would need to be undertaken pro-actively to avoid having to use our business resumption plan in the event of catastrophic failure. Company will save about 1 million dollars.
- Created viable process for extrusion, during new product development, with no start-up difficulties.
- Effective Communication Throughout the Organization
Experience

Senior Process Engineer / Technical Support, 2005 – Present
Zezee Corporation

Process Engineer / Technical Support, 2000 – 2005
Zezee Corporation

Technical Professional, 1997 – 2000
Halogen Energy Services

Education

BS  Chemical Engineering, 1996
University of Missouri – Rolla, Rolla, MO

Graduate level coursework towards an MBA with Financial Emphasis

Professional Development

Xerox – Lean Six Sigma Yellow
Exercise 1 – Develop Your Resume

Use this resume worksheet to gather the information needed for developing a resume. After you have completed the worksheet, use the information and the previous resume samples as guides to create your resume.

Name:
Address:
Phone number(s):
Email address:

Overall job search objective:

Experience or Skills:

Work Experience, Volunteer Experience, or Professional Experience (Complete for each experience):

Job Title:
Employer’s Name:
City and State:
Duties:

Job Title:
Employer’s Name:
City and State:
Duties:

Job Title:
Employer’s Name:
City and State:
Duties:

Job Title:
Employer’s Name:
City and State:
Duties:

Education or Relevant Training (List highest level of education first. Unless you have just graduated high school, do not include high school).
Section 5-B - The Cover Letter

The purpose of the cover letter is to highlight things about yourself that are related to the specific job for which you are applying.

*An effective cover letter will help get you an interview.*

A cover letter should be attached to each resume you submit to an employer. This is true whether you are applying online, by email, by mail, or delivering a resume in person. Never send a resume without a cover letter that relates your specific qualifications to the particular position for which you are applying.

The more knowledgeable you are about specific requirements of the job and the nature of the company offering it, the better the impression you will make. The internet is a good source of information about the company advertising the job opening.

In addition to stating your qualification for the job, you should express interest in both the job and the company in your cover letter.

The language used in a cover letter should be simple and direct. The letter should be brief and to the point. It is important that the letter be neat, well organized, and grammatically correct.
Things to remember about a cover letter:

- Always send one with a resume
- Type it neatly and make sure it is well organized and grammatically correct.
- Explain why you are writing; specify the job you are seeking.
- Tell how your skills relate to the specific job.
- Convey your enthusiasm in the job and in joining the company.
- Request and interview.

**Cover Letter Facts**

- An effective cover letter can get you an interview.
- It introduces your resume and creates interest in it.
- It is used to highlight things about you relevant to a specific job.
- It gives you an opportunity to present your personal values.
Cover Letter Format

(Date)

(If available)
Company Name
Address
City, ST ZIP

Dear Recruiter: (**)

Please accept this letter and the enclosed resume as indication of my interest in the Accountant Assistant’s position with your firm as advertised on Craigslist.

I have acquired excellent skills in the accounting field through an intensive training course in accounting and through varied work experience. I believe my hands-on experience as an office manager, combined with my technical knowledge of accounting, uniquely qualifies me for the position which you have advertised.

I believe my skills and abilities would be a great asset to Accountability Plus. I am available for an interview at your convenience. I can be reached at (916) 555-1234.

Thank you in advance for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,

Jane Smith

Enclosure: Resume

**NOTE: Due to the fact that most job ads today do not list a recruiter’s name, company address, or phone number, the salutation should read “Dear Recruiter.” If a company name, address, and the name of the contact person is available, these should be used.
Cover Letter Contents

Date:
Name and address of Employer (if available)

Dear Recruiter (or contact person):

PARAGRAPH 1:
1. State the position (job) for which you are applying.
2. State how you heard about the job.
3. Give a reason why you are applying.

PARAGRAPH 2:
1. Review your personal qualification, skills, and abilities for this particular job.
2. Give information about your personal values, such as your dependability and ability to work as a team member.

PARAGRAPH 3:
1. Ask for an interview at their convenience to discuss your qualifications in person.
2. Thank the contact person for his time and consideration.

Sincerely,

YOUR SIGNATURE
(Type your name)

Enclosure: Resume
Cover Letter Practice

Using the sample cover letter and other information given about cover letters as models, write a sample of your own cover letter based on the overall job goal you have decided upon.

Date:

Dear Recruiter:

State the position you are applying for and where you heard about the opening. Give a reason you are applying.)

1. 

Briefly summarize your qualifications for the job, and describe relevant training or experience you have had. You may also add a short statement about values you will bring to the job like, “I am flexible, dependable, detail oriented, and work well with others.”

2. 

Express your interest in obtaining the job and in joining the company. State that you are available for an interview at their convenience.

3. 

Thank them for their time and/or consideration.

4. 

Sincerely,

Enclosure: Resume
Section 5-C - The Employment Application

The employment application is an important screening device used by employers. This form often seems meaningless to the applicants after they have completed several, but the completed application serves as a basis on which the potential employer makes some of his or her decisions.

The employment application is also a legal document. The application is signed and dated by you. If any of the information you provide is false, it can be used to legally deny you employment or terminate your employment in the future.

It is essential that you understand the importance of filling out application forms neatly, completely, and correctly. A neat application will indicate to the employer that this applicant cares about his or her self-presentation; a complete application demonstrates that the applicant pays attention to details, follows directions, and is not satisfied until a job is well done. An application form that provides accurate information shows that the applicant may be trusted to see that a job is done right.

An application should:

1. Be neat and legible, whether hand written or typed.
2. Be grammatically correct.
3. Have all instructions followed.
4. Have all blanks filled out or marked N/A or Not Applicable
5. Provide accurate information
6. Give specific positions, titles, and job duties in job history. Do Not state See Resume!
7. Have no spelling errors, discernible whiteouts or erasures.

How to Make Your Application Clear and Specific

1. Complete the master application form that follows. This will give you a complete and accurate template to be used on applications completed for employers.
2. Read the instructions thoroughly before filling out the application. Print clearly, preferably in black ink and never in pencil.
3. Be specific and brief in descriptions of past jobs. Many employers refuse to take a resume in place of an application because the resume may not provide all the information they desire. Most employers require both an application and a resume. Even if you have a resume, complete the application in full. Never put “See Resume” in place of an answer.
4. Answer all questions. Do not abbreviate or use acronyms. If the question is not applicable, place a N/A or Not Applicable in the space provided.
5. Stress the particular experience related to the job you are applying for and watch your spelling.
6. Stress the important skills and abilities you had in previous jobs that are transferrable to the new job.
7. Clearly specify the machines or tools used in former jobs that could possibly be used in the new job.
8. Clearly and briefly describe the scope of your responsibilities.
9. Briefly state the unusual or challenging aspects of prior jobs.
10. Get permission to use references BEFORE you use them.
11. Be neat. Do not soil the application.
12. Be sure to sign and date the application.
13. Provide accurate information. False information could legally terminate your employment in the future.
14. If you are completing a resume at home, have a trusted sighted person review your completed resume (someone other than the person who may have helped complete it for you preferably).

**Exercise 1 – Master Application**

By gathering the information as outlined, you will be able to have a single source for most information required by an employment application. Complete and keep in a portfolio with your up-to-date resume and current list of references. A master application will be especially beneficial in helping the person who may be providing you with assistance in completing paper applications.

**Personal Information**

1. Name
2. Address, city, state, zip code
3. Phone number
4. Email Address
5. Social security number
6. Are you eligible to work in the United States?
7. If you are under age eighteen, do you have an employment certificate?
8. Have you been convicted of a felony within the last five years? (information about convictions varies based on state law)

**Education and Experience**

1. School(s) attended, degrees, graduation date
2. Certifications
3. Skills and qualifications

**Employment History (for both current and prior positions)**

1. Employer
2. Address, phone, email
3. Supervisor
4. Job title and responsibilities
5. Salary
6. Starting and ending dates of employment
7. Reason for leaving
8. Permission to contact previous employer

**References (usually three references)**

1. Name
2. Job title
3. Company
4. Address, phone, email

**Availability (when you could start the job and the days/hours you are available if it's a job with a flexible schedule)**

1. Days available
2. Hours available
3. Date you are available to start work
Section 5-D - References

An important ticket to getting hired and often taken lightly is a list of references.

Things to remember about references:

1. The more current the reference, the better.
2. Employment references are always the best.
3. Written references, especially from previous employers, always help.
4. It is acceptable to use Volunteer Agencies where you have volunteered as employment references.
5. If you do not have current work references or have no work history, a character reference can be used as a substitute.
6. Be sure to have correctly spelled names, correct addresses, and confirmed phone numbers for people you use as references.
7. When in doubt about a reference, do not use that person.
8. Never use family members as references.
9. It is advisable to use references who have known you for at least one year.

Exercise 1 – Reference Worksheet

Name:  
Business:  
Address:  
Phone Number:  

Name:  
Business:  
Address:  
Phone Number:  

Name:  
Business:  
Address:  
Phone Number:  

Preparing for Your Job Interview

The interview is an opportunity to sell your skills and abilities to the employer. You must do the job of selling yourself extremely well in order to compete with other applicants for the same position.

Your ability to succeed in employment interviews depends on identifying and clearly structuring the skills you can bring to the job; and then offering proof that you have these skills and can perform them well. This is also where it is important to know what accommodations you may need to perform a job and should be able to tell the employer how this is a benefit to them.

Do not lose the job because you did not take the interview seriously. Be prepared!

Tips for a Successful Interview

1. Preparation: Practice, practice, practice! Anticipate possible questions and write out answers to each of them. Do some research. Know something about the company before you go.

2. Punctuality: Do not just be on time. Be at least 15 minutes early.

3. Appearance: Dress conservatively, but comfortably. Use the guidelines presented later to help you.

4. Body Language: When offering a handshake, give a firm one, regardless of the interviewer’s sex. Erect posture shows confidence. Sit down only when offered a chair. Lean slightly forward in your chair and relax. Avoid crossing your legs or your arms.

5. Eye Contact: It is important that you make eye contact with the interviewer. Practice being able to track people speaking with you so that you are always looking at their face when talking to them. If you find this challenging, work with a trusted friend or relative and ask them to provide feedback to you to help you better develop this skill.

6. Enthusiasm: Bring a positive attitude into the interview without being too familiar. Leave your problems and complaints someplace else.
7. Thank you note: At the end of the interview, thank the interviewer for his or her time. Be sure you have the interviewer’s name and title noted. Follow up with a thank you note to the interviewer a day later.

**Most Common Interview Questions**

1. Tell me about yourself. (The interviewer wants to know your educational background and work experience, not your personal life.)

2. What are your strengths?

3. What are your weaknesses?

4. What interested you about our company?

5. What outside hobbies are most significant to your personal development?

6. Why did you leave your last job?

7. What didn’t you like in any of your former supervisors? (Do not say anything negative about any of your former supervisors.)

Be prepared to ask questions of the interviewer. Some ideas are:

1. When do you plan to make a decision?

2. May I call you?

3. Will I be working as a team member or alone?
Types of Clothes for Different Job Interviews

Work Clothes
This clothing would be appropriate for janitorial, factory, domestic aide, machine operator, mechanic, or other similar jobs.

- For Men: Neatly pressed and washed trousers and a plain button shirt.
- For Women: Plain dress or skirt and blouse in a washable fabric, comfortable shoes, no jewelry.

Casual Clothes
This clothing would be appropriate for orderly, nurse, waitress, cook, messenger, shipping clerk, child care, nurses assistant, home companion, driver, dispatcher, etc.

- For Men: Sport shirt (no tie) and pressed slacks. Dark socks.
- For Women: Dress or skirt and blouse. Dark colors or pastels, no bright colors. Plain is better than printed. Comfortable shoes, nylons, and very little or no jewelry.

Office Clothes
This clothing would be appropriate for receptionist, sales associate, and general office work.

- For Men: Clean white shirt, tie, sport coat or suit. Dark socks. No loud ties or wide coat lapels. No strong aftershave or cologne.
Disclosure of Disability

Persons who have a "hidden disability," such as a psychiatric disorder, may choose not to disclose the existence of the disability during the interview. If the employer does not know of the existence of the disability, the employer will not be able to exclude the applicant based on the disability. By contrast, blindness is usually obvious to the employer. Because the employer is normally aware of the disability, a blind person is in a different position from a person with a hidden disability. Since the employer will be aware of your disability but may not know what kinds of questions may be asked, you must be prepared voluntarily to describe and demonstrate how you can perform the job. This means that you must thoroughly research the job and the reasonable accommodations you will require long before you walk into the interview.

You should also be prepared for questions the interviewer may have about your ability to perform the job. Employers are prohibited from asking specific disability-related questions unless a job offer has been made. However, the employer may ask if you need reasonable accommodation for the interview process. Also, while an employer is normally prohibited from asking applicants to describe or show how they are able to perform certain essential functions of the job unless they ask this of every applicant, if an employer might reasonably believe that an applicant was unable to perform a job function because of a known disability, the employer may ask that particular applicant to describe or demonstrate how he or she would perform the function, even if other applicants were not asked this same question. Because many employers may be unfamiliar with blindness and may not understand that a blind person is capable using alternative techniques to perform the same tasks as a sighted person, the employer may reasonably believe a blind person would be unable to perform certain functions of a job.

For instance, your disability would be a "known disability" if you came to the interview using a white cane or guide dog, so the interviewer would be allowed to ask you to describe or demonstrate how you would perform specific job functions. If you say that you would need a reasonable accommodation to perform the job, the employer may ask you questions about the accommodation. Accordingly, you should educate yourself in advance about what reasonable accommodations you will need. For instance, if you say that you need text-to-speech software, the employer is allowed to ask who makes the software and if it is compatible with the employer's computer system. You should be prepared to answer this type of question and do so with confidence and authority.

It is important to keep the focus on how the alternative techniques you use are a positive attribute and to demonstrate your confidence in using or describing the use of alternative techniques.
Exercise 1 - Mock Interview:

Once you reach this exercise, your facilitator will discuss scheduling a mock interview for you which will give you an opportunity to practice using interviewing skills in the mock interviews.

Your facilitator will inform you when your mock interview has been scheduled. You should treat this as if it were a real interview for a real job. Review the previous sections on Preparing for an Interview and Types of Clothes for Different Job Interviews and the following section of Disclosure of Disability and Interview Do’s and Don’ts. If you have any concerns or questions, discuss them with your facilitator BEFORE your scheduled mock interview.

REMEMBER:

• Dress appropriately  
• Arrive on time  
• Bring your resume and a list of references

Your facilitator will discuss the critique provided by the interviewer at your next scheduled appointment following the mock interview.

Section 5-F - The Thank You Note

The thank you note is a short, simple communication expressing your gratefulness to the interviewer. Unless the employer is making a decision that same day you were interviewed or the following day, mailing the thank you note is recommended. Create your thank you note as soon as possible after the interview while the process is still fresh. Take your time.

The format of a thank you note is:

1. Salutation: Be sure you have the interviewer’s correct name and spelling. Address him or her as Mr. or Ms.

2. Paragraph 1: Thank the interviewer for his or her time and specify the position for which you were interviewed.

3. Paragraph 2: Identify a justified compliment of the business and relate it to your best selling feature.
4. Paragraph 3: Thank you interviewer again and let him or her know that you will be looking forward to meeting with him or her again in the near future.

5. Closing: Sincerely is the proper way to close your note.

6. Signature: Be sure to sign the thank you note and include your typed name so the interviewer is able to identify who you are.

**Importance of Sending a Thank You Note**

Sending a thank you note after an interview is a very powerful tool.

1. By sending a thank you note, you show your interviewer courtesy and respect.
2. So few job applicants send thank you notes that you automatically stand out if you do it.
3. A thank you note lets you make points on things you forgot in the interview.
4. A thank you note demonstrates your etiquette and written communication skills.

**Sample Thank You Note**

Date (Should usually be the date of the interview)

Dear Mr. or Ms. Benz:

Thank you for your time in interviewing me for the position of Office Assistant.

I was very impressed with your company’s investment in both personnel and equipment. After talking with you and other members of your staff, I am confident that my skills in word processing and public relations are a perfect match for your job requirements.

Thank you again for the opportunity to discuss my qualifications. I look forward to meeting with you again in the near future.

Sincerely,

Jane Smith

**NOTE: An email can be acceptable, but it is much better to send the thank you note by mail.**
Protecting Your Privacy

- When utilizing the internet and email during the job search process, there are some steps you can take to protect your privacy and personal information. The following information is important to consider, particularly if you are responding to a job posting through sites like Craigslist where many employers are “anonymous.”

- Limit the personal contact information (name, address, phone numbers) on your resume when emailing to anonymous employers. In other words, make your resume “cyber-safe.” You can do this by making a copy of your resume and deleting your address and only including a single phone number. Additionally, you may consider creating an email that you use exclusively for the job search process that you can easily dispose of after obtaining employment.

- Choose carefully where you post your online resume. Many sites, such as LinkedIn, allow you to post an online resume and make it searchable by potential employers. Choose these sites carefully, review their privacy rules, and post to a few really good sites rather than posting everywhere.

- When posting an online resume, if the option is available, choose to limit access to your complete resume, unless you are using the cyber-safe version of your resume. Most job sites will allow you to set the “visibility” of your resume. Review the options carefully to choose which method best suits your needs.

- Keep a written log of where you have posted your resume. Include the date you posted the resume, the site, and which version of your resume (cyber-safe or regular).

- Don't use resume distribution services! You completely lose control of your resume, whether it is distributed via e-mail or posted to a number of Web sites. You don't know who has it or what they might do with it.

- Don't provide your Social Security Number, your driver’s license number (including your Driver's License, if your SSN is the same as your license number), your bank account number, or your mother's maiden name to anyone approaching you about a potential job. A person with a copy of your resume and your Social Security Number has everything they need to steal your identity - the #1 fraud, according to the FBI. There is no reason to include your SSN on your resume! If a stranger approaches you (via phone, e-mail, or regular mail) claiming to need a little more information to do an employment "background
check," "prescreening," or something similar, and asks you for your Social Security Number or your mother's maiden name, do not give it to them. This approach has been used by identity thieves to collect information from victims. In general, the safest time to provide anyone with your Social Security Number is only when you are completing an IRS form at the employer's physical location, after you have accepted their job offer. Your Social Security Number may, very rarely, be needed for a background check, but few employers spend the time/money for a background check on an applicant who has not been interviewed.

- Look for, and READ, Web site privacy policies! If the site does not have a privacy policy, do not use the site! There are thousands of job sites - find another one. NOTE: a privacy seal (e.g. TRUSTe or BBBonline) does NOT mean that a site is "safe" to use - it just means that they disclose what information they collect and what they do with it.
47 Principals of Job Hunting


1. The job-market is always churning.
2. Millions of people are unemployed even in the best of times; millions of people find work even in the worst of times.
3. The solution to unemployment cannot wait for government programs. You are in charge of your job-hunt; no one else will find a job for you.
4. Job-hunting is a repetitive experience in the world of today. You must master the job-hunt one and for all: you must aim for empowering yourself, not just look for “service” that rescue you just this one time.
5. Job-hunting has become a survival skill.
6. Every job is temporary. By their very nature, jobs are mortal; they get born, grow, prosper, decline, die. Jobs and job-titles are endlessly being born, and then dying.
7. All job-hunting methods are mortal, at least in their outward form: you must be continually changing how you hunt for work. What got you here, won’t get you there; job-hunting has completely changed in the twenty-first century.
8. All of us basically job-hunt the way we live our life: depending on step-by-step well-thought-out plans, or on just intuition, or on just blind luck. If your job-hunt is not working, and you’re depending on just luck, move up to intuition; if intuition isn’t working for you, move up to step-by-step planning.
9. Even when you feel utterly powerless, you must work on what is within your control, even if it’s only 2 percent.
10. You must be prepared for your job-hunt to take a long time.
11. You must be energy-conserving in your job-hunt, which means familiarizing yourself with the latest information about what job-hunting methods will repay you for the time invested, and what methods won’t.
12. The business world is like a foreign country: if you visit it, you must learn its language, and how employers think.
13. You must learn that employers hunt for employees in exactly the opposite way that job-hunters search for employers.
14. You must rethink who you are; this involves doing some homework and research – on yourself, not the job-market (initially) or “hot jobs.”
15. You are not your job-title; you are “a person who . . . .” You are a person who has *these* priorities, *these* enthusiasms, *these* gifts, *these* knowledges, and *this* experience.
16. It’s hard to plan for finding meaningful work if you haven’t first thought out what would be (or is) for you a meaningful life.
17. In the realities of today’s market, you will probably have to settle initially for part of your dream; so make sure that dream is large to begin with. You can keep working closer and closer to it in future months and years.

18. Your self-inventory must be a search for what you did right, not for what you did wrong.

19. Your self-inventory must be a search for what you enjoy doing, not for what is most marketable. If you like doing something a lot, it’s probably because you’re good at it. The reverse does not follow. We are all good at many things that we have no appetite for doing, anymore, if ever.

20. There are three key elements to a self-inventory: your answers to three questions, WHAT, WHERE, and HOW. WHAT skills do you most enjoy using; WHERE do you most want to use those skills; and HOW do you find the person who has the power to hire you for such a job.

21. It helps to search for answers to these questions with two other people. Every one of us is oblivious to our own excellencies, initially.

22. Your uniqueness does not consist in one outstanding skill that you have, but in how you combine the skills you have (a necklace is worth more than a single pearl).

23. Your uniqueness does not consist in any one subject that you know, but in how you combine two or three different fields that you know.

24. Your uniqueness does not consist in what you do, but in the “invention” or “inventiveness” that you bring to what you do, that thereby makes you different from nineteen other people with the same background.

25. Down the road, if you continually strike out, in your job-hunt, you must rethink your job-hunt as a possible career-change; use your self-inventory as the tool for identifying what.

26. In job-hunting, don’t wait until all place has declared it has a vacancy; explore any company that interests you, whether it has a vacancy or not.

27. Approach smaller companies rather than larger ones, if you consider you have any so-called handicap or barrier to getting hired, such as your age, etc. (Try companies in the field that interests you which have 50 or fewer employees; then, if nothing turns up, 100 or fewer employees.)

28. Gather as much information about a job, a company, a field as you can, before you ever go in for an interview (this is called Informational Interviewing).

29. If going to talk with people terrifies you, prepare for Informational Interviewing by first just doing a “practice field survey” – identifying a curiosity or enthusiasm you have, totally unrelated to any job you are thinking about, and then going to talk with someone who shares that enthusiasm. Do this repeatedly until you get over your fears.

30. The key to talking with anyone, is to find a mutual enthusiasm or passion. Example: a movie fan has no trouble talking to a movie fan. Fear disappears in the face of enthusiasm.
31. Generally speaking, the major purpose of a written or digital resume, if you use one, is not to “sell yourself,” but simply to secure an invitation to come in for a talk.

32. Do not depend solely on your resume to get you into a place for an employment interview; use “bridge-people” (formerly called “contacts”) – those who know you and also know them; find bridge-people through such sites as LinkedIn.

33. Keep in mind that once an employer is considering you, Google is your new resume; you can no longer control what an employer can know about you (as in the old days of just “resumes”); but you can and should “clean up” your “Google resume” a little (or a lot). See the Internet for instructions on how to do this (the rules keep changing; stay up-to-date, especially with Facebook).

34. The major purpose of your first interview with an employer is to get yourself invited back for a second interview.

35. An employment interview is more like “a first date” than it is like “buying a used car.” Each of you, job-hunter and employer, must decide if you want to try “going steady.” It’s as much up to you as it is up to them. Your interview is still part of your research.

36. In the employment interview, talk 50 percent of the time, let the employer talk 50 percent of the time.

37. In the employment interview, never speak badly about a former employer; they may get the idea that that’s how you will talk about them.

38. In the employment interview, answer each of the employer’s questions no shorter than 20 seconds, no longer than 2 minutes, at a time.

39. At the end of an interview, if you have decided you really would like to work there, ask for the job. How? “Considering all that we’ve talked about, can you offer me this job?”

40. In the employment interview, do not discuss salary until the end of the interview, after the employer has definitely said, We want you. And remember, the first one to mention a figure generally loses in the negotiation. Here’s a way for you to respond to an employer who asks what salary you are expecting: “Well, you created this job, so I’d be interested to know what salary range you had in mind.”

41. If they say the job is yours, you’ll start on Monday, do not give notice (if you are currently employed) until you have a firm written job offer in hand from the new place; a verbal “you’re hired” on Friday can turn into a “sorry, we discovered we just don’t have the budget for it” on Monday. This happens more often than you would think. Get the offer in writing.

42. When you start your new job, exceed their expectations: come in early, stay late, put their priorities before yours.

43. At your new place, keep a log of your accomplishments, done by yourself alone, or in a group or task force. Write in this log once a week (weekends are a good time). You can summarize its key points at the end of the year, when you want to ask for a raise.
44. If you just can’t find a job, look around for what your community needs. Observe keenly. It’s not what you see; it’s what you notice that determines everything.

45. If you’ve decided you don’t want to work for someone else, but want to start your own business, first interview others who have gone before you, in the same line of work, and learn what “land mines” they tripped over, and what skills were required, for them to succeed. Then review your own skills to see if there are any missing, that you will have to go out and hire.

46. If you want to make a radical career change (new job-title, new field) there is a way of doing this that enables you always to claim you have lots of experience: change in two steps in the next three years or so, first changing just the job-title, but staying in the same field; then changing the field down the road – or vice versa (change just the field, but keep the same job-title as before, then change the job-title down the road). E.g. accountant in television to consultant in renewable energy.

47. Remember, every job is temporary. Including the one you just got or created. Start planning your next job-hunt the first day you are in this new job. Job-hunting is a repetitive activity in today’s world.
Section 6 – Resources

*American Foundation for the Blind (AFB) [http://www.afb.org]*
The site of this organization provides a tremendous amount of information on a variety of topics including employment and adaptive technology. This site can be a useful resource for employers needing additional information regarding accommodations in the workplace. This is the site where *Career Connect* is located. This resource for job seekers with blindness or low vision can be particularly valuable.

*CalJobs [http://www.caljobs.ca.gov/]*
This is the State of California Employment Development Department’s job search site. You must register to use the site, but registration is free. Once registered, you will be able to enter an online resume and will have access to searchable job postings by employers throughout California. Jobs posted are private and public sector jobs. It is important to read the postings carefully and follow the instructions at the end of each posting regarding applying for the job as may vary from posting to posting.

*CareerConnect [http://www.afb.org/section.aspx?FolderID=2&SectionID=7]*
According to this section of the website for American Foundation for the Blind, CareerConnect is an employment information resource developed by the American Foundation for the Blind for job seekers who are blind or visually impaired. CareerConnect presents employment information, career exploration tools, and extensive job seeking guidance for students and adults with vision loss and the professionals who work with them.

*Craigslist [http://sacramento.craigslist.org/]*
This is a mostly free, online advertisement website, which is popular with many potential employers. Use care when applying for jobs posted on this site. If you have any questions about the validity of a job posted on this site, talk to your facilitator or counselor prior to applying.

*Disaboom [http://www.disaboom.com/]*
According to the home page of this website: “Disaboom provides people with disabilities the answers, solutions, and connections you need for living your life to the fullest.”

*Indeed [http://www.indeed.com/]*
Indeed pulls job listings from job boards, newspapers, company career pages and industry associations.
JobHuntersBible.com  http://www.jobhuntersbible.com/
This is the official companion website for the popular job-hunting book; What Color is Your Parachute, by Richard N. Bolles. This site contains useful information on job searches, resumes, the internet, research, and networking. It is a great resource to get information before using the internet when searching for employment.

Lighthouse International  http://www.lighthouse.org/
This is a worldwide organization with locations in many states in the United States. The site provides useful information for individuals with blindness or low vision, their families and friends, professionals, and the community in general.

National Federation of the Blind (NFB)  http://nfb.org/
The site of this organization provides a tremendous amount of information on a variety of topics including employment. Some information is available without membership. NFB also offers a Free Cane program, which is available to all individuals with blindness or low vision regardless of membership status.

Privacy Rights Clearinghouse – Fact Sheet 25a: Avoiding Online Job Scams  http://www.privacyrights.org/fs/fs25a-JobSeekerPriv2.htm
This fact sheet provides important information on online job scams. It is suggested reading for anyone utilizing the web and email to conduct job searches.

This state government website provides useful information, including links to resources, for job seekers.

US.Jobs (formerly Job Central)  http://us.jobs/
The National Labor Exchange provides this site, which gives users the ability to conduct ad-free job searches. The site also provides useful information for job searchers and employers on a variety of topics.

What Color is Your Parachute? By Richard N. Bolles
References


