

**THE JOB SEARCH CHECKLIST**  
***A Paradox 21 Special Report***  
***Prepared by Joe Tye***

Saved as books / job search checklist.doc

**Contents**

- I. Managing Your Career for the Long Run**
  - II. Organizing Your Job Search**
  - III. Networking Your Way to a Job**
  - IV. The Resume: Your Personal Sales Tool**
  - V. Your Cover Letter Gets Them to Read Your Resume**
  - VI. Responding to Advertisements**
  - VII. Preparing for the Interview**
  - VIII. Having a Great Interview**
  - IX. References**
  - X. Negotiating Your Best Offer**
  - XI. Overcoming Rejection**
- Bibliography**

## I. MANAGING YOUR CAREER FOR THE LONG RUN

- ✓ Chuang Tzu, who lived some 2,300 years ago in China, anticipated Emerson's celebrated essay "Self-Reliance" when he wrote the following:

*The little marsh pheasant must hop ten times  
to get a bite of grain.*

*She must run a hundred steps  
before she takes a sip of water.*

*Yet she does not ask to be kept in a hen run.*

*Thought she might have all she desired set before her.*

*She would rather run free and seek her own living.*

*Uncaged.*

- ✓ In this era of fast-paced change and flat organizations, it is all too easy to fall into the following success traps:

- *Success is "Up:"* In the future, success will be measured by how grounded you are, not by how high you are off the ground on the organization chart.
- *Success is "More:"* Fulfilling work is more important than dying with the most toys. Managing desires is more important than managing money.
- *Success is an End-Point:* The world is changing too fast for anyone, no matter how "successful," to rest on their success. If you're not enjoying the journey, you probably won't enjoy the destination.
- *Success can be Free:* As many lottery winners have discovered to their dismay, no one can give you success, it can only be earned.
- *Success is Security:* The more money people have, it seems, the more they worry about money. Real wealth doesn't mean having money, it means not worrying about money.
- *Success is Popularity:* Being successful may or may not increase the number of friends you have, but if the only reason they are your friend is that you are successful, then it is a mutually parasitic relationship.
- *Success is Happiness:* Just being "successful" does not automatically mean that you will be happy. In fact, the

sacrifices required to achieve success can often be the source of profound unhappiness.

- ✓ Ask friends and family members for their advice, beginning with this question: “Given everything that you know about me, what would you describe as my perfect job?” Write down all the answers and see if on that basis you can design your ideal job description as seen through the eyes of those who know you best.
- ✓ Complete a one page personal business plan for some accomplishment you would like to achieve. Writing a business plan does not need to be a laborious process, nor does a business plan need to be some hefty document full of words and numbers. In fact, with a little practice you can become a master of using the one page business plan to more effectively plan for and achieve your personal goals. Just answer the following eight questions.
  - What do I want to do?
  - Why do I want to do it and what are the benefits to me and others?
  - What resources do I need?
  - What resources do I already have?
  - Who can I ask for help?
  - What major obstacles will I need to overcome?
  - How can I measure my progress?
  - What actions can I take now to get started?
- ✓ No job can make you happy. Your personal happiness and satisfaction come as a result of your attitude. Conjuring up your dream job and expecting it to satisfy your every wish is likely to be as futile as conjuring up a dream date who magically transforms into the perfect spouse. As in marriage, it takes effort on your part to create a fulfilling job.
- ✓ You have probably heard about the Peter Principle, which describes the tendency in organizations for people to keep being promoted until they rise to their level of incompetence. In today’s world of flattened organizations, however, people are more likely to fail by reaching the limits of their willingness to learn and change than they are by being promoted into jobs above their capabilities. Progress in a career these days is more like making your way through an obstacle course than climbing up a ladder.

- ✓ Estimate the number of hours you spent in your last year on the job engaged in meaningless activities -- boring meetings, useless paperwork, busy-work, and make-work. Now multiply that number by the number of years remaining before your retirement. How many more hours of your life are you going to flush down the drain? Is it worth the money?
- ✓ Pay attention to all the different things people do to make their livings, especially those who have started their own businesses or created their own jobs. You'll be amazed at the world of opportunity out there.
- ✓ Don't be fooled into thinking that "successful people are happy, therefore I'll be happy if I'm a success." Success is frequently won at the expense of being personally unhappy, particularly when it is defined in terms of power over others, material possessions, or appearances. In *The Paradox of Success* John R. O'Neil warns that to be a success at work can mean being a failure at life if you have improperly defined the meaning of success. Complete these two sentences:

I'll be successful if \_\_\_\_\_.

I'll be happy if \_\_\_\_\_.

If your definition of success is simply having more of something (money, power, recognition) than you have now, then you will never really achieve it. If your definition of happiness is simply feeling better about yourself and the world than you do now, chances are you'll never reach it, especially if you're too busy trying to achieve more success.

- ✓ You are not your Myers-Briggs score. Don't pigeonhole yourself on the basis of arbitrary measures that serve more to limit possibilities than open them up. And never let anyone tell you that you can't do something you want to do because you don't have the aptitude, intelligence, or experience to do it. If you have purpose, enthusiasm, and determination, you can get whatever else you need.
- ✓ Make a one year plan and a five year plan. Your one year plan should probably be cautious, conservative, and judicious. But your five year plan should be expansive and grand -- if you have big dreams and are willing to do whatever it takes to make them come true.
- ✓ These are the qualities of a good goal:
  - It is based on a dream that inspires you.

- It is consistent with your purpose and mission
  - It speaks to you with Truth -- it rings with integrity.
  - It is compatible with your personal values.
  - It is consistent with your other goals, both those you have selected for yourself and those you must meet in your work with others.
  - Its achievement is in the best interests of those you care for.
  - You can measure your progress toward its fulfillment.
  - You have a way of knowing when you've reached it.
  - You know the price that will be required for achieving it, and have decided that you're willing to pay it.
  - It has a timetable for completion.
  - You know who you can ask for help, and what specific assistance you will request.
  - It is do-able.
  - You have written it down in a place where you will see it often.
- ✓ Flow is a state of total immersion in an activity, of working hard and enjoying it for the sheer joy of the work. It is a common experience of peak performers. These are some of the requirements.
- A mission that inspires you.
  - Goals that have been selected because they are personally fulfilling, not because they are calculated to please others or simply make a lot of money.
  - Defined interim goals that allow you immediate feedback on your progress.
  - A willingness to make short-term sacrifices in order to achieve long-term goals
  - Total concentration and immersion in the effort, forgetting the egoistic self, outside worries and cares, and the very passage of time.
  - Determination and self-discipline.
  - Teamwork.
  - Finding joy in the work itself, without thought for results, outcomes, or praise.
  - External focus on the world, not preoccupation with one's own thoughts and emotions.

When is the last time you experienced Flow? How many times a day (or a week, or a year) do you experience Flow in your job? Would you take a pay cut to obtain a job in which you experienced Flow every day?

- ✓ If you've read books on setting and achieving goals, you probably know about the 1954 study of Yale University graduates. Only three percent of the graduating seniors had written down goals. Twenty-five years later, that three percent had more money than the other 97 percent combined. There is enormous power in writing down your goals. Assume that someone on the other side of an interviewing desk will be familiar with the Yale study, and will ask you whether you have written down your goals and what they are.
- ✓ You, and only you, can take responsibility for managing your career. Consider yourself to be president, chief financial officer, and sales force for a company called ME, Inc.
- ✓ To accept self-responsibility for your career requires a high level of self-reliance in all phases of your life, including personal financial management, time management, continuing education and professional development (see the Paradox 21 Special Report *No Brainer Time and Money Management* for detailed recommendations).
- ✓ You are more likely to succeed at work you enjoy than at work where only the weight of your paycheck keeps the negatives from outweighing the positives.
- ✓ If you're not enjoying the journey, chances are that you won't enjoy the destination. If you're feeling a high level of stress, fatigue, or burn-out, it may be time to consider changing careers, or a change in your attitude about the job.
- ✓ A change in career can be healthy and does not have to be risky or frightening. Plan ahead and move incrementally. Someday you'll be amazed at how happy and successful one person can feel.
- ✓ A key difference between people who succeed at achieving a great deal and those who do not is a sense of purpose. Taking the time to prepare a personal mission statement could be the most important step you ever take to secure career success and personal happiness.
- ✓ Be careful in how you define success. If you consider yourself to be a success only if you receive the approval of others or acquire material possessions, as opposed to feeling personally fulfilled and uplifted by your work, you run the risk of falling into the success trap: having met your preconceived definition of success and still being unhappy and/or feeling like a failure.
- ✓ Success begins with self: self-esteem, self-confidence, and self-image. The three are complementary, but not the same.

- ✓ *SELF-ESTEEM* is your underlying sense of self-worth. Low self-esteem is the epidemic of our culture: it underlies a great deal of neurotic disturbance, psycho-pathological behavior, and career failure. You are not born with genetically-programmed self-esteem; by your attitudes and actions you can raise or lower it.
- ✓ Accepting personal responsibility and working to keep a positive attitude enhances self-esteem; blaming others for your problems and cynical negativity reduce it.
- ✓ Especially as you progress in your career, low self-esteem can be a time bomb, causing you to engage in inappropriate behaviors designed to gain approval from others to make up for the inner approval that you can't seem to win.
- ✓ You could fill a library with books on how to enhance your self-esteem. In terms of your career growth, here are a few fundamentals: accept yourself as you are, warts and all, but also identify those warts that can be removed and start working on them one at a time; know your purpose in life and those activities that make you happy; give yourself permission to design your life in a way that maximizes the opportunities to do what makes you happy; understand that "reality" is a very fuzzy concept, more fully defined by how you interpret and respond to events as by the events themselves; that by your conscious choice and disciplined practice you can learn to control your thoughts and emotions in a way that creates a more positive reality; and learn the fine art of detached objectivity and mindful awareness, allowing yourself to not take the ups-and-downs of daily existence so personally.
- ✓ Another excellent way to enhance your self-esteem is to spend time and energy helping others. Indeed, the feeling of being needed by someone else is one of the most powerful sources of human self-esteem.
- ✓ *SELF-CONFIDENCE* is belief in your ability to do the job. It is possible to have high self-confidence with low self-esteem and visa versa, but generally raising one will help raise the other. The way to increase self-confidence is through study and practice.
- ✓ Whether you feel confident or not, acting as if you really know what you're doing will make you feel more confident.
- ✓ Do something once and you'll know you've done it; do it often and you'll know you can do it.

- ✓ *SELF-IMAGE* is the set of beliefs you carry about yourself, some of which are realistic and some of which are not. For example, you may have a self-image of being disorganized or shy or not good with math, irrespective of whether you have high or low self-esteem or confidence in your abilities overall.
- ✓ As Maxwell Maltz points out in *Psycho-Cybernetics*, in a sense your self-image is based upon past hypnosis (repeated mental translation of an environmental condition -- “my room was always a mess” -- into a belief about self -- “therefore I must be incapable of being organized”). Just as self-image is based upon unconsciously having been conditioned in the past, so too it can be enhanced by developmental self-hypnosis (as successfully practiced by many successful athletes).
- ✓ The self-esteem, confidence, and image that you bring to the job will profoundly influence your chances of success.
- ✓ In any job, you will be judged upon two factors: 1) how competent you are at the work; 2) how well you “fit” with the culture of the organization and the personalities of fellow workers--especially your boss. Almost every person who loses a job does so as a result of problems of “fit,” not problems of competence.
- ✓ Understand that “politics” is inevitable in any organization. To be naive or cynical about power and politics is to reduce your objectivity--they will always exist, and the more responsibility you desire to achieve, the more capable you will need to be in effectively managing politics.
- ✓ A vast majority of people who are fired lose their jobs as a result of inter-personal difficulties, not incompetence. Likewise, far more executive careers are derailed by arrogance, inflexibility, and other character flaws than by poor administrative performance.
- ✓ Studies have shown that people who play “the game” with enthusiasm, for example by becoming a sports fan if that's part of the corporate culture, are more successful in their careers.
- ✓ The single-most important quality for anyone aspiring to a leadership position is self-mastery--learning to control your emotions, having a deep appreciation of how your words and actions affect others, and being able to act strategically.
- ✓ A survey of 191 senior executives concluded with this advice for someone just beginning a career: 1) take advantage of opportunities;

2) search for meaning;  
and 3) know yourself.

- ✓ Charles Handy, in *The Age of Unreason*, described the four requirements of future career success as: 1) accepting personal responsibility; 2) having a compelling vision of the future; 3) cultivating a passionate desire to achieve your goals; and 4) believing in yourself.
- ✓ Plan for transitions--someone starting out today will probably change jobs more than ten times and will likely have five or more different careers.
- ✓ Periodically ask yourself, "What work would I love to do now if I could make as much money as I'm making at my current job." If your answer is different than what you're doing, begin planning for a transition. But don't yet quit your day job if you can help it. Take some classes, speak with people who are doing what you wish you could be doing, do some moonlighting, or start a small business on the side to minimize your transitional risk.
- ✓ Chances are good that if you start doing work you love, before long you will be making more money than you are now. But for most of us, there is this important caveat: You also have to be willing to do things that you really don't want to do--like perhaps keeping the books--and do the things you fear--like making cold calls for new business.
- ✓ Prepare for the eventuality that you may someday be fired. Various estimates project a likelihood of 25% to 80% that you will be fired at least once. Lose your job before you lose your job: Plan now for possibility and make sure you're protected when it happens. If you think that there is a chance you might become unemployed, order the Paradox 21 Special Report *The Fired Drill: Anticipating, Preparing for, and Surviving Job Separation*.
- ✓ Be ready and willing to proactively take a risk that will move you in the direction of doing work that has meaning for you. The greatest risk is complacency.
- ✓ The typical career path of the future will more resemble an obstacle course than a ladder. Don't waste too much time trying to find an end-point where you can stop working and declare victory; rather, do your best to conquer each obstacle with expedition, excellence, and enthusiasm.

- ✓ Subscribe to the *National Business Employment Weekly*, or read it in your local library. Each issue contains employment advertisements from *The Wall Street Journal*, as well as information, analysis, and articles on various aspects of career planning, career management, and job search (800-562-4868, \$35 for eight weeks).
- ✓ Unless you're quite certain of what your ideal job or calling in this world is, invest some time in working through the exercises of a life and work planning book such as Richard Nelson Bolles' *What Color is Your Parachute?* or Laurence Boldt's *Zen and the Art of Making a Living*.

## II. ORGANIZING THE JOB SEARCH

- ✓ Acknowledge the fact that a job search is inherently inefficient, and that the harder you work at it, the more inefficient it will be because you'll run down more dead ends. But also realize that this "inefficiency" will ultimately enhance your effectiveness at getting the best job offer possible. Given that you must live with the inherent inefficiency, work hard to make as efficient as possible those processes over which you have control.
- ✓ Most career counseling experts tell you to treat your job search as a full-time job, and some advise you to treat it as a time-and-a-half or even a double-time job. If you are well-organized and well-focused, however, you may be better off spending a good solid 4 or 5 hours a day on the job search, and devoting the rest of your "work day" to reading, thinking, and meditation, and some perspective-enhancing goofing-off.
- ✓ The more focused you are on what you want to do, the less time you will spend chasing jobs you really don't want. This is one of the benefits of having clearly thought out your personal mission statement.
- ✓ Before you start your job search, read several different books on the process. Some of the best-selling authors have very different philosophies and will offer conflicting advice; accept the suggestions that make the most sense for your own search. *The Paradox 21 Special Report 25 Books That Could Help Your Career, If You Only Had Time to Read Them* can give you a good overview of the best and best-selling career books.
- ✓ Plan to read lots of inspirational books -- motivation, self-help, how-to, biography, etc. -- beginning now and throughout the process. *The Paradox 21 Reading List on Self-Mastery* includes many suggested titles.
- ✓ Set up a space for your job-search command center. It should include a comfortable chair, a dedicated-line telephone with answering machine, a personal computer and laser printer, a fax machine or fax modem, reference books, a file drawer, and space for you to work. A personal copy machine would be helpful; your laser printer or fax machine may serve that function.

- ✓ The Paradox 21 *Job Search War Room Kit* is a complete package of educational, organizing, and inspirational resources to help you jump start your job search. It includes several books, a video, files and forms, inspirational music and quotations, and special rejection antidotes. For more information, contact Paradox 21 at P.O. Box 480, Solon, IA, 52333-0480.
- ✓ Make your job search command center a cheerful place. Have music for inspiration and for meditation; decorate it with flowers or your favorite pictures; tape inspiring quotations and affirmations on walls, doors, and windows.
- ✓ If your job search command center is at home, have rules concerning who may and may not answer the phone, times when you are not to be disturbed, and hours during which the screams of children and the barks of dogs must not be audible to someone on the other end of the phone.
- ✓ Consciously design your time management system. There are many good books on the subject (see *The Paradox 21 Reading List on Self-Mastery*), and many commercially available systems. Very effective systems can be devised with nothing more than a calendar and note cards. You must, however, have a system and you must use it.
- ✓ Be ruthless with your time. Every minute, be aware of what you're doing and how it relates to your objective of finding meaningful work. *Just Say No* to tempting distractions that don't get you closer to achieving your goals.
- ✓ Make productive use of meal times -- they are often the best times to conduct informational interviews. But don't use meal times to conduct business that could just as well be done by phone; you're better off using the time to study and meditate.
- ✓ Know how to distinguish between those things you *must* do, and those that you merely want to do or feel you should do, and don't do any of the latter until the former are under control.
- ✓ Carry reading or work with you to make productive use of waiting or other down time.
- ✓ Listen to motivational tapes while you are driving.
- ✓ Set up a "chron file." Using hanging folders, make 31 for each day of the week and 12 for each month of the year. These become your suspense files. Every morning, check your file for that day. At the

end of each month, allocate the next month's contents into the daily file, which should now be empty.

- ✓ After your own time, the most important thing for you to organize is your contacts. This can be done with a paper system or a computer system, or a combination of the two. A good book for getting started on the latter is *ACT! for Dummies* by Jeffrey J. Mayer. For the job-seeker who intends to use the initial investment in creating a network as the foundation for an ongoing commitment to building and cultivating a network of contacts, *ACT!* is probably the best system. This program keeps track of an endless number of people (limited only by your computer's memory); allows you to enter an amazing amount of information about each; tracks names and prints labels according to categories you define; has sophisticated print functions, automatic phone dial, and other helpful capabilities. Beyond contact management, *ACT!* includes a comprehensive personal management system with calendar, to-do lists, alarms, etc.
- ✓ Whether you are setting up a new system or revising one that you already have, view the effort as an investment in a permanent and ever-growing network of friends and contacts.
- ✓ Eventually, your network will be one of your most valuable assets. Whether it's on a rolodex, in business card filing system, or on a computer, have a back-up.
- ✓ If you especially want to work with a desktop rolodex, you can purchase a computer contact management system that prints out rolodex cards, allowing you the best of both worlds.
- ✓ Become an avid collector of business cards. As soon as possible, make notes to help you remember details about the person you just met and enter them in your contact management system.
- ✓ Go on-line. Your personal computer will become an increasingly useful way to build and stay connected with your network. It is increasingly clear that online job search will become not only more prevalent, but for many professions will become the primary way that employers and job candidates are linked in the future.
- ✓ The third most important thing for you to keep organized is your correspondence. Keep copies of everything that comes in or goes out. File it all in the appropriate place. You may find it helps to file multiple copies of a single document. For example, copies of a letter from a prospective employer might go in your chronological file for the date action is required, and also be filed under the name of the

individual and/or organization. It's better to have too much paper than to be unable to find something you really need.

- ✓ If you have multiple different versions of your resume (as will be advised below), make sure to track who got what version.
- ✓ Organize your research. You'll want to be able to put your hands on information about industries, companies, and people quickly. You can get organized with hanging files, card files, a computer database program, or some combination, but you need a system that works for you.
- ✓ Although you will refine all of your filing systems as you go along, the more thought and planning you put in upfront, the less trouble you will have later; retrofitting a filing system can be a real headache.
- ✓ Keep a file of good stuff about you: your accomplishments, your strengths, the things that make you a likable and worthwhile person.
- ✓ Keep a humor file. Maintaining a sense of humor will make you feel better and get you a job faster.
- ✓ Keep a journal. Daily journal-writing, and periodic review of what you've written, can help you keep your thoughts organized. The *Never Fear, Never Quit Self-Transformation Workbook* from Paradox 21 Press has a unique one month journal starter kit that is refillable.
- ✓ Take notes of every phone call and interview and file them where you can easily retrieve them. Go back and review them before each interview.
- ✓ Prepare for the long-haul. An effective job search usually takes longer than people anticipate (certainly longer than they wish it would). A long-haul mindset will help you stay organized, and also help prevent you from jumping at a job offer that might not be right for you.
- ✓ If you are currently employed but looking for a different job, be discreet. One survey showed that 80% of employers would fire an employee known to be actively searching for another job.
- ✓ Networking is not confidential.
- ✓ Two ways that people can get caught up are by responding to blind want ads (P.O. Box only, but no company name), and by floating their resume on an electronic network that does not have adequate security.

### III. NETWORKING YOUR WAY TO A JOB

- ✓ These are the prerequisites of effective networking:
  - Introduce yourself in a polite and friendly way.
  - Know the right questions to ask.
  - Listen carefully and keep thinking.
  - Say thank you, record a note for your records, and send a follow-up card.
  - Stay in touch by sending information that is helpful to the other person.

It's not rocket science.

- ✓ Begin your networking where you have the most support -- with friends and family.
- ✓ One of the best sources of information is other people who are looking for job. Have lots of job search pen pals. Earn a reputation as someone who liberally shares job leads with others.
- ✓ Richard Beatty's *Job Search Networking* is an excellent how-to on the subject. The first key to being an effective networker, Beatty says, is to have people you know refer you to others, and then ask them for additional references. In this way you can expand your network geometrically. The second key is to be reasonable in the requests that you make of people. A crucial point, Beatty says, is that 43.8 percent of all jobs found by networking are newly created as a result of the networking contact; in other words, by overcoming your networking anxiety *you could create the job of your dreams out of thin air!*
- ✓ If you are (or were) an executive in the \$70,000+ pay range, consider joining one of the proprietary job search networks. For a subscription price of \$200-300 per year, these provide access to job leads unlikely to be found in the classifieds. They are also increasingly being used by executive recruiters to solicit candidates. These services are further described in an article by Tom Philpot in the December 25-31, 1994 issue of the *National Business Employment Weekly*. The major services are:
  - Exec-U-Net (203-851-5180)
  - The Search Bulletin (703-759-4900)
  - Netshare (415-883-1700)

- Human Resources Network (616-837-7857)
- CEO Update (202-408-7900)

Executive Edge (800-546-3343)

- ✓ It's been estimated that 75 percent of all jobs are never advertised, and that many advertised jobs are never filled.
- ✓ A majority of people who find jobs find them by networking; more jobs are found this way than by responding to advertisements, search firms, and direct mailing combined.
- ✓ Dozens of books have been written on the art of networking your way into a job, and outplacement firms and career counselors around the country promote networking as the best way to find a new job.
- ✓ Be acutely aware, however, that because so many people are "networking" there has been a backlash on the part of all the people being "networked." There are a number of things you can do to avoid this backlash.
- ✓ Follow the advice of businessman/author Harvey Mackay and "dig your well before you are thirsty." When you make a first call to somebody, you are in a much better position if you're calling to offer them help than if you are seeking help.
- ✓ Another good way to get your foot in the door is to initially call seeking help on behalf of somebody else.
- ✓ If you are calling on behalf of yourself, ask for information or advice rather than asking for a job.
- ✓ Practice proper networking etiquette; if you're not sure what this entails, read the book *Secrets of Savvy Networking* by Susan RoAne or *Flirting for Success* by Jill Spiegel.
- ✓ Become active in every professional association that is appropriate to your field and use this as a way of becoming connected.
- ✓ Whenever you read a good article by somebody in your field, send them a congratulatory note and include them in your contact file.
- ✓ Write some articles of your own so that people write you notes and include you in their networks.
- ✓ Don't think of yourself as having one network, but rather as having multiple networks. Computer software like *ACT!* can help you organize all of your contacts by different categories.

- ✓ Keep records of all networking contacts; again, the right computer software can greatly facilitate this process. Every letter sent or received, every phone call, should be entered.
- ✓ Douglas Richardson, a Philadelphia career counselor who wrote the Wall Street Journal's guide *Networking*, advises using "granfalloon" in your networking. This is the term from Kurt Vonnegut's novel *Cat's Cradle* that refers to artificial groups that seem to be real (like Hoosier graduates or Bears' fans). If you know a prospective employer is a Bears' fan, it pays to find out all you can about the Bears before your next interview. If you're a Hoosier, it pays to start your networking with other Hoosiers.
- ✓ Don't be mercenary in your networking. You're asking for favors; make sure that you repay them with generous interest. And remember your debt when others call you asking for help.
- ✓ In order to make every networking call seem as relaxed and friendly as possible, prepare and rehearse for it as though it were the most important meeting of your life.
- ✓ Never conclude a networking call or meeting without first obtaining the names of several other possible contacts. In this way, your potential network will grow geometrically.
- ✓ Recognize, however, that the larger your network grows the more time it will demand to maintain it.
- ✓ One very valuable and often-overlooked networking source is people who got the jobs that you unsuccessfully applied for. It never hurts to call and congratulate them--they may have suggestions or leads for you.
- ✓ While it's always helpful to mention a name that can open doors, don't drop names without permission, and be judicious in mentioning somebody's name. Don't exaggerate your familiarity with the person. Assume that the one you are speaking with will call the dropped name if they're at all interested in hiring you.
- ✓ Keep in mind that in the scheme of your whole life, finding a new job is a much less valuable attribute of networking than fostering your own professional learning and growth and making friends.
- ✓ Use the internet and the world wide web to facilitate your networking. The two books *Be Your Own Headhunter Online* by Pam Dixon and Sylvia Tiersten and *Hook Up, Get Hired!* by Joyce Lain Kennedy are

the best resources as of late 1995. Both books are reviewed in the Paradox 21 Special Report *25 Books That Could Help Your Career, If You Only Had Time to Read Them.*

#### **IV. THE RESUME: YOUR PERSONAL SALES BROCHURE**

- ✓ When you build your resume, write out on a notecard to be kept in front of you the most important things a prospective employer will be looking for: 1) an accounting of where you have been since getting out of school; 2) how your education and experience will help their company solve its problems and increase its profits; 3) a record of your meaningful accomplishments and evidence that it promises significant future contributions to their organization.
- ✓ Emphasize accomplishments, not responsibilities or experience. What you have actually done is what will set you apart from the competition, most of whom have had awfully similar duties and experiences to yours.
- ✓ For jobs within your industry or profession, emphasize specialized skills and accomplishments; for others, stress general skills that are readily transferred. Computer word processors allow resumes to be tailored for every organization to which you apply. With a bit of research, you can creatively match your past accomplishments to the target company's needs in a convincing way. If you can't, you probably shouldn't be applying for the job. For example, if you've been a retail manager for ten years and are applying for a position selling heavy equipment, your resume might include a statement like: "Increased the division's sales by six percent per year by implementing a program for assuring the satisfaction of major customers."
- ✓ Remember that the resume is your story, but it's not really about you. It should be a mirror in which the prospective employer sees a person who will fit into their organization and its culture, and who will help them successfully compete.
- ✓ If you've been out of work for a while, or if you anticipate that it might be a while, one way to fill the gap on your resume is to start a business. Smith and Associates might look better than a black hole. But if you do start Smith and Associates, you had better have something to show for it by the time you get to an interview -- a brochure, a customer (better yet, a customer list), a product for sale, or anything else that shows you've been busy.
- ✓ Doing the research for starting a business can actually be an effective means of job search. The executive who won't take a call from a job

hunter might be willing to speak with someone who can offer a product or service that will help the business. During the course of conversation, the discussion could get around to “why don’t you just come to work for us to do this?”

- ✓ Send your resume to several recruiters in your field, asking for an honest assessment of how competitive your qualifications are for the positions you’ll be competing for, and suggestions on how you might improve the presentation. When they respond, send them a thank you card with an appropriate small gift.
- ✓ Create one page supplements for your resume that provide more detail on your accomplishments in specific areas. Before you send a resume, call the decision-maker and offer to include the most appropriate supplement. Your offer might go like this: “I know that Farewell Corporation is planning major initiatives in information services. Would you like me to include with my resume a supplemental brief that more extensively describes my experience in this arena?” They will rarely say no.
- ✓ The Harvard Business School pioneered the use of case studies as a way of teaching management skills. You can also use case studies to help your job search. Take several projects in which you played an important role and write a one page case study. Use these headings: 1) The Problem; 2) The Process; 3) Outcomes; 4) What I learned. Do some scouting to find out what will be the major challenges facing the person in the position for which you are applying and enclose it with your resume, explaining why it is relevant.
- ✓ Read the “Resumania” column by Robert Half in the last issue each month of the *National Business Employment Weekly*. You’ll get some good laughs, and may avoid making an embarrassing mistake yourself.
- ✓ Of course, there is always the possibility that Smith and Associates will be so much fun, and perhaps so lucrative, that you decide you don’t really need to a real job after all.
- ✓ As Robert Half puts it, a resume is a balance sheet without any liabilities. Your resume is *not* the place to be modest.
- ✓ Most employers spend an average of only 45 to 60 seconds per resume; at least on the first pass they are more interested in weeding you out than in bringing you in.

- ✓ In your resume you want to convey your educational qualifications, professional accomplishments (as opposed to work experience), your ability to organize and communicate information, and a high level of energy and productivity.
- ✓ The prospective employer primarily wants to know how well your problem-solving abilities mesh with their problems, and how your personality will fit with their organization.
- ✓ The resume is your most important sales tool. Think of it as an advertisement for yourself, and remember a fundamental rule of advertising: concentrate on your “unique selling proposition.” What is it that makes you a better candidate than all the hundreds or thousands of others who are applying for the same job?
- ✓ While a resume is no place for modesty, it’s also no place for hogging the glory; don’t make it sound like you did it all when others should share in the credit.
- ✓ There are three basic types of resume: chronological, functional, and combined. Unless you have something you want to hide such as long gaps in your employment history or a record of not making much progress in your career, the chronological format is probably best, for three reasons: first, any other format automatically suggests you are trying to hide something; second, it avoids having the prospective employer spend most of their 45 to 60 seconds trying to figure out your history; and third, this format is best for showcasing your accomplishments.
- ✓ The consensus among career counseling experts is that a resume should be short, no more than one or two pages. This is probably the best approach for entry level or even many middle management positions. You should not, however, delete information that can help persuasively sell you as a candidate to meet an arbitrary page limit.
- ✓ For more senior corporate or professional positions, a longer resume might be appropriate, particularly if you have many accomplishments.
- ✓ You must choose whether to present your information using bullet point format or with paragraphs. Here’s a good rule of thumb: if it is an entry level position, a position for which requirements are relatively standardized, or one for which there will likely be many applicants, bullet point is probably best. On the other hand, if it is for a senior executive position, a position which requires autonomous

judgment and communication skills, the paragraph format is probably best.

- ✓ Here are some things that your resume does not need: a picture of you, personal information such as family or hobbies, salary history, references or even a statement that references will be supplied upon request, or anything that might be considered gimmicky.
- ✓ Avoid unnecessary words. For example, you don't need to put the word "resume" at the top, or indicate that references are available upon request. You don't need to include every paper you've ever written, or every seminar you've ever attended. Never include information that an employer may not legally ask for, such as race, religion, children, or health status.
- ✓ Use action words and numbers wherever possible, and avoid words that connote passivity. For example, "implemented sophisticated cost-accounting system that saved \$100,000 in the first year" is better than "knowledge of sophisticated cost-accounting systems." Don't let your resume be a "job description" listing of the duties you had on each previous job. Prospective employers want to know what you've *accomplished*, not what you've done.
- ✓ It is popular to include an employment objective at the top of a resume, but often not necessary. In fact, two bad things can happen with an objective--it can screen you out by being too general (indicating a lack of focus), and it can screen you out for being too specific (indicating a lack of flexibility). A preferable alternative might be a very brief executive summary of your accomplishments. This allows you to present facts, not wishes.
- ✓ It should go without saying, but just in case, never lie on a resume.
- ✓ Unless you are applying for an academic position, don't overdo descriptions of your educational background and don't weigh the resume down with listings of your publications. If you are applying for an academic position, you need a curriculum vitae, which is a different animal than a resume.
- ✓ Use the resume to sell yourself as a problem-solver who can solve the problems of the organization you are targeting. Before you send a resume to any organization, make a list of the most important problems you will confront in the new job; tape that list to the wall in front of you as you rework your resume.

- ✓ If you are conducting a broad job search, you should have multiple different versions of your resume that are tailored either by industry or by function. Be sure to keep a careful record of who got what version.
- ✓ Print out your resume on a laser printer and use high quality paper.
- ✓ If you're working with an outplacement agency, make sure that you have not inadvertently included their "signature" on your resume and cover letter. Make deliberate changes from the format that they recommend.
- ✓ Rather than leaving gaps on your resume, explain periods of unemployment. If you don't tell them that you took three years off to raise your children or travel the world, they may assume you were in prison. Of course, you'll never know that's why your resume went into their wastecan.
- ✓ If you're unemployed now, and your former employer hasn't given you the courtesy of a temporary office and a title for job search purposes, think about starting a business. You may be better off looking for a job as a self-employed consultant than as an unemployed individual.
- ✓ If you enter your resume on a computer network, be sure to include all necessary key words to make sure that your resume is called up on any search for a job you might be interested in.
- ✓ Electronic resumes follow different rules than paper resumes: nouns (key words) are more important than the action verbs that make a paper resume sparkle; graphic design should be plain and simple, rather than the multiple fonts and fancy layouts that make a paper version eye-appealing; and you should use industry buzzwords and lots of synonyms to optimize the chances that your resume will be pulled in a computer search. A good book on computer resumes is *Electronic Resume Revolution* by Joyce Lain Kennedy and Thomas Morrow.
- ✓ Consider the advice of Brian Jud in his book *Coping with Unemployment*, and condense the essential elements of your resume to be printed on the back of your business card. A printer can make a special double-fold card to give you more space. If you're really adventurous, have Dave Bruno and Associates create a gold plastic business card that has the feel of a credit card with your resume briefing on it. For information, call 800-870-4410.

- ✓ Some experts recommend that you sandwich between your cover letter and your resume an executive briefing. This could take one of two formats. First, you could lay out two columns, the first outlining the organization's primary needs and the second your corresponding qualifications and previous accomplishments. The second format is to show how you have dealt with problems or opportunities similar to those now facing the target organization; this should be in three parts: 1) the problem or opportunity, 2) the action taken; and 3) the outcome.
- ✓ Your local library or bookstore has lots of books with advice on how to construct a resume, most of which include many examples. Take the time to look through as many of these as you can. It's also helpful to look at the resumes of other people who are, or might be, competing for jobs similar to your target job. These can often be accessed at job fairs, college career offices, or by asking people to share them with you.

## V. YOUR COVER LETTER GETS THEM TO READ YOUR RESUME

- ✓ In your cover letter, the most important thing is to show how your unique combination of strengths can help the target organization deal with its most pressing problem.
- ✓ Start collecting and analyzing “junk mail.” You will notice that the most effective solicitations share these points in common:
  - They are framed in terms of giving *you* benefits, not selling you a product that the vendor thinks is really neat.
  - Though there may be many benefits, there is one clearly defined *unique selling proposition*, that combination of benefits that make this offering different, and better than, the competition.
  - The message is straightforward and easy to understand. It is not clouded by unnecessary words or convoluted arguments.
  - They have the feel of a personal letter; even though you know it’s a mass-mailing, the good ones make you feel as though the writer really knows you.
  - They can be immediately understood by the average sixth grader.
  - The letter virtually compels you to at least scan the brochure or other materials that are enclosed.
  - The offering has punch, both because of the story it tells, the creative use made of the English language, and the graphically appealing layout.
  - They almost always include a hard-hitting PS.

Take a lesson from the direct mail masters and frame your cover letters in terms of benefits to the employer of hiring you, be direct and personal, and tell a story that makes them want to learn more by reading your brochure (resume).

- ✓ Always frame the cover letter in terms of how you can help the prospective employer, not in terms of how they can help you.
- ✓ Never fax a resume -- especially an unsolicited resume -- unless you have been requested to do so. Be first class and send it first class. *Never* send a resume without a cover letter.
- ✓ Snoop. Don’t send a resume to a post office box without first having tried to ferret out who the company is so that you can send it to a person with a name. Never send a resume to the personnel director

without first having tried to find out who will actually be making the hiring decision. What's the worst that can happen? They will send your resume to personnel with the others. The best that can happen is you'll jump to the front of the line. If you don't know how to snoop, what a great excuse to read Sherlock Holmes stories!

- ✓ To really make your cover letter sizzle, find out the prospective employer's biggest problem -- high costs, low morale, declining sales, whatever -- and show how your track record of accomplishment can be employed to turn the situation around. Some resume counselors advise a format in which you present two columns, one stating the prospective employer's needs or problems, and the other listing the strengths that you could bring to those specific needs or problems.
- ✓ Your cover letter is as important, and may be more important, than your resume. Whipping out a second-rate cover letter risks having your resume pitched unread.
- ✓ Your cover letter should be typed and printed out on a laser printer.
- ✓ Invest in quality personal stationery.
- ✓ Use different paper for cover letters than that being used for your resume; the same paper for both might make the prospective employer think you are working through an outplacement agency. Even if this is true, you don't want them to know it quite yet.
- ✓ Keep the cover letter to one page. Concentrate on your unique selling proposition. Try to make that come through as clearly and convincingly as possible.
- ✓ The cover letter is the place to highlight your most significant accomplishments -- the ones that convince the prospective employer that you can solve their problems. To the extent possible, quantify savings you have achieved, new business you have generated, and anything else that can be made tangible.
- ✓ Do some research before you write the cover letter. The more you know about the company and its competitive environment, the more convincingly you will make a case that you can help them succeed.
- ✓ Remember that, whether you like it or not, most organizations are in business to make money, and won't survive if they don't. The bottom line in their eyes will be how you can contribute to that goal.
- ✓ Never frame a cover letter in terms of what's in the job for you; think instead of what you can do for the organization you hope to work for.

- ✓ Get into the habit of reading all of the “junk mail” letters you receive asking you to buy something or donate money. Most of these are written by professionals in the persuasive disciplines and you may learn how to write a more persuasive letter.
- ✓ It is probably less risky to be creative in a cover letter than it is in a resume, so long as your creativity is not mistaken for gimmickry. For example, instead of opening the letter “please consider my application...” you might try “it sounds like you have a problem that requires the services of a high achiever like me.” Just remember, the more unconventional you are, the more you will polarize those who read your letter into groups that love it or hate it, with few in between.
- ✓ Never start a cover letter with “I.” For that matter, see if you can write the whole letter that way. Discipline yourself to focus on the organization’s needs, not yours.
- ✓ Give your letter punch. Write it in active voice, using action-oriented words, and showcasing your most significant accomplishments.
- ✓ Always read your cover letters out loud before you send them, proof-read them meticulously, and even read them to others for their reaction.
- ✓ Never include salary history information in a cover letter, even if you are applying to a want ad which requested salary history. All it will do is screen you out; it will do nothing to bring you in.
- ✓ Your library or bookstore also has books on how to write a great cover letter, including examples. You want to have your own style, but reading some of these will help you to evolve a style that is effective.
- ✓ Every cover letter should generate a thank you letter. Even if you’re turned down for the job -- even if you’ve received an obvious form letter rejecting you -- send a note thanking them for having taken the time to read your resume. Then enter them into your rolodex, *ACT!*, or business card file as a potential future contact.

## **VI. RESPONDING TO ADVERTISEMENTS**

- ✓ Cast your net broadly. In addition to the local papers, watch for want ads in *The Wall Street Journal*, the *National Business Employment Weekly*, and major national newspapers including the *New York Times*, the *Los Angeles Times*, or the *Chicago Tribune*.
- ✓ If an ad gives a company name, find out everything you can about that company before applying. This will help you position yourself as someone who can help them solve their problems.
- ✓ Try to find out who the hiring decision maker is and call directly to that person. Do not mention the ad, but simply say that you understand they are looking. This may get you past the first screen; even if it doesn't the worst that could happen will be that you'll be told to respond to the ad.
- ✓ If the ad requests salary history, don't provide it. Rather, say something to the effect that your income has grown commensurate with your steadily increasing responsibilities.
- ✓ If you have not heard within several weeks, send another follow-up cover letter with a second copy of your resume. In this second cover letter, provide additional reasons why they should consider you.
- ✓ If you're turned down for a position that seems perfect, don't take no for an answer. It's always possible that their selected candidate fell through. Write back several weeks or months later to see if there is another opening.
- ✓ Get into the habit of keeping a file of "perfect job" ads. If a company has the perfect job for you now, chances are that if you're looking at sometime in the future they may have another perfect job.
- ✓ Be wary about responding to blind ads, those that have only a P.O. box and no company name. It might be your company advertising, in which case you may have just signed your own termination notice.

## VII. PREPARING FOR THE INTERVIEW

- ✓ Here's a paradox: The more you feel the need to impress people, the less impressed they are likely to be. Here's another paradox: The more desperate you are for a job, the less likely you are to ask the questions that would reveal the problems that could eventually set you up for failure if you do get the job.
- ✓ Think big. Not as in wanting the world, but as in being a big person. Imagine an historical role model--Jesus, Abraham Lincoln, Eleanor Roosevelt. If that person were going in your stead for the upcoming interview, would they be trying to get the job and making sure they negotiated the best deal? Or would they be looking into the heart and soul of the person across the desk, trying to think of the best way that the two of them could work together for the achievement of a greater goal? Paradoxically, thinking big like this and transcending the narrow viewpoint of "what's in it for me" is most likely to get you the job.
- ✓ All of the interview questions you will be asked fall into these five categories:
  - *Who are you* (what's your history; what are your values, ideals and dreams; what baggage do you carry)?
  - *What have you learned and achieved* (education, on-the-job learning, maturity, and work accomplishments)?
  - *What value can you add* (problem-solving, creative ideas, financial success, competitive advantage)?
  - *How will your personality fit into our culture and how will you get along with people* (especially the boss)?
  - *What are the risks of hiring you* (you're not who you seem to be; you don't get along with people; you're not emotionally stable; you would cost more than the value you add)?
- ✓ Practice your responses to the following questions until you can get them down to about sixty seconds:
  - *Tell me about yourself.* Don't start with being born in a log cabin: you want to get across the essential 3 Es: Education, Experience, and Enthusiasm).
  - *What are your proudest accomplishments?* Hopefully, through your research you've identified the organization's most pressing

problems and your response will demonstrate that you are just the person to help solve them.

- *What is your greatest strength?* Here the strongest answer is probably a combination of strengths that makes you unique, such as, “I’m a very creative thinker, but I’m also a practical worker who can turn dreams into reality.”
  - *What are your weaknesses?* Forget the “I work too hard” shtick; the ideal answer tells the interviewer that you know yourself and that you are continuously learning to turn weaknesses into strengths -- like this: “In my enthusiasm to get things done I can neglect to include people who might have a stake in the outcome, so I am constantly reminding myself to look from side-to-side as well as straight ahead.”
  - *Why should I hire you?* Here you respond with your unique selling proposition, that combination of knowledge, skills, enthusiasm, and track record of accomplishment that distinguishes you from the competition.
- ✓ Make a list of the questions you would least like to have asked of you in a job interview. Then have a friend or family member ask you to answer those questions in front of a video recorder. Practice until you are happy with your responses.
  - ✓ Be prepared to tell an interviewer about the most influential books and people in your life and why they attained that status.
  - ✓ If you are coming off a tough job loss, carrying around the dead weight of anger, bitterness, and resentment is not only harmful to you, it is a red flag to potential employers who are on the lookout for anything about your character that might cause problems in their organization. Be prepared to explain your job loss in a positive way. Two surefire ways to push yourself out of the running are: 1) telling the interviewer you are not really sure why you were let go; or 2) telling the interviewer that the stupid SOB was out of their minds to fire a positive and productive performer like you.
  - ✓ Body language is a critical component of the interview. It’s used by interviewers to analyze your personality, so use it to your advantage. Here are the essentials:
    - When standing or walking, be erect with head up and chest out; when sitting, don’t slouch.
    - Subtly mirror the body posture and movements of the interviewer (if they cross their legs, you do the same), which will help you establish rapport.

- Keep your hands in your lap or at your sides (indicating calmness), and away from your face (which suggests nervousness or something to hide), but use frequent hand gestures to emphasize key points and convey your enthusiasm. The best hand gestures involve both hands in expansive motions at chest level.
  - Maintain good eye contact without staring or glaring.
  - Give yourself an extra point every time you smile and two extra points every time you laugh.
  - Tightly folded arms suggest a defensive mentality and should be avoided, especially if your legs are also crossed.
  - Don't drum your fingers, crack your knuckles, pick at lint on your clothing, or let other nervous mannerisms betray a sense of insecurity.
  - Relax and have fun.
- ✓ There are lots of books on how to dress. Here are the basics:
- Wear a suit--the type of suit that will be worn by the person to whom you will report.
  - Err on the side of being conservative -- it's hard to beat the traditional dark blue suit with a starched white shirt or blouse.
  - Well-polished black leather shoes and a matching belt are always a safe bet.
  - Unless you are applying for a job at Disneyworld, leave the Mickey Mouse tie at home.
  - Be moderate and tasteful in the jewelry department -- for men a nice watch and class and/or wedding ring (leave the diamond earring at home, stud) and for women a simple necklace, earrings, and/or pin in addition to a watch and a ring or two (not in the nose).
  - Go easy on the make-up, perfume, and aftershave.
  - Take off your coat only after the interviewer has done so.
- ✓ Buy yourself a new suit of clothes, spending 25 percent more than you are comfortable with. Keep it in a plastic bag in the closet except for interviews. Believe it to be your lucky suit, and it will be.
- ✓ There are lots of books about how to do well in job interviews, and you should read them. But in terms of your maintaining emotional courage, what comes after the interview may be most important. Don't tear yourself down by dwelling upon your inevitable mistakes or by imagining what the interviewer might have thought of you. It probably went a lot better than you think.

- ✓ All the world's a stage, and nowhere more so than during an interview. Consider hiring a speaking tutor or an acting coach to help you do the best possible job of presenting yourself and all that you can offer the prospective employer. Prepare for each interview just as if you were going on stage. Have a script and rehearse it. A job interview is not a friendly chat; it's a command performance on your part.
- ✓ Learn everything you can about the company. The research librarian at your local library can be a big help, as can computer databases.
- ✓ Write out at least fifty questions that you anticipate might be asked, and practice answering them. It's just like taking college entrance exams; there's a technique to it and the more you practice the better you get.
- ✓ There are a number of books that include lists of potential questions to anticipate. Read as many as you can, and rehearse your answers for every applicable question. Read as many as you can.
- ✓ Try to find out everything you can about people who will be included in your interview. If you have common interests, it can get things off to a good start.
- ✓ Have a friend videotape your practice sessions with a camcorder and review these, repeating until you are satisfied.
- ✓ Make a list of between four and six key items you want to make sure that you cover in your interview; have a one-to-two minute script for each.
- ✓ Have a prepared and rehearsed response to the standard opening question which will run something like "tell me about yourself." Don't take more than two minutes; if the interviewer wants more information, he or she will ask for it.
- ✓ Learn to think like an interviewer in order to anticipate the questions that are coming. Reading some of the books summarized in the Paradox 21 Special Report *25 Books That Could Help Your Career, If You Only Had Time to Read Them* will help.
- ✓ Listen to motivational tapes on your way to the interview if you're in a car with a tape player.
- ✓ If you're particularly tense about an upcoming interview, visualize yourself going through it in a relaxed and controlled manner. If it's an

especially important interview, you might wish to seek the services of a hypnotherapist to help you create a “memory of the future” of you handling the interview with grace and poise.

- ✓ Brace yourself for the possibility of a “stress interview,” in which one of the interviewer’s objectives will be to see whether you are easily rattled. The best preparation for a stress interview is to have done your homework, anticipated potential questions and objections, and have rehearsed your responses.
- ✓ In interviewing, it’s usually the case that last shall be first. The last person interviewed is over three times as likely as the first person to get the job. Find out where you are slotted in the schedule, and try to maneuver yourself to the end.
- ✓ Especially for management positions, you might be judged as much by the quality of the questions you ask as the ones you answer. Prepare at least twenty questions of your own about the organization, its business and strategies, its culture and values, and how you can best contribute and grow as an employee. These questions should reflect the fact that you understand the company and the industry based upon your research, but don’t try to impress people with your command of minutia.

## **VIII. HAVE A GREAT INTERVIEW**

- ✓ Although this will hopefully not be the case, begin with the assumption that the interviewer has not read your resume.
- ✓ More often than not, the interviewer will not have had much practice at interviewing and may actually be winging it. Most interviews are conducted by people who only do it several times a year.
- ✓ In some cases, it might be that the interviewer is not even sure of what the organization is looking for, or the profile of the ideal candidate.
- ✓ In the first five minutes, try to establish a social rapport with the interviewer. If you've been able to ascertain that you share a common interest (for example sailing or golf) this is better introductory conversation than talking about the weather.
- ✓ Although it may seem hokey, use mirroring techniques because they work. Use body posture, hand gestures, facial expressions, and manner of speech that subtly mirrors the interviewer's to help establish a rapport.
- ✓ In the next five minutes or so, try to work in as many as possible of your one-to-two minute sales pitches. It is your responsibility to assure that the interview does not turn into a rambling social discourse; stay sharp and stay focused.
- ✓ After each question, pause for a moment and take a breath while you think through your response. Not only will you give a better answer, you'll also come across a more thoughtful person.
- ✓ Be comfortable with silence. You are usually better off allowing a few seconds for both of you to collect your thoughts than trying to fill silence with awkward talk. Some interviewers will use deliberate silence to prod you into saying something unplanned, and perhaps unwise.
- ✓ Use every opportunity to answer a question with a specific example of your past performance, using numbers where possible, and how you can help the organization solve their problems.
- ✓ Never be afraid to ask for clarification of a question before you respond.

- ✓ If during the interview you are tempted to take credit for something you didn't do or otherwise give a less-than-honest response, don't do it.
- ✓ During the interview, pay attention as though your life depended upon it.
- ✓ Remember that you are not just being interviewed, you are also interviewing. Don't let your desire for the job blind you to real problems that could derail your career later even if you get the job now.
- ✓ Listen to your intuition. If something doesn't feel right, or if you're concerned that you might not "fit" with the organization's culture and personality, chances are that you'd be heading for an unpleasant experience.
- ✓ When it comes your time to ask questions, take notes.
- ✓ Never smoke during an interview. If you do smoke abstain long before the interview, and if you don't smoke avoid places where other people are smoking. Smelling like an ashtray could doom you at the outset, since 94 percent of employers will hire nonsmokers over equally qualified smokers.
- ✓ Don't be pushy. Though you may not feel it to be true, act like you have all the high cards. Play a cool hand.
- ✓ The best way to have confidence is to know that you have multiple options. Never slack off on your networking and researching. Try to line up as many interviews as possible, and keep working on it until the new job is signed, sealed, and delivered. Even then, some career counselors will advise you to keep working on it for another week or so.
- ✓ Your goal in any interview is not necessarily to get the job, but rather to get another interview.
- ✓ Be aware that the time you are most likely to blow the interview is toward the end, after you think it's all over and start to let your guard down. Stick to the planned and rehearsed script all the way out the door.
- ✓ If the job is offered at the end of the interview, be very gracious and very enthusiastic and tell them you'll think the offer over and let them know in a few days.

## IX. REFERENCES

- ✓ Be strategic in selecting references. If the company to which you are applying has a no-nonsense, bottom-line culture, list the chief financial officer of your current or former employer. If, on the other hand, you know they are looking for an empowering leader, offer as references some of the people you have empowered.
- ✓ References can be particularly important if you are changing industries. The ideal reference is somebody who can convince a caller that your background as a critical care nurse makes you the ideal candidate for a marketing job with a steel mill.
- ✓ Ask a lot of people if they would agree to serve as a reference for you. This has several advantages. First, it includes more people in your job search networking loop. Second, it reduces the risk of overusing any particular person. Save your strongest references for the job you *really* want.
- ✓ Give each reference a brief fact sheet concerning your background and your accomplishments. Don't assume they know everything; they will appreciate your consideration.
- ✓ Many employers will attempt to check references other than those you provide. Try to anticipate who might be contacted and let them know what's going on. This has the further benefit of letting them know that you are available for work.
- ✓ Be strategic in selecting references. The ideal reference is somebody who can convince a caller that your background as a critical care nurse makes you the ideal candidate for a marketing job with a steel mill. Never offer references unless asked.
- ✓ Always ask for their permission before giving someone as a reference and always let them know when they might expect to be called, and by whom.
- ✓ Give each reference a brief fact sheet concerning your background and your accomplishments. Don't assume they know everything and they will appreciate your consideration.
- ✓ If you were terminated from your last job, but must list that employer as a reference, have an understanding with them concerning what they will and will not say on the reference.

- ✓ Many employers will attempt to check references other than those you provide. Try to anticipate who might be contacted and let them know what's going on. This has the further benefit of letting them know that you are available for work.
- ✓ After you get the job, send flowers or a box of candy to everyone who served as a reference for you.

## **X. NEGOTIATING YOUR BEST OFFER**

- ✓ You have your strongest negotiating position if you don't want or need the job too badly, and the way to do this is to have other options.
- ✓ Information is power-- at least potential power. The more homework you do, the more information you will have. The day you first apply for the job you should begin collecting information for negotiation.
- ✓ Read a good book on negotiation strategy, like *Getting To Yes* by Roger Fisher and William Ury or *You Can Negotiate Anything* by Herb Cohen. Remember these key points:
  - Everything is negotiable.
  - You have more leverage than you think you do.
  - Information is power, but only if used wisely.
  - Knowing what you need and want is more power.
  - Being willing to say no to an unacceptable offer is still more power.
  - Your emotional reactions are more likely to hurt you than help you.
  - Keep your ego out of it -- this is business.
  - You are more likely to get what you want if you can couple it with a corresponding gain for the employer.
- ✓ Think twice before you just accept the offer without negotiating the terms (especially if it's for something like being a purchasing agent, where tough negotiating skills are a must). Your failure to negotiate might be interpreted as a sign of weakness, desperation, or low self-esteem. It could raise questions in the mind of the hiring manager about your ability to steward corporate resources, or mark you from the outset as someone who is easily intimidated.
- ✓ Detach yourself emotionally from the negotiations. This has nothing to do with winning or losing, it is not a reflection of your true inner worth, and having your requests rejected is not a rejection of you personally.
- ✓ If the job is offered to you on the spot during the interview, resist the temptation to shout "hallelujah" and take it right then and there. Ask for a day or so to think about it. This will give you time to study the specifics of the offer and think about how it might be restructured to

your benefit. It will also let them know that you are not desperate and have options.

- ✓ Try to get a signed agreement. It doesn't have to be a formal employment contract. A simple offer letter will actually establish a contractual employment relationship so long as you sign and return a copy.
- ✓ Don't withdraw your name from consideration from any other positions until the end of the first week on the new job.
- ✓ When negotiating the terms for a new position, remind yourself that if everything works out, you'll be working with these people. Be nice!
- ✓ When negotiating for a job in today's environment, think 1-2 years, not 5-10. Think cash compensation, not perks and benefits. Think "pay for measurable performance" not "vague promises of a future review."
- ✓ Avoid asking for perks that can be seen as extravagant, especially when companies want to be seen as cost conscious. Demanding a country club membership when people are losing their jobs might be bad form.
- ✓ What you see during negotiation might be your first true indicator of what it's like to work for that employer. If you don't like what you see, walk away.
- ✓ Take this advice from Paul Hawkinson, publisher of the *Fordyce Letter*, a monthly newsletter for the personnel executive search and employment counseling fields: "The litany of horror stories I have come across in my years as an executive recruiter, consultant and publisher provides a litmus test that clearly indicates counter-offers should never be accepted...EVER!"
- ✓ In a *National Business Employment Weekly* article, staff writer Perri Cappel tells the story of Kathleen Strickland, who was laid off from \$125,000 job as a senior vice president with a retailer. She was offered a position with another firm at \$60,000, which she declined. She subsequently declined follow-up offers of \$80,000 and \$100,000, before finally accepting an offer at \$130,000. Strickland was successful, says Cappel, because "she know it was a negotiation from the start, was incredible specific, set her priorities, and was willing to walk away if she didn't get them."

- ✓ Know what you need and what you wish to have beyond that, and have a sense of priority concerning what you are willing to give on.
- ✓ Be realistic. Know the market value of your time. You get this by having other offers. Also know the market value of that position. You get this by calling other companies and following up on other similar openings. The best way of pegging this is knowing people who are in similar positions who will share with you the details of their compensation.
- ✓ The longer you can postpone talking about money and benefits, the better. As time goes on and other candidates drop out, the organization will be more certain that you are the one they want.
- ✓ Negotiate cash first, benefits second, and perquisites last. The reality of the social contract between employers and employees today is that most people don't really have long-term job security. Given a choice between cash and benefits, take cash; given a choice between short and long term, take short.
- ✓ Think of things you can do to continually increase your value to the company. Be willing to give more than you demand. Be willing to prove yourself.
- ✓ Detach yourself from the negotiations; try to be as objective as possible. Make believe you are negotiating on behalf of someone else.
- ✓ Be willing to say no and walk away from an unacceptable offer.
- ✓ Rehearse your negotiation speech before the mirror or a close friend.
- ✓ Don't just concentrate on compensation level, but also consider educational opportunities, retirement options, a severance agreement, or other benefits that might be important.

## **XI. OVERCOMING REJECTION**

- ✓ Rejection is not ejection; one employer turning you down does not toss you out of the game. Rejections are the Red Badge of Courage of the job search process. The only people who earn lots of rejection letters are those who are working hard on their job search.
- ✓ Suzanne Kobasa and her colleagues at the University of Chicago studied executives at AT&T when that company was going through the stress of corporate reorganization and downsizing. While some executives had their health adversely affected by the stress, others held up well. The latter group shared the following three qualities:
  - They had a strong commitment to both work and family.
  - Although they could not control the details of work, they felt that they still had control of the overall quality of their lives and that whatever happened they had options for action.
  - They viewed change as a challenge not a threat.

It was, in summary, their optimistic attitude which carried them through stressful times.

- ✓ Don't read gloomy forecasts of an America with no jobs; articles claiming that virtually everyone who loses a job these days slips down the socio-economic scale; or that nine out of ten new business ventures fail. If you had the time (and you don't) to go back through the library archives, you'd find a steady stream of such articles at least since the Great Depression. Despite them all, people have still been able to find better jobs, make better livings, and start successful businesses, and you can too.
- ✓ No matter how bad things seem, try to keep your perspective. Keep in mind the words of a young homeless teenage mother of two, who routinely had to stay up all night keeping rats and roaches away from her children: "People think they got it tough. They don't know the meaning of the word."
- ✓ If you lose a job, think twice before getting another job doing the same old thing. Do your homework. Is the occupation you've been in going away? Are you simply delaying the inevitable need to bite the bullet and retrain and redirect yourself by taking another job in a dying profession?

- ✓ There will be times during a prolonged job search when, no matter how faithful you are, it will feel like God has abandoned you. And perhaps that may be the case. If you are waiting around for divine intervention to plant your feet down on the right vocational path, or to open the right doors and arrange for lucrative job offers, your personal growth will depend upon your taking responsibility for yourself. Like a parent who ignores a whining, petulant child, God may just be waiting for you to grow up and start asking the right questions instead of asking for bail-outs and handouts.
- ✓ Don't let yourself get into the most dangerous downward spiral of inaction leading to low self-esteem leading to inaction leading to lower self-esteem leading to...
- ✓ Don't allow your mind to picture rejection letters in the mailbox, and when they do appear (as they must) immediately erase the image, replacing it with a future memory of that joyous phone call offering you the job of your dreams.
- ✓ Use each rejection as an invitation to review your approach. Don't do it alone -- get help and advice from friends, a counselor, a minister, and anyone else who can help you get back into peak form.
- ✓ If you're looking for a job, you should be playing the law of averages by applying for as many different opportunities as possible. Here's an exception: if you find that rejection letters are battering your emotions, then don't apply for jobs you are highly unlikely to get, and don't send resumes in response to blind (P.O. Box only) want ads. That's just asking for rejection letters that you don't really need.
- ✓ Most successful writers have a fat file of rejection letters. Keep this in mind during your job search. If you are not accumulating lots of rejection letters, you may not be working hard enough or you may have set your sights too low.
- ✓ To make the inevitable rejection more positive, give yourself a goal of 1,000 rejections (that's how many Colonel Sanders had before he franchised his first Kentucky Fried Chicken store). With every 50 you add to the file, celebrate by taking some time off from the job search to do something fun. If you don't have piles of rejection letters, chances are you're not shooting high enough.
- ✓ Analyze and learn from every rejection, but don't second-guess them. Replace "if only" with "next time" and believe that you are now one step closer to achieving what is meant-to-be. If you have a strong

sense of faith that you have a purpose on earth and that you will be aided in fulfilling that purpose, then rejection letters will lose their sting; it just wasn't meant to be, but something else is.

- ✓ After a tough rejection, you may find yourself tempted to assume that your previous employer torpedoed you with a poor reference. Don't. First of all, it's probably not true. Second, even if it is (and you'll never find out) knowing it won't help you and assuming it will hinder your efforts to keep a positive mental attitude.
- ✓ Send a thank you note in response to every rejection letter you receive, even if it's obviously a form letter. Enter the name of the person who signed the rejection letter on your rolodex or computer, and make it a point to stay in touch in the future. If they had a job that interested you now, they may again in the future. Or if you start your own business, they may be a prospective customer. Be a winner even in rejection.
- ✓ Take each rejection as a prod to work harder on alternative options.
- ✓ If you get enough rejections, fate may be trying to tell you that the time has come for you to consider a different career path, or working for yourself.
- ✓ No matter how positive you try to be, however, rejections do hurt. Acknowledge your feelings of disappointment, anger, anxiety, but do not wallow in them.
- ✓ As Elisabeth Kubler-Ross stated in describing the stages of death and dying, the one element that is constant in the dying process is hope. Keep your hopes high during all the rejections that must inevitably come. You will get a job.
- ✓ You can find meaning in your work and in your life.
- ✓ So go out to dinner, watch a funny movie, and tomorrow get back up on the horse and ride it again.

## BIBLIOGRAPHY

- 📖 Asher, D.: *The Foolproof Job-Search Workbook*
- 📖 Asher, D.: *The Overnight Job Change Strategy*
- 📖 Beatty, R.H.: *The Five Minute Interview*
- 📖 Besson, T.: *Cover Letters (Wall Street Journals Guide)*
- 📖 Besson, T.: *Resumes (Wall Street Journal's Guide)*
- 📖 Boldt, L. G.: *Zen and the Art of Making A Living*
- 📖 Bolles, R. N.: *What Color Is Your Parachute?*
- 📖 Bolles, RN.: *The Three Boxes of Life*
- 📖 Byron, J.: *Finding Work Without Losing Heart*
- 📖 Dixon, P and Tiersten, S.: *Be Your Own Headhunter On-Line*
- 📖 Everett, M.: *Making A Living While Making A Difference*
- 📖 Hagberg J and Leider R: *The Inventurers: Excursions in Life & Career Renewal*
- 📖 Handy, C.: *The Age of Unreason*
- 📖 Helfand, DP.: *Career Change*
- 📖 Hirsch, AS.: *Interviewing (Wall Street Journal's Guide)*
- 📖 Jackson, T.: *Guerrilla Tactics in the New Job Market*
- 📖 Jud, B.: *Coping with Unemployment*
- 📖 Kennedy, JL and Morrow, T.: *Electronic Resume Revolution*
- 📖 Kennedy, JL.: *Hookup, Get Hired!: The Internet Job Search Revolution*
- 📖 Kight, L.: *Getting the Lowdown on Employers and a Leg Up on the Job Market*
- 📖 Ken Kragen, K.: *Life Is a Contact Sport: 10 Great Career Strategies That Work*
- 📖 Lloyd, J.: *The Career Decisions Planner*
- 📖 Logue, C.H.: *Outplace Yourself: Secrets of an Executive Outplacement Councilor*
- 📖 Lucht, J.: *Rights of Passage at \$100,000 Plus*
- 📖 Mackay, H.: *Sharkproof*
- 📖 Marion, P.: *Crisis-Proof Your Career*
- 📖 Messmer, M.: *50 Ways to Get Hired*
- 📖 Messmer, M.: *Job Hunting for Dummies*
- 📖 O'Neil: *The Paradox of Success*
- 📖 Peterson, L.: *Starting Out, Starting Over*
- 📖 Petras, K and Petras, R.: *The Only Job Hunting Guide You'll Ever Need*
- 📖 Quittel, F.: *Firepower: Everything You Need To Know Before and After You Lose Your Job*
- 📖 Resnick, R.L.: *A Big Splash in a Small Pond: Finding a Great Job in a Small Company*
- 📖 Richardson, D.B.: *Networking (Wall Street Journal's Guide)*

- 📖 RoAne, S.: *How to Work a Room*
- 📖 RoAne, S.: *The Secrets of Savvy Networking*
- 📖 Roberts W: *Straight A's Never Made Anybody Rich*
- 📖 Ryan, R.: *60 Seconds and You're Hired*
- 📖 Sher, B: *I Could Do Anything If I Only Knew What It Was*
- 📖 Sinetar, M.: *Do What You Love, The Money Will Follow*
- 📖 Sinetar, M.: *To Build the Life You Want, Create the Work You Love*
- 📖 Spiegel, J.: *Flirting for Success*
- 📖 Tye, J.: *Personal Best*
- 📖 Winter, B. J.: *Making a Living Without a Job*
- 📖 Yate, M.: *Knock 'Em Dead*
- 📖 Yate, M.: *Beat the Odds*