



Advance Your Career at SU

**Presented by
WorkLife and
Organizational
Development**

**Syracuse University
July 2008**

Advance Your Career at SU

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Syracuse University
Office of Human Resources
WorkLife and Organizational Development
315-443-2488
learn@syr.edu

Advance Your Career at SU

Introduction:

The purpose of this guide is to provide you with tools and resources to support your career advancement at Syracuse University.

This guide includes information about Syracuse University's internal application process, creating a resume, cover letter tips and techniques to improve interviewing skills.

Additional Support

Syracuse University's WorkLife and Organizational Development team offers additional resources to support career development for SU faculty and staff including:

Personal Support:

- Assessments
- Career coaching
- Critiques for resumes and cover letters
- Interview preparation

General Support:

- Learning Opportunities workshops
- Staff 2 Staff programs

For further information:

E-mail learn@syr.edu

Visit the HR website at <http://humanresources.syr.edu/>

Call 315-443-2488

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The SU Online Job Search

Searching for Positions at SU

To search for open positions, go to <https://www.sujobopps.com>

Click "Search Open Positions" from the menu on the left hand side
Enter/select your search criteria
Click "Search" to display results

To view a position:

Click "View" under the title of any position to see the job posting

To go back to search results:

Click "Return to Search Results" at the bottom left hand side of the page
to go back to the search results

To apply for a position:

Click "Apply for Position" at the top or bottom left hand side of the page
to begin the application process or follow the instructions on page five of
this document

Job Interest Profile

The Job Interest Profile is an optional feature designed to notify you via e-mail of new openings that match at least one of your skills. This does not affect your consideration for any position, nor does it automatically apply to any position.
You must have a valid e-mail address to receive notice of new postings.

To sign-up:

New Users (applicants who have not applied using the online system)

Go to <https://www.sujobopps.com>

Click "Create Job Interest Profile" from the menu on the left hand side

Follow the instructions to complete your Job Interest Profile

Returning Users (applicants who have previously created an application using the online system)

Go to <https://www.sujobopps.com>

Click "Edit Job Interest Profile" from the menu on the left hand side

Follow the instructions to complete your Job Interest Profile

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Applying for a Position at SU

To apply for open positions, go to <https://www.sujobopps.com>

Current employees of Syracuse University must complete an online application.

New Users (applicants who have not applied using the online system)

To apply for a position:

- Click "Create Application" from the menu on the left hand side
- Select the type of application you wish to complete
- Click "Go" at the bottom of the page
- Follow the instructions from the "Create New Application" page
- You will be required to create a user name and password to begin the application process

Returning Users (applicants who have previously created an application using the online system)

- Click "Login" from the menu on the left hand side
- Enter your user name and password
- Click "login" to begin

To update your existing application:

- Click "Manage / Edit Applications" from the menu on the left hand side
- Click "Edit Application"
- Follow the instructions to complete desired changes

Note: If you need to update your application information be sure to do so *prior to applying* for a position. ***You will not be allowed to change your application information after you have applied for a position.***

To apply for a position:

- Click "Search Open Positions" from the menu on the left hand side
- Enter the job number or search for the position you want to apply for
- Click "View" under the job title you want to apply for
- Click "Apply For This Position" at the top or bottom left hand side of the page
- Follow instructions to proceed, or
- Click "Cancel Applying To This Position"

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Need Assistance Completing an Online Application?

- Instructions for **new** applicants can be found at <http://humanresources.syr.edu/shared/docs/paftuser.doc>
- Instructions for **returning** applicants can be found at <http://humanresources.syr.edu/shared/docs/partnusr.doc>
- Contact the recruitment staff from the Office of Human Resources:

Sharon Cole
Employment Specialist
315-443-4823
sdcole@syr.edu

Chris Percoski
Employment Specialist
315-443-4690
crpercos@syr.edu

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The Cover Letter:

The purpose of the cover letter is to present your skills and experience in a way that will highlight what you can offer to an employer. The cover letter should grab the search committee's attention and motivate them to review your resume. Use the cover letter as an opportunity to sell yourself for the particular position you are seeking and to make a connection between your candidacy, your resume and the job. A well-organized and concisely written cover letter will convey interest and qualifications for the position and demonstrate your communication skills.

Cover letters should be:

- individually tailored to each job you apply for;
- addressed to the search chair and include the job number you are applying for; and,
- closed with a request for action and appreciation for consideration.

The Resume:

A resume is both a factual description of your skills, knowledge, and abilities as well as a marketing tool. The purpose of the resume is to generate enough interest to motivate the search committee to select you for an interview.

For many jobs written communication skills are essential. Your resume and accompanying cover letter can be your most important marketing tools. The first impression that they create with the search committee is just as important as in person or phone contacts. In fact, resume and cover letters are often used as tools to prescreen candidates for interviews.

Resumes should:

- create a positive first impression for the search committee;
- target the job you are applying for; and,
- utilize the best resume format for the situation.

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Cover Letter Format

Your Street Address
City, State, Zip Code
Telephone Number
E-mail Address

Month, Day, Year

Search Chair
Name of Department or College
Street or P. O. Box Address
City, State Zip Code

Dear Search Chair:

OPENING PARAGRAPH

State why you are writing, how you learned of the position, and basic information about yourself. Include the job number for which you are applying.

2ND PARAGRAPH:

Tell why you are interested in the employer or type of work the employer does. Simply stating that you are interested in the job does explain why you are interested, and can sound like a form letter. Demonstrate that you know enough about the department or college to relate your background to the position. Mention specific qualifications which make you a good fit for the position. Refer to your attached resume. Mention other attachments that are required to apply for the position.

3RD PARAGRAPH:

Indicate that you would like the opportunity to interview for a position. State that you would be glad to provide the search chair with any additional information needed. Thank the search chair for his or her consideration.

Sincerely,

Your full name typed

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Types of Resumes

Format	Advantages	Disadvantages	Best Used By
Reverse Chronological	Logical flow and easy to read. Highlights a steady work record. Showcases growth in responsibilities. Easy to prepare and preferred by many interviewers. Focus is on time, job continuity, growth, and achievements.	Emphasizes gaps in employment. Not suitable for those with little or no previous work experience.	Individuals: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - with steady work experience - who have grown in their responsibilities - that have performed a limited number of functions in their work - applying for a position within the same function, department or college as current and/or past experience
Functional	Emphasizes transferable skills, credentials and achievements rather than employment. Organizes a variety of experience (paid, unpaid work, other activities). Downplays your age, young or mature.	May be ineffective if not well prepared. Requires effort to emphasize and communicate key skills sets that relate to the position.	Individuals: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - who are changing careers or seeking employment in a different college or department - with little or no experience - with employment gaps and/or frequent job changers - who have developed skills from other areas other than documented employment - that have a variety of different, relatively unconnected work experience
Combination	Highlights relevant accomplishments, skills, and work history. Uses a career profile, which is a functional style listing of relevant skills and accomplishments, and then proceeds to describe employment and education histories in reverse chronological order.	May be confusing if not well organized. Requires more effort to prepare.	Career changers or individuals in transition. Individuals entering the job market after an absence. If done well, this format works for almost anyone with more than a few years of work history.

Source: Harris-Bowlsbey, J., Suddarth, B., & Reile, D. (2005). Facilitating Career Development Student Text Second Addition. Brook Arrow, OK: National Career Development Association.

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Sample Job Posting

The following is an example of a typical posting found on www.sujobopps.com

JOB POSTINGS

Job Title

Senior Administrator

Job Description

Manage day-to-day operations of the Thornden Park Center, including, but not limited to, budget and fiscal management, payroll, hiring and supervision of staff, grant management, and serving as liaison with external constituencies.

Qualifications

Bachelor's degree or equivalent combination of education and experience required; minimum of 5 years experience in an administrative/supervisory capacity required.

Job Specific Qualifications

Excellent oral and written communication skills required; experience working with people in leadership/executive positions; strong skills in managing multiple tasks and shifting priorities required; prior experience supervising is necessary; prior work experience at Syracuse University highly desirable.

Responsibilities

Manage fiscal operations, including budget development, account management, invoicing and reconciliation of receivables, managing grants and payroll.

Manage human resources needs, including hiring, supervising, evaluating of staff; function as liaison with HR.

Serve as liaison for community partners and campus network.

Work closely with Director and Associate Director to plan and implement annual conference.

Manage special projects.

Serve as secretary to the advisory board.

Minimum of 5 years experience in an administrative/supervisory capacity required.

Excellent oral and written communications skills required.

Experience working with people in leadership/executive positions required.

Strong skills in managing multiple tasks and shifting priorities required.

Prior work experience at Syracuse University highly desirable.

A COVER LETTER, RESUME AND LIST OF PROFESSIONAL REFERENCES MUST BE ATTACHED.

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Sample Cover Letter in Response to Job Posting

3 County Route 3
New York, NY 00036
(315) 123-4560
learn@syr.edu

July 25, 2008

Mrs. Jane Jones
Recruitment Manager
Thornden Park Center Company
1 Thornden Park Center
Syracuse, NY 13244

Dear Search Committee:

Enclosed please find my resume and a list of three professional references for your consideration for the position of Senior Administrator within the Thornden Park Center.

I am very confident the contributions I have made this far in my career will make me an excellent candidate for this position. My contributions have led to measurable increases in productivity, employee satisfaction, and new community partnerships. Although I have successfully enhanced my career over the years, each aspect has held significant levels of administrative responsibilities, not only working as an administrative generalist, but also as team leader and manager. As detailed in my resume, I have record achievements within a fast paced, change-oriented company, which will allow me to deliver the same high quality results for the Thornden Park Center.

Specifically, my current position at Best Company requires that I interact regularly with executive level officers both within the company and the general community. Additionally, I am responsible for the office administration and budget functions.

In short, I believe my education and work experience make me the prime candidate for this position. I thank you for your time and consideration. I look forward to meeting with you to further discuss my qualifications. I can be reached by phone at 315-443-1870 or e-mail at learn@syr.edu.

Sincerely,

Theo Huxtable

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Sample Chronological Resume in Response to Job Posting

THEO HUXTABLE

3 County Route 3
New York, NY 00036
(789) 123-4560

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Objective

Administrative professional seeking to provide top-quality administrative support. I offer vast experience and knowledge in all administrative functions, excellent communication skills and computer proficiency.

Experience

July 2001 – November 2007 Best Company Syracuse, NY

Administrative Generalist

Coordinate and conduct new employee meetings and process all associated paperwork.

Responsible for office administration; filing, preparing reports, managing department budgets.

Administer the invoicing and reconciliation of receivables.

Responsible for all department staff related issues including employee/supervisor council.

Responsible for reimbursement accounts for employees and negotiating price for outside training of staff.

Guide supervisory staff on employment practices in accordance with internal policies and applicable State and Federal regulations.

Co-Chair of the Community Service committee. Initiate, plan and execute all events with a select committee sponsoring local charities associated with the United Way.

Perform administrative duties such as filing, answering telephones, and scheduling meetings and equipment.

1998 – 2001 Super Skills, Inc. Syracuse, NY

Department Administrator

Researched and maintained state laws for various clients doing business in other states.

Created, customized and revised department handbooks, job descriptions and client surveys. Created and revised forms, statistical reports and spreadsheets. Designed monthly newsletter.

Responsible for maintaining all Power of Attorney Authorizations for clients in various states.

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Sample Chronological Resume in Response to Job Posting continued

THEO HUXTABLE
3 County Route 3
New York, NY 00036
(789) 123-4560

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1995 – 1998 Flowers and More Liverpool, NY

Office Manager

Responsible for payroll administration, all employment related issues including staffing, placing employment ads, conducting new employee orientations, maintaining employee files.

Assist supervisory staff in researching employment practices in accordance with internal policies and applicable State and Federal regulations.

Responsible for benefit administration and conducting benefit meetings.

1992 – 1995 Staff Helpers Liverpool, NY

HR Assistant

Responsible for COBRA administration.

Created and updated client employee handbooks and job descriptions.

Responsible for producing workers' compensation and liability reports for all clients in conjunction with the insurance carrier auditor.

Answered switchboard. Created sales and marketing materials, statistical reports, spreadsheets. Performed various administrative duties for all departments.

Education

1987 – 1989 Bryant & Stratton Business Institute Cicero, NY

Business Administration

Strengths

Excellent work ethic with exceptional communication and organizational skills. Detail oriented. Proficient in Microsoft Word, Excel, Power Point, Publisher and HRMS.

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Sample Functional Resume in Response to Job Posting

Note: Out of the three resume formats reviewed in this guide, the functional resume format can work well when you are trying to demonstrate to the interviewers how your skills transfer to the position for which you are applying.

Hermione Granger

*100 Magic Way, Hogsmede • London 10008 • Phone 987-654-3210
E-mail: morticiaaddams@syr.com*

Summary

An experienced Administrative Manager with hands-on experience. Strong knowledge of all aspects of administration including: budget planning, accounts receivable & payable, human resources, event & travel planning, excellent organizational skills and high attention to detail.

Key Competencies

Change
Management
Professional
Dedicated

Customer
Service
Self-Directed
Analytical

Benefits
Management
Organized
Able to Multi-task

Employee
Relations
Highly Motivated
Approachable

Selected Skills & Experience

COMMUNICATION

- Effectively communicated with all levels of executives, staff, faculty, students and general public to provide excellent service.
- Proven success at providing clear communications through e-mail, prepared letters, telephone and in-person.

ADMINISTRATION

- Managed office and provided executive administrative support to the director including preparing speeches, managing calendar and preparing correspondence.
- Ensured that all office materials are filed accurately and in a timely manner for efficiencies
- Created and implemented several new office procedures to increase efficiency.

BUDGET MANAGEMENT

- Assisted with planning annual office budget of over \$100,000.
- Maintained database to track expenses including payroll and to manage receivables.
- Tracked all financial transactions for federal grants received.

SUPERVISION & MANAGEMENT

- Coordinated hiring of all office staff including screening resumes, interviewing and making final candidate selections.
- Supervised all office staff, prepared and delivered performance evaluations and acted as coach and mentor for struggling employees.
- Worked with Human Resources group to ensure compliance with all company policies and employment laws.

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Sample Functional Resume in Response to Job Posting continued

Hermione Granger

*100 Magic Way, Hogsmede • London 10008 • Phone 987-654-3210
e-mail: morticiaaddams@syr.com*

Professional Experience

Honor Group, Inc	Director, Administration	2007 – present
Friends, Inc.	Office Administrator	1995 – 2007
Life Insurance Company	Receptionist	1987 – 1991

Awards

Numerous discretionary awards and financial awards for excellent service and exceeding company expectations.
Continuously recognized for dedication and dependability.
Perfect Attendance Award (at Friends, Inc) received each year from the inception of the program in December 1999.

Education & Professional Training

Central City Business Institute, Associates Degree, Major: Business Administration	Syracuse, NY
Business Management Training, 2006, Managing Change Training, 1999	Brookfield, WI Syracuse, NY
Model-Netics Management Development Program, 1988	Syracuse, NY
Dale Carnegie Effective Speaking and Human Relations 14-week program	Syracuse, NY

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Resume Action Words

The following action-oriented verbs can be used in your cover letter and resume to communicate your accomplishments and skills in a powerful way. Use an action verb at the beginning of each phrase to liven up your resume or cover letter and get the reader's attention.

Accelerated	Consolidated	Explained	Maintained	Regulated
Accomplished	Contained	Extracted	Managed	Rehabilitated
Achieved	Contracted	Fabricated	Marketed	Remodeled
Acted	Contributed	Facilitated	Mediated	Repaired
Adapted	Controlled	Familiarized	moderated	Represented
Addressed	Coordinated	Fashioned	Monitored	Researched
Administered	Corresponded	Focused	Motivated	Restored
Advanced	Counseled	Forecast	Negotiated	Restructured
Advised	Created	Formulated	Operated	Retrieved
Allocated	Critiqued	Founded	Organized	Saved
Analyzed	Cut	Generated	Originated	Scheduled
Appraised	Decreased	Guided	Overhauled	Schooled
Approved	Delegated	Headed up	Oversaw	Screened
Arranged	Demonstrated	Identified	Performed	Set
Assembled	Designed	Illustrated	Persuaded	Shaped
Assigned	Developed	Implemented	Planned	Solidified
Assisted	Devised	Improved	Prepared	Solved
Attained	Diagnosed	Increased	Planned	Specified
Audited	Directed	Indoctrinated	Prepared	Stimulated
Authored	Dispatched	Influenced	Presented	Streamlined
Automated	Distinguished	Informed	Prioritized	Strengthened
Balanced	Diversified	Initiated	Processed	Summarized
Budgeted	Drafted	Innovated	Produced	Supervised
Built	Edited	Inspected	Programmed	Surveyed
Calculated	Educated	Installed	Projected	Systemized
Catalogued	Eliminated	Instigated	Promoted	Tabulated
Chaired	Enabled	Instituted	Provided	Taught
Clarified	Encouraged	Instructed	Publicized	Tracked
Classified	Engineered	Integrated	Published	Trained
Coached	Enlisted	Interpreted	Purchased	Translated
Collected	Established	Interviewed	Recommended	Traveled
Compiled	Evaluated	Introduced	Reconciled	Trimmed
Completed	Examined	Invented	Recorded	Upgraded
Composed	Executed	Launched	Recruited	Validated
Computed	Expanded	Lectured	Redesigned	Won
Conceptualized	Expedited	Led	Reduced	Worked
Conducted			Referred	Wrote

Source: Yate, M. (2006). Resumes That Knock 'em Dead. Holbrook, MA: Adams Media

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Questions to Ask the Interviewer

Select questions that are most appropriate for your situation and to the position at hand:

1. Why is the position open?
2. How often has the position been filled in the past five years?
3. What are some of the objectives you would like accomplished—short term and long term?
4. What is most pressing? What would you like to have accomplished in the next two or three months?
5. What freedom would I have to determine my work objectives, deadlines, methods?
6. What kind of support does this position receive in terms of people and budget?
7. What are some of the more difficult problems/challenges facing someone in this position? How do you think these could be best handled?
8. What are the success factors for a person to be effective in this position?
9. Are there opportunities for growth and advancement? If so, in what time frame?
10. What significant changes do you foresee in the near future?
11. How is one's performance measured and reviewed? What accounts for success?
12. What are the most critical factors for success in this position?
13. To whom will I be reporting?
14. How do you as the supervisor describe success?
15. How would you describe your management style?
16. How do you prefer your staff to communicate with you? Orally, in writing, informally, in meetings, or only when necessary?
17. How much travel, if any, is involved in this position?
18. What is the next step in the interviewing process? What is the time frame for filling the position?

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General Interview

The interview question matrix below outlines typical interview questions and recommended responses. In a general interview, the interviewers use questions to learn more about you, your attitude, and your potential fit for the job and the matrix has been categorized accordingly. At Syracuse University, you will most likely be asked both general and behavioral interview (see page 23) questions.

Category: General Questions											
INTERVIEW QUESTION	RECOMMENDED RESPONSE										
Tell me about yourself.	The best initial response to that question is your 90-second introduction. <table border="0"> <tr> <td><u>Topic</u></td> <td><u>Approx. Time</u></td> </tr> <tr> <td>Education</td> <td>5 sec</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Accomplishment/Work Experience</td> <td>50 sec</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Current Situation</td> <td>5 sec</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Future</td> <td>30 sec</td> </tr> </table>	<u>Topic</u>	<u>Approx. Time</u>	Education	5 sec	Accomplishment/Work Experience	50 sec	Current Situation	5 sec	Future	30 sec
<u>Topic</u>	<u>Approx. Time</u>										
Education	5 sec										
Accomplishment/Work Experience	50 sec										
Current Situation	5 sec										
Future	30 sec										
What can you offer us (that other candidates cannot)?	Use your research about the position to make your answers meaningful to the interviewer. Respond by emphasizing your unique qualities and capabilities. Relate them to the position at hand whenever possible.										
Have you ever had any failures? What did you learn from them?	Demonstrate that you persevered and learned from your failures. Communicate to the interviewer how you'll take that information and apply it in the future.										
How have you kept up in your field?	Discuss reading seminars, courses (in or outside work), association meetings, certifications, or discussions with colleagues or other professionals.										
Why should we hire you?	Start by looking at the job description or posting. What is the employer stressing as requirements of the job? Make a list. Next, do an inventory to determine what you have to offer as a fit for those requirements. Think of two or three key qualities you have to offer that match. Don't underestimate personal traits that make you unique; your energy, personality type, working style and people skills are all very relevant to any job.										

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<p>What did you like least about your last job?</p>	<p>When you answer this question, it's best to focus on tasks rather than company politics or people. A potential response would be:</p> <p>“Overall I've been very satisfied with my job. I have to say that I did have a job where there was an inordinate amount of paperwork. Because working with people is my strength, the paperwork really bogged me down at times.”</p>
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Category: Can Do!	
INTERVIEW QUESTION	RECOMMENDED RESPONSE
<p>What are your strengths?</p>	<p>Enumerate three or four of your key strengths with examples that are relevant to their needs. Base your response on the position, your research, and other data you gathered.</p>
<p>What are your weaknesses?</p>	<p>Everyone has a weakness. The best way to handle this is to offer only one example, that minimizes the trait and emphasizes the positive. Communicate what you've learned and how you've changed as a result.</p>
<p>If I spoke to your previous manager, what would he or she say are your greatest strengths and weaknesses?</p>	<p>Use on-the-job examples of strengths. Position any weakness in a positive way. Your former manager would probably want to give you a good reference, so recount some of the positive things you did for him or her.</p>
<p>What have been your most significant accomplishments so far?</p>	<p>Write an accomplishment statement, selecting ones that are relevant to the position for which you are interviewing and the challenges you would be facing.</p>
<p>What qualifications do you have that you feel would make you successful here?</p>	<p>Talk about two or three of your major skills (supported by accomplishments) which you believe will be useful in the position.</p>
<p>Describe a situation in which you had a difficult problem and how it was solved.</p>	<p>Relate an accomplishment that had to do with this kind of situation. Depending on the organization's culture and needs, highlight conflict management, team building, communication skills, or staffing.</p>
<p>Describe a situation in which you have worked under pressure or met deadlines.</p>	<p>Refer to your accomplishments. Discuss one or two in which you were especially effective in meeting deadlines or dealing with high-pressure situations.</p>

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Category: Can Do!	
Tell me about an objective in your last job that you failed to meet, and why.	<p>This question assumes that you failed to meet one of your objectives. If you can honestly state that you met all your objectives, say so. If there was an objective that you were unable to meet for legitimate reasons, discuss it with an explanation of the obstacles over which you had no control.</p> <p>Above all, state what you learned as a result of the experience.</p>
Give examples of times when you were a leader.	Draw examples from your accomplishments that demonstrate your leadership skills.
How do you feel about assuming the responsibilities of a supervisor or manager (if no previous experience)?	If this is an interest for you, emphasize your strengths as an individual contributor. If you want to manage others, say so with enthusiasm and give examples of why you feel you would be successful.
What do you see as the most difficult task in being a manager?	Managing multiple priorities between: various workgroups, individuals, budgets; maintaining high ethical standards; or other management issues relevant to the interviewing organization.
How much financial responsibility have you had in previous positions?	<p>You can answer this in terms of your budget, head-count, or the size of a project or team that you directed.</p> <p>If you haven't had this type of responsibility, refer to an accomplishment that demonstrates a related skill.</p>
How many people have you supervised?	If you have not managed others, refer to those over whom you had influence (including subordinates, peers, teams, contractors, or vendors).
Give one or two examples of your creativity.	Refer to accomplishments and creative solutions or insights that relate to the organization and the position.
What are your goals or ambitions for the future?	Indicate your desire to concentrate on doing the immediate work well and your confidence that the future will be promising. You don't want to convey that you have no desire to progress, nor do you want to appear to be using this position as a stepping stone.

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Category: Fit	
INTERVIEW QUESTION	RECOMMENDED RESPONSE
Why are you seeking a position with our organization?	Indicate that from your research, the operational issues they face are the kind that excite you and match up well with your skills, abilities, and past experiences. If you can do so honestly, express what it is about the organization that appeals to you.
What sort of outside reading do you do? What are the recent movies you have seen?	Mention some of the things you read to keep current in your professional field, balance by recreational reading and viewing.
Tell me about a work situation that irritated you.	Talk about this type of situation in terms of skills you used to manage and improve the situation. If applicable, stress your ability to remain calm under pressure.
How would your co-workers describe you?	Refer to your skills, strengths and personality traits.
What do you think of your previous manager?	If you liked the individual say so and describe why. If not, think of something positive to say.
How would you describe your management style?	If you have management experience, you might want to talk about how you set goals and get people involved in them. Also, describe the techniques that you like to use to bring out the best in people, motivate them, and help them grow.

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Behavioral Interview

What is a Behavioral Interview?

In a behavioral interview you will have to demonstrate your knowledge, skills, and abilities, collectively known as competencies, by giving specific examples from your past experiences. The interviewer does not want to know if you can do something, but that you have done it. He or she, prior to the interview, determines what competencies are required for the position. Then the interviewer develops a series of questions that will allow them to find out if you, the job candidate, possess the necessary competencies to perform the job. The basic premise of the behavioral interview is that past performance is a good predictor of future performance in similar situations.

It's difficult to prepare for a behavior-based interview because of the huge number and variety of possible behavioral questions you might be asked. The best way to prepare is to arm yourself with a small arsenal of example stories that can be adapted to many behavioral questions.

One strategy for preparing for behavioral interviews is to use the STAR Technique, as outlined below.

STAR Interview Response Technique	
INTERVIEW QUESTION	RECOMMENDED RESPONSE
S ituation or T ask	Describe the situation that you were in or the task that you needed to accomplish. You must describe a specific event or situation, not a generalized description of what you have done in the past. Be sure to give enough detail for the interviewer to understand. This situation can be from a previous job, from a volunteer experience, or any relevant event.
A ctions you took	Describe the action you took and be sure to keep the focus on you. Even if you are discussing a group project or effort, describe what you did - not the efforts of the team. Don't tell what you might do, tell what you did.
R esults you achieved	What happened? How did the event end? What did you accomplish? What did you learn?

STAR Interviewing Response Technique for Success in Behavioral Job Interviews.
<http://www.quintcareers.com/STAR_interviewing.html> (2008, January 30).

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Behavioral Interview Questions

1. Describe a situation in which you were able to use persuasion to successfully convince someone to see things your way.
2. Describe a time when you were faced with a stressful situation that demonstrated your coping skills.
3. Give me a specific example of a time when you used good judgment and logic in solving a problem.
4. Give me an example of a time when you set a goal and were able to meet or achieve it.
5. Tell me about a time when you had to use your presentation skills to influence someone's opinion.
6. Give me a specific example of a time when you had to conform to a policy with which you did not agree.
7. Please discuss an important written document you were required to complete.
8. Tell me about a time when you had to go above and beyond the call of duty in order to get a job done.
9. Tell me about a time when you had too many things to do and you were required to prioritize your tasks.

Free Sample Behavioral Interview Questions.

<http://www.quintcareers.com/sample_behavioral.html> (2008, January 30).

Note: At Syracuse University, you will most likely be asked both general (see page 18) and behavioral interview questions.

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Professionalism and Ethics

Preparation is the first step in the interview process. During the interview, the way you conduct yourself professionally is critical to creating a positive impression. Here are some general guidelines for the interview process.

DO

- Dress appropriately; err on the side of being conservative to show you take the interview seriously. Your personal grooming and cleanliness should be impeccable.
- Know the exact time and location of your interview, how long it takes to get there, park, find a rest room to freshen up, etc.
- Arrive 10 minutes prior to the interview start time.
- Offer a firm handshake, make eye contact, and have a friendly expression when you are greeted by your interviewer.
- Maintain good eye contact during the interview.
- Sit still in your seat. Avoid fidgeting and slouching.
- Exhibit a positive attitude. The interviewer/search committee is evaluating you as a potential co-worker.
- Evaluate the interviewer/search committee and the department or college they represent. An interview is a two-way street.
- Make sure you understand the next step in the hiring process.
- Offer a firm handshake and make eye contact when the interview concludes.
- Write and send a thank you note promptly.

DON'T

- Make negative comments about previous employers or colleagues.
- Give the impression you are only interested in salary; don't ask about salary and benefits issues until the subject is brought up by your interviewer.
- Be unprepared for typical interview questions.
- Cancel your interview at the last minute.
- Don't accept a job offer, even verbally, until you are certain you are committed.

Interview Dos and Don'ts. <<http://www.career.vt.edu/JOBSEARC/interview/dodont.html>> (2008, July 14).

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Additional Resources

Cover Letters That Knock 'Em Dead

By Martin Yate (2006)

Resumes That Knock 'em Dead

By Martin Yate (2006)

101 Best Resumes: Endorsed by the Professional Association of Resume Writers (Paperback)

By Jay A. Block, Michael Betrus (1997)

Ace the IT Resume!

By Paula Moreira, Robyn Thorpe (2002)

The Elements of Resume Style: Essential Rules and Eye-opening Advice for Writing Resumes and Cover Letters That Work

By Scott Bennett (2005)

301 Smart Answers to Tough Interview Questions

By Vicky Oliver (2005)

StrengthsFinder 2.0:

By Tom Rath (2007)

Go Put Your Strengths to Work: 6 Powerful Steps to Achieve Outstanding Performance

By Marcus Buckingham (2007)



How to Answer Any Interview Question

By Perri Capell

Don't be rattled by your next job interview. It's possible to answer any question that comes your way. How? By preparing and knowing how to direct the conversation to the topics you want to cover.

To start, take a tip from consultants who coach executives and politicians on how to handle media interviews. These trainers say you can deliver the message you want to an employer, regardless of the question you're asked.

"Most people don't realize that their purpose isn't to sit there and hope the right questions will be asked," says Aileen Pincus, president of the Pincus Group, a media interview-training firm in Silver Spring, Md. "They need to develop two or three key messages and make sure their point is delivered."

Unlike some politicians who ignore press questions and immediately introduce a different topic in response, job candidates must respect and directly answer employer's queries, says Jeff Braun, vice president and general manager of the Ammerman Experience, a Stafford, Texas, media interview-training firm. However, you can quickly make the transition from your answer to the important points you want to convey about your qualifications, he says.

He suggests when answering job-interview queries applying the formula $Q = A + 1$: Q is the question; A is the answer; + is the bridge to the message you want to deliver; and 1 is the point you want to make.

"If you take the '+ 1' off the formula, then the interviewer is controlling the session," says Mr. Braun.

Diligent preparation also is necessary to effectively answer any interview question, say senior executives. Theirs and media trainers' tips follow:

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Study hard. Learn as much as you can about the job, the employer and its executives beforehand. Use this information to answer direct questions and to then segue into a discussion about your qualifications and fit.

Eric Herzog, a vice president of product line management and channel marketing at Maxtor Corp., a hard-disk drive company in Milpitas, Calif., says he always talks to current and former company employees and analysts whenever possible prior to job interviews to gain as much insight as he can into the employer's challenges and culture. If the company is publicly owned, he studies its financial condition by reading U.S. Securities and Exchange Commission documents, such as annual 10-K shareholder reports on the company's performance. He then tailors his interview answers to the company's issues.

"If the company is having a rough time financially, you can say that not only did you make good products or services, but that you produced things on time and under budget," says Mr. Herzog. "That's a little plus if the company is in trouble."

If you're working with a recruiter, ask him or her about what the company is seeking and its key challenges, says Derek Messulam, vice president of rental market development for GE-Capital Solutions, a financial-services unit of General Electric Co. in Norwalk, Conn. Mr. Messulam says he grills recruiters regarding a job's responsibilities and the attributes the company wants before job interviews. He then makes sure that his answers demonstrate his potential value to an employer.

"When questions come up, you can steer the conversation to how you can demonstrate value," says Mr. Messulam. "You answer the question, but maybe not 100% the way they were expecting it."

Have anecdotes ready. Many interviewers ask questions that require candidates to provide examples of how they handled a difficult challenge or other work situation. Such questions often start with a phrase such as, "Tell me about a time when you faced...."

These questions require a story in response, but it's unlikely you have a story that fits every conceivable query. But the task of preparing becomes easier when you realize that interviewers typically are interested in only five or six general categories, says Mr. Braun. Instead of trying to be ready for every potential question, come up with stories to fit these general issues, such as how you handled conflict or a difficult challenge.

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It may help to think of each issue as a bucket and mentally place a story or two in each one, says Mr. Braun. "Be more generic in your approach," he suggests. "When asked a question along one of those lines, you can move to the story you have in one of those buckets."

From his research, Mr. Messulam says he can usually tell what types of things a company might want to know about him and thinks of corresponding anecdotes. "I have seven or eight top stories that tell someone what I am good at," he says.

This strategy also works when interviewers say, "Tell me about yourself," says Lucinda Baier, former president and chief operating officer of Whitehall Jewelers Inc., a national specialty retailer and a former senior vice president of Sears Roebuck & Co.

Ms. Baier left Chicago-based Whitehall in December after it accepted an agreement with an investor to become private. She left Sears in April 2004 when the credit and financial products division she headed was sold to Citibank.

When asked to tell interviewers about herself, she determines how much time she should use and then tries to describe her specific qualifications that fit the company's key issues.

"If you know what challenges the company is facing, you can tailor your response to what the company is dealing with and how you can help," she says.

Be positive about the negative. Count on being asked about a past mistake or blemish on your career record, and don't try to dodge the issue. Ms. Pincus advises. "If you have a vulnerability, you need to be prepared to answer the question," she says. "There should be no lying or dodging. Just answer it and move on."

When discussing a mistake, be ready to say how you learned or benefited from it. "You learn as much by dropping the ball as you do by catching it," says Mr. Herzog. When interviewing for his current job, which he started in August, Mr. Herzog says he mentioned he had been involved in successful turnarounds and one that failed. "And I said what I learned from it," he says.

[How To Answer Any Interview Question.](http://online.wsj.com/article/C60530CAPELL.html?mod=CarJMain_howcanwehelp)

<http://online.wsj.com/article/C60530CAPELL.html?mod=CarJMain_howcanwehelp> (2006, May 30).

Quintessential Careers: When Job-Hunting: Dress for Success

by Randall S. Hansen, Ph.D.

It's probably one of the most overused phrases in job-hunting, but also one of the most underutilized by job-seekers: dress for success. In job-hunting, first impressions are critical. Remember, you are marketing a product -- yourself -- to a potential employer, and the first thing the employer sees when greeting you is your attire; thus, you must make every effort to have the proper dress for the type of job you are seeking. Will dressing properly get you the job? Of course not, but it will give you a competitive edge and a positive first impression.

Should you be judged by what you wear? Perhaps not, but the reality is, of course, that you are judged. Throughout the entire job-seeking process employers use short-cuts -- heuristics or rules of thumb -- to save time. With cover letters, it's the opening paragraph and a quick scan of your qualifications. With resumes, it is a quick scan of your accomplishments. With the job interview, it's how you're dressed that sets the tone of the interview.

How should you dress? Dressing conservatively is always the safest route, but you should also try and do a little investigating of your prospective employer so that what you wear to the interview makes you look as though you fit in with the organization. If you overdress (which is rare but can happen) or underdress (the more likely scenario), the potential employer may feel that you don't care enough about the job.

How do you find out what is the proper dress for a given job/company/industry? You can call the Human Resources office where you are interviewing and simply ask. Or, you could visit the company's office to retrieve an application or other company information and observe the attire current employees are wearing -- though make sure you are not there on a "casual day" and misinterpret the dress code.

Finally, do you need to run out and spend a lot of money on clothes for interviewing? No, but you should make sure you have at least two professional sets of attire. You'll need more than that, but depending on your current financial condition, two is enough to get started and you can buy more once you have the job or have more financial resources.

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Hints for Dress for Success for Men and Women

Attention to details is crucial, so here are some tips for both men and women. Make sure you have:

- clean and polished conservative dress shoes
- well-groomed hairstyle
- cleaned and trimmed fingernails
- minimal cologne or perfume
- no visible body piercing beyond conservative ear piercings for women
- well-brushed teeth and fresh breath
- no gum, candy, or other objects in your mouth
- minimal jewelry
- no body odor

Finally, check your attire in the rest room just before your interview for a final check of your appearance -- to make sure your tie is straight, your hair is combed, etc.

Other Dress for Success Resources

1. Books:
 - [Quintessential Careers: Dress for Success Books](#) -- all the best books for making a first great impression!
2. Web Sites:
 - [SYMS Dress to Achieve](#) -- a career site created to help college students and recent grads about the basics of proper job interview attire, as well as other helpful career tips to present yourself in the best possible light during job interviews. For both men and women. No cost to job-seekers.

Questions about some of the terminology used in this article? Get more information (definitions and links) on key college, career, and job-search terms by going to our [Job-Seeker's Glossary of Job-Hunting Terms](#).

[When Job Hunting: Dress for Success](http://www.quintcareers.com/dress_for_success.html). <http://www.quintcareers.com/dress_for_success.html> (2008, July 18).



Projecting Self-Confidence, Not Arrogance, in Interviews

By Eileen P. Gunn

We've been taught to put forth our most confident, capable and polished selves during job interviews.

But recruiters note that business-school students seeking jobs regularly slip from grounded confidence into arrogance and an inflated sense of entitlement. As a result, they often knock themselves out of contention for attractive jobs.

"We have top-talent indicators that we look for, and we also have several derailers in the back of our minds," says Chris Aisenbrey, director of university relations for Whirlpool Corp. in Benton Harbor, Mich. "Arrogance can raise a red flag, because it affects your ability to work in teams and with lower-level employees, and [affects] your ability to be customer-service focused."

There are things interviewees can do to leave the right impression, recruiters say. Here are five tips to help ensure that your air of self-confidence won't cross the line into arrogance.

1. Talk teamwork.

Avoid overstating your role in team projects. For some students, "everything is 'I did this, I did that.' It's off-putting," says Ken Bayne, assistant treasurer at Guidant Corp., a medical-device maker in Indianapolis, who's been recruiting M.B.A.s for seven years. During on-campus interviews, recruiters can meet several students who worked on the same project, he says, "and I'll get completely different points of views about who did what."

He prefers to see an interviewee "be clear about what the team accomplished and about what their role was," he says. "To be an effective person on a successful team is the best of both worlds."

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2. Engage everyone.

Recruiters often worry that high-achieving M.B.A.s won't be able to engage and manage a diverse group of people, including those in the ranks below them.

Mr. Bayne says he likes to ask interviewees about when they had to motivate someone who wasn't a direct report. "It indicates they can get things done in an organization," he says.

And Mr. Aisenbrey keeps an eye on candidates' social interaction through the interview process. For example, the candidate's chit-chat when Mr. Aisenbrey is escorting them from an interview tells him about their social skills and whether they're enthusiastic about his company. During those few seconds of informal conversation, "I want to know what they know about Whirlpool and why they're excited about it," he says.

How candidates interact with other employees also is telling. "The administrative assistants will tell a recruiter if a person was rude or standoffish or high maintenance," Mr. Aisenbrey adds. Chatting with the receptionist when you arrive for your interview helps. So does returning calls promptly.

3. Convey interest with questions.

Knowing little about a company suggests to recruiters you thought you didn't need to bother preparing -- a signal that you think too highly of yourself or too little of their company. Asking detailed, pointed questions about the company is a good way to show that you've done your homework, recruiters say. "The questions will show when you know nothing about a company, too," Mr. Bayne says. For example, some M.B.A.s ask questions that are easily answered by looking at the company's Web site.

Asking questions about the company's culture indicates that you're looking for the job that will fit you best, rather than one that will provide the most prestige or biggest paycheck. Mr. Aisenbrey says that one of the best questions he's been asked was: What would a person see when standing in your parking lot at the end of the workday? The interviewee wanted to know if workers would come out looking stressed or talking with co-workers, or whether no cars would leave the parking lot until late at night.

"It was a creative way to get at the issue of culture," he says.

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4. Don't fixate on your job title.

Some M.B.A.s get too hung up on titles. For example, Mr. Bayne says, he typically hires M.B.A.s into senior-analyst roles rather than manager positions. "But that senior analyst might be doing more managing than they expect," he says. He prefers candidates who are curious mostly about the work they'll be doing and about their likely career progress at his company, he says.

Mr. Aisenbrey shares the same view. "Chances are that your job is going to change soon after you get to the company," he says. "Your supervisor will move on, the job will grow or shrink, or you'll be promoted quickly because you're a great talent." As a result, he says, he likes interviewees to be most concerned with how they fit with the firm in general rather than what their initial title or exact role will be.

5. Have realistic expectations.

Employers who recruit M.B.A.s "want people who see themselves at the beginning of their career," says Andy Chan, director of the career-management center at Stanford Graduate School of Business. "The job isn't necessarily going to be at the bottom, but it will be somewhere in the middle."

M.B.A.s who believe they'll immediately get to use the management skills they learned in class to run a big-business division need to adjust their expectations. This is particularly important when changing careers, and especially if you're also changing industries, Mr. Aisenbrey says. "Just because you were a manager in engineering doesn't mean you're ready to be put in charge of one of our brands immediately," he notes.

At the Massachusetts Institute of Technology's Sloan School of Management, Jacqueline Wilbur, the director of career development, encourages students to spend much of their first semester talking to alumni about their career paths, so they have a realistic idea of what their first job after graduation might be and where they might go from there. She says she particularly likes students to hear from alumni who have been out of school for about five years and have a longer-term perspective on their school experience.

[Projecting Self-Confidence, Not Arrogance, in Interviews.](http://online.wsj.com/public/us?mod=DNH_WSJ)

<http://online.wsj.com/public/us?mod=DNH_WSJ > (2008, March 25).

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