

The Confidence Crusher Oops!... I mean The Job Hunt

The job hunt can be a very stressful and humbling process. You may feel like you are sending your resume into a black hole. Let me give you a few quick tips and funny stories (all true!) that will make you think, "Hey, at least I didn't do *that!*"

Resume Tips

- Tailor your resume to fit the specific job opening for which you are applying. Don't submit a resume for a position as a Scientific Grant Reviewer for the government with a resume that's objective reads "Looking for a Research Scientist position in the pharmaceutical industry." This one happens all of the time.
- Be sure you are able to explain EVERYTHING that you list on your resume. I had one poor candidate who put "FACS" on his resume. When asked what FACS stood for and how it worked, the candidate couldn't answer. The interviewer proceeded to tell the embarrassed candidate that his resume was inflated.
- Don't remove degrees from your resume! If you have to take your PhD or your Master's Degree off of your resume in order to obtain a given job, then that is not the job for you!

Job Hunt Tips

- When you are on the phone with a potential employer, remain professional. S/he is an employer, not a therapist. I've seen candidates burst into tears and tell their life stories – divorce, foreclosure, you-name-it. You will get a job based on the respect you elicit, not the sympathy.
- After two unreturned phone calls, it may be best to give up on that particular job lead. Hiring managers keep a running list of "stalkers."
- Practice proper phone etiquette during the interview process. Remove all "ringback" tones and goofy voicemail messages. Some of my favorites include calling a candidate to talk about a position and listening to "Hollaback Girl" while I waited and calling a job seeker whose outgoing voicemail message said, "You've reached the right number at the wrong time; please leave a message."
- Network! There are a million small ways to build up your professional network over time. Some ideas include:
 - Join a professional society (hey, you're already in AWIS – use it to your advantage!).
 - Establish relationships with your co-workers, mentors, customers, and professional references.
 - Become an active member of your university's alumni association.
 - Help other people whenever you can – you never know when they will be able to return the favor!
 - Trade business cards with people you meet at meetings, conferences, bars, restaurants, and even elevators!
 - Join social networking sites like LinkedIn.com, for example.
 - Even when you are not actively job seeking, you should still be networking!

Interview Tips

- We are human; we make mistakes. If you accidentally leave your phone on and it rings during your interview, **DON'T ANSWER IT!** (like one of my candidates did - I swear). Apologize for the disruption, turn off your phone, and continue with the interview.
- Don't use imaginary words like "ginormous" during a formal interview.
- When asked if you are interested in the position for which you are interviewing, don't shrug your shoulders and mumble "sure." This may seem like common sense, but I've actually witnessed this happen!
- Dress professionally. As a life-long scientist, you may not own a suit, but I would highly recommend purchasing one. Even if the PI interviewing you is wearing running shorts, black socks, and sandals, it is better to overdress than under dress for your first interview. To my candidate who wore jeans splattered with paint... this tip goes out to you.

The two most important things that I can tell you are:

BELIEVE IN YOURSELF!

- and -

DON'T FORGET TO LAUGH!

-JKW, M.A., Scientific HR Professional