

Managing your career – Tips from career development practitioners

Compiled by
Dr Ann Villiers, *Mental Nutritionist*®
in collaboration with the
Career Development Association of Australia

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Ann has studied sense-making for more than twenty years, drawing on careers as a senior public service manager, educator and business woman. Author of *How to Write and Talk to Selection Criteria*, (4th edn.), *101 Interview Questions* (Audio CD) and numerous articles on www.selectioncriteria.com.au, Ann demystifies the process of getting your foot in the door to government jobs.

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* Author is a member of the Career Development Association of Australia

What is the Career Development Association of Australia?

The Career Development Association of Australia (CDAA), formerly the Australian Association of Career Counsellors, is a national organisation of practitioners who work in the career development industry either for themselves or others, providing a range of career services for people entering or re-entering the workforce, managing their work and life roles, seeking course and career information and advice or changing careers.

The Vision of the CDAA is to be recognised internationally as a peak organisation committed to excellence in the delivery of career services.

CDAA's Mission is to nurture and stimulate the professional excellence of our members and champion the value of career development.

The Career Development industry is becoming standardized in order to best service the career development needs of all Australians. To this end, the CDAA is a member of the Career Industry Council of Australia (www.cica.org.au), the national representative body of career practitioner organizations. All professional, fellow and life members of the CDAA are assessed as being appropriately qualified and experienced. They must also undertake continuing professional development activities and comply with set requirements in order to maintain their membership.

What is career development?

Career development is the lifelong process of managing learning, work, leisure and transitions in order to move towards a personally determined and evolving future. It applies to people of all ages.

What is a career development practitioner?

Career development practitioners provide services that help people manage their careers, make occupational and study decisions, plan career transitions and find career information.

They may use a range of titles including:

- Career counsellors or advisers
- Employment counsellors
- Career management consultants
- Career practitioners
- Career coaches
- Rehabilitation counsellors
- Guidance officers
- Vocational rehabilitation workers.

Career development practitioners work in a range of settings including: schools, TAFEs, universities, business organisations, government agencies and private practice.

They may work with individuals or small groups. Some of the services they provide include:

- Career counselling
- Career education
- Job placement
- Employment services
- Recruitment
- Career coaching
- Training
- Mentoring
- Coordinating work experience or internships
- Resume preparation
- Career planning
- Administering and interpreting tests
- Teaching job hunting strategies.

All CDAA members are bound by the *CDAA Code of Ethics*, which provides a practical guide for professional behaviour and practice.

You can learn more about the Career Development Association of Australia by visiting www.cdaa.org.au.

Grow Your Career – Find a Career Development Practitioner

Carole Brown CDAA Vice-President

What are career development practitioners?

Career practitioners are often known as career advisers, coaches or counsellors and work in areas ranging from schools to universities, community organizations and large corporations. There are many who also work in private practice.



How a career practitioner can help you

CDAA professional members are qualified and skilled to assist in areas such as career planning and transition, identifying further study options, writing job applications, preparing for job interviews, finding work experience or internships, returning to work following injury, and career and life management skills such as networking, negotiation, assertiveness and decision making.

An expert CDAA career professional will help you to identify your career values, skills and interests and assist you to put together an exciting and achievable plan for your future.

Finding the right person to assist you

Professional CDAA members are listed on the CDAA website. When looking for the right member to help you, it can be helpful to ask about the way they work, their qualifications and experience, any specialised skills and knowledge they have, their costs and how many sessions might be required.

Prepare for a meeting with a career practitioner

Either as a personal exercise, or in preparation for meeting with a career practitioner consider the following questions:

- What is important to you?
- What do you value?
- What do you want out of work?
- What are your special talents and skills?
- What type of work roles interest you?
- Which employers and organisations need what you can offer?

How much will it cost?

Most practitioners charge a fee per session, however some use a sliding scale which means they offer lesser fees to people on lower incomes. Some also offer a 'package' with a number of sessions which may include a specific set of activities.

Find a qualified career practitioner that can assist you by visiting www.cdaa.org.au or freecall 1800 222 390



For parents - the importance of career development ACT Department of Education and Training

Within compulsory education career education develops self-awareness, knowledge and competencies regarding the world of work, and making decisions and transitions. Within post-compulsory education career education provides for effective advice and guidance on educational options (including links between these options and later occupational destinations) and will help to better match individuals' learning choices to their interests, talents and intended destinations.

Career information, guidance and counselling

Career information, guidance and counselling refer to services that assist young people at any point throughout their transition process to make educational, training and occupational choices and to manage their careers. It will include a wide range of activities.

Activities around career information, guidance and counselling will include:

- activities within schools to help students clarify career goals, understand the world of work and develop career management skills
- personal advice, guidance or counselling to assist with decisions about initial courses of study, courses of vocational training, further education and training, initial job choice
- the organised and systematic use of community members such as employers, parents and peers to provide occupational and educational advice and information
- print-based, computer-based or on-line services to produce and disseminate information about jobs and careers, courses of study and vocational training to help individuals make career choices.

Career information, guidance and counselling services will:

- include the use of current industry based information
- be provided in a variety of settings: not only educational institutions and employment offices but also workplaces and community settings
- be provided in a variety of sectors: not only the public sector but also the private and community sectors
- allocate an important role to informal and non-professional sources of information and guidance such as local employers, community members, parents and peers as well as the formal professional sources
- play a pro-active role, helping young people to create new options, as well as skills matching into existing jobs and courses. This implies:
 - o advocacy on behalf of young people, and support for their self-advocacy on their own behalf
 - o feedback to learning providers on learners' unmet needs
 - o encouraging and supporting the skills of career management, not simply facilitating initial educational and occupational choices.

If you would like to know more, contact Pene Butt, email Penelope.Butt@act.gov.au, phone: 02 6205 7873

Developing Your Personal Brand – Gillian Kelly

Looking to stand out from your competitors? Want to build a reputation that will see you headhunted and wooed with better remuneration, or maybe fast-tracked on the internal promotion list? Then its time to examine your personal brand! It's not usually the *best* product that is the most successful but rather the best *marketed* product.

The same can be said for personal marketing. How many people do you know that are highly talented in what they do but struggle to gain the necessary recognition and reward, whilst others with seemingly less talent effortlessly climb the corporate ladder. In the corporate market it's clear it's not the most talented or credentialed that rise the ranks but instead those who are able to build a clear reputation for excellence.



So what do you need to do to join the corporate success ranks? It's simple! Just apply the same principles to yourself as marketing teams do to commercial products and build yourself a strong personal brand.

Have a clear understanding of your unique strengths. Everyone has unique strengths and talents. Personal branding is about recognising and leveraging these.

What are you known for doing really well?

What type of work do you love and thrive on?

What would you do for free or get up on your Saturday morning to do?

What do you bring to roles that consistently add value to your employer's bottom lines?

Ask your friends and family what kind of words they'd use to describe you?

When you have this information you'll be able to see integrated themes that you can use to craft a powerful personal branding statement that showcases your unique selling points.

Get to know your target audience. Knowing your target audience will enable you to tap into their unmet needs. If you are in a workplace, identify who the decision makers are in that next promotion decision, what they need and what they are looking for in the future for the company and its staff.

Use this knowledge to deliver a consistent and strategic branding and promotion message. Know your talents and sing them loudly and proudly. If you are not confident carving a strong personal brand yourself you can enlist the help of Personal Branding Consultants who can help you identify and mould an authentic personal brand. Deliver this consistently and you'll notice your awareness and respect grow.

Keep in mind - how you are packaged is how you are perceived. Make sure your resume, online identity and communications with others all reinforce the image you want to promote.

Remember - You don't need to be the best to be the best known!

Gillian Kelly, Director of Career Edge, is a Personal Branding Strategist and international award-winning resume writer and is recognised world-wide for her capacity to assist her clients to identify, promote and articulate their unique value to the careers marketplace. Click here for more articles on [personal branding](#) or to contact **Career Edge**.

Career choice clarity – Kim Brazulaitis

To most people, the idea of choosing or changing careers seems a daunting and overwhelming task.

It doesn't have to be.

Many of the skills we use everyday can be applied to career management.

Take, for instance, the process of buying a pair of shoes. Seems simple enough, but a vast array of skills are being used.

The first step is to figure out what kind of shoes you need; size, style, sports? Then, you go shopping to find some suitable contenders. You try them on and decide whether to buy. All these steps were based on detailed criteria.

To manage our careers well we first need to have self awareness. We need to understand what we want out of our career, and life, before we explore the opportunities available.

Surprisingly, most of us miss this step and launch into career exploration, looking through the newspapers expecting our dream career to jump out at us. More often than not, it doesn't.

Tips to career choice and change

- Start small. Make a list of what is important to you, people, environment, tasks etc. Do you have a future goal of where you want to be, say, in five or ten years?
- Utilise the resources around you. Friends, family, and co-workers can be great for career ideas and contacts.
- Research. This sounds technical, but it's simply seeking information about a career so you can compare it to what you want. Speak to people who do the job or even better, do some work experience. After all, would you buy a pair of shoes without trying them on?

Extra tip

Changing or choosing a career can be an emotional experience. Be kind yourself on this journey. You don't have to figure it all out at once.

Kim Brazulaitis is a career counsellor at the Career Development Centre in Perth. www.det.wa.edu.au/training/cdc/

Research the market

Remember: Labour market research is different from actually ringing up employers and asking for a job. (Although of course, you could take a job if it was offered to you!) It is about finding out what is out there in the job market, and what you might need to get there.

1. Determine what job it is that you would like to research, e.g. find out about being a journalist, a flight attendant or a computer technician. List these occupations.
2. Think about whom you might telephone or visit for more information:

You might try:

- People you know who work in the industry
 - Organisations that employ those people
 - The Yellow Pages/Newspapers/Internet
 - TAFE Colleges/Universities/Private Educational Organizations
3. When you have your list of people/organisations that you are going to contact, work out a list of questions that you may wish to ask.
 4. The next thing is to actually make contact. There are a few tactics you might want to remember:
 - Ask if your contact has time to spare, and if they don't, when can you call back
 - Introduce yourself, and have a 'script' ready – make sure that you mention that you are not looking for a job, just trying to make a career decision
 - Don't talk for more than 15 minutes
 - Start with a company that you are not too interested in, so you can practice your 'script'
 - Have a notebook ready – record phone numbers, names and position titles
 - Remember that it may take a few calls before you get someone who will talk and you may feel that you are nowhere - keep going anyway
 - Call at a time when you think the company will not be busy – never on a Monday or Friday and never at morning tea, lunch or afternoon tea time

Grace du Prie works in career advising, employment consultancy and training. With years of hands-on experience in these industries, she works extensively with mature-age people re-entering the work force & long-term unemployed. Grace works currently with Sarina Russo Employment and has previously worked, among others, with Learning Network Qld, Mission Australia, Employment Plus, CRS Australia, and TAFE. She also conducts a private practice. Grace is a long-term Professional member of CDAA.

Networking as a career tool – Livia Leskovec

Have you ever heard the saying, “it’s who you know, not what you know”?

When it comes to career potential it’s a combination of both *who and* what you know.

You need knowledge, skills, experience and attitudes that an employer considers important. You also need to be able to communicate your unique value with the world. Nurturing your network will increase the number of career opportunities presented to you and propel you toward career heights.



What is a network?

Your network is a web of mutually beneficial relationships that you build up over time. In the professional world, a network is made up of contacts you have established and developed with the purpose of exchanging your ideas, knowledge, contacts, resources and opportunities.

How do I network?

Networking is about identifying opportunities to have a conversation with another person. You identify each others professional needs and how you can meet each others needs.

Is networking for me?

You have much to offer the world just as you are right now. You have knowledge, skills, experiences and talents that make you special. Even if you have never consciously networked before, you already have a personal network through your family, friends, and educational institution. Networking is for everyone.

How will networking benefit me?

Through networking you are repeatedly communicating your value to the world. By increasing the world’s awareness of your unique value, you are increasing the possibility of your next job opportunity or promotion. You are creating your reputation.

Hints & Tips

- **Prepare** for any new opportunities that present themselves such as meeting new people.
- **Research** what is needed to be successful in your chosen industry or field.
- **Identify** your talents, knowledge, skills, experiences and attitudes that will contribute to your success in your chosen industry or field.
- **Practice** communicating these in a quick and memorable way with your family and friends.
- **Join** a networking group, local chamber of commerce or attend an industry night.
- **Create** an online professional identity by using networking sites such as LinkedIn or Linkme.
- **Engage** with other people. Find out about their career goals and tell them about yours. Networking is about communicating with other people.

Livia Leskovec, *Career Masters*, is an independent Consultant specialising in learning design and career development. She has worked across a range of industries including banking, finance, insurance, telecommunications and recruitment. Livia holds a Bachelor of Science Psychology, Postgraduate Diploma in Psychology and Cert 4 in Workplace Training & Assessment. Livia holds professional membership with Australian Association of Career Development and Australian Human Resources Institute.

Making the most of career fairs – David Rockawin

Career fairs provide great opportunities to find out more about potential employers and employment opportunities within their organisations. They also provide a direct way for you to enquire about their specific recruitment needs and processes.



Why attend a careers fair?

As well as being able to give you an up-to-date overview of employment opportunities within an organisation, a careers fair can broaden your awareness of who some of the key employers are within the industry, vocation or profession that interests you.

When attending a careers fair, you can speak to the relevant person in the organisation about their recruitment procedures and as a result you will also have a name that you can refer to when submitting applications – this will assist you when targeting your cover letter.

Preparation for the careers fair

The first step is to define your own goals. It is worthwhile to work out what it is that you are looking to get out of the event – for example it could be that you want to find out more about the organization beyond the information that can be obtained from their website.

It is helpful to find out which employers will be attending because this can assist you in identifying and prioritizing which employers you will aim to speak with. If you are aware that some of your desired employers will be present, you then have the opportunity to target your applications to that particular organization in advance (keeping in mind that only some employers will accept applications on the day).

Do your research!

By visiting the websites of your selected employers beforehand, you will be better positioned to ask appropriate questions and your direct contact with employers will allow you to demonstrate an informed understanding of key aspects of their organization.

The benefits of prior research will equate to a more productive experience at the fair because you will have been more targeted in your approach and the improved quality of your interaction will optimize your ability to make a great “first impression”.

Attending and following up from the fair

Although not a formal interview, a positive first impression is important. Neat clothing is usually appropriate. Make the most of the 5-10 minutes that you may have with an employer – jotting down relevant details/contacts in your notebook. Avoid monopolizing their time. After the fair, follow up on any leads or tips that you were given to improve your career development. When writing job applications, be sure to mention that you attended the event and spoke to representatives from their organization – even more effective if you are able to mention the names of people with whom you spoke.

David Rockawin has extensive experience as a Careers Educator and currently works as a Careers Consultant – whereby he assists university students in maximizing their employability skills whilst empowering them to actively take control of their own career development.



A career and transition framework (CaT) for the ACT – ACT Department of Education and Training

Career and transition services are becoming increasingly important in Australia

Young people are confronted by many more education and employment decisions than were their parents at the same age. Most people can now expect to experience several changes of employer and of career during the course of their working lives (Halliday-Wynes, Beddie & Saunders 2008).

The ACT career and transition framework

In response to the plethora of options facing young people, the ACT Department of Education and Training, through the Transitions, Careers and Vocational Learning Unit, has convened a reference group, made up of a wide range of stakeholder representatives, to develop an ACT career and transition (CaT) framework.

Using the MCEETYA *Career and Transition Services Framework* as a point of reference, the ACT framework will underpin the formation of a resource that provides effective services, programs and strategies as a career and transitions 'how to' guide for students, parents, teachers, service providers, specialist support services, community agencies and government agencies. It will consist of the following elements:

- learning pathways plan
- transition plan and portfolio
- follow up support
- career education
- brokering of vocational education and training (VET) and structured workplace learning (SWL)
- career information, guidance and counselling
- brokering for placement and referral
- individual support approaches
- monitoring and tracking.

The reference group agreed that career and transitions is an ongoing, lifelong plan and that the framework should be available to support young people from year 6 through to age 25. The importance of 'student voice' in the process was agreed unanimously. The use of survey results from Measuring, Monitoring and Reporting (ACT DET) together with literature searches on current trends should also inform the CaT framework.

The next steps in moving forward with the framework are:

- to map and evaluate current career and transition services, programs and strategies available in the ACT
- to meet with groups of students to elicit what works and what doesn't work.

If you would like to know more about this exciting project, contact Pene Butt, email Penelope.Butt@act.gov.au, phone: 02 6205 7873

The Gap – Savitri Tsuzuki

So you finished your last job – or your job finished you. Whether you're aware of it or not a part of you has been seeking change and has created this situation.

There is great personal power in owning responsibility for where you are in life right this moment. However, while we often know what we don't want, it can be difficult to articulate what we do want. If you're feeling stuck, apathetic, no energy for searching [although you did find your way here] unmotivated, directionless, take heart, you are in that most difficult and yet potentially the most powerful phase of your life. You're 'In the Gap'.

Symptoms vary from individual to individual but often include • Inability to get up in the mornings and /or excessive tiredness • Lack of interest in past pleasures, even friends are shunned • The thought of repeating past work options bores you • No job seems to draw your interest • Due to a sense of 'stuck ness', we can feel as if we're wasting time, being lazy, undervalued, under utilized. • Feelings of sadness • A strong feeling of powerlessness and loss of identity. While endings have clearly definable emotions like anger, relief, grief when you're 'in the Gap' the strongest emotion can actually be 'a lack of emotion' or numbness.

How long does The Gap last?

This Gap time is perfectly natural and in fact needed for your growth. In any process of transformation there is a time of decay, endings and a time of 'being fallow' to prepare the ground for the new seeds and when the time is ripe, the seeds start to appear on the surface of your thoughts. Although the gap time varies from individual to individual it is, by its very nature, a non-doing time. It allows past experiences, learning, successes and failures to gradually sift through your psyche and settle.

It's perhaps no accident the word fallow and allow have the same derivative. Being in the gap between careers can be a difficult place for all of us but is especially so for action-oriented people but there are ways to utilize this time and prepare the soil for new ground and opportunities. Spend a few minutes every day in silent contemplation of some aspect of nature. See how the day closes with twilight, the leaves turn brown before they fall and the caterpillar rests in its cocoon. Or use the time to finish some over due projects or explore areas that have always interested you but you have never had the time to pursue.

In due time spring will come and with it new beginnings.

Extra tips

'What the caterpillar calls the end, the rest of the world calls a butterfly' Lao Tsu

Savitri Tsuzuki Director of ZenConnections is a Counsellor, Career Coach, Management Advisor, EAP Provider and Lecturer specialising in holistically managing work-life-career transitions. More tips can be found at www.zenconnections.com.au

Building a Powerful Resume – Gillian Kelly

How do you build a resume that will leave a lasting impression with recruiters and prospective employers? Just as marketing teams use proven strategies to promote their products, there are a number of key tactics savvy resume writers employ to deliver high performance resumes and bolster their candidate's success.



Treat the opening to your resume like gold. The opener to your resume is prime resume real estate and is worth investing in. Spend time building an opening profile that will broker an impact. Ensure that every word of this sharp, powerful section is strategically selected to speak to the needs of the employer. After reading this brief section the reader should be left with an impression of results, and a clear appreciation of your track record of success in your field and what you potentially offer them.

Leverage Your Success in Achievement Highlights. Your front page of your resume should act as a summary of your value proposition to the prospect. Using highlights of your career to-date on the front page enables you to bring an immediate sense of results and capture the reader's attention, drawing them in and ensuring they want to read on. Make sure your bullets are action-packed and focused on the quantifiable value you have delivered to past companies.

Employment Overview - Sell the sizzle not the sausage. When it comes time to describe your past roles, avoid telling employers standard information on your duties, and instead tell them what they most want to hear about - your performance. Ensure that your employment overview focuses on the challenges you were given in each role and then impress them with proof of how well you handled these challenges and what your successes meant to the business and its bottomline. If they can see consistent record of success they will quickly grasp what you potentially offer them in the future.

Build a personal brand. Throughout your resume hone in on what you are known for doing well in the workplace. Sell your strengths and unique skills in a theme consistently spread across all elements of the resume. It's all about communicating your ROI and value proposition to executive recruiters, hiring managers, and HR professionals.

Use keywords wisely so that your resume ranks. Did you know a lot of recruiters and large employers use databases to store and manage their candidate resumes? They then input keywords to select resumes relevant to their job target. Ensure your resume is scanner friendly by including keywords for your industry and avoiding text boxes, tables or shading that can make it difficult for scanners to read your resume.

Don't put a premium product in home brand packaging. Make sure your layout and design is at a professional standard. Your resume design should be clean, with plenty of white space, a consistent font, and a modern format. In Australia resumes are generally around 3 pages for executives and senior professionals. This gives you enough room to sell yourself without taking up too much of the employer's valuable time.

Through careful application of the strategies above you can enjoy the same results professional resume writers secure for their candidates. Good Luck.

Gillian Kelly, Director of **Career Edge**, is a Personal Branding Strategist and international award-winning resume writer and is recognised world-wide for her capacity to assist her clients to identify, articulate and promote their unique value. [Click here for more information on personal branding](#) or [information on how Career Edge can assist you with your resume writing](#).

What is the correct length of a résumé? – Annemarie Cross

The discussion about the correct length of a résumé has been debated by many a career professional. Previously it was stated that a résumé should not exceed one page, and even the most qualified candidate's résumé should not exceed the strict one-page rule. Thank goodness that philosophy has now changed with many recruiters and career professionals no longer enforcing this old-fashioned way of thinking.

So, how long then should a person's résumé be? A: There is no real hard-and-fast rule, with the résumé's length being subject to a person's experience, their accomplishments and their job focus. Remember that your résumé is a marketing tool and not an autobiography. As such, it should be written in a way that compels the decision-maker to call you for a job interview.



An executive who possesses corporate ingenuity and a career demonstrating success after success cannot possibly portray this vast expertise in a one-page format. This would only serve to limit the overall value being offered to a prospective employer. Also, trying to condense over 10-20 years of accomplishments onto one page would look quite unpleasing to the eye.

By the same token, a graduate with limited experience may have an array of successful projects completed throughout their courses, many of which have been integrated into a corporate environment. With these examples, had the accomplishments and transferable skills been omitted from the résumé due to a length restriction, each person's campaign would have been jeopardised.

Generally your résumé will undergo a two-part screening process: the initial 10-30 second scan to ascertain a candidate's potential match for the role; then, once your résumé survives this brief inspection, the second more in-depth review is where the reader will scrutinise the details provided to see if your competencies and experience truly warrant an interview. During this stage, it is vital to maintain the reader's interest, which is why so much emphasis is placed on information relevance and brevity.

By following the key points below, you can be confident that your résumé length is suitable for your experience and job target:

- I cannot stress enough the importance of brevity, with relevant depth and detail; your document is a selling tool – not your life history, so include only what is relevant.
- Remember that you have only 15-20 seconds to capture the reader's attention, so the first third of the front page of your résumé is of vital importance.
- To ensure the information detailing your employment is succinct, don't include your entire position description however, identify the key accountabilities relevant to your career goal in a concise manner to maintain the reader's interest.
- Also vital is your key accomplishments and quantifiable results, which should be bulleted directly beneath the job scope paragraph. These value-added achievements provide the prospective employer with the results your initiatives and expertise have secured, as well as identifying the potential cost-savings, increased revenues and market growth that you can contribute to their organisation.

Annemarie Cross is a Personal Branding Strategist and has won numerous international writing awards for her résumés. She is also a Career & Leadership Coach, Speaker and author of *10 key steps to Ace that Interview!* Visit www.a-e-c.com.au for your free 21-page 'Powerful résumé' e-book.

Writing a resume when you've never had a job – Sue Travers

Writing a resume when you have no job experience is a challenge asking for a lot of lateral thinking and focus on your transferable skills. It is possible for someone who has never held a job to produce an informative and useful resume. It just takes time and persistence.

Transferable skills. What are they?

These are the skills you have learnt in one environment, that are applicable to a number of other areas. For instance an advertisement might specify you will need to use the phone. Even though you may not have been involved in answering customer queries, you will have experience using the phone. Your task now is to explain to the employer how quickly, politely and enthusiastically you are able to answer his or her phone on the job. Many young people will have been involved in answering work related calls for a parent. Your task is to explain how the skill you already have is relevant to a work environment.

What are employers looking for?

There are many personal attributes employers want. Things such as the ability to get on with colleagues, work independently and as part of a team, problem solving, good sense of humour and the willingness to learn. In other words, the kinds of things we do every day whether we are in the paid workforce or not. Be creative and show how you can apply your current skills in a work environment. How do they benefit the employer?

Sometimes the advertisement will tell you what the employer wants. "Join our friendly team". It's not enough to say, "I'm friendly". A student may say "My classmates enjoy working with me for group work. They say we get our work done quickly and happily when I am a member of their group. We usually get good marks too." This way you are showing that you are a good team player, results oriented, and a pleasure to work with.

A young mum might say: "I'm usually the person who greets the newcomer to our young mum's group to help put her at ease, and show her where everything is. They say my welcoming smile and cheerful manner made them want to return the next time."

Don't underestimate your current skills and knowledge. Think carefully. Think creatively. How can you show you're the right person?

Sue Travers is a Life and Career Coach. She works with young people and adults looking at life values in relation to career decisions.

Resume Optimisation – How Does Your Resume Rank? - Gillian Kelly

You knew about website optimisation but did you know that resumes are now being scrutinised by similar technologies? Few people realise that their futures are now being determined not at the hands of employers and HR staff but by machines and modern advances in technology.



What is resume optimisation

With online posting of applications, recruitment agents and employers are now turning to technology similar to Google to cut down on application processing time through scanning your resume for keywords to see if you are a match for their criteria. "Text strings" (or keywords) are entered into a computerised tracking system to assess the resumes in the database and to identify suitable candidates. Just like websites, the more keywords or "hits" that a scanning program finds, the more likely it is that your resume will actually be read.

Building a scannable resume

So what are the crucial things to keep in mind when developing a scannable resume?

1. Find out the essential keywords for your industry. Job advertisements, selection criteria and position descriptions all provide valuable information on buzz words and key skills needed in your industry. Ensure these are prominently displayed in your resume, both at the front in your header, objective and skills summary and then throughout your resume in the employment and qualifications sections.
2. Ensure your format can be scanned. Use font sizing no less than 10 point and select a clean font such as arial or century schoolbook.
3. Avoid formatting that may throw out scanners such as text boxes, unusual fonts, underline, tables, images and columns
4. If you are having your resume developed by a professional be sure to ask for a scannable resume or text only version.

Finally remember, just like websites, content is still the most important thing so good resume writing principles still apply. Ensure your resume highlights what you offer potential employers through an achievement-rich resume filled with energy, results and career highlights. Good Luck!

Gillian Kelly, Director of Career Edge, is an international award-winning resume writer recognised world-wide for her capacity to build high impact resumes. Click here for more information on **resume writing** or here to contact **Career Edge**.

Unravelling selection criteria – Ann Villiers

Selection criteria can be mysterious creatures for those not in the know. They can turn your job hunting adventure into a painful journey. Here's some essential must-knows about selection criteria.

Read the job description

Read the job description and notice that it lists selection criteria. These criteria will form the basis of all decision-making, particularly for public service jobs. The instructions will tell you to "address the selection criteria". If you don't do this, you may not reach the next stage, such as the interview.



Address the selection criteria

What this means is that you must create a document with all the selection criteria listed. Under each one, you must provide evidence, in the form of examples, that 'prove' you have the skills covered in the criterion. For example, if the criterion is: *Good written communication skills particularly letter and report writing*, I could write:

'I have honed my written communication skills over the past 3 years in my current role as Secretary to the Director. In this position I am personally responsible for composing letters on a daily basis to suppliers, members of the public, and Government Departments. Only on rare occasions does the Director need to make amendments.

I am the author of a recent report to the Managing Director on Office Administration Procedures which was accepted and implemented throughout the office. Currently I am preparing reports and assignments for my external unit on business studies at university. I have received a distinction for my first assignment.'

Be results-oriented

The above example gives concrete evidence of my ability to write letters and reports. When providing examples you need to outline the situation you are talking about, what action you took, and most importantly, what the result was.

Results can be tangible items, like a report or letter. They can be more intangible, such as a decision made, a recommendation accepted, an agreement reached. They can be quantified to indicate the scale or dimension of the result. For example, an increase in sales or decrease in errors.

Extra tips

Research the organisation. Be concise – there is often a word limit. Meet the deadline. Check spelling, grammar and punctuation. Choose strong verbs that reflect what actions you took. Address all parts of the selection criteria. Do not change the wording of the criteria. Give examples that are relevant to the job you are applying for.

Dr Ann Villiers, *Mental Nutritionist*®, is a Career Management Coach specialising in selection criteria. She is the author of *How to Write and Talk to Selection Criteria* (4th edn.) Visit www.selectioncriteria.com.au for free articles and interviews designed for applicants and selection panels.

“Tell me about yourself” – talking about your skills to an employer – Adrienne Lovelock

You are at a job interview, seated in front of a prospective employer. You want to make a good impression. How do you present yourself as the best candidate for the position?

What do employers look for? Research¹ has shown that no matter what the industry, employers are looking for people who offer skills in communication and teamwork, problem-solving, initiative and enterprise, planning and organising skills, self-management skills, commitment to ongoing learning, and technology skills appropriate to the field of work.

You are developing these skills every day - in your studies, in your interactions with other people, in your paid and voluntary work.

Ask yourself which of these qualities you can offer an employer. Give yourself an honest appraisal: which are you strong in, and which could do with some work? Work together with a trusted friend to get some feedback about how others see you. A mentor in the workplace or at University can help you to think objectively about what you have to offer.

Talking about your own skills isn't always easy. Society encourages us to be self-effacing, and boasting is frowned on. But talking objectively about your skills isn't boasting. Once you have thought about the skills you have, and have made an honest appraisal of your strengths, think of some examples you can give of times when you have used each skill.

Often, at an interview, you will be asked behavioural questions; that is, questions about how you responded in a particular situation. This type of questioning is used because it is believed that your past behaviour is a good predictor of your future behaviour.

Every job seeker needs a “story bank” – a collection of anecdotes about your own experiences that you can use to tell a prospective employer about your skills and abilities and your personal style. Telling stories about what you've done enables you to be objective about your skills, and rescues you from feeling that you might be either boasting or underselling yourself.

For example, a story about the role you took in a group field trip, or your work with fellow employees on a group task in the workplace, can illustrate your skills in teamwork, collaboration, interpersonal skills and communication. An account of a task that initially went wrong, but was eventually put right, can illustrate your problem solving and analytical skills, your flexibility and adaptability, and your capacity to learn quickly. A story about how you coped well with a dissatisfied customer or a discontented colleague can show your interpersonal skills and your ability to handle a difficult situation.

When you tell your story, don't forget to say what this incident showed about you. Name the skills that you used. Talk about what you learned from the incident. If the outcome of the episode wasn't 100% satisfactory, be ready to talk about how you might do it differently another time. Employers like a person to be self-aware. It is important to know what you have to offer; it is also important to know that you don't know everything and to have a genuine willingness to learn and adapt.

In a job interview, there are no right or wrong answers. You can present yourself at your best by being aware of the skills and qualities you have to offer, and being able to show these through examples.

Adrienne Lovelock, *Your Personal Strategist*, is a freelance career educator, career counselor and career coach. One of her areas of specialisation is assisting tertiary and secondary students to prepare for entry to the workforce. Contact her at: adriennelovelock@iprimus.com.au

¹ Department of Education, Science and Training, “Employability Skills for the Future”, 2002