

The logo for 'upstarHR' is presented on a white, torn-edge paper strip that is tilted upwards from left to right. The text 'upstarHR' is written in a bold, black, sans-serif font with a white outline, giving it a sticker-like appearance.

upstarHR

Rock Your Job Search

Preparing, Networking, Interviewing, and more

Contents

- Acknowledgements
- What to Expect
- Resume Formatting
- Stop Hiding from Us
- Networking Matters
- Applying Well
- Interview Prep
- Post-Interview Steps
- Additional Resources

Acknowledgements

This guide was developed in part by my best friend, Allen Robinson. In the past four years he's been a coworker, mentor, and friend. He now does graphic design, develops web applications, and other nerdy stuff. I'll never be able to thank him enough for his friendship and support over the years.

I dedicate this book to him and to every other newbie trying to break into HR and make their own way. We're with you in spirit.

What to Expect

This eBook is here to help guide you through the roller coaster of a ride that searching, interviewing and taking the steps to help you stand out from your competition. This eBook is written from the interviewer's perspective in the hopes to give you a little insight into what is being analyzed.

This is not all-encompassing, but the intent is to provide you with the guidance to avoid the common mistakes and take advantage of the opportunities to make yourself more appealing as a candidate.

When you finish this short guide, you should have a much better grasp on the mind of the person on the other side of the interviewing table. We'll wrap up this guide with a few tools and resources to help if you feel this is an area where you're weak.

Have fun. Enjoy it. The ride might be stressful at times, but looking back the majority of us wouldn't trade it for the world.

Luck Favors the Prepared (Resume)

Create your resume and keep it up to date. Simple enough, right?

Wrong. It's something that even I don't do on a consistent basis, though I've done better at keeping mine updated as of late.

At a minimum, update your resume every time you have finished a job or have a new accomplishment to add. Don't wait to be out of work until you start updating your resume. If you wait, you will end up rushing your resume and possibly leaving some serious errors or completely omitting some strong accomplishments.

Next, I would suggest having someone proofread your resume. Make sure your resume has been gone over several times by a friend before submitting to a prospective employer.

If you are submitting an electronic resume, take a few seconds and make sure you are submitting it in the correct format.

In recent years the standard has been to suggest that candidates send resumes in Adobe Acrobat (PDF) format. It's great if it is only being read by a human, because you can ensure that the resume looks exactly the same for the

recipient as it does to you.

However, you must also be cautious of PDF formatting. One potential downfall to using PDF formatting is that some Applicant Tracking Systems (ATS) used by employers will not “parse” the PDF format. In layman terms, if a recruiter searches for keywords across all resumes in their database, a PDF might not return those key words, even if they are used specifically in your resume.

The most widely used format is .DOC (Microsoft Word) formatting. This formatting is ATS friendly and almost any recruiter or hiring manager will use or have access to Microsoft Office which is used in the creation and reading of DOC format. Be sure to save your resume in DOC, not DOCX.

The reason for this is that newer versions of MS Office are always backwards compatible, but if the company you submit to is using an old version of MS Office, they will not be able to open your DOCX file.

Unfortunately, the cold hard fact is that if a recruiter or hiring manager can not easily open your resume, they will move on.

You will not always get a call asking for you to resubmit in another format. You have one shot at getting a readable resume in front of a recruiter.

Also, use the correct terminology and key terms of the field you are seeking employment in. Tailor your resume to the job you are applying for, it doesn't have to be drastic, but take a look at the job description and highlight skills that are being looked for in the job description. For example, if the position specifically calls for someone with project management skills, be sure to include a bullet point somewhere on your resume highlighting a successful project you have led in the past.

Be sure think about what you are saying in your resume. Tailor your resume and the wording you use for the job you are applying for. It is not uncommon to have three or four different versions of your resume. Submitting a resume with wording that says something along the lines of "seeking a supervisory job" when you are really applying for a janitor's position can be a quick turn off for a recruiter. They will look at that sentence and make a determination that you will not be happy working in a job that has no supervisory responsibility.

Use tact in your resume. Spend some time trying to read your resume from an employer's perspective is possible. Ask yourself, "Will this reflect who I am?" I will never forget the resume that listed "killing and supervising" as a duty performed for the candidate's time spent in the Military. Sure it may have been true, but is "killing" a skill that an employer will be able to utilize?

Bottom line: be relevant to the position you are applying for.

Hide and seek... It's a fun game, but not when you're job searching!

So how do you even go about finding an open job? It's all about the Internet. Employers are placing more importance on sourcing candidates from the Internet either through their company career site, online job boards or both.

Take the time to develop a resume/profile on sites like [Indeed.com](https://www.indeed.com), [LinkedIn](https://www.linkedin.com), and on any special job search sites within your niche. If you happen to be a nurse, look for nursing job boards to post your resume.

Take the time to develop a social profile online so you are easily found in web searches. You never know when that "random" contact with someone via a Google search could lead to the next job opportunity.

Networking-Yes, it still matters

Networking. Networking. Networking. Join a society, club or whatever there is for your profession. Get out there and meet people. For as long as I've been in HR, the statistics have pointed to the majority of people finding their jobs by word of mouth networking.

As a recruiter looking for candidates, I have filled many positions through a word of mouth network. My current employer has a very strong referral policy, and in my opinion as a recruiter/HR professional, this is only going to get more important, not less. The easiest way to cut through a stack of 100 unknown candidates is to start with the two or three that are "known quantities" via employee referral.

Take the time to connect with friends, family, etc. Not only do you increase your chances of acquiring a new job through networking, but as a pleasant side effect, you will usually learn more about your field if you join some type of society or club.

One of my favorite quotes applies here: *If you keep doing what you've been doing you'll keep getting what you've been getting.*

If you really want to expand your network, it's time to talk with and meet new

people!

Applying yourself

So, you have found a job looks like a fit, now what?

Personalize your delivery.

If at all possible, do not just hit the “submit” button and send in your application and resume just like the other 3 million applicants. It’s basically the same thing as playing the lottery with your career, and in that scenario the odds are definitely against you.

Let’s remedy that, shall we?

The simplest way to personalize your application submission is to include a cover letter. Make sure the cover letter is more than just a form letter that you send to every employer. Keep the letter short, two or three paragraphs max. Recruiters do not want to read your life story.

Use the available space to tell why you would like to work for the company and why you feel you would be a good fit. A more advanced way to personalize your application is to seek out the hiring manager’s name/email address for the position that you are applying to and send them your resume directly.

Oh, and in case you were wondering, don't call to check on your application. Never. Ever. We don't have the time and bandwidth to respond to every applicant, and when you call us it just makes us want to hire you even less. Sad, but true. If you follow up at all try to find an email address for that.

Holy crap they want to talk to you... Now what!?

Ok, apparently you have done something right. Let's not screw it up at this point, okay?

We'll start with the basics. Wear some nice clothes. I shouldn't have to say this (or write it), but I have seen too many people completely ignore this rule and didn't want to assume that you already knew it.

I have always heard suggestions like "dress one step above the position you are applying for", or "dress how you would on a typical day for the job you are applying." Other recruiters and I appreciate a well-dressed candidate.

You can not go wrong with a suit, male or female. Dressing professionally shows respect for the organization, the position, recruiter's time and self respect. First impressions are based heavily on appearance. Right or wrong, those are the facts. So, wear a suit. I don't care if you are applying to be a doormat.

Next, do your homework. Find out as much about the position, organization and people you would be working with before the interview. Visit the organization's web site, research the person interviewing you on LinkedIn. Recruiters like it when an applicant takes a genuine interest in the organization. This is so easy with the resources at our fingertips from a quick Google search; however, I'd say

that only 10% of my candidates take advantage of this. It can be a major differentiator if you do it well!

In the resources page at the end I provide a link to a great article on how to research the company culture. This is key, because you don't want to find out a week into the job that you hate the company you're working for.

As far as the actual interview, try not to freak out too much. Take a deep breath. You are just talking to another human being about a common interest. I have wrecked more than my fair share of my early interviews in my career by getting nervous. Now I understand that for many, this is easier said than done. But you have to go back to the fact that the recruiter would not be talking to you if he did not initially think you could fill the position. Have some confidence and then start to have a genuine conversation.

If you have transitioned in and out of job frequently, be ready to explain why. Were you laid off? Did you find a better opportunity? Did you realize too late that company's culture was not a fit for you? Use the last explanation sparingly and only if it is true. Sometimes using a company's culture as an excuse can also signal that maybe you won't fit in with the company you're interviewing with. As a recruiter, I always take that response with a grain of salt until I better understand how the decision was reached. Keep that in mind.

If you do not ask closing questions during the interview, you're missing a huge

opportunity to stand out from the crowd. A common question is “is there anything about my qualifications that doesn’t meet your needs?” Use that as a springboard to sell yourself and counter any weak points you might have.

On the most basic level, the recruiter is looking for a stable candidate that can fulfill the requirements and show at least some measure of credibility within the profession.

As the interview is concluding be sure to ask the interview(s) for a their business card. You will need their contact information to thank them.

After the interview

So, you survived the interview. Whether it went well or not, there are a couple of things you need to do. First is sending a thank you letter or email to the individuals that you interviewed with. The “thank you” does not have to be complex; just a simple letter thanking them for their time and maybe reiterating why you will be a good fit for the organization is just fine. I personally have found that if you can offer a possible solution to a problem you discussed during the interview, then it can help to strengthen your position in the candidate pool.

No matter what the outcome of your interview is, try and keep a positive outlook. It can be mentally draining to go through a job search, you will need all the good vibes you can muster. The right job for you is just around the corner. I’ve had plenty of frustrating experiences with regard to job searching, but every time I was pleasantly surprised later when I started a truly amazing job. There’s a reason you might not get some positions, and in the end you’ll be better off for it.

Never lose hope!

Additional resources

Looking to further your learning? Here are a few resources that you can study. Warning: they might inspire you to greater heights than you ever imagined. Tread carefully.

- [How to not get a job in 2013](#)
- [14 ways to research culture as a candidate](#)
- [How to get an entry level HR job \(video\)](#)
- [This is the best blog on career advice you'll find anywhere](#)

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