

PRO-ACTIVE JOB SEARCH*

A truly pro-active job search is necessary in securing employment. Deliberately plan your approach and tactics for putting yourself in the "best possible position for success" in landing job offers with employers of special interest to you. It is true some jobs are obtained through "luck", but never luck alone! Proper planning, development of your skills, employer research, the ability to communicate your experiences, networking, and a constant sense of "being alert for opportunities" will lead to your success.

A successful pro-active job search includes:

- Career Office(s)
resources, staff assistance, career development, and campus interviews
- Networking with
professional and personal contacts
internship and cooperative experiences
alumni network and associates
faculty contacts and recommendations
professional association conferences
- Employer research
"cold calls" based on knowledge of need and match with qualifications
library resources of career information, employer directories, etc.
- Job announcements
professional associations, trade journals, job fairs, job listings, conferences,
newspaper employment listings
- Keeping current
reading of professional journals, business periodicals, and newspapers to keep up-dated
on economic trends and growth areas
- Professional employment agencies
most successful for chemists with experience
never pay for services--reputable services charge the employer

*Do not limit yourself to campus interviews.
Be pro-active...talk to people...research employers...
read...use all available resources to
"position yourself for success".*

Self Assessment

It may seem unnecessary to assess yourself at this point in time, but on-going assessment of needs and goals is part of an overall healthy and successful approach to life. It is not only necessary for successful preparation for interviews, resume-writing and effective communication, it is necessary for a continued sense of success, happiness, and accomplishment.

Through an effective self assessment, you will consolidate your goals, be able to articulate your motivations, focus on your personal and professional values, gain self-confidence, and concisely and convincingly discuss your strengths. This maturity and ability to communicate are highly valued by employers -- and, will, more importantly, help you as you begin to build and feel comfortable with your choice of career.

*Through an effective self-assessment...
learn to comfortably and concisely discuss the reasons
behind your decisions...*

*excerpted from Engineering Career Services Handbook.

Networking

You have all heard the term. And, you may think it is over-used, over-emphasized, and not very effective. Not on your life! Sixty to ninety percent of jobs are secured through networking (often called the hidden job market).¹ Many (some say, "most"!) good jobs never get advertised. When they are, there is usually fierce internal and pre-qualified external competition. So how do you find out about the hidden job market? By increasing the number of people in your informal network who know of your career strategy and asking them for information, advice, recommendations, and referrals.²

Companies are concerned that the people they hire be not only qualified technically, but also have a good reputation for being successful at what they do. It is very difficult to get a good job reference from previous employers because companies, avoiding the risk of litigation, seem to give bland (or no) recommendations. If, however, a person is referred to a job opportunity by someone who knows him/her and can attest to actual contributions, there is a validation on the table of that individual's worth. Companies have a desire to hire people who they can find out something about, and the most logical way to do this is by networking.³

Networking is utilizing your contacts and connecting with, i.e. talking to (!) people to reach a mutually beneficial end. The principle has been around forever, but for any job search it is eminently important. You have a network started already! Build on it and enhance it. Begin with family, plus each of their networks; friends, neighbors, former neighbors, plus each of their networks; former classmates, their family, plus each of their networks; your current and former employers, colleagues, supervisors, subordinates, customers, clients, suppliers, competitors, plus each of their networks; your doctors, dentists, clergy, insurance agents, bankers, lawyer, accountant; your plumber, painter, hairdresser; your local librarian; store owners and salespeople at stores you frequent, and club members and enthusiasts who share your personal interests.

Network...or not work.⁴

Although there's no clear formula for networking success, it is important to:

- Develop a plan to daily or weekly make contacts; be purposeful; set a goal for yourself.
- Take responsibility; no one is going to network for you; the obligation is yours.
- Begin your network with the familiar and work outwards.
- Do your homework--networking is NOT cold calling! You have either a person who referred you or have done research leading you to this individual. Tell the contact what you know and ask for assistance.
- Always extend your network by asking each contact for at least two names of individuals they suggest you contact.
- Keep your network current. Every month or so contact your network to keep them up-to-date; keep a log of contacts and activities; write thank-you notes.
- Return the favor someday.

Networking is a multiplication game. The more contacts you make, the greater your odds at finding a job. Tell every person you know that you are looking for a job. Don't be embarrassed to tell people your goals.

¹Susan Linn, Networking Consultant, Engineering Horizons, 1991-92

²Tomasina Stephon, Northern Illinois University, Career Planning & Placement Services

³Mike Townshend, Vice President, New Options Group, Inc.

⁴Irv Pfeiffer, Irv Pfeiffer & Associates, 1994

Employer Research

Long before your first interview, you must target employers interested in hiring chemists with your qualifications -- and, of course, employers with whom you are interested in working! This research helps you focus your job search, use time efficiently, and match your goals and strengths with employers' needs.

*Power in the job search comes from selective targeting ...
not through numbers.*

Where to Start

Networking

- Professors, teachers, researchers, and associates
- Family, friends, and acquaintances
- Internship colleagues and previous employers

Chemistry Career Services Library.

- Directories. Hoover's Handbook, ACS Employer Mailing List, Peterson's Job Opportunities, Greater Madison Area Directory of High-Tech Companies
- Employment Opportunities--vacancies announced through the Chemistry Career Services Newsletter (published on the Career Services website).
- Employer Literature--printed brochures, pamphlets, and annual reports detailing many chemistry-related employers. A select number of company videotapes is also available.
- Handouts on career planning topics—resume/cover letter writing, interviewing skills, etc.

On and Off Campus

- Memorial Library/Reference Room - 2nd Floor (728 State St./262-3193) for excellent resources and directories
- College Library (Helen C. White Hall/262-3245)
- School of Business Library - in Grainger Hall
- Wendt Engineering Library
- Business, trade, and professional journal articles and newspapers
- University Counseling Service (905 University Ave./262-1744) offers career planning workshops and individual career counseling.
- McBurney Resource Center (905 University Ave./263-2741) provides assistance to persons with disabilities who are seeking employment.
- Madison Campus Ministry for career planning workshops (731 State St./257-1039).
- Madison Public Library/Central Office - Reference Services (266-6350)

What You Need to Know

Source: Northwestern University Lindquist-Endicott Report, 1990 - Natl. Survey of 320 Employers

Success in the interview often depends on the quality and quantity of research on the position, company, and industry. Corporate interviewers indicate that they expect candidates to research the industry, the company, and the position using available resources such as annual reports, recruiting literature, videotapes, and campus presentations.

As candidates prepare for interviews, they tend to focus on creating a resume, buying a suit, and preparing to answer the usual interview questions. Many believe that a cursory review of the literature provided by the company will adequately prepare them to meet the interviewer's expectations. However, a lack of thorough company research is frequently interpreted as poor preparation and an absence of real interest. Because of this perception, no candidate can afford not to include careful research as a significant part of his/her interview preparation.

About the Position:

General knowledge/overview	Major and degree requirements
Career opportunities and career path	Relocation requirements
Job description and responsibilities	Geographic preferences
Training program	

About the Company:

General knowledge: company history and type of business/growth pattern	Market niche/share of market
Products/services	Current conditions/events
Location of headquarters & business units	Organizational goals/future plans
Financial info: sales/profits/revenues	Parent company & relationship
What products/services the company provides	Clientele/customers
Size and number of employees	Leading edge projects/R & D
Who the company is:	Public or privately held
Organization/structure/divisions	Salaries/benefits
Cultural/philosophy/management style	

About the Industry:

Understand the industry	Rank/industry status/competitors
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Other General Comments from Respondents:

Who we are, what we do, and the position we offer
Perception of what they will be doing on the job is critical
Company size, product lines, and where their experience will fit
Enough information to ask 2-3 intelligent questions about our business
Location, type of industry, major products, and business groups
What it is they like about our organization
Research company, current facts, and talk with friends who have accepted positions here

Success in the interview...depends on the quality and quantity of research on the position, company, and industry... a lack of thorough company research is...interpreted as poor preparation and a lack of real interest in the employer.

RESUMES

The resume is an essential, if not the central, job search element and must be well crafted to communicate your qualifications. It is, in itself, a reflection of the quality of your work. If not top quality, your job search will be ineffective. As a written summary of your educational experiences, work experiences, and professional skills, activities, and interests, it is your door to the interview. Use the resume as an important marketing tool to "sell" your unique experiences and strengths to an employer. The employer's first impression of you is often the resume.

*The single purpose of a resume is...
to obtain an interview.*

The single purpose of a resume is to stimulate the potential employer to want to find out more about you. The hiring process begins with a good resume. A poor resume will surely eliminate you from the selection process in the very first screening. A well-written resume will maximize the employer's interest in your qualifications.

Some studies have shown that many employers screen each resume for only 30 seconds -- or less! One career advisor tells the story of a very effective human resources manager reviewing resumes each Sunday while watching an NFL game! With this in mind, you know that you must attract the employer's attention in this extremely short period of time. Although this method of reviewing resumes is not the "norm", it punctuates the importance of developing a professional, easy-to-scan, informative, and interesting resume!

Two resume formatting styles most often used are the chronological and functional styles:

Education and experiences are listed in a reverse chronological order in the strictest chronological resume. Education and experience are emphasized. Most new graduates with a clearly-defined career focus, such as chemists, will use the chronological resume formatting style. This straight-forward format is easily recognized and easily scanned.

The functional resume format utilizes "creative" subject headings to list experiences by type of responsibility or function. It emphasizes transferable skills. People making career changes or having a variety of career objectives appreciate the flexible format of the functional resume. In addition, people seeking careers not directly related to their past or present experiences or education will often develop a functional resume.

Resume Writing Guidelines

- List information in reverse chronological order - from the most recent to the least recent.
- Use phrases and "action verbs" (see page 8) to describe experiences. Complete sentences are not easily scanned. Examples are:
 - *Designed/implemented a software system for*
 - *Supervised the installation of a tracking system which*
- Use bolding, tabs, capitalization, italicization, and "bullets" to emphasize, underscore, and improve the reader's ability to scan the resume. **BUT DON'T OVER-DO THEIR USE!** Use the "top to bottom -- left to right rule". Present information on the page in order of importance, keeping in mind that people read from *top to bottom* and from *left to right!* Always include a cover letter with a resume.
- Hand-carry to each interview a folder or portfolio containing your professional papers and summaries. Include: several copies of your resume and transcripts, a notebook for questions and note-taking, graduate student project summaries, a prepared List of References, recommendation letters or evaluation from previous work experiences (if available). You will look and be more prepared with this folder or portfolio.
- Do not include: age/date of birth, a photograph, marital status, date available for employment, health or gender.

Rough Drafts

The rough draft of your resume will be significantly longer than the final form. Do not edit or get distracted in formatting issues at this point -- brainstorm for ideas. Include all work experiences, educational experiences, extracurricular interests, skills, and abilities. Outline and fully describe experiences that have helped shape the development of your technical abilities, strengths, work ethic, decision-making abilities, interests, and character.

High school activities, honors, and awards are generally best left off the resume of a college graduate. Some bachelor of science graduates will include high school achievements if extensive. Graduate students should, of course, only mention college activities, awards, and experiences.

*Don't write your resume in a closet...
Tailor it to your audience...strongly and creatively
represent your skills, strengths, and experiences.*

In reviewing this lengthy, sometimes rambling rough draft, you will more clearly see patterns of strengths. This brainstorming process of developing a resume is an excellent method of self-assessment. Once your resume is well-written, you will be able to answer any question about yourself in the interview -- with specific examples and clear understanding of your motivations and strengths!

Seek the advice of colleagues and friends who can often articulate your strengths more easily than you can! One of our recruiters with twenty-five years of experience somewhat facetiously suggests that you have your best friend (or mom!) write your resume -- implying that they may do a better job of "selling" your qualifications.

Final Drafts

In the final draft, format, consolidate, and polish the rough draft. Your final draft will be one or two pages in length. Graduate students and experienced chemists may have a longer resume, or use an addendum page, to further list and describe projects, publications, and perhaps a summary of your qualifications.

Although most beginning bachelor of science graduates will have a one page resume, do not eliminate important information simply to have a one page resume. When using more than one page for your resume: include your name and the page number at the top of all additional pages; use at least half of the second page; print on one side of each page.

A "List of References" page may be added as an addendum page to the resume. Include your name, a page title, and the complete name, professional address, and phone number of each reference. Be sure to obtain permission to use each reference name and to give each reference a copy of your resume for referral.

A resume is NEVER final; it is constantly evolving. The final draft will:

- Have no spelling or grammatical errors
- Have a professional format and layout
- Be laser-printed or a quality copy of a laser printed original
- Be reproduced on professional quality white or subtle shades of beige paper

Resume Components Suggestions

Name/Address

- use slightly larger font size/bold your name
- include phone numbers and message number
- list current address(es), residence and/or office, and e-mail address

Objective/Summary of Qualifications/Qualifications Highlights

This statement can be the most important written statement in your job search. It provides a central focus to your resume and tells the employer you are purposeful and have goals which are directly related to your past pattern of interests and skills. Tailor this section to include:

- interpretation of your qualifications and capabilities
- particular job search (short-term goals)—synthetic organic research, chemical education, bioinorganic chemistry, chemical manufacturing, sales representative, etc.

Education

- List from the most recent to the least recent/use dates of graduation, not attendance.
- Highlight strengths and unique experiences, such as: area of specialty, GPA, honors, course work listing, certificates and scholar programs.
- Mention if you financed 50% or more of your education (through work, scholarships, or personal loans).
- List thesis title and academic mentor/advisor.

Work Experience

From most recent to least recent, list position titles, employers, dates of employment, and work descriptions. Include other "hands-on" chemistry experience, defensible statements that communicate what you have to offer (examples: that you are results-oriented/ how you have added value to employers). Be concise, yet descriptive.

Skills

Creatively list your professional skills (technical, analytical, computer languages, programs, machines, interpersonal skills), and personality attributes (persistence, dedication, work ethic, commitment, organizational skills, etc).

Publications/Presentations/Research Interests

List published works and those "in progress"; include presentations. Group research interests to indicate strengths and goals.

Honors/Awards/Scholarships

List awards/honors/scholarships, with dates.

Professional Memberships/Affiliations

List memberships, including offices held, and dates; omit religious & political affiliations.

Activities/Interests

- List personal/extracurricular interests related to your work.
- Include non-related activities such as sports or music (recruiters will often begin an interview with a question related to one of your special interests to put you at ease).

Citizenship

State visa status near the end of the resume, if appropriate. If your name sounds "international" and you are a U.S. citizen or permanent resident, include citizenship directly beneath your name.

References

Eliminate "references available upon request". References may be listed on the resume or on an addendum page.

- Include professors, advisors, thesis directors, research project colleagues, and internship supervisors. Ask permission to use individuals as references.
- Give each reference a copy of your resume (keep them informed about your job search).
- Remember that three references are needed when applying to graduate schools (obtain references now if you are considering graduate school in the future).

Action Verbs List for Resume Development

c. 1981 by Richard N. Bolles

achieved	dispensed	instituted	presented	shaped
acted	displayed	instructed	printed	shared
adapted	disproved	interpreted	problem-	showed
addressed	dissected	interviewed	solved	sketched
administered	distributed	invented	processed	sold
advised	diverted	improved	produced	solved
analyzed	dramatized	inventoried	program	sorted
anticipated	drew	investigated	projected	spoke
arbitrated	drove	judged	promoted	studied
arranged	edited	kept	proof-read	summarized
ascertained	eliminated	lead	protected	supervised
assembled	empathized	learned	provided	supplied
assessed	enforced	lectured	publicized	surveyed
attained	estimated	listened	questioned	synergized
budgeted	evaluated	logged	raised	synthesized
built	examined	made	read	systematized
calculated	expanded	maintained	realized	talked
charted	experiment	managed	reasoned	taught
checked	explained	manipulated	received	team-built
classified	extracted	mediated	recommended	tended
coached	filed	memorized	reconciled	tested
collected	financed	mentored	recorded	told
compiled	fixed	met	recruited	trained
completed	followed	modeled	reduced	transcribed
composed	formulated	monitored	referred	translated
computed	founded	motivated	rehabilitated	traveled
conducted	gathered	moved	related	treated
conserved	gave	navigated	rendered	trouble-shot
consolidated	generated	negotiated	repaired	tutored
constructed	guided	observed	reported	typed
consulted	handled	obtained	represented	umpired
controlled	headed	offered	researched	understood
coordinated	helped	operated	resolved	understudied
copied	hypothesize	ordered	responded	undertook
counseled	identified	organized	restored	unified
created	illustrated	oversaw	retrieved	united
decided	imagined	painted	reviewed	upgraded
defined	implement	perceived	risked	used
delivered	improvised	performed	sang	utilized
designed	increased	persuaded	scheduled	washed
detected	influenced	photographed	selected	weighed
determined	informed	planned	sensed	worked
developed	initiated	played	separated	wrote
devised	innovated	politicked	served	wrought
diagnosed	inspected	predicted	set	
directed	inspired	prepared	set-up	
discovered	installed	prescribed	sewed	

COVER LETTERS

Every resume mailed to an employer must include a cover letter in order to be effective. The cover letter is an introduction to your resume; a way of explaining your career interests. All materials (transcripts, completed application forms, project summaries, etc.) mailed to an employer should include a cover letter. When used for its most common purpose, as a method of job inquiry, the letter should coordinate with and complement the resume.

You will need a cover letter most often during the early stages of the job search when you are: 1) inquiring about job openings or campus recruiting visits; 2) requesting an appointment for an interview; 3) encouraging an employer to consider hiring candidates with your specific degree or training; 4) asking for consideration for an interview at the plant, corporation site, or governmental agency; and for other job search purposes.

*Every resume...must include a cover letter
in order to be effective.*

Some basic guidelines for developing a cover letter are:

- One page in length
- Address the letter to a specific person (Never use *To Whom It May Concern*. Use the Career Services office resources or network to find the name of an appropriate contact.)
- Use good quality paper -- some people use the same color, type, and quality paper on which the resume is printed.
- Follow the basic business communication rules of letter writing.
- Use perfect grammar; make no spelling errors.
- Sign each letter.

The Introductory Paragraph

The cover letter includes three segments: the introductory paragraph, the body, and the closing paragraph. In the introductory paragraph, very clearly and simply state why you are writing to the employer and why you are sending a resume. You must remember that this may very well be your first introduction to the employer. The first impression is extremely important. It is crucial for you to pique the interest of the employer at this time; to make it clear that your resume *and you* deserve further consideration.

- Introduce yourself and state the position you are seeking or the purpose of the letter.
- Identify your interests in the employer.
- Make it clear that you have researched the company, are knowledgeable, and are enthused about the employer's opportunities.
- Directly express interest in the position and identify how you learned of the job opening.
- If a specific position opening is unknown, identify your specific interests/expertise which are compatible with the employer's work.
- If a professor, colleague, or company employee suggested you contact the employer, identify that person by name. This is a particularly effective means of capturing the employer's attention.

The Body

The body of the cover letter will generally be one or two paragraphs in length. Use this section to justify the prospective employer's interest.

- Do not simply repeat "resume" information; identify special qualities, areas of expertise, or relevant experiences that match the employer's needs.
- Briefly describe your educational and work experience and how they have prepared you to make a "good match" with the on-going and/or future needs of that specific employer.

The Closing

A strong *closing* paragraph is essential to an effective cover letter. Use the closing segment to request an interview at the employer's earliest convenience.

- Indicate the next step you will take (i.e., that you will follow up your letter with a phone call in two weeks).
- State specifically what you want from the employer (i.e., information for employment; an application form; an interview; etc.)
- Indicate when you plan on visiting the employer's geographic area (if the employer is located in another area of the country). Indicate you would like to meet with the employer at that time.
- End with a goodwill statement, such as: I look forward to meeting you; thank you for your consideration; etc.

Tone of the Letter

While the contents of the cover letter are important, the tone is equally important. Be professional, warm, and somewhat formal. You want your letter and resume to be noticed in a positive way, not in a negative way due to informality or "cuteness". The tone should imply:

- professionalism and confidence, not arrogance
- willingness to become a part of the team
- enthusiasm for the employer/product/technology/research/type of work/etc.
- willingness to meet with and discuss possible opportunities

*The thank you letter must be mailed within
two or three days of the campus interviews ...*

Thank You Letters

The impact of a well-timed, well-structured thank you letter can make all the difference. Despite the demands of coursework, personal responsibilities, and preparation for many campus interviews, you should always take the extra time and effort to develop a letter of appreciation for the interview.

- Write and mail the thank you letter within two or three days of the campus interviews.
- Be brief - keep your letter to two or three paragraphs.
- Document or refer to something you talked about in the interview to personalize the letter.
- Summarize/clarify relevant information from the interview or plant visit.
- Include any additional information, such as transcripts or project summaries.
- Check for grammatical and spelling accuracy.
- Be professional; do not write informally.

INTERVIEWS

What does Chemistry Career Services provide the recruiter?

- Interview schedule and copy of your resume.
- Listing of Chemistry faculty, and highlights describing departmental research.
- Local map

What should you bring to the interview?

A portfolio including some of the following:

- Transcripts from the UW-Madison and from other colleges you've attended.
- List of references, publications, and/or presentations.
- Summary of class projects upon which you have worked.
- Any pertinent documentation of your experiences which would benefit your candidacy. It may not be necessary for you to refer to these documents in each interview, but it is important to have them with you in case they may be needed or helpful.

The recruiting interview normally lasts 30 minutes for BS students, and 45 minutes for MS and PhD candidates. Your communication skills, personality, genuine interest, and amount of preparation will be evaluated, as well as your educational background, technical expertise, and work experience -- a tall order by anyone's standards!

The interview has been defined as a "50-50 proposition" -- an opportunity for you to learn more about the employer and an opportunity for the employer to evaluate you as a potential employee. In a recession, a student's sense of uncertainty can make this definition seem almost silly. Good jobs are hard to come by! How can a student feel confident interviewing an employer?! But it is important to know that in a tough job market, the "match" between employer and candidate is even more important. Individuals on both sides of the table should scrutinize and question each other; should discuss opportunities; and should work to show enthusiasm and interest.

*The campus interview should be a two-way discussion--
the match between your qualifications and the employer's opportunities*

What to Expect

You will usually be interviewed by one person: a human resource/personnel manager or a researcher/chemist. You may also be interviewed by a team of two recruiters. Most recruiters will try to put you "at ease" (to get to know you and your strengths) and to determine your fit into their organization. Expect to have your professional skills evaluated, as well as your general personality (for fit into their "corporate culture"), motivational attributes, and communication skills. (See "Evaluation" on page 13 for further insight into the recruiter's goals.)

You will not be offered a position as the result of the on-campus interview. The recruiter will evaluate your candidacy and later extend an offer for a plant trip or site visit, a "letter of interest", or a rejection letter. Your "rejection" may be based on poor interview performance or lack of "fit" with the employer, as well as on issues beyond your control or the recruiter's control, such as employer cut-backs or a hiring freeze.

Preparation

There are several factors which recruiters consider in the screening process. Most employers will give strong consideration to research interests and experiences; GPA or class standing ; and internship or co-op experiences. Characteristics which are equally crucial to most recruiters

are: ability to articulate, maturity, alertness, compatibility with employer, enthusiasm, and interview preparation (i.e. employer research).

- Review your self assessment; know your strengths, motivations, and unique qualities.
- Review your employer research notes.
- Be prepared to discuss every item on your resume for 15 minutes! -- give specific examples (you may not actually talk this long, but be prepared!!)
- Never respond with a one-word answer to any question.
- Be ready for the "why" question -- why did you choose chemistry?; why did you sign-up for this interview?; why should I hire you?; why did you enjoy a class?; why did you intern last summer?; etc.
- Review frequently asked interview questions for general topic areas of concern to recruiter.
- Review your reasons for interviewing with this particular company.
- Hand carry resume copies, transcripts, and samples of relevant projects or course work with you to the interview.
- Have questions for the interviewer.

*Be prepared to discuss
any one item on your resume for 15-30 minutes.
Have specific examples.*

During the Interview

Your successful preparation for the interview will ultimately be evident during the interview. If you are well-prepared for the interview, you will perform effectively. Some general rules for interviewing:

Waiting:

- Wait in the atrium area. The recruiter will call you when ready. Check the company file found in the Career Services office for confirmation of your interview date/time.
- Be on time. Arrive 5 - 10 minutes early fully prepared to interview -- do not be combing your hair or tying your tie outside the recruiter's door!
- You may leave personal articles (coats/backpacks) in the Career Services office for safekeeping.
- Dress professionally ... show that you care ... you can make a first impression only once!

The Interview:

- Use a firm handshake, make eye contact, and smile upon introducing yourself.
- Allow the recruiter to initiate the conversation.
- Be friendly and relaxed. The recruiter wants to know the real you.
- Pay attention to your body language: eye contact, posture, use of hands, and sitting position/posture.
- Communicate effectively and clearly. Do not monopolize the conversation.
- Listen carefully to the recruiter. Ask for clarification if you do not fully understand a question.
- Never respond simply "yes" or "no"; give examples and explain "why".
- Display self-confidence -- not arrogance.
- Display an understanding of the employer's needs and a desire to serve them.

*Two questions underlying every question the recruiter asks are:
"Can you do the job?" and "Will you do the job?"*

Closure:

- Near the end of the interview, the recruiter will generally ask if you have any questions. Be sure to not ask a question which was already answered during the interview! Practice good listening skills throughout the interview; in the normal flow of conversation, ask questions. By participating in the interview conversation, you will show your interest, attentiveness, and finally preparedness by asking questions.
- This is also the time to summarize your interests and enthusiasm for the employer's work. Summarize the specific qualifications, strengths, or examples of your work that you want to emphasize. Be assertive in making sure the interview truly represents your strengths.
- Shake hands and thank the recruiter for his/her time. Ask when you can expect to hear from him/her. Ask if you can supply any other materials (such as transcripts, letters of recommendation, project summaries, etc.) to help in the screening process. Ask for the recruiter's business card. (You will need this information to write a thank you letter.)

*Be ready to discuss your "setbacks"
in a way that shows
what you have learned from them.*

Evaluation

The recruiter will evaluate you based on many dimensions -- some conscious and some subconscious. One employer evaluates its entry level chemists on seven dimensions: GPA, motivation to work for the company, impact (appearance, presence, grooming, sociability), oral communication, leadership, work standards, and hands on experience (work, school, or extracurricular interests). Some recruiters are required to evaluate you in comparison to other students, while others rate you on a numerical scale.

The recruiters' goal is to have you succeed, not fail! Your preparation and their skill in formulating your "fit" will determine the outcome. They might invite you for a second interview, circulate your resume to other departments for review, keep your records on file should a position become available in the future, or reject you based on an incomplete "match" with their needs.

Follow-Up

Send out a thank you letter to the recruiter within one to two days following your interview. Express appreciation for the interview, clarify or emphasize any particular topics that were mentioned in the interview, and re-emphasize your interest in the employer. Keep an organized record of all companies interviewed, recruiters' names and addresses, and the "follow-up". You will have many details to remember during the interview season -- be organized!

Recruiters will normally respond to your on-campus interview in no less than two weeks -- often as long as eight. Ask the recruiter when you can expect to hear from him/her. The recruiter's response will be an offer of a plant/site visit, a letter of interest, or a rejection letter. Keep rejection letters in perspective. Every candidate will receive a rejection letter at one time or another. Not everyone is hired; in fact, a very small percentage of those interviewed are ultimately hired.

Review and evaluate your interviewing performance. Work on improving your weaknesses and maintaining the strengths of your interview. As you interview more often, you will improve.

Second/On-Site Interviews

If your initial interview with an employer is successful, you may be invited for a plant trip or site visit. Plant trips usually involve a full day of interviews, and your presentation of a research talk, especially in the case of PhD/Postdoc interviewees. You may talk with managers and researchers from the area in which you may potentially be placed. You may also be interviewed by department heads or administrators who will be involved in the final hiring decision.

The plant trip provides you with an excellent opportunity to learn specific information about a company's daily operations and work environment. You should be prepared to ask questions you were unable to ask in the initial interview. Ask about employment practices, training and development, and the work environment. Pay attention to the physical surroundings, the pace of the office or plant, and the attitudes and behavior of the people with whom you may be working. If possible, take some time to explore the city as a place to live and work.

Presenting Seminars

Normally PhD and Postdoc interviewees will be expected to present a seminar at the on-site interview. Your experience in giving research group presentations will be of significant help in practicing for this event. Your audience here is not necessarily skilled in your area of research, so it is best to prepare your talk in more general terms. By focussing on a good introduction and background of your research, it will provide a better basis of understanding. Then you can move onto the specifics of your research. This audience will be primarily evaluating your communication/presentation skills, more so than the actual content of the research you have accomplished. A 45-minute presentation is a typical timeframe.

Salaries and Other Logistics

Be prepared to discuss salary expectations. Do not, however, feel pressured to give a "final" salary response. Ask for a week (or more) to consider any offer, if you need additional time. Question any offer that is given you with the condition that an immediate response is necessary. Review Chemistry Career Services salary statistics and the National Association of Colleges and Employers (NACE) national salary survey to know the appropriate range for your degree and discipline.

*Be courteous to
every employee representative
with whom you meet and speak on the phone.*

Travel and hotel arrangements are usually made by the employer's human resources department. Confirm all arrangements by phone or letter. If you will be reimbursed for travel expenses, keep your receipts.