

NOTES FOR CAREER CAFÉ – AAM LOS ANGELES, MAY 2010 – NIK HONEYSETT

YOUR CAREER

- Who's looking out for your career?
- What's your career goal?
- How to get promoted
- When is it time to look for a job?
- Is your job taller or wider?
- Are you in your job comfort zone?
- Is your resume current?
- Don't Ask = Won't Get
- Are you more valuable with more years in your current job?
- Are you more valuable with experience from another job?

No one else is in charge of your career. No one is going to come knocking on your door offering you that next job or a promotion. If you want to progress, it's up to you. If you want to get promoted ask your boss what you need to do, what are the deliverables? The answer might be "no chance", if you don't ask you won't get it. Do you have more responsibility than your job description? Is it taller: more responsibility, scope or authority? If you don't enjoy your job, it's just as much your responsibility - suck it up or start looking for a new one. It's time to look for a new job when: you're unhappy, need more money, want a change, want different experience. Ask yourself: Do I want to be doing this job in 5 years? 2 years? Stuck in the job comfort zone? Don't think you could do any other job? It could take anywhere from 2 weeks to 2 years to get into another job.

THE HIRING PROCESS

- The Position
- The Posting
- The Resumes
- The Short List
- The Phone Call
- The Interview
- The Offer

Getting a job is a process that starts with you, either you need to move on or an opportunity arises. Think about the company or institution, do some research and think about their process. Is it a large institution? Will the hiring manager be the person you'll report to? Is HR handling the first round selection? Are there strict requirements? Process might take weeks or months. Avoid trying to short-circuit the process, put contacts in the cover letter.

YOUR RESUME

- Is metadata about your career
- Is factually correct and honest
- Is triple-checked
- Always travels with a cover letter
- Starts with your name & objective
- In a stack and read in a minute

Your resume is metadata about you, it should be a work in progress, update it yearly to adjust some dates or add significant accomplishments - do it when you have a performance review or on your hire date. Keep it short, 1 page if possible, 2 max, unless your job requires a C.V, e.g. a list of publications, exhibitions. Your resume is a reference tool for your next employer - simple to use and easy to understand. It's about you, so it should start with your name and a summary that captures the essence that you want to convey.

YOUR COVER LETTER

- Is a short story about you
- Is like a movie pitch or book review
- Can be light but not funny
- Is factually correct and honest
- Appropriate content and tone
- In a stack and read in a minute
- Is triple-checked

Is a one page narrative about you and why I should be interested in you. It should tell me who, what, where, why, when. Be very careful using humour - if in doubt, leave it out. Match the tone of the posting. Don't put anything in it that you can't substantiate. Think how it will be read & who will read it. Avoid bragging, superlatives, name dropping. Know spelling mistakes or typos! Do some homework on the institution, do they refer to themselves in a particular way? Try to match that.

YOUR INTERVIEW

- Phone Interview
- Face to face interview
- Make a list
- Things to ask, things to avoid
- Focus on the job, but follow the lead
- Experience of the interviewer
- Take notes
- Negotiating Salary

If you get to this stage, you're in the top 5%-10% - the good news. Bad news is you need to beat everyone. Think about the motivation: To select? To eliminate? To clarify? If it's a 'phone interview: no cell phones, no distractions, allow more time than you need. The goal is to make a decision, what information can you give the interviewer to help them make that decision? Ask them? If it's an HR person, they're likely by-the-book interviewers, if it's the position's supervisor, probably not good at interviewing. Focus on the specifics of the job. Make sure you get all your points across, don't be controlling unless that's the job.

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THE POSITION AND POSTING

Is this a new position? Is it the right move for you? Will it look good on your resume? Think why this position is good for you. The posting is the only information you have about the position. Make sure you follow all the instructions in the posting. If it asks for salary history, include it or address why. If it asks for a desired salary, include it or address why. Thoroughly read the posting, read between the lines. What does sense of humour really mean? (Stressful job?) Do you meet all the qualifications and do you have the skills they are looking for? If you don't meet all of them, make sure you're prepared to address the question. Is there a time limit? Is there a time frame?

THE RESUMES

I'm using the plural, because when you apply for a job, you're one in a few hundred, your task is to be that one. Ideally, submit your resume and cover letter as a pdf attachment to an email, cover letter first, the body of the email should double as the cover letter. Larger institutions will likely have a defined process, possibly even with application support. Some of these applications require you to fill out a form rather than submit documents – do both if you can. If they are using an application, it may strip your neatly designed resume, rendering it to text. It may OCR it, badly. Your resume should be simple and elegant. For me, a good resume is like the definition of pornography – I'll know it when I see it.

THE SHORT LIST

The first task for a hiring manager is to generate a short list, which means an elimination process – My goal is to generate a short list of about 10% of the total submission, I look for reasons to cut the list. Approximately $\frac{1}{4}$ of resumes can be eliminated due to typos and mistakes. Another $\frac{1}{4}$ are usually insufficiently qualified or lack appropriate experience - college graduates applying for a job requiring a few years experience. I can normally cut a list in half without even reading your resume, just your cover letter. For the remaining half, I'm looking for interesting and qualified people and will sort them into Yes, No and Maybe. This may take a couple of iterations. I'm looking for someone who is not under or over-qualified.

THE PHONE CALL

Some hiring managers may want to speak to you on the phone first, either because you are on the other side of the country, or maybe they can't make a decision about you. They may want an easy "out". It's the perfect way to understand your personality. Some may always want to phone interview first. Be prepared. Make an impression. Don't be interrupted. Make them want to meet you.

THE INTERVIEW

You made it to the interview which means you have the credentials to do the job, if you had a telephone interview the hirer thinks you have the personality to do the job. The interview is going to demonstrate whether you fit it. Interviewing is time consuming for the interviewer, don't waste their time. Your goal is to convince them that you are smart and can fit in. Read *Blink* by Malcolm Gladwell. Chances are the interviewer will have made their mind up within the first few minutes if you are right for the job. If you're an internal candidate, you're either in the interview because you have a real shot or for professional courtesy, assume nothing and treat it like any other interview. Make a list. Listen to the interviewer. Take their lead but make sure you get all your points across. Your goal is to demonstrate that you are smart and will fit in.

THE OFFER

Depending on the institution's process, this may happen a number of ways. The hiring manager may or may not have the authority to negotiate a salary. The position may be unionized in which case the salary is set and you have no negotiation, alternatively it may be in a grade structure, in which case there are some rules surrounding how much they can offer. Don't be afraid to negotiate salary. Have an explanation about why you're asking for a particular amount, kids and mortgage doesn't work. How different is this from your current job. Research similar jobs in the same area – monster.com, careerbuilder.com. Is it a big difference with more scope, responsibility and supervision? What's a reasonable increase? 10%-20%? 50%? 100%?