8 Tools For A Successful Job Search
In Technical Communication

JPG & Associates, Inc.

Presenter:

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Contents

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Tool 1: Resume/Cover Letter

Content: Relevant Topics (Or Headings):

⊙ Clear <u>objective</u>—top of page.

⊙ <u>Internship</u> description (new grad).

⊙ <u>Work history</u> (new grads—brief; elaborate where employment involved communication experience).

⊙ <u>Projects completed/developed</u>: course papers, research projects (new grad); technical and marketing pieces, other projects while employed.

⊙ <u>Written and verbal communication skills</u>.

⊙ Other <u>skills and strengths</u> to emphasize: detail-oriented, leadership, problem solving abilities, ability to work independently and collaboratively.

⊙ Notable <u>accomplishments, recognitions, awards</u>.

⊙ <u>References</u> upon request.

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Content (cont'd):

- <u>Use active/direct verbs to describe either a job, a project, and/or accomplishment</u>: wrote, edited, proofed, developed, trained, authored, etc.

- <u>Use active/direct verbs to describe interpersonal skills and abilities</u>: coordinated, achieved, led, collaborated, negotiated, achieved, awarded, etc.

- <u>Incorporate words, phrases, and acronyms</u> that reinforce your image (or brand) as a technical communicator: deliverables, content, subject matter experts (SMEs), stake-holders, etc.

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Content (cont'd):

- Incorporate words, phrases, acronyms that reinforce your image (or brand) as a technical communicator: deliverables, content, subject matter experts (SMEs), stake-holders, etc.

- Make mention of any industry and/or technology exposure which may be of interest to the reader—i.e., medical, computer, software development, and so on.

- Highlight knowledge, experience, familiarity with authoring and/or project tools, methodologies, processes, etc. that are attention-getters: Agile, CMS (content management, XML), UX/UI, etc.

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Format/Style:

- Chronological (most common); functional is ideal for those transitioning from current profession into tech. comm., and preferred for independent consultants.

- 1 page optimum (new grad).

- 2 pages (experienced).

- 1 to 2 fonts ideal (Ariel/Helvetica, Times Roman).

- Use bullets where possible.

- If some paragraphs needed, limit to several sentences.

- Author in MS Word.

- Avoid complex layouts—1-column wide ideal; no photos or color.

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Tool 1: Resume/Cover Letter (cont'd)

Cover Letter:

- Include when applying for a specific job.
- Summary of your background, educations, status, and professional skills and strengths.
- Cover letters get better results.

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Summary:

- Your resume should never be considered "good enough".
- Always read and re-read--it may surprise you what you may find.
- Always keep it updated with new experiences and training. No pictures please.

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Tool 2: Portfolio & Presentation

Building And Maintaining....

- <u>Purchase a professional looking portfolio case</u>. For digital samples, you may want to also consider including a laptop.

- <u>Select samples of your work that best represent</u> your communication skills and experiences: technical or creative pieces, website content, newsletters, training-presentation samples, research papers, articles, and so on.

- If—for example--the piece is an entire manual, then only <u>include several representative sample pages.</u>

- If the sample is a brochure or newsletter, <u>insert the entire sample in the sleeve</u> (you can always remove for later for discussion.

- <u>If your samples cover several categories</u> (technical writing, and marketing, for example), then consider sorting by group.

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Building And Maintaining… (cont'd)

◎ <u>If you are a new graduate and you completed an internship</u>, you may have some good corporate samples from that to show.

◎ <u>If no internship</u>, then review your college courses and pull together samples of projects completed for such classes as Technical Communications, English, Journalism, or Marketing Communications. Consider excerpts from thesis papers, research project, reports, class projects, etc.

◎ <u>If you have web-based projects</u>, hyper-linked files, or on-line help files, it is ok to print out representative pages. Also post them on the web, or bring them to the interview on a flash drive or laptop (consider emailing PDFs, links, and other formats later).

◎ <u>Do not include</u>: worn out in appearance, appear to be old or produced with outdated technology (i.e., pre-desktop program era), excessive use of samples which don't have much impact overall (i.e., complex, graphs, specifications, formulas, or measurements).

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Building And Maintaining… (cont'd)

- ◉ <u>Periodically review your portfolio</u> and determine if you need to add newly-completed samples, or if you need to either remove outdated, non-relevant samples, or worn out-looking samples.

- ◉ <u>When obtaining samples</u> (printed or digital), always try to get permission—as some samples may contain proprietary information).

- ◉ <u>Check your portfolio before the interview</u> in case you need to add, subtract, or change the order to better match the interview.

- ◉ <u>As you show the samples, make sure you describe</u>: 1) name of project or deliverable, 2) audience, 3) your involvement with the project, 4) any particular obstacles you overcame or problems you solved during the project.

- ◉ <u>At the interview</u>, usually wait until the interviewer either requests to see the portfolio, or offer to show it after you and the interviewer have discussed your background and experiences.

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Tool 2: Portfolio & Presentation (cont'd)

7 Great Portfolio Sites For Freelance Writers (And Most Are Free)

- Journo Portfolio…
- Clippings.me…
- Squarespace. …
- Contently. …
- Flavors.me. …
- Pressfolios. …
- WordPress.com…

Tool 3: Inteviewing Skills

Prepare for the interview ahead of time to minimize surprises:

1) <u>Retrieve directions</u> to the location.

2) <u>Check out company</u> website and learn about the history, products, culture, etc.,

3) <u>Make a list of questions you anticipate may be asked</u>; then think about the answers you might provide.

4) <u>Bring a list of prepared questions</u>. This may include questions about: a) the position, expectations, career growth potential, b) company background, management structure, culture, financial strength, future growth, etc., c), if interviewing with an agency or recruiting firm, then questions about their track record, compensation levels, specifics about contracting.

5) <u>Arrive on time</u>. Arriving 10 to 15 minutes early is advisable. Important: If you are late, avoid making excuses. Be honest with the reason and apologize.

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Tool 3: Inteviewing Skills (cont'd)

- <u>Attire</u>: "business professional" level.

- <u>It may sound like an old cliché</u>, but a good place to start is always with a firm handshake, eye contact, and a smile.

- <u>Bring a well-organized and representative portfolio of work samples</u>. This can include separate manuals, books, handouts, etc. Laptops may be necessary for showing online sample portfolio. (Important: Lack of samples makes it more challenging for interviewer to assess background and experience.

- <u>Be ready to describe your involvement with project samples</u>. (Examples: Did you write it "from scratch"? Did you update the document? Were you simply the project coordinator?)

- <u>In addition to brining your portfolio, laptop</u>, also bring an extra resume, flash drive (with sample files), and a list of references.

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- ◉ <u>Be prepared to provide</u> the interviewer a brief summary of your personal background and career background, starting with your most recent assignment or position.

- ◉ <u>Other topics for discussion that you may anticipate</u>: 1) identifying your current career objective, 2) describing how you entered your current career path, 3) emphasizing skills or strengths that set you apart from other candidates.

- ◉ <u>Always maintain good eye contact</u>; it shows confidence, alertness, and interest.

- ◉ <u>Answer questions thoroughly, but concisely</u>. A big "turn-off" is interrupting the interviewer, or controlling the conversation. Let the interviewer control the conversation, as he or she most likely has an interview format that they follow. Additionally, there is a limited amount of time to gather information about your skills and experiences.

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- <u>Ok to engage a small amount of small-talk</u> to "break the ice", but nothing controversial.

- <u>Avoid questions about compensation</u>—unless the topic is raised by interviewer.

- <u>Avoid sounding defensive</u> when asked to clarify certain omissions from your resume. Being combative or difficult is a "red flag" to the interviewer.

- <u>Avoid any implications of blame</u>, such as: "your place is difficult to find."

- <u>Follow up soon after the interview</u> with an e-mail or thank you letter. If interested, express your interest by telling the interviewer(s) why you believe you are the best candidate for the position.

- Check back periodically—but not excessively.

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Tool 4: Communication Tools

Communication is vital to a successful job search. Making yourself easily accessible and quickly responsive can sometimes be the difference between getting a job, or missing out on it.

- Have all <u>vital contact information</u> on resume.

- Make sure you have a <u>working cell phone, with voice mail set up</u>.

- <u>Check e-mail and voice mail on a regular basis</u>.

- <u>Return e-mail inquiries and missed phone calls promptly</u>—sometimes a day or even hours can make the difference.

- Be proactive and check in with your agencies or contacts periodically—shows interest, energy, and professionalism.

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Tool 5: Social Media Presence

- LinkedIn—highest priority
- Facebook—prudent use
- Other—no particular commentary

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<u>Networking is not dead</u>—it is alive and well! Networking is still considered one of the most effective ways of finding employment opportunities.

- Professional organizations such as the STC, AMWA.

- Job search networks, workshops, classes, offered in a variety of venues and settings.

- Peers, professional colleagues from past employment.

- Friends, neighbors, relatives.

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Keep the job pipeline filled by applying for jobs that match your career objectives on a regular basis. Here are some common sources for such:

◉ Corporate job sites

◉ Agency job boards

◉ Job posting sites such as Indeed, Zip Recruiter, Monster

◉ Job fairs (in-person)

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Hiring options available:

- ◉ Contract (typically, through an agency, at the client site).

- ◉ Contract-to-hire.

- ◉ Full time direct.

- ◉ Consulting—aka: freelancing, independent consultant (via an agency, or direct with the client).

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Where do I search for opportunities?

- Job boards
- Networking
- Corporate sites
- Generic recruiters
- Focused agencies specializing in communication professionals
- Academic sources—campus career fairs, career office postings
- Local and national career fairs

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Tool 8: Follow-up Protocol

Following a job interview, be sure to devote adequate time and energy to the follow-up process.

1. <u>Communicate appreciation and interest</u> with an email or thank you letter.

2. <u>Offer</u> to answer additional questions, provide additional samples, and/or offer list of references.

3. <u>Be accessible</u> by phone, email.

4. <u>Return emails or calls promptly</u>.

5. <u>Check back occasionally</u> after an interview--but don't over do it. Do same after applying for a position—assuming you have a contact name.

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Job Search Behavioral Traits To Develop

- Disciplined

- Punctual

- Responsive

- Communicative

- Methodical

- Resourceful

- Flexible

- Pro-active

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- Treat your job search like a job.

- Be aware of competition.

- Be positive.

- You can negotiate.

- You are interviewing them as much as they are interviewing you.

- If it doesn't work out, then move on— there are other opportunities.

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Practices Or Behaviors To Avoid

⦿ Being too bold, presumptuous.

⦿ Letting our ego get out of control.

⦿ Checking in too often.

⦿ Asking too many questions.

⦿ Taking for granted your network (i.e., burning bridges).

⦿ Letting rejections get you down.

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- …preparation
- …basic job search tools
- …communication
- …conversation
- …presentation
- …attire
- …attitude
- …appearance

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Your Future Looks Bright

We at JPG wish you the very best of success in your search for your next career opportunity in technical communication!

If you have any questions related to the topic of technical communications, we invite you to email me at: jerry@jpgassoc.com, or contact me by phone: 651-779-1072.

Thank you for joining me today!

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