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Job Power Ace the Interview

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Important: Read This First!

Congratulations! You found a company that was intrigued by your résumé, or by a recommendation from a third party. They want to see you. Let's get prepared for the interview!

This is not a book to read, this is a **Work Book**, a how-to kit. In it I will help you prepare yourself for an interview. The interview is the most important, the decisive, part of your job search. Somebody finally looks at you and has to decide whether or not to hire you.

I assume you have done the preliminary work:

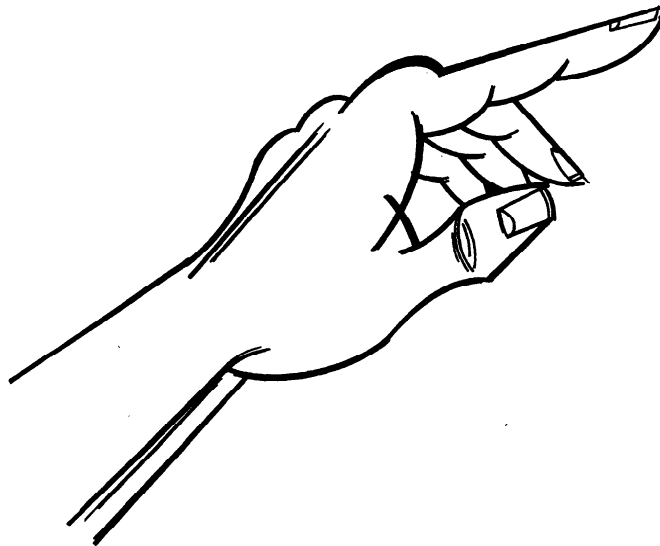
- You know what kind of job you want.
- You know what your strengths are, what you can offer; and what you have to sell.
- You have a good résumé.

The action sheets in this book are for you to write in. You will fill them in with your ideas, conclusions, and drafts. You will find that writing helps you develop clear, well-formulated ideas.

To get started, read quickly through the whole book. This will tell you what to expect. Then go through it in detail, filling in all the action sheets.



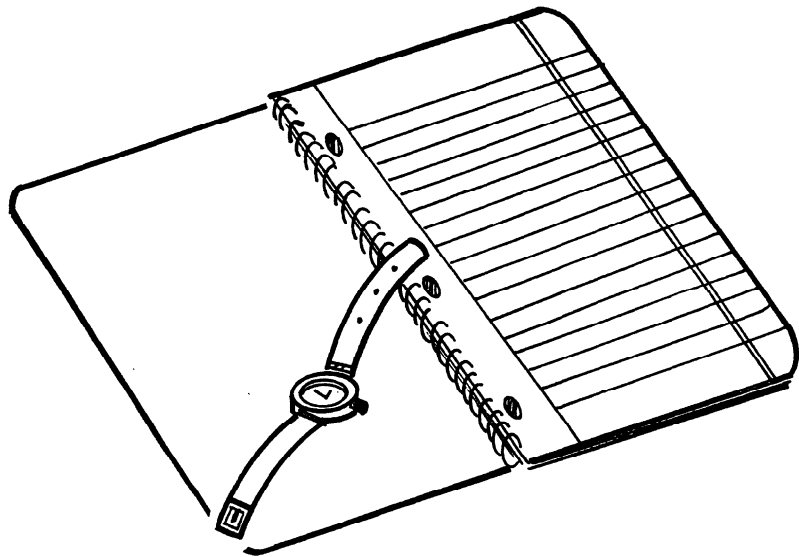
I was a top manager in two very different industries, and personally hired a lot of men and women. I organized some takeovers and mergers, and had to let a number of employees go. Realizing the problems these people faced, I left my job and started a career transition company. In the last 10 years, I have helped hundreds of men and women decide what kind of a job they should be looking for, and have shown them how to find it. This book is the outcome of my experience. It will not try to psycho-analyze you or teach you any fancy theories. It will just teach you how to succeed at presenting yourself in a job interview.



Know Yourself

Identify Your Strengths and Weaknesses

The interview is your chance to convince an employer that you're the right person for a job. To do that, you need to be clear about where you're strong, and where you need work. You need to be able to describe your skills and interests, and to have clear career goals. The Action Sheets and Checklists in this section will help you get ready to answer an interviewer's questions.



Action Sheet 1: Outline of Work and Education

Wouldn't it be great if interviewers sent you a list of questions in advance, so that you could prepare your answers? Unfortunately, they don't. You need to be prepared to answer any kind of questions about your background. Preparing an outline of your work and education will help you be ready for anything.

First, break your life down into parts: school, first job, second job. (If you have more work experience, write it on a separate sheet of paper.) For each part, write down:

- why you chose that program or job
- what you did while you were there
- why you left

School: _____

Major programs studied: _____

Why you chose that program: _____

What you did while you were there: _____

First job: _____

Why you chose that job: _____

What you did while you were there: _____

Why you left: _____

Second job: _____

Why you chose that job: _____

What you did while you were there: _____

Why you left: _____

Action Sheet 2: Long-term and Short-term Goals

A common interview question is, "Where do you want to be in five years?" This Action Sheet will help you answer the question.

In the first column, write what you want to have in each category now. In the second column, write your goal in five years. In the last column, write your goal in ten years.

	today	5 years	10 years
kind of job			
income			
level of responsibility			
type of supervisor			
job location			
company size			
work hours			
workdays			

Now write one or two sentences that summarize your goals.

In five years, I want _____

In ten years, I want _____

✓ Checklist 1: Who Am I?

How would you describe yourself? Are you clear-sighted or quick-tempered? Dependable or absentminded? We all have different personality traits. And different jobs call for different strengths.

The words in this list all describe different personality traits. Some of them probably don't describe your personality at all. Some probably describe you very well. Some probably fall somewhere in between. Put a **1** beside any word that fits your personality very closely. Put a **2** beside any word that fits you pretty well. And put a **3** beside any word that doesn't fit you at all. If you aren't sure about a word, look it up in the dictionary. Does the dictionary definition fit you, or not?

1—describes you well		2—describes you pretty well		3—doesn't describe you at all	
<input type="checkbox"/>	absentminded	<input type="checkbox"/>	careful	<input type="checkbox"/>	friendly
<input type="checkbox"/>	accomplished	<input type="checkbox"/>	careless	<input type="checkbox"/>	generous
<input type="checkbox"/>	accurate	<input type="checkbox"/>	charitable	<input type="checkbox"/>	good-humored
<input type="checkbox"/>	adaptable	<input type="checkbox"/>	confident	<input type="checkbox"/>	greedy
<input type="checkbox"/>	adventurous	<input type="checkbox"/>	consistent	<input type="checkbox"/>	gregarious
<input type="checkbox"/>	aggressive	<input type="checkbox"/>	convincing	<input type="checkbox"/>	hardworking
<input type="checkbox"/>	ambitious	<input type="checkbox"/>	courteous	<input type="checkbox"/>	healthy
<input type="checkbox"/>	analytical	<input type="checkbox"/>	creative	<input type="checkbox"/>	high-spirited
<input type="checkbox"/>	argumentative	<input type="checkbox"/>	curious	<input type="checkbox"/>	honest
<input type="checkbox"/>	artistic	<input type="checkbox"/>	decisive	<input type="checkbox"/>	imaginative
<input type="checkbox"/>	assertive	<input type="checkbox"/>	deft	<input type="checkbox"/>	immature
<input type="checkbox"/>	brave	<input type="checkbox"/>	delicate	<input type="checkbox"/>	impatient
<input type="checkbox"/>	calm	<input type="checkbox"/>	demanding	<input type="checkbox"/>	independent
<input type="checkbox"/>	capable	<input type="checkbox"/>	dependable	<input type="checkbox"/>	industrious

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1—describes you well		2—describes you pretty well		3—doesn't describe you at all	
<input type="checkbox"/>	inquisitive	<input type="checkbox"/>	outgoing	<input type="checkbox"/>	solid
<input type="checkbox"/>	intelligent	<input type="checkbox"/>	passionate	<input type="checkbox"/>	stable
<input type="checkbox"/>	introverted	<input type="checkbox"/>	passive	<input type="checkbox"/>	stingy
<input type="checkbox"/>	inventive	<input type="checkbox"/>	patient	<input type="checkbox"/>	strong
<input type="checkbox"/>	lenient	<input type="checkbox"/>	peaceful	<input type="checkbox"/>	strong-willed
<input type="checkbox"/>	loyal	<input type="checkbox"/>	people-oriented	<input type="checkbox"/>	successful
<input type="checkbox"/>	mature	<input type="checkbox"/>	persistent	<input type="checkbox"/>	tactful
<input type="checkbox"/>	meticulous	<input type="checkbox"/>	persuasive	<input type="checkbox"/>	talented
<input type="checkbox"/>	narrow-minded	<input type="checkbox"/>	polite	<input type="checkbox"/>	tidy
<input type="checkbox"/>	neat	<input type="checkbox"/>	positive	<input type="checkbox"/>	trustworthy
<input type="checkbox"/>	nervous	<input type="checkbox"/>	practical	<input type="checkbox"/>	understanding
<input type="checkbox"/>	objective	<input type="checkbox"/>	professional	<input type="checkbox"/>	unscrupulous
<input type="checkbox"/>	open-minded	<input type="checkbox"/>	punctual	<input type="checkbox"/>	vigorous
<input type="checkbox"/>	organized	<input type="checkbox"/>	quiet	<input type="checkbox"/>	weak

Look at the words that you rated as a 1, meaning that they describe you well. Choose the six words that you think describe you best, and write them below.

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____
5. _____
6. _____

✓ Checklist 2: Skills on the Job

Employers often want people who know how to do specific things: use a word processor, hang sheetrock. But they often want more general abilities, too, like being able to resolve conflicts, or set goals. Use this checklist to rate your abilities in each of the following areas.

	Excellent	Good	Poor
Budgeting skills able to keep accurate financial records and estimate income and expenses to manage a budget			
Conflict resolution skills able to understand other points of view and negotiate an acceptable agreement			
Consensus-building skills able to make group decision-making easier			
Global perspectives able to get along with others, appreciate different cultures, maintain an openness to new ideas, be aware of cultural differences, and develop a global perspective			
Group interaction skills able to work cooperatively with people to reach a common goal			
Interpersonal skills able to listen well, express feelings appropriately, and understand the feelings of others			
Oral presentation skills able to speak effectively and explain concepts accurately			
Organizational skills able to plan and prioritize tasks associated with a schedule or deadline			
Problem-solving skills able to identify problems, propose and evaluate solutions, and decide on the best solution			
Self-awareness understand personal values, interests, strengths, weaknesses, goals, motivations, and personality characteristics			
Self-confidence have a strong self-image, able to stand up for beliefs			

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	Excellent	Good	Poor
Setting goals understand the elements of setting, achieving, and assessing short- and long-term goals			
Stress management skills able to manage stress in healthy ways through recreation, exercise, relaxation, and time management			
Team-building skills able to organize and enact changes required to enhance group effectiveness and promote group development			
Time management skills able to manage time effectively and productively			
Written communication skills able to create grammatically correct, concise, and clear written materials			

Which of your skills did you rate as excellent? Write them on the lines below.

[illegible]

Action Sheet 3: What Are My Strengths?

What are your strengths? What are you best at? These can be character traits, like being a good listener, or learned techniques, like knowing a programming language. Think of at least three character traits and three learned techniques that you consider personal strengths. Write them down on this Action Sheet. Then think of a time when you demonstrated each strength, and write it down. Look for times when other people noticed your strength. Did you ever receive a bonus or an award for something you see as a strength? Was something you did noted on a report or evaluation? It is useful to be able to document your strengths.

Strength: _____

Demonstrated by: _____

Strength: _____

Demonstrated by: _____

Strength: _____

Demonstrated by: _____

Strength: _____

Demonstrated by: _____

Strength: _____

Demonstrated by: _____

Strength: _____

Demonstrated by: _____

Strength: _____

Demonstrated by: _____

Action Sheet 4: What Are My Weak Areas?

You may feel that you want to focus on your strengths for this interview, not your weaknesses. But employers want to know about your weak areas, too. They know everyone has them. If they hire you, they need to be sure your weak areas won't cause a problem on the job. For example, if the person hired as administrative assistant was disorganized, the company would suffer. For this reason, employers often ask something like, "What do you consider your greatest weakness?" If you answer by saying, "I'm always late for everything," you probably won't get the job. It's best to be able to either name a weakness that you have overcome, or name something that could be seen as a strength as well as a weakness. In the first case, you could say, "I used to be rather disorganized, but I took a course where I learned how to set up systems and prioritize, and it's no longer a problem." In the second case, you could say, "Some people might say I'm over-attentive to details—but others would probably say I'm unusually thorough."

On the lines below, list six weaknesses you have now or had in the past. For each one, either describe how you overcame the weakness or find some way to make it sound like a strength.

Weakness: _____

Solution: _____

Weakness: _____

Solution: _____

Weakness: _____

Solution: _____

Weakness: _____

Solution: _____

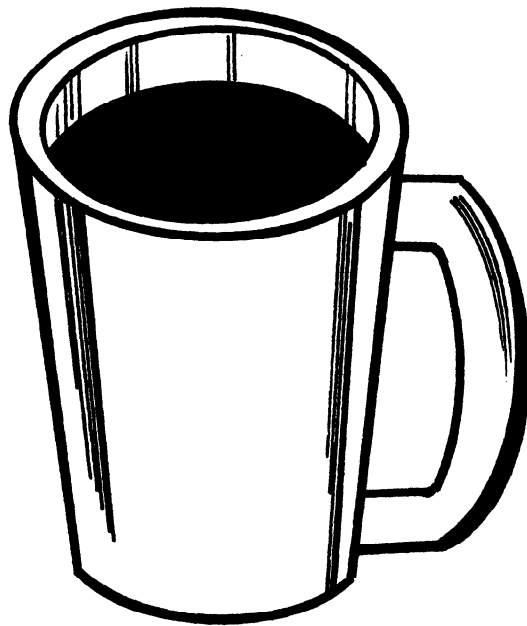
Weakness: _____

Solution: _____

Starting in Your New Job

Congratulations! You have a new job! I hope your job is a good step forward toward your chosen career, and toward the goals you determined on Action Sheet 2.

Now let us make sure you get off to a good start. Here are some things to think about.



How to Start in Your New Job

- Learn the rules. The company you joined prospered before you came. They have developed rules. Learn them and respect them. You may think that some of these rules do not make much sense—but take the time to find out. You have to adapt to your new employment; it will not adapt to you.
- Use your first 100 days! That is the “honeymoon” period a new president of the United States is granted by the press and the public. It is also the time you are granted by your boss and your colleagues to be “new.” Use this time to ask questions, to clarify anything you do not understand. For two or three months nobody will be amazed if you ask a lot of questions, even stupid questions. But after those first few months you are supposed to know the answers. Ask questions, so that you understand everything! Remember: It is smarter to ask dumb questions than to make dumb mistakes!
- Open your ears. There are official channels of communications, but there are also unofficial ones. A lot of information is passed at the coffee machine, or at the central photocopier. Secretaries know many things before their bosses do. Do not search for gossip in the company—but keep your ears open.
- Know the people. There is an official chain of command, an official structure. But often the most influential people are not the ones with the biggest office and the fanciest title. Look for signs of power independent of official titles.
- Keep in mind, whatever you may be told, no employer can guarantee job security. Your employer certainly has the best intentions, but nobody knows the future. A takeover, a failing product, a recession, or any other event may force the company to let people go. So keep your eyes open for other job possibilities.
- Stay employable. Keep up with new developments, new techniques, new products or equipment, so that you always have a lot to sell, should you ever want—or need—to look for another job.
- Keep your long-term objectives in mind. There’s a saying that goes, “Most people aim for nothing in life, and hit it with amazing accuracy.” Do not be one of them!

Good luck in your new job!