

Work Ministry

The Recruitment/Selection Process

The job search process from the perspective of the employer is a series of discrete steps, each essential to success of the overall search. The process is well-established and follows a pattern that job seekers can use to advantage, provided they understand the process. The four-step process is:

- Define job specifications for responsibilities and selection criteria
- Screen resumes using the specs to identify prospects
- Conduct phone interviews of selected resumes using the specs to identify candidates
- Meet with candidates and use the specs to select a finalist

Job Specifications: what the company wants

When a position becomes available in a company, the HR function and hiring manager review and reach agreement upon the criteria for selecting the right person. Job specifications define requirements such as:

- Education, work experiences and industry background to acquire a person with credentials that enable early success in the position, and
- Skill sets and technical proficiencies to assure competency of performance.

The above criteria may result in eight to ten requirements for the hiring decision. Most importantly, the specifications drive all phases of the selection process, such as resume screenings, evaluation of job fair candidates, employee referrals, interview assessments, etc., through to hiring of the final candidate.

How do you get the details of the specs? Fortunately, the job specifications are readily available to job seekers in ads, postings on company web sites and other sources. The order of presentation of the specifications also demonstrates what is most to least important and may suggest possible tradeoffs and areas of flexibility as well.

To effectively address the specifications, consider the following:

- Networking: Add the specs to your conversations with people who have knowledge of the company's operations to get better informed about company plans. Ideally, network for an introduction to a former employee or perhaps a current employee for more insights.

- Research: Use the internet and other resources to learn more about the company as well as key terms of the specs. Add "specs talk" to every communication with the target company.

The challenge of the job seeker during this stage is to demonstrate competency, comfort and familiarity with as much of the specs agenda as possible. The job specifications are the central issue at every stage of the candidate screening process: the resume design, the phone screening interview and the job interview.

Resume Design: send a clear message

A resume screener searches for candidates who match the specifications. A strong, focused resume that captures three or four core competencies plus related accomplishments allows the screener to make multiple connections with the job specifications. The resume screener doesn't need to know all that the job seeker has ever done; instead, he/she is looking for the match between the specs and the background outlined in the resume. Some key points in relation to the job specifications:

Core competencies are the key skills of the job seeker, those skills that are performed well, with subject matter expertise, supported by solid accomplishments.

Core competencies should be evident throughout the two-page resume.

Every job seeker has one set of core competencies, so one resume should be used, mixing and matching the presentation of the core competencies to improve the correlation with job specs as needed.

Some key points on resume design to communicate core competencies more effectively:

- Use a resume that is no more than two pages in length
- Place the past ten years of experience on page one, all other background on page two
- Define three or four core competencies and accomplishments related to same
- Draft a Summary at the top of the resume that contains three essential statements:
 - A "global" statement that covers overall career
 - A strengths statement that defines core competencies: what you do best
 - A proficiency statement that lists software or other technical resources that apply to the profession
- Present core competencies as accomplishments that relate to the specifications.
- Review the resume and remove "job description" information, leaving only core competencies to make the case for your candidacy.

In order to get past the resume screening, core competencies information must correlate well with the job specifications. That's what screeners are looking for in selecting resumes for follow up.

Phone Screening Interview: get "on message"

Recruiters contact those prospects that appear to match up well with the specs to determine if they are viable candidates. Like resume preparation, there are abundant resources available for how to handle this step as well, but some key points to improve performance are:

- Since you have worked hard in your search for the moment when a company calls, keep your notes and records in order to enable quick reference as needed.
- A recruiter may call or email and ask to schedule a time for a phone interview. Select a time of day that works best for your schedule and prepare for the call with notes on the company, your list of questions about the job, key points about your background that you want to cover and, finally, get into the right mind set for the conversation.
- Recruiters ask questions because they don't know what the answers are. Respond to the questions asked, avoid using questions to segue into other areas that may or may not be of interest to the recruiter.
- Comments about career, job roles and responsibilities are most effective if the job specs are used to drive the details. Talk about yourself in terms of the specs.
- Core competencies should be presented using the priorities of the job specifications as script direction. Any shortcomings versus the specs should be addressed by citing other, comparable achievements.
- Finally, close the call with a summary of core competencies and state a strong interest in a meeting to discuss the opportunity.
- A final point: the phone-screening interview is not about you. It is about the specifications and how you match up.

All other considerations being equal, the job seeker who stays "on message" by presenting his/her core competencies in terms of the job specifications will get the opportunity to interview for the position.

Interview: talk about the specifications

Interviewing job seekers enables a company to evaluate the candidates, test their own expectations and find the "best fit" to effectively meet their hiring goals. Consider some key points about job interviewing:

- The application for employment is often a first step in interviewing on site. If it is not offered, ask for an application and prepare it because that gets you formally into the company's system as a candidate. The records have to be kept for one year, which may enable you to get a callback for another opportunity if the current position is not a fit.
- Cover the basics: be on time, bring copies of your resume, get the business card of every person on the interview schedule.
- Take notes in each meeting on the schedule.
- The job specs provide a "road map" for content. Use the specs to share details about career, job roles and responsibilities that connect to the specs.
- Listen to the Interviewer and answer the questions asked. Let the Interviewer ask for more details.
- If you meet with company staff from various functions other than your speciality, cover aspects of your background of particular interest to them. For example, if you are an Engineer and are introduced to people in sales or customer service, talk about your customer contact roles.
- Be prepared to ask a few solid questions that demonstrate knowledge and comfort level with the job specifications, which will illustrate that you "walk the talk" when it comes to the company requirements.
- A final point: ask for the job!

Job seekers who address the interests of the company by talking about the company needs at every stage of the recruitment/selection process are much more likely to reach the goal of a job offer.

Bill Broderick is a Principal in Work Ministry with a broad background in executive search and career coaching.

All information is copyrighted by Work Ministry or resources noted. Printing of any information is permitted, but documents may not be altered or used for commercial purposes.