



The
Lukaszewski
Group

Management Consultants
In Communications

FINDING YOUR FIRST JOB IN PUBLIC RELATIONS

How to Prepare for Interviews



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THE JOB SEEKERS FOUR MOST IMPORTANT TOOLS

1. **The Marketing Résumé**

The Marketing Résumé is a format that highlights what you want to do, are doing, and know how to do. It sells experience, not chronology. A Marketing Résumé has three basic parts besides your name, address, telephone number, and E-mail address.

2. **The Cover Letter**

The Cover Letter needs to accomplish three objectives: gain interest, evidence your knowledge about the company, and express your desire for the position.

3. **Crib Cards**

Crib Cards are four-by-six index cards on which you write key information to help your memory during interviews.

4. **The Chronologic Résumé**

The Chronologic Résumé lists jobs and internship experiences from most recent back to your first job or internship position.

E-MAIL VS. SNAIL MAIL: HOW TO PUT YOUR BEST FOOT FORWARD, FIRST

As a new graduate looking for your first professional position, you have the benefit of job search Web sites such as Monster.com, on-line classified postings, and professional networking sites such as LinkedIn. Undoubtedly, you will reply via E-mail.

The ease of hitting the “send” button, together with the wide geographic mobility of so many recent graduates, means that prospective employers are receiving four, five, six, and perhaps even 10 times the number of responses to their personnel ads as they would have received before the advent of the Internet and E-mail. Therefore, for that first job of your dreams you will be competing against greater numbers of qualified candidates from a wider geographic area.

Here are some tips that may help your response stand out and be more seriously considered.

1. If you are really interested in a position, do your homework. Check out the company’s Web site and use a search engine, e.g., google.com, to find articles and current company information. Weave portions of what you learn into your cover letter.
2. Double check the grammar and spelling in your on-line job search information. Make sure that your profile “looks” good electronically. If you use Microsoft’s Track Changes feature, don’t inadvertently allow the recipient of your electronic résumé an unintended insight into your job search strategy. Accept all changes before attaching any newly customized or edited documents.
3. Prepare a cogent and compelling E-mail message to which you attach your résumé and cover letter. Come up with something more persuasive than, “I saw your ad on *NY Times* Web site and wish to apply for the position.” Also, be careful not to inadvertently close doors by using exclusionary language such as, “It has been my mindset to only work for a company that is willing to grow and expand.”
4. Consider opening an E-mail account for your job search activities. And, if you are directing prospective employers to your cell phone number, make certain that the message there is polished and professional. On an ancillary note, college recruiters and human resources staff responsible for hiring are routinely social media sites such as www.facebook.com, www.google.com, and other on-line resources to prescreen applicants. Think about this before you begin sending résumés and remove inappropriate photos and language.
5. Help the Personnel Director keep straight all the applications crossing his or her desk by appropriately naming your attachments, e.g., <first name> <last name> Résumé and <first name> <last name> Cover Letter. Remember, you are already asking him or her to open and print your E-mail, then your attachments, and finally to fasten them together.
6. For those dream jobs and companies where you would really like to work, seriously consider sending snail mail in addition to or in place of E-mail. In a recent radio feature on this topic, a personnel manager said he had received 168 E-mail and five snail mail applications that day from a classified ad placed in *The New York Times*. It was the five snail mail applications he went on to describe. Based on his enthusiasm, I suspect that those five were all selected for an in-person interview.

Skill Clinic

Tailor your resume to achieve a marketable success

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As someone who hires public relations agencies and individual practitioners for projects across the United States and Canada, it's extremely frustrating to see how poorly public relations practitioners talk about those things they know how to do. As you begin your public relations career, here's a simple model I call the *marketing resume* that will help you turn what you know into experience you can sell.

WHAT THE INTERVIEWER WANTS TO KNOW

Whether you are a freelancer, part of a PR agency team, or someone coming up within the corporate framework, there are three things I want to know about you when I consider hiring you:

- What you want to do (this is related to what I need to know)
- What you know how to do (that adds value to your goals)
- What you've already done (may indicate a better fit in my organization)

GETTING READY TO MARKET YOURSELF

As I talk to clients and other PR professionals who make hiring decisions, they all have identified and look for common attributes in job applicants. It's these characteristics an employer needs that you must address first as you begin to think about how you can best market yourself.

1. Identify what you want to do

Start noting in alphabetical order those things you'd like to do and build your experience in those directions.

2. Know what you know how to do.

When it comes time to market your services, you'll be prepared with specific examples of what you know how to do which support your marketing objectives. Remember, you're not selling everything... just those skills which are being purchased.

3. Know what you've already done.

What are those things, especially those you'd like to talk about as experience whether or not you really want to do them in the future?

4. Know those skills and tasks you would like to be able to do. One of the most important things I want to know from applicants is those skills they *want to learn* to broaden their career.

THE MARKETING RESUME

The marketing resume is a format that highlights what you want to do, are doing, and know how to do. It sells experience, not chronology. A marketing resume has three basic parts besides your name, address, and telephone number:

"You're not selling everything... just those skills which are being purchased."

1. *A specific job related or professional goal (at the top).* Keep in mind what a goal is: a simply stated, positive, brief, time sensitive, achievable, plain language statement of something you'd like to accomplish. Applicants tend to shy away from job-related goals for three reasons.

First, they're afraid if they put a goal down and it isn't what the buyer is looking for they won't get interviewed. If you want to do something I have no use for, i.e., if you do shopping center openings and I do landfills, I don't think I'm going to hire you no matter what your resume looks like. Let's not waste each others' time.)

Second, applicants often have difficulty coming up with meaningful, specific goals such as I described a moment ago. Take the time and trouble — develop several. Your career will move along faster if you know what you're after.

And third, some resume advisors tell you not to have any goal at all, just lay out the chronology of your experience. Remember, those of us who hire people do not hire chronology. We hire people with knowledge, skill, ability, talent and ambition. Sooner or later we'll get to chronology but first we want to know if we have any interest in hiring you or if you have any interest in working for us. But we'll behave the way we think you want us to. If you present chronology, guess what we'll talk about — not what you want to do but where you've been.

2. *Your specific experience.* Tell me what you know how to do combined with what you want to learn to do (four of five types of experience maximum). Remember I don't buy verbs, "Handled," "managed," "coordinated," "built," and "strategized" are smokescreen words — wandering generalities which don't do a thing to enlighten me as to what you know how to do. **Be specific.**

3. *Special knowledge.* I once interviewed an individual who listed being a trade association intern on her chronological resume. What she really did during that internship was help develop a program on teen-age suicide. This was and remains very special knowledge for a person who was barely more than a teenager herself. By reshaping a simple internship experience to focusing on the special knowledge she gained, she had a valuable piece of input for her resume. We do not buy internships. *We buy the experience you gained while being an intern.* Another form of special knowledge is those various computer systems you might be able to operate. The more you know about using word processors and computer equipment, the more valuable you are.

Keep your marketing resume to one page, one side. It is a marketing tool designed to focus both you and the interviewer on those things you want to talk about and those things you want to do.

Another tip — list your experience in the order which both supports your goals and in which you'd like to work. The result will be that the interviewer will talk about the topics you're most interested in and will be focused in the direction you both want to go. This step assures that your "hot topics" come up. Otherwise they could get missed or misinterpreted.

"We do not buy internships. We buy the experience you gained while being an intern."

Turning what you know into something of value to advance your career, to get a better job or make your current job better are obligations we have as professional practitioners. It is expected that we will learn something new everyday and apply that to ourselves and to the benefit of those we counsel. Develop a personal catalog of your various skills, knowledge and abilities. Be ready to bring them to bear on the process of professional and self-improvement when the time is right.

Yes, you should also have a chronology, but only as a supplement to your marketing resume. The marketing resume enables you to stay in the game longer by talking about those things that are most important to you based on your understanding of what the company itself is looking for.

Good Luck!

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MARKETING RÉSUMÉ WORKSHEET

Name: _____

Address: _____

Telephone: _____

E-mail: _____

Objective: _____

Experience:

1. _____

2. _____

3. _____

4. _____

Related Experience: _____

SAMPLE COVER LETTER

A short, powerful, positive cover letter will accomplish three objectives:

1. Get the individual receiving your marketing résumé interested in meeting you.
2. Evidence that you know something about the organization you are applying to.
3. Show your willingness to take command of the interview process.



Date

Contact Name

Contact Title

Organization Name

Organization Address

City, State ZIP

Dear _____:

As I pursue my career in public relations, I've noticed your organization and am very interested in talking with you about an entry-level position.

In reviewing your Web site, I noticed you make products my family has used for years. I'm especially intrigued by the manufacturing process for XYZ.

Let me take the initiative and contact your office for an appointment. You'll hear from me shortly, and I hope you'll take the opportunity to meet with me. XYZ Industries, Inc. would be a great place to begin my career.

Sincerely,

Your Name Here

CRIB CARDS

Crib cards are four-by-six cards on which you have written the information to help your memory during interviews:

- Two or three favorite stories you tell about yourself that illustrate who you are and what you know how to do
(Use only titles on the crib card. Forget writing the entire story out.)
- Important facts
- Information you'll want to remember to mention for this and other interviews
- Pertinent information such as the name of a reference or two
- Other information that you might find useful

Bring only three or four crib cards to an interview, maximum, with up to five bits of information on each.

Also bring a handful of blank lined index cards on which to take notes during the conversation. Taking notes is a very flattering exercise and helps you remember information for the follow-up letters and correspondence you'll be sending following the interview.

Everyone appreciates having his or her words noted by another human being. Take advantage of this process to be more effective and more impressive in your interaction with job interviewers.

MARKETING RÉSUMÉ EXAMPLE

Your Full Name

Your Mailing Address
Contact Telephone Number • E-mail Address

Employment Objective

An entry-level position within a Public Relations agency. <Example, e.g., Journalism> experience developed excellent written and verbal skills. The candidate has other important skills, knowledge, and abilities.

Writing/Editing

Write and Edit News Releases – 2004

- Create event program brochure and other collateral materials

Reporter - North Chicago Daily – 2004-2005

- Interview and report the happenings around college campus

Freelance Writer – 2006

- Gather and package information for several feature stories

Fraternity Chapter Awards Chair – 2004

- Write copy and submit fraternal portfolio information to National Organization Awards committee

Media Relations/Direct Contact

- Outreach with volunteers to support media and special events – Toast Masters 2006
- Organize meetings with various civic organizations; provide information to attendees and local celebrities
- Meet with department/organization heads and entice fund donation – local event
- Discuss and promote events to local media – local event 2004/Fight Night 2003

Event Planning

Major Creative Event – Big Ridge Mall 2006

- Provide event planning support and assist Public Relations specialist

Fraternity Days – Fraternity/University of North Chicago 2004

- Develop levels of contribution, scheduling/organizing events, and underwriters

Research

Coordinate Research for Newsletters – Non-profit Organization 2005-2006

- Gather information to be placed in monthly E-newsletter

Gather Past Statistics to Apply to Event – Fraternity Days 2004

Fund raising

Philanthropy Chair – Fraternity Days 2004

- Organize and run campus-wide philanthropic event: \$8,000 to non-profit organization

Fundraising Chair – Fraternity 2004

- Create ideas for financial benefit and implement them to increase funds

Multi-Cultural Travel

Study Abroad – Summer 2004

- Learn in-depth insights about Spanish culture and language through five-week seminar in Spain

Education

University of North Chicago – May 2006

BA: Public Relations

Minor: Spanish

Organizations

- Vice President of Public Relations Student Society of America – 2004-2006
- Fraternity – 2001-present

CHRONOLOGIC RÉSUMÉ EXAMPLE

[Insert Address]

[Insert Telephone Number and
E-mail Address]

Your Full Name

Objective	[Insert Objective]		
Experience	2001–Present	Company	City, State
	National Sales Manager		
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Increased sales from \$50 million to \$100 million ▪ Doubled sales per representative from \$5 million to \$10 million ▪ Suggested new products that increased earnings by 23% 		
	1996–2001	Company	City, State
	District Sales Manager		
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Increased regional sales from \$25 million to \$350 million ▪ Managed 250 sales representatives in 10 Western states ▪ Implemented training course for new recruits — speeding profitability 		
	1992–1996	Company	City, State
	Senior Sales Representative		
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Expanded sales team from 50 to 100 representatives ▪ Tripled division revenues for each sales associate ▪ Expanded sales to include mass market accounts 		
	1987–1992	Company	City, State
	Sales Representative		
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Expanded territorial sales by 400% ▪ Received company's highest sales award four years in a row ▪ Developed Excellence In Sales training course 		
Education	1983–1992	State University	City, State
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ B.A., Business Administration and Computer Science ▪ Graduated Summa Cum Laude 		
Computer Skills	Proficient in MS Word, MS Excel, MS Access, MS PowerPoint, Adobe Acrobat, and Outlook		
Interests	Community involvement and SR Board of Directors		