

Networking

Twenty percent or fewer of all job openings are ever advertised. Most jobs are filled through personal referrals, direct contact with employers or employment agencies.

The key to networking is to make as many contacts as possible by meeting and talking to people who can help you learn about job openings and opportunities. Make sure to be specific about what you are looking for and how they can help. For instance:

- Make a list of friends, relatives, teachers or anyone with whom you may have a common thread. They might know of employers looking for your particular skills. Ask for tips, leads and suggestions to help you reach your goals. Take advantage of your “connections” and contact those employers or leads. Even if you do not get the job now, they might remember you later or even point you in a better direction.
- Attending a career fair is a particularly effective way to network. You will have the opportunity to meet with representatives from multiple industries, and to submit your résumé to several potential employers.
- Make an effort to learn about local employers and any you contact. Find out who is hiring, what type of work they do and who to contact about job openings. One of the best ways to go about this would be to check out the company’s website.
- Some good ways to start networking would be to attend career fairs, join a student or professional organization or network online. Don’t be afraid to approach new people. More times than not you’ll find a way you can help the person, or learn they are able to help you out.

Online Networking

It was not that long ago when getting tagged in a photo meant that someone took a picture of you getting punched, and writing on someone’s wall could get you busted for graffiti. But with the dramatic increase in the number of people signing on to social networking websites, these phrases have taken on whole new meanings.

When these sites started popping up a few years back, they were primarily used by college students and recent graduates as a means of keeping in touch with social acquaintances and friends. However, with millions of accounts on platforms like Facebook, MySpace, Twitter and LinkedIn, there is a good chance that everyone from your boss to your grandmother could be looking at your profile right now.

Thousands of people use these sites when searching for jobs or seeking out potential clients. But despite all of the positive and

beneficial applications these tools provide, there are also several ways that improper and careless use can affect your personal and professional life.

In March 2009, an employee of the Philadelphia Eagles was fired from his job of six years for posting a comment on his Facebook page concerning his dissatisfaction with management for releasing one of his favorite players. A few weeks prior to that, two nurses were fired from a hospital in Wisconsin for posting pictures of a patient on their Facebook accounts. This phenomenon has become so common that the term “Facebook fired” now appears in the online Urban Dictionary and is defined as, “being fired for something you post on Facebook.”

The simple fact is that social networking sites are tools, and tools have the potential to be dangerous if the proper precautions are not taken while using them. Here are a few suggestions to ensure safe use of social networking:

Don't post anything on your profile that you wouldn't be comfortable with showing up on the front page of your local newspaper. While you may post that picture of you out on the town last Saturday for the enjoyment of your friends, keep in mind that if they can see it, so can everybody else.

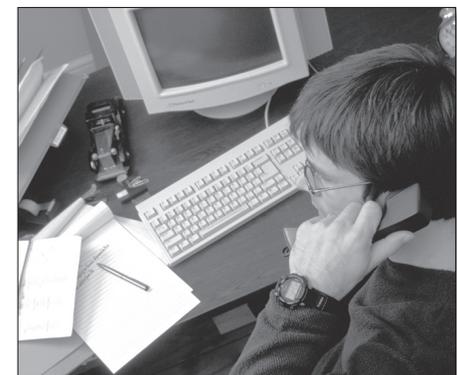
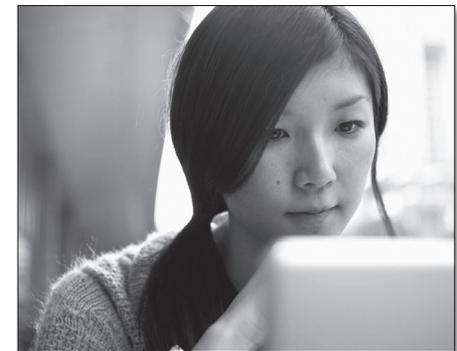
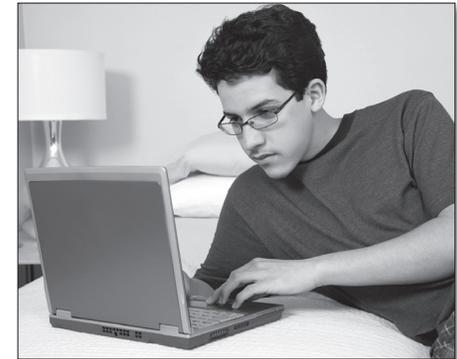
Don't use your profile as a way of venting about what's going on in your life. If you have a bad day at school or work, writing a couple of paragraphs about it may help you to blow off some steam. Keep in mind, though, that we all tend to say things out of frustration that can be quite hurtful if they are taken out of context.

Keep private information private. Information such as your home phone number or address can provide potentially dangerous people with unwanted access to your personal life. Additionally, cyber criminals thrive on information regarding your pets or grandparents' names, as these are the questions that banks and credit card companies use to verify your identity.

Remove comments posted by others that can get you in trouble. You can't always keep your friends or others from posting material that you don't want to be seen online. It is, therefore, important to remain aware of what is posted and remove information that could be harmful or ask those who posted it to remove it.

Do not admit to doing anything illegal. Even if you are joking, it is very difficult to undo such an admission. The police are just as capable of using social media sites as anyone else. The best bet is to avoid doing anything illegal in the first place.

If you keep these general rules in mind while using social media networks, there is no reason why these networks can't be a great tool to help you keep in touch with old friends, make some new ones or even land that job you've been looking for.



Obtaining and Retaining a Job

YOUR RÉSUMÉ

Making a Great First Impression

Think of your résumé as your personal sales brochure. It establishes a first impression of you and plays a pivotal role in whether or not you will get an interview.

But a résumé is more than a summary of your skills, experience and education; it is an advertisement of your best self. A prospective employer wants to know where you have worked and what skills you can bring to the workplace. So when touting your accomplishments, be specific. Give specific examples of where your skills brought about significant results. Instead of stating “good decision maker,” say “Made decision to streamline and increased profitability by 30 percent.” This could lead to a productive discussion during your interview.

Developing Your Résumé

Research suggests that your résumé has less than 20 seconds to catch someone’s eye and make the right impression. Take time to make it eye-catching and easy to read. To create an impressive résumé, it should be:

Résumés can vary in appearance, but most consist of the following components:

Well written: No spelling or grammatical mistakes. Keep it clear and concise. Have someone proofread your résumé before you give it to an employer.
Attractive: It should be typed and professional in appearance. An employer should be able to glance over the résumé and read the main points.
Concise: Your résumé should be as long as it has to be, and no longer. For a student, one page is usually sufficient.
Relevant: Include only information having to do with the job you are seeking or your career goals.
Personalized: Use the style and format that best reflects your needs and accomplishments.
Appropriate: Information and format must conform to employer expectations. An artist, for example may appropriately include graphics, while a banker should not.

Personal Data: Your name, telephone number, address and email address.
Education: List educational levels in reverse chronological order, most recent first. Include details relevant to the job, such as courses or special projects.
Work Experience: Summarize your work experience, focusing on your tasks and accomplishments. Include relevant unpaid work experience.
Activities: List those activities most relevant to your occupational goal. Include school, community and professional activities.

Common Complaints about Résumés

Listing objectives or meaningless introductions: Vague objectives and overly general introductions don't tell the reader anything of value, wasting their time and valuable résumé space. Tell them who you are and what you do by making a single, clear statement.

Writing in either the first or third person: Using the first- or third-person voice risks turning your résumé into a narrative. It can take it from a short summary of your qualifications into a second, redundant cover letter.

Important information is too hard to find or absent: Many employers see hundreds of applications a day and simply skim résumés. If some piece of information about you is important, make sure it is included and easily seen.

Too Long: A résumé is not a second cover letter. You want to concisely state your qualifications for the job, your work history and accomplishments. But don't overdo it. The ability to be concise is looked upon favorably by most employers.

Personal information not relevant to the job: There are times, such as when your hobby is related to the job you are seeking, that including personal information can help you. Most times, however, don't include information that can be wrongly interpreted or open the door to some type of prejudice on the part of the résumé reviewer.

Too duty oriented with accomplishments not highlighted: A list of duties from a previous job just reads like a job description. Instead, briefly describe some of your accomplishments, which give the résumé a personal flavor while highlighting your talents and initiative.

Unprofessional email addresses: The résumé is your first contact with the employer in the hiring process, always try to make a good impression. An email address that is the same as your name will do just that. "HotPants021" won't.

Gaps in employment: In the interest of brevity, don't explain gaps in your employment in the résumé. Leave that for the cover letter, but be ready to again explain the gaps in your interview.



See the
Resource Guide
for more
information

Posting Your Résumé Online

Posting résumés and conducting job searches online is becoming more and more popular. While this makes the process of getting your name out there much easier, it does not increase your chances of getting a job. Companies receive hundreds of applicants for each job listing through online forums. If a résumé does not stand out, it may be immediately discarded. When posting online, you have a much better chance of successfully obtaining a job if you read the job description very carefully and then tailor your résumé to it. Putting hours of effort into a few job postings can be more effective than putting minimal effort into hundreds.

For more information about résumés and cover letters, check your local library or bookstore.

The Internet can also be a valuable resource for résumé and cover letter preparation. You might find the following sources useful:

"Résumés for Dummies" by Joyce Lain Kennedy

"Résumé Writing Made Easy" by Lola M. Coxford

"Résumés That Knock 'Em Dead" by Martin Yate

PA CareerLink®

www.cwds.state.pa.us

The Riley Guide: Résumés & Cover Letters

www.rileyguide.com

Jobweb

www.jobweb.com

Rockport Institute

www.rockportinstitute.com/resumes.html

Employment 360

www.employment360.com/resume-writing-tip.html

Here are a few tips and precautions for posting your résumé online:

BEWARE OF FORMATTING REQUIREMENTS

Convert your résumé to plain text by saving it as a "plain text" or "text only."

Carefully proofread after converting; some errors may have occurred in the process.

Replace bullets with asterisks (*) or another symbol.

Do not use tabs or try to center the text. Left-justify the entire résumé.

Do not try to control the length of lines by pressing enter/return. It may appear differently on the employer's computer than it does on yours.

USE CAUTION WHEN PROVIDING PERSONAL INFORMATION

Do not list your phone number or your home address; the city name should be enough.

Do not list your references; say that you can provide them upon request for an interview.

Remove dates and specific company names. Use a general description of the company. Instead of "IBM," for example, use "a multinational information technology company."

Create a disposable email address that can be discontinued after obtaining the job. This protects you and might be more professional than your current email address.

DON'T LET YOUR RÉSUMÉ SIT

Résumés are normally arranged online by date of submission, much like job postings. If your résumé is good, but months old, an employer might think you are no longer available to hire.

Revise your résumé every two weeks; this keeps you near the top of the list. If the résumé hasn't caught someone's eye, making improvements might be necessary.

If you have no results after a few months, remove your résumé and try another website.

Remove all your résumé postings after obtaining a job.

Convey Your Abilities in Your Cover Letter

A cover letter should accompany every résumé that you send. Cover letters can be used to inquire about job openings or apply for known vacancies. The purpose of a cover letter is to capture the employer's attention so that they will read the résumé and grant you an interview.

A cover letter should be written to a specific prospect and not mass-produced. Address it to a particular person and, if possible, mention a specific job within the company. A sample cover letter is provided here to highlight the most significant aspects of a good cover letter.

Important Items to Check Before Sending Your Cover Letter

- Use correct spelling, grammar and punctuation. If possible, have someone other than yourself review your letter before you send it.
- Make sure that your cover letter is focused on what you can accomplish for the company, not how the company will help your career.
- Don't overuse the word "I" throughout the letter.
- Be clear and brief, but make sure that you have given enough information to interest the employer in your qualifications for the job.

Address a specific person, not "Dear Sir" or "Dear Personnel Director."

The body of your cover letter should highlight your main qualifications: the skills and experiences that relate to the job. Give examples that highlight your talents. Refer to, but do not repeat, your résumé.

Sign the letter boldly. A signature in blue ink shows the recipient it is not simply a photocopy.

Keith Gardner
108 Huntington Park Drive, Apt. 824
Boalsburg, Pennsylvania 16827
(555) 555-5555
Email: kgardner@hotmail.com

June 1, 2010

Dr. Mitch Shaver
Superintendent
Boalsburg Area School District
200 Third St.
Boalsburg, PA 16827

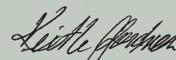
Dear Dr. Shaver:

Please consider this letter as an indication of my interest in applying for the middle school mathematics teaching position with the Boalsburg Area School District, which was advertised in the Centre Daily Times on May 31st. I am a very enthusiastic and creative teacher who enjoys incorporating new methodologies and activities to help engage students in mathematical concepts.

Having received a Bachelor of Science degree in secondary education from Boalsburg University and serving as a middle grade director at Camp Mahe, I have several years of experience in teaching and mentoring adolescent students. As a student teacher at Toftrees Middle School, I was given the opportunity to get my feet wet and immediately developed a passion for bringing out the best in my students. In addition to my classroom experience, I attended school-sponsored enrichment programs that enhanced my classroom management and instruction skills. I also demonstrated my energetic teaching and creativity as the middle grade director of Camp Mahe, where I supervised a group of counselors and designed their summer curriculum.

I hope to inspire and challenge the students of Boalsburg Middle School as a member of the faculty, and would like to request an interview to further discuss my qualifications. I will contact you in the morning later this week to inquire when your schedule may allow time for us to meet. Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,



Keith Gardner

Your address and contact information appear at the top of the letter when mailed. Your contact information is included at the bottom in the case of an e-mailed letter.

You should begin by stating the position for which you are applying and how you learned about the opening.

In the closing, request an interview; suggest a time for your follow-up call or contact. Never assume that the employer will call you.

The Job Application

Creating a Positive Image

In addition to a résumé, many employers require that you complete and sign a job application. The suggestions below will help you complete a job application and make a good impression on a prospective employer.

DEVELOP A PERSONAL FACT SHEET CONTAINING:

- Your Social Security number
- Names, addresses and telephone numbers of your spouse and/or close family members
- Schools attended, addresses and dates attended
- Names, addresses and telephone numbers of references
- Military experience, dates served, branch of military, relevant training and discharge type
- Past employment, dates employed, salary history and reason for leaving
- Any other information you feel is relevant to the application

PREPARE IN ADVANCE

- Know the deadline for applying and where to deliver your application.
- Read the entire application before starting to write.
- Answer all questions as honestly and accurately as possible. Some companies will terminate individuals on the basis of a dishonest application.
- Use a pen unless a pencil is required.
- Print all information legibly or type the form if possible.
- Be sure all spelling is correct.
- Emphasize your positive education, work and military experience.
- Focus on volunteer work, hobbies or training if they are job related and you have little work experience.
- Answer all questions; if a question does not apply to your background, write "N/A," or "Not Applicable."
- Have your résumé available in case you need it for information or to submit with your application.
- Have copies of transcripts, letters of recommendation and other documents ready to attach to your application form.
- Account for all gaps in your work history by stating your major activity during those times such as "job hunting," or "caring for a parent."
- When asked for salary desired, write "negotiable," "open" or give a salary range.
- Use "will discuss" or "will discuss in interview" rather than list potentially negative or damaging factors such as a felony conviction, health problem/disability or involuntary termination from a job.
- Keep a copy of your completed application so you can review it before your interview.

The Job Application (continued)

ABC Manufacturing Company Employment Application
Division of Human Resources, 700 Manufacturing St., Pittsburgh, PA 15222

PLEASE NOTE: Complete all parts of the application. If your application is incomplete, or does not clearly allow the experience and/or training required, your application may not be accepted. If you have no information to enter in a section, please write N/A.

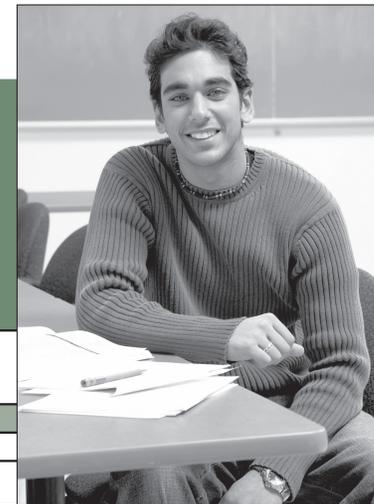
Position Requested and General Information	
Name (First, MI, Last)	Social Security Number
Mailing Address	
City, State, and Zip Code	
Home Phone	Cell Phone
Position (Job for which you are applying)	Desired Salary

Additional Information
Have you been an Employee of ABC Manufacturing in the past? [Yes] [No]
I certify that I am in compliance with the provisions of the Selective Service Act ([Yes] [No])
I certify that I am a U.S. citizen, permanent resident, or a foreign national with States. ** [Yes] [No]
Have you ever been convicted of, or entered a plea of guilty, no contest, or had a [Yes] [No] If Yes, please explain.
** These questions must be answered in order to be considered for employment

Education		
Name of High School	Attended From:	To:
		Type of Degree or Diploma
	Attended From:	To:
		Type of Degree or Diploma
	Attended From:	To:
		Type of Degree or Diploma

ABC Manufacturing Company Employment Application
Division of Human Resources, 700 Manufacturing St., Pittsburgh, PA 15222

Work History			
Employer	Address	Supervisor	Phone Number
Job Title:	From:	Salary	May we contact this employer? [Yes] [No]
To:			
Reason for Leaving:			
Employer	Address	Supervisor	Phone Number
Job Title:	From:	Salary	May we contact this employer? [Yes] [No]
To:			
Reason for Leaving:			
Employer	Address	Supervisor	Phone Number
Job Title:	From:	Salary	May we contact this employer? [Yes] [No]
To:			
Reason for Leaving:			
References			
Reference:	Relationship to Reference:	Phone Number:	
Reference:	Relationship to Reference:	Phone Number:	
Reference:	Relationship to Reference:	Phone Number:	
Signature:		Date:	
I certify that all answers and statements on this application are true and complete to the best of my knowledge. I understand that should an investigation disclose untruthful or misleading answers, my application may be rejected, my name removed from consideration, or my employment with ABC Manufacturing Company terminated.			



The Interview

OK, you've landed a job interview. Now it's important to make the most of the opportunity. The best way to do that is to be prepared. Here are some suggestions for what to do between the times an interview is scheduled and when it actually occurs.

Before The Interview

- **Research the company and industry.**
Make sure you know some facts about the company's history, what products or services it offers and the industry it serves.
- **Memorize a one-to two-minute commercial about yourself.**
Be ready to sell yourself with a summary of your education, achievements, skills and goals. It should sound natural, not rehearsed.
- **Be prepared for "dangerous" questions.**
Know in advance how you will answer questions about lack of experience, job-hopping history and gaps in employment.
- **Practice answers to anticipated questions.**
Almost all questions fall into one of the following seven categories:
- **Are you trustworthy?**
Key Words: personal qualities; "who you are"
Can you do the job?
Key Words: skills, abilities, strengths
Will you really work at the job?
Key Words: initiative, attitude
Will you fit in?
Key Words: relations, co-workers, boss, customers
Will you leave soon?
Key Words: future, plans, goals, objectives
Are you safe? Key Words: conflict, stress
Can I afford you?
Key Words: benefits, salary, overtime, compensation

During The Interview

Do:

- Go alone.
- Arrive a little early.
- Be clean and well groomed.
- Bring extra copies of your cover letter, résumé, references and a pen.
- Address the interviewer by name.
- Smile and shake hands firmly.
- Listen carefully and be interested.
- Maintain good eye contact.
- Take time to think about your answers to interview questions.
- Speak clearly and use proper grammar.
- Ask for clarification if you do not understand a question.
- Be positive.
- Stress your qualifications for the job.
- Express your readiness to undertake the job duties.

Don't:

- Speak too fast.
- Interrupt the interviewer.
- Fold your arms.
- Sit with your arms or legs far apart.
- Smoke or chew anything, even if invited to do so.
- Say, "I'll take anything."
- Fiddle with pens, paper or desk items.
- Ask about salary.
- Criticize your former employers or teachers.
- Discuss personal or financial problems.
- Provide information that is not true.
- Beg for the job or hang around after the interview.
- Sit down until you are asked.
- Ask when a hiring decision will be made.

After The Interview

Thank the interviewer(s) for their time. Remember that you're in competition with others for job openings. What you do after an interview may decide who ultimately gets the job. To separate yourself from other candidates, take the time to write a brief follow-up letter to each person who interviewed you. This is one more chance to get your name in front of the interviewer(s) before a hiring decision is made. Also, don't be afraid to contact the interviewer(s) after some time has passed to check on the availability of the position for which you interviewed. This once again reestablishes your interest in the position.

Tips for writing an effective follow-up letter.

- Write and send it within 24 hours of the interview.
- Mention the day of your interview and the position for which you interviewed.
- Thank the interviewer(s) for their time.
- Reaffirm your interest in the position.
- Highlight the skills or accomplishments not discussed during the interview.
- State your availability for future interviews.

A Note About Criminal Records:

As in most things, honesty is the best policy. If you have a criminal record, don't lie about it on an application. That will get you fired and, even worse, could be punishable by law. It is much better to tell your prospective employer about your past rather than take the risk.

Before hiring you, an employer must feel that he or she can trust you in his or her place of business. A criminal conviction can be a red flag to them. A good reference from a parole officer, former employer or community leader can go a long way to diminish the sting of a criminal record when seeking employment.

Having a criminal record will have an impact on the kinds of jobs you are able to obtain. So, you have to be realistic in your job expectations. Keep in mind that the seriousness of the offense and the passage of time could make a difference to the prospective employer.

A Note on Substance Abuse:

You have heard this message a countless number of times: Don't use drugs! Not only is engaging in drug or alcohol use illegal, but it also leads to dangerous behavior. Substance abuse can have an adverse effect on your career. More and more employers are conducting drug tests on their employees or prospective employees. The U.S. military has a zero-tolerance drug policy; the federal government allows drug testing at all levels. Drug screenings may take the form of polygraph (lie detector) and tests of blood, urine or hair. It is important to note that many employers will dismiss employees or reject applicants on the basis of a positive test.

If you are asked to take a drug test, tell your employer about any prescription medications you are taking. Review the company policy on drug testing, and understand that if you refuse a test that may be grounds for disciplinary actions (including dismissal). False positives do occasionally occur, and are sometimes caused by over-the-counter drugs and some foods (poppy seeds are infamous for this). If this happens, discuss the option of retesting with your employer.

Again, substance abuse is not only illegal, but it can ultimately cost you your job. Engaging in drug and alcohol abuse will affect your physical and mental health, making you less sharp and an overall liability to the company.

Solutions: DON'T USE DRUGS.

Let your employer or prospective employer know about any prescriptions you might be taking. Know what the company policy is on drug testing. Understand that refusing a drug test might be grounds for disciplinary action (including dismissal), depending on the company policy.

False positives do occur. Over-the-counter drugs and some foods (poppy seeds are infamous) can cause a positive drug test despite the taker not being a drug user. If this happens, discuss re-testing with your employer at once.

Keeping Your Job: Professional Behavior at Work

You've been hired! That's great news. But it's important to understand that making a good impression doesn't end with the interview. Once hired, many people act in an unprofessional manner and make negative impressions on supervisors and coworkers. The result? They end up losing the job they worked hard to obtain and they don't have a good reference for the next.

Professionalism is one of many "soft skills" that today's employers say workers are lacking. Soft skills are intangibles that center on social interaction and communication within the workplace. Acting in a professional manner and learning other soft skills will improve your chances of succeeding within a company, even if you lack experience or have underdeveloped technical skills.

How Are Your Soft Skills?

- **Punctuality:** Do you arrive at work 15 minutes early, or do you rush around and get there a few minutes late?
- **Self-motivation:** Do you actively seek out work for yourself, or do you wait for someone to tell you what to do?
- **Flexibility:** When asked to do something you've never done before, do you rise to the challenge or complain that you don't know how to do it?
- **Teamwork:** Do you think working as a team is a waste of time, or does it motivate you to do your best?

You also have to realize that the mistakes you make at one job could stay with you as bad performance reviews, unfavorable references and as part of your professional reputation as you look for another job. With that in mind, the following is a list of professional behavior guidelines to keep in mind as you start a new job:

Basic Professionalism

- Schedule upcoming dental and medical appointments prior to starting a new job. It is best not to take off work early in your employment unless it's an emergency situation.
- Arrive to work on time, all the time. Being punctual shows you are reliable and responsible.
- Come to work clean and well groomed. Yes, it sounds obvious, but poor appearance leaves a lasting impression.
- Dress according to your duties. If your job is labor intensive, wear clothing that allows freedom of movement. If you work in an office setting, adhere to company dress code. When in doubt, err on the side of conservative dress.
- Take the time to read the office manual on policies and procedures. Then follow it.
- Keep your personal life personal. Don't address personal matters while you're on a company phone or company time.
- Remember that the supplies and equipment provided to you are there to help you do your job, and are NOT there for your own personal use.

Keeping your Job: Professional Behavior at Work (continued)

Outward Professionalism

- In any work environment, you will confront situations that cause frustration. When that happens, it's always best to remain cool and control your emotions. Shouting matches and dramatics rarely work to your advantage.
- Keep your opinions and biases to yourself. It's very easy to alienate someone with a single poorly chosen conversation; it's a lot more work to overcome the damage done by that conversation.
- Don't engage in gossip about co-workers or supervisors. First, it makes you look bad. Secondly, think about the people involved. How much would you like to hear rumors about yourself?
- Maintain a positive attitude at work. Cynicism and moodiness only serve to alienate co-workers.
- Similarly, make friends with and surround yourself with positive people who don't engage in gossip or play office politics. This is good advice for life outside the office, too!
- Always remember to be diplomatic and polite. Good manners can earn you nothing but respect at work.

Job Professionalism

- Get a feel for the culture of your workplace. If it's a corporate, professional environment, a laid-back attitude won't get you far. If the workplace is more relaxed, it's probably not to your advantage to be overly assertive.
- Be patient with yourself at work. You aren't expected to know everything, especially when you first start your employment. Learning the ropes takes time and impatience will lead to rash decisions and a poor attitude.
- Team players are highly valued. Be one, whether through support or encouragement. Always be willing to help your co-workers and employer.
- Another part of being a team player is shouldering your own workload. Don't make others set aside their projects to do your work for you.
- Use your performance reviews as a learning experience. The criticism offered in them is meant to be constructive – to help both you and the company – so don't get overly defensive.
- Be willing to take on new tasks. By learning new skills, you enhance your résumé and make yourself more valuable to your employer.
- Finally, you want to make yourself valuable to your employer, try to be "layoff-proof." At the same time, however, you don't want to be so valuable in your current job that you'll never be promoted.

Pennsylvania Office of Vocational Rehabilitation

The Pennsylvania Office of Vocational Rehabilitation (OVR) is a state agency that provides services to help persons with disabilities prepare for, start and/or maintain employment. Vocational rehabilitation provides opportunities for people with disabilities to become productive and independent in their communities. An estimated 620,000 Pennsylvanians between the ages of 16 and 63 have a serious physical or mental disability. OVR's first priority is to help people with the most significant disabilities obtain or retain competitive employment.

Bureau of Vocational Rehabilitation Services (BVRS)

The BVRS provides services to eligible individuals with sensory, physical and/or cognitive disabilities – except blindness or visual disabilities – both directly and indirectly through a network of approved vendors. Services are provided on an individualized basis. The BVRS counselor, during face-to-face interviews, assists customers in selecting vocational goals, services and service providers. Counseling and guidance, diagnostic services, assessments, information and referral, job development and placement, and personal services such as readers or sign language interpreters are provided at no cost to the individual.

Bureau of Blindness and Visual Services (BBVS)

The BBVS assists Pennsylvanians who are blind or have a visual disability to gain the necessary skills to live and work independently in their communities. BBVS services are provided throughout the commonwealth by professional staff in district offices in Altoona, Erie, Harrisburg, Philadelphia, Pittsburgh and Wilkes-Barre.

Hiram G. Andrews Center (HGAC)

The HGAC offers comprehensive services integrating education, counseling, evaluation and therapy in a barrier-free environment. HGAC's postsecondary trade and technical school is the Commonwealth Technical Institute (CTI), offering seven associate degree programs and 15 diploma programs. A collection of support services combine to offer students the skills they will need to live, work and contribute to the community. A new informational CD-ROM, "Take a Look Inside ...HGAC" provides an overview of the training programs and comprehensive support services. To request a copy of the CD or a CTI catalog, visit the HGAC website, www.hgac.org.

Pennsylvania Office for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing (ODHH)

The ODHH coordinates services for individuals who are deaf, hard of hearing or deaf-blind, as well as their relatives, friends, physicians, lawyers, counselors and employers. They are a liaison for people with hearing loss to government and private entities. The ODHH has offices in Allentown, Erie, Johnstown and Harrisburg.

OVR

717-787-7834 (Voice)
717-787-4013 (TTY)
800-442-6352* (Voice)
877-497-6545* (TTY)
717-787-7500 (BBVS Voice)
866-375-8264* (BBVS Voice)

HGAC

814-255-8200 (Voice/TTY)
800-762-4211* (Voice/TTY)

ODHH

717-783-4912 (Voice/TTY)
800-233-3008* (Voice/TTY)

* Toll-free within Pennsylvania

Online Resources:

Visit the Pennsylvania Department of Labor & Industry at www.dli.state.pa.us for more information on the following.

- OVR, related programs and a statewide office directory
- HGAC and the Commonwealth Technical Institute
- ODHH, an online resource directory and the Interpreter Registration Program
- Pennsylvania's disability resources
- Vocational rehabilitation job opportunities in Pennsylvania

Child Care

Parents entering the workforce have an overriding concern: Who will take care of my child while I am at work? For many workers, day care is the most realistic answer. If you choose this option, there are a few things to keep in mind:

- Find a child care provider able to accommodate your work schedule and transportation needs.
- Check on availability. Openings in child care centers can be tough to come by in some instances.
- If your child has special conditions or needs, find a provider that can meet them.
Financial assistance may be available for families meeting certain work schedules and income requirements. Call the Pennsylvania Department of Public Welfare at 877-4-PA-KIDS to get in contact with your county Child Care Information Services office for more information.

Welfare-to-Work Programs

Welfare-to-Work programs exist to assist low-income or other hard-to-employ individuals in gaining employment or job training. Pennsylvania's program targets:

- Recipients of Long-term Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF)
- Unemployed and underemployed non-custodial parents with child-support obligations
- TANF recipients with characteristics predictive of long-term dependence (such as no high school diploma, teenage pregnancy, poor work history, disability that does not prevent employment or youth)
- The Welfare-to-Work program provides case management, job preparation, job search and placement and other services to those who qualify. Contact your local PA CareerLink® office for more information.