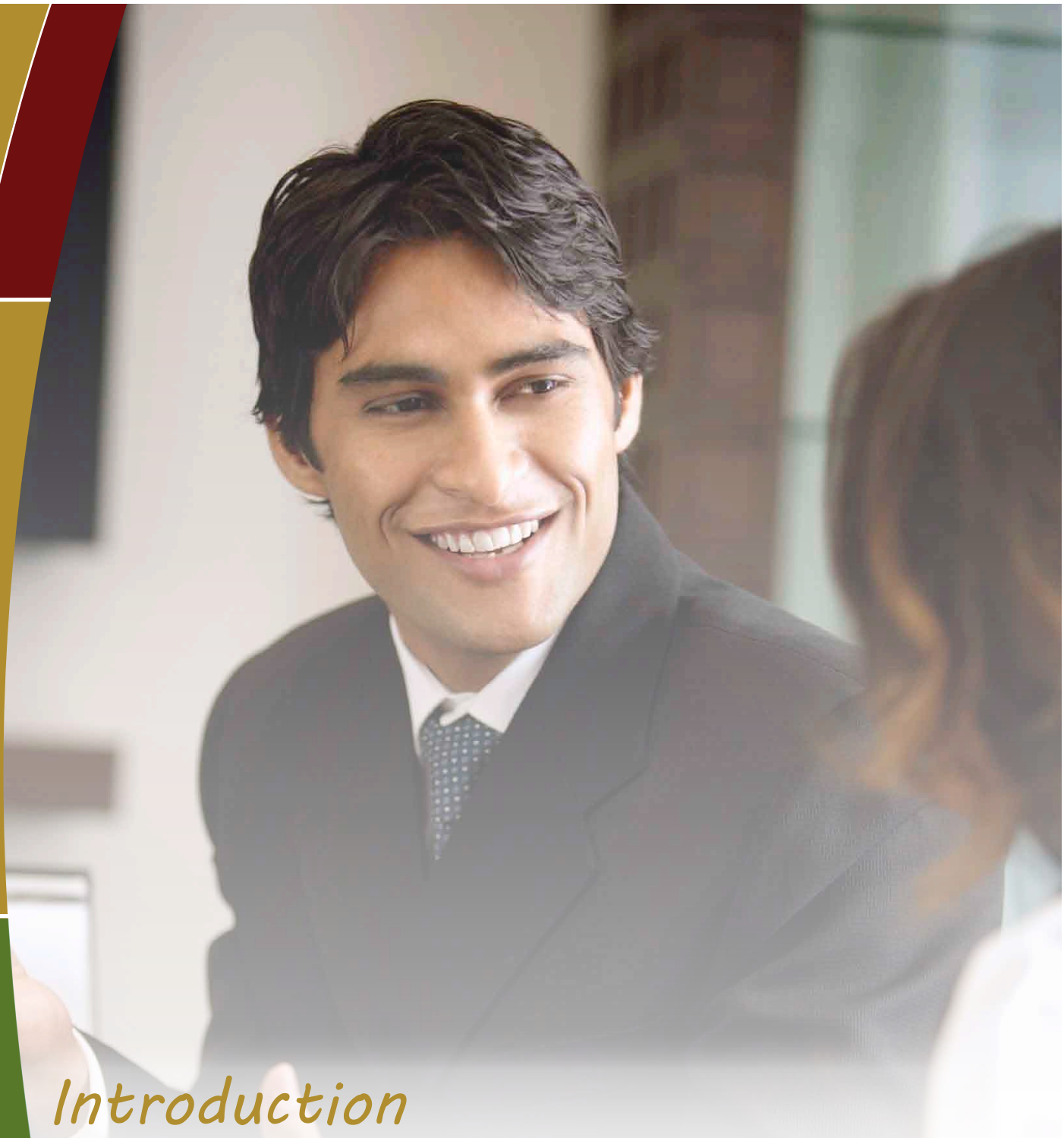
IowaWORKS

RESOURCE GUIDE for Job Seekers

A step-by-step guide to dealing with a job loss, starting a new job and everything in between.



Introduction

You want a job. And you believe that somewhere, some employer has precisely the job you want – one that fully utilizes your knowledge and abilities and provides a challenge with opportunities for advancement.

To find that job, you need to perform a well-planned job search. You have a product to sell – your knowledge, skills and experience . . . YOURSELF! What you need to know is how to market yourself most effectively.

Whether you are just out of school and ready to start your career or looking for a new position after 20 years of experience, the techniques presented in this booklet will help you navigate all aspects of the job search process from beginning to end.



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DEALING WITH JOB LOSS

Examine the Past

Take some time to think through the past. You need an accurate grasp at what has happened in order to feel better about the future.

Things done right at my previous job:

1.

2.

3.

Things that could have been done better/changes I need to make to do the job better:

1.

2.

3.

Where to get help making these changes:

1.

2.

3.

Family Issues

Unemployment affects everyone in your family. Don't isolate yourself but rather talk to your family about how you are feeling or what you are doing. Have some family time and allow everyone to voice their concerns and ideas. Ask for their assistance in conserving financial resources. By working through this together, you can build your family's self-esteem, sense of competence and trust in yourselves as a family unit.

So you're unemployed.....now what?

Before you begin a new job search, take some time to think through your situation. A job loss can affect every area of your life. How you handle this major life event can affect you for years to come. Work is not something we do simply because we have time on our hands; a job often defines who we are and how we define ourselves. For this reason, losing a job threatens your self-image and possibly your lifestyle. Dealing with the emotional impact of a job-loss may be as demanding as looking for a new one.

Typical reactions to losing a job include:

- Anger
- Lack of self-confidence/esteem
- Anxiety
- Grief
- Embarrassment
- Shame
- Lack of faith in the future

Some people dwell on what could have been done differently and may become weepy or angry. However, all of these feelings are the opposite of what you need to begin a job search. This requires optimism, confidence and energy. To move yourself to a place where you can begin to look for a new job, you first need to acknowledge your feelings. Get them out in the open and off your chest. Just doing this much will likely reduce your tension and keep you among people, where you are more likely to hear about job openings.

You may find it helpful to put your feelings in writing. It can be a great way to see what you feel and help you realize what you need from yourself and others.

Ways to handle my feelings positively:

1.

2.

3.

Ways my feelings affect me negatively:

1.

2.

3.

Ways to strengthen my ability to cope:

1.

2.

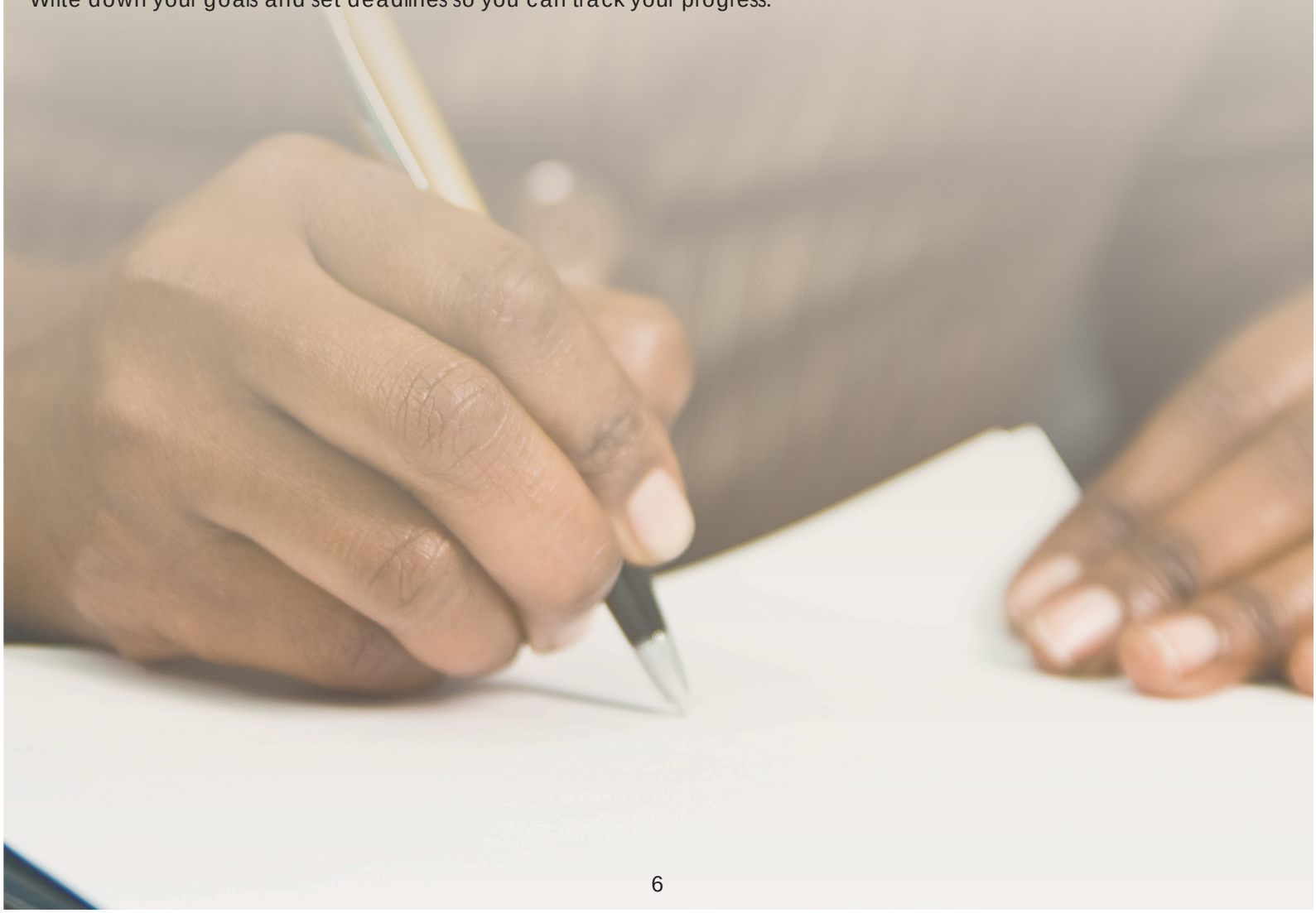
3.

Begin to Set Goals

Now that you've dealt with the past, think about the future. Begin setting goals by asking yourself:

- How much do I need to earn?
- Can I afford to wait for the "perfect" job or do I need to take whatever comes along?
- What kind of work do I want to do?
- What may be some alternatives?
- What do I absolutely not want to do?
- Should I consider changing careers?
- Do I need more training?
- Should I relocate to where my skills are more in demand?

Now that you've explored your strengths, preferences and limitations, you can begin to set some long-term goals. While it may take months to achieve your ultimate objectives, they can be achieved by setting and meeting short-term goals. Write down your goals and set deadlines so you can track your progress.



Self-Appraisal

Deciding exactly what your qualifications are is the first step in merchandising your talents. You need a detailed inventory of your background and experience so you will know exactly what assets you have to offer an employer.

No matter what type of job you seek, your inventory will be a basic tool in your search. It will contain the information you need to prepare your résumé. It will help you decide how to present your qualifications at a job interview, and be a source for facts, dates and other information you will need to give an employer. To prepare your inventory chart, follow the outline below.

On a separate sheet of paper, list all the data you think might help you in your job search. Later, you can sort the list and select only the assets relevant to the job you seek.

1. **Work history**

   List all of your jobs, including part-time, summer, freelance work, internships, and volunteer activities. For each job, give the name and address of your employer, your job title, the details of your duties, and the dates you were employed.

   Then ask yourself:
   - What did I like about each job? Why?
   - What did I dislike about each job? Why?
   - Why did I leave?

2. **Skills and abilities**

   Ask yourself:
   - What personal qualities do I have that make me excel at certain types of work? Think back over your job experience, school and volunteer activities, and try to be honest with yourself. Are your strong points initiative, imagination, leadership, ability to organize, willingness to follow orders, interest in detail, or ability to work with people?
   - What did I learn on the job that I could use in another position? (For example, operation of a machine or office equipment or blueprint reading).

3. **Education:**
   - List the schools you attended, the main courses you took, and the degree(s) you received. It is not necessary to list graduation dates.
   - Any business, vocational, military, on-the-job training, or continuing education courses, the dates, and any certificates you received.

   Then ask yourself:
   - What courses or training did I like best and why?
   - What courses or training did I dislike and why?
   - Now list any scholarships or honors you received and your extracurricular activities.

4. **Interests, talents, and aptitudes**

   Ask yourself:
   - What are my hobbies or volunteer activities?
   - What are my special talents or aptitudes? For example, can I fix a car? Play a musical instrument? Speak another language besides English? Am I good at drawing or painting? What do I learn most easily?
   - How can I relate my talents and interests to a job? If you are a recent graduate, your activities may be a significant part of your job qualifications (for example, work on the school newspaper or campus radio station). Even if they are not directly related to a job, they may help you decide where your talents and interests lie. (For example, do you enjoy sports, recreation and outdoor activities? Did you excel on the debate team? Are you good at organizing a group to do a job?)

5. **Career goals**
   - What kind of work do I want to be doing five or ten years from now?
   - What sort of job should I seek now to prepare for my goal?

6. **Jobs I want**

   Considering all the information in your inventory, list the types of jobs you feel you are best qualified for and want. List them in order of your preference.

SELF-APPRAISAL & ASSESSMENTS

You need to learn more about different types of jobs. A good place to go is your local Iowa*WORKS* office or Access Point. Both have information about the fast-growing jobs in Iowa and the qualifications you need to get them. Each office has a resource room in which you can go online and research careers.

The Occupational Outlook Handbook, published by the U.S. Department of Labor (www.bls.gov), has the latest information about several hundred occupations. Each occupation includes information about the work involved, where the jobs are located, what training and other qualifications are needed to fill them and the chances for advancement. It also lists earnings, working conditions and assesses future job opportunities for people in the field. You ca also find out where to go for more information about occupations of particular interest to you.

Another good source of information about various types of jobs is your local public library. You can find books about specific career fields.

If you have completed your inventory, you are ready for the next step - either preparing your résumé or selecting your sources of job information. But perhaps you have considered all the factors in your background and still are not ready to answer the key question: What kind of job do I want? You may be just out of school or in the military and know little about the sorts of jobs open to you. You may have decided you are on the wrong track vocationally and want to switch to a new field. Perhaps you have been out of the labor force for years because of a variety of reasons. Or, you are not sure what your job goal should be for other reasons.

Once you have decided on your job goal, your local Iowa*WORKS* office or Access Point has many self-service tools to assist you in preparing your résumé. Each office also offers workshops and testing services to help you identify your skills, interests, abilities and training needs. The center will help match your skills and interests to the right job.

RÉSUMÉS

Résumé Development

Rules for résumé preparation come and go. Most résumés are skill-based, meaning they focus on what you can do and not where you did it. This is the information requested by many major employers. However, résumés have no official format. Since a résumé is a sales brochure, you want to include everything that relays why you're the right person for the job.

Contact your local Iowa*WORKS* office for copies of materials on how to construct a résumé or come in and visit one of our Access Points. All offer easy–to–use résumé-building software, as well as information on websites that list job openings, career exploration tools and employer data.

Follow these tips when you're preparing to write your résumé:

- Start by really thinking about your work history and education.
- What positions interest you? What are your strongest skills?
- Work history: Do you have a strong work history? If not, do you have strong skills?
- Education
- Skills/Achievements

When putting together a format, follow these guidelines:

- Keep it simple.
- Use a simple, easy to read font.
- Justify the text to the left.
- Try to keep it to one page.
- Do not include personal information, such as marital status, height, weight or religion.
- Be consistent.

Remember these key points when putting your résumé together:

- Make sure you have correct dates of employment and correct company information.
- Use key words that fit the desired job.
- Focus on responsibilities not job duties.
- Keep it to a few bullet points.
- Even the small things can have value.
- List achievements.
- Make sure all reference information is up-to-date.

One of the most important things to do after you've written your résumé is to: Proofread!!

Remember:

- If you say in your résumé or cover letter that you are detail–oriented, make sure that you are!
- Do NOT rely on spell check to find spelling errors.
- Print off a copy of your résumé, read it and give to someone else to read.

Additional Tips

Use the following résumé tips for additional help when creating a résumé.

- Text should be broken out by using bullets and sentences or phrases rather than long paragraphs
- Format résumé with: work history, employers, position titles and dates including month and year
- Detailed work activities – duties and responsibilities
- Specific achievements and accomplishments
- Education — degrees, special schools, certifications and short courses
- Only use numbers and acronyms that an employer will quickly understand to demonstrate specific achievements and accomplishments.

Résumé Do's and Don'ts

Don't: Think a title speaks for itself. Job titles can often be misleading and can change from one company to another.
Do: Provide position titles and descriptions.

Don't: Leave the reader guessing where and when you were employed.
Do: Clarify dates and places.

Don't: Apply for a job you only have a brief mention of on your résumé.
Do: Tailor your résumé so that it is appropriate to the position for which you are applying. Coordinate your educational or career credits according to length or the importance to the reader.

Don't: Leave fragmented sentences or be long-winded on your résumé. This will virtually assure you of a place at the back of the line.
Do: Organize your thoughts in a clear, concise manner. No one ever won a Nobel Prize for literature on their résumé.

Résumé Sample

Kristina Anderson
12122 Fremont Drive
Cedar Rapids, IA 12345
555-555-5555

OBJECTIVE
To provide my positive customer service skills as a bank teller

SUMMARY

- Motivated, efficient, accurate, and detail oriented.
- Over three years' experience as a bank teller.
- Familiar with retirement accounts including IRA's, KEOGH'S, 401K's.
- Proficient in accounting software: Lotus 1-2-3, Excel.
- A high-energy, enthusiastic and dependable individual who excels in challenging and competitive environments.
- Handle crisis situations in calm and capable manner.

EXPERENCE
Peoples State Bank, Cedar Rapids, IA **January, 1997 to Present**
Bank Teller

- Maintained accountability of transactions including the control and supervision of large amounts of cash flow.
- Computed figures with speed and accuracy.
- Maintained accuracy of customer accounts.
- Operated computer systems for processed data retrieval.
- Maintained excellent public relations with customers.

Seven Falls Bank, Alton, MO **August, 1993 to January 1997**
Assistant to Retirement Accounts Manager

- Worked closely with manager to record contributions to existing and new accounts.
- Created in-house promotional materials to assist customers with information on Keogh's and IRA's.
- Calculated year-to-date interest and tax deduction advantages.

EDUCATION
University of Iowa, B S Degree in Accounting, 1997

References Available Upon Request

Scannable Résumés

A scannable résumé can be viewed by a computer using the latest document imaging technology (known as Optical Character Recognition, or OCR). Employers use this to store résumés in databases and search through many applicants electronically.

The scannable résumé format is similar to a traditional résumé. It includes your goals, education, work experience, activities, honors, and any special skills you might have. You can create a scannable by modifying your traditional one. The two most important elements of a scannable résumé are formatting and keywords.

Human resources personnel will review your résumé only after the computer retrieves it from keyword searches. To help your resume be chosen from the multitudes, use simple formatting and include nouns or noun phrases which are likely to be used in a database search.

Formatting

Keep in mind that the first reader of your scannable résumé will be a computer, not a human. A fancy format pleasing to the human eye may confuse OCR scanners. Using simple format and font/type style decreases the likelihood that scanners will misread your résumé.

- Use one common font throughout the résumé instead of increasing the size. Indicate section headings by simple spacing.
- Avoid using bullets, tables & visuals. Instead use dashes, left-justified text and spacing to format.

Keywords

Keywords are words employers search for when trying to fill a position. They are the essential characteristics required of the job: education, experience, skills, knowledge and abilities. The more keyword marketing points you present about yourself, the more likely you are to be plucked from an electronic résumé database now or a year from now.

To use the keyword concept effectively, create a Keyword section just under your name that includes discipline-unique words and phrases which potential employers will search for in the résumé database. For example, keywords for a business professional might include the following:

- Leadership skills, Ethics, Finance
- Teamwork, Marketing, total quality management

In scannable résumés, nouns are dominant. Computers search for descriptive words such as accounting, manager, Price Waterhouse. Action words like accelerated, arbitrated and launched are not used anymore.

Don't overuse abbreviations. However, common ones like B.A. (Bachelor of Arts) are acceptable.

Guidelines for Scannable Résumés

The following are general guidelines to avoid having your résumé overlooked:

- Left justify the entire document.
- Place your name at the top of the page on its own line.
- Use standard address format below your name.
- Multiple addresses should be placed one on top of the other.
- List each phone number on its own line.
- Avoid vertical and horizontal lines, graphics, and boxes/tables.
- Avoid punctuation as much as possible.
- Note: a two–page résumé is acceptable.

COVER LETTERS

Cover Letter Do's and Don'ts

- Type your résumé, do not hand write your résumé.
- Always send original cover letters to employers, do not send a photocopy of your cover letter.
- Use 8 1/2" x 11" paper.
- Use same color of paper as your résumé.
- Do not use present or past employment business stationery.
- Always proofread your cover letter.
- Remember to sign your cover letter.
- Don't be negative.
- Don't mention needed salary, fringe benefits, or vacation time.

Creating Stellar Cover Letters

A cover letter is another important job marketing tool and it is as important as your résumé because it is your first impression with the employer. Plus, it provides you with an opportunity to explain the negative aspects of your résumé and direct the attention to the résumé parts that relate to the job opening. Cover letters should be written in a business format. Below is a breakdown of the different parts of your cover letter.

Contact Information

Include electronic communication on your cover letter. Provide a current e-mail address (that you check regularly) along with a phone number that will roll to voice mail if you're unavailable. Make sure your voice mail has a professional and courteous message.

Salutation

Use the employer's name and title if known. Do not use a first name only, use the entire name or last name such as "Dear Mr. Wilson. Otherwise, address as "Dear Sir or Madam".

First Paragraph

Your first sentence should tell how you learned of the possible opening. Use the remainder of the paragraph to express interest in a specific position or a particular kind of job and state that you have enclosed a résumé.

Second and Third Paragraphs

Your cover letter needs to fit the organization and job of interest. Direct attention to your qualifications and company knowledge. Remember, the purpose of your cover letter is to convince the employer to read your résumé. The letter needs to be concise and professional.

When applying for a position that is a complete career change, explain to the reader you are making a change and why you are qualified for the position. Qualifications may include recent education or volunteer experience.

If you don't explain how you qualify for a career change position, the reader may eliminate your résumé quickly because you do not have the matching work history.

Fourth Paragraph

Request an interview that takes into consideration the company and type of job for which you are applying. End the letter by thanking the person for their consideration.

Closing and Signature

May use:

- Sincerely
- Yours truly
- Sincerely yours
- Cordially

Enclosure

Notice of what you included with your cover letter such as résumé or work sample.

Photos

It is not appropriate to include your photo on a résumé or cover letter.

Cover Letter Sample

John Jobseeker
1234 Elm Street
Des Moines, IA 50311
(515) 555-1234 (H)

August 15, 2005

Albert Monte
Al's Prime Peanut Packing Plant
9876 Main Street
Des Moines, IA 50311

Dear Mr. Monte:

I am writing to apply for the peanut product purchasing manager position that you listed with Iowa Workforce Development. Al's Prime Peanut Packing Plant is well known in the peanut packing industry and I hope to have the opportunity to work for such a highly regarded company.

As my enclosed résumé illustrates, I have worked for Pat's Premiere Peanut Packing Plant since 1997. I started as a peanut packer and worked my way up to the position of peanut product purchasing manager, a position I have held for the past five years. Working my way up through various positions in the field has helped me to become knowledgeable in all aspects of the peanut packing field. In addition, I have recently completed my BA degree in Business from Drake University, Des Moines, IA.

Your job order also stated that experience in Microsoft Excel is desired. As a peanut product purchasing professional for Pat's Premiere Peanut Plant I am required to utilize Microsoft Excel on a daily basis. Although I completed many projects with Microsoft Excel, my latest accomplishment has been to develop a new spreadsheet analysis of vendor costs.

As you can see, my experience as a peanut product purchasing professional, as well as my 7 years of experience in the peanut packing industry, would allow me to quickly become an asset to your company if given the opportunity. I hope that you will allow me to discuss my qualifications in more detail with you during an interview. You can reach me at home (515) 555-1234 if you have any questions or to schedule an appointment at your earliest convenience. Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,

John J. Jobseeker

John J. Jobseeker

Enclosure: Résumé

SUCCESSFUL JOB SEARCH

Necessary Job Search Skills

In today's world, job searching is not usually a one time event in most people's work life. Studies show that the average person will change jobs more frequently today than in the past. The change is due, in part, to the fluctuating economy and fast–paced technological and scientific advances. It is important to learn the techniques of job search and consider it an invaluable and evolving life-time skill for present and future use.

Therefore, job search skills need to be constantly maintained and updated throughout your work life. Once you have acquired job seeking skills:

- Your confidence increases and your fears about looking for a new job are reduced.
- Your ability to interview and present yourself and your skills improves.
- You have more knowledge and are better prepared to move up the career ladder.
- You are more employable to potential employers when you are employed.
- You know more about the needs and trends of the labor market.
- You are more aware of your value and worth to your employer and the labor market.
- You know how to highlight your skills and abilities to stay ahead of the competition, achieve upward mobility, and negotiate successfully.

It is recommended that you make the most of the valuable skills and assets acquired through your job search.

- Keep your skills current. Maintain a list of new software, responsibilities and achievements.
- Update your résumé when you have gained new skills, abilities and accomplishments.
- Get the training or experience you will need to move up or to a different employer.
- Maintain a list of awards, accomplishments and recognitions to present to your supervisor to lobby for a raise or for upward mobility. Also include that information on résumés and cover letters.

Online Application Tips

1. Complete the entire profile or application.
2. Carefully read and follow all the directions.
3. Include details, be specific and try to use comment sections.
4. If possible include a cover letter.
5. Ensure the e-mail address used is one that you check frequently.
6. Use the same e-mail in all communications.

Where to Look for Good Job Referrals

Below is a list of the top places to visit when looking for a job. Some may be more applicable to you than others. Take a minute to review the list and see which ones make sense for you to use during your job search.

1. Iowa*WORKS* Offices or Access Point locations: www.iowaworkforce.org to find one near you.
2. Online websites: See the back page of this booklet for a list of popular job listing websites
3. School or college placement offices
4. Newspapers, Professional Journals and Trade Magazines
5. Industrial and Craft Unions
6. Federal Employment Offices
7. Private Employment Agencies
8. Yellow pages of Telephone Directory, Industrial Directories, or Chamber of Commerce lists
9. Professional Associations

SUCCESSFUL JOB SEARCH

Job Seeker: Do's and Don'ts

When looking for a new job, remember these simple do's and don'ts.

Don't: Embellish or fabricate details, facts or experience.

Do: Be honest.

Don't: Leave large gaps or absences in your employment history.
Do: Explain these gaps by stating "returned to school," "help friend start a new business," "traveled," or other reason. If your reason is health related or due to a disability, it is your personal decision whether or not you want to disclose this fact. (Unless your problem prevents you from doing the job safely, it is probably not necessary to disclose.) If the gap is less than one year, don't list it. There is no written rule that says you must account for every month of every year.

Don't: Forget to include any activities you may have done during an employment gap.
Do: List these in your skills and accomplishments; they may include qualities useful for the position.

Don't: List a specific pay rate.
Do: Use a pay range that reflects the local area.

Don't: Use words like "fired" or "let go".
Do: Instead, use words to describe the situation like "moved," "seasonal employment," or "laid off." However, you should be ready to explain.

Effectively Planning Your Time

Even if you are under no economic pressure to find a job quickly, starting your search promptly is a wise policy. Delays may hurt your chances of finding the job you want. If you have just finished school, for example, you are competing for similar positions with other new graduates in your field. Moreover, a long delay between school or your last job and your application for work may give an employer the impression that his or her office is one of your last stops in a long and fruitless job search.

Once you start a job search, you should treat it as a full-time job. Looking for work can become discouraging at times, but sustained effort usually pays off.

The following suggestions may help you plan an efficient job search:

1. Start planning your job search as soon as you know you will need to find a new job.
2. Make job hunting a full-time project. You work at least a 40 hour week for your employer; don't work any less for yourself.
3. Once you start a search, do not allow yourself little vacations.
4. Apply early enough in the day to allow time for multiple interviews, tests, or other hiring procedures that may be required.
5. Be on time for appointments.
6. Before approaching a firm, try to learn the best time and day of the week to apply for a job.
7. Follow up leads immediately. If you learn of a job opening late in the day, call the firm to arrange an appointment for the next day. The employer might postpone a hiring decision until you can be interviewed.

Why is Networking so Important?

In the world of work, networking is, indeed, a very big deal - even the Wall Street Journal reported that 94 percent of successful job seekers claimed networking had made all the difference for them. Networking comes in many forms; everything from meeting an old friend for a cup of coffee to ask how she likes law school, to having your best friend's father put in a good word for you at his company, to meeting with an older alum from your college to learn more about a career in social work.

How you find Networking Contacts

There are many ways to identify networking contacts. Here are some places to find folks who know something about a field, organization or school you are considering:

- your college alumni association or career office networking lists
- your own extended family
- your friends' parents and other family members
- your professors, advisors, coaches, tutors and clergy
- your former bosses and your friends' and family members' bosses
- members of clubs, religious groups and other organizations to which you belong
- all the organizations near where you live or go to school

What can these Networking Contacts Tell You?

1. They can tell you what it's really like (from their perspective, of course) to work in a given field or organization now. They can also tell you how the field has changed and what they see for the future.
2. They can help you understand the aptitudes and training needed to get into and be successful in a particular field.
3. They can give you the inside scoop on schools and training programs.
4. They can give you insider information on an organization, such as who is in charge, what the culture is like, what kinds of people have held the job you're looking at, what it takes to succeed in that position.
5. They can be living demonstrations of what it's like to work in the field. Can you imagine yourself doing what they do?
6. Every once in a while, the person with whom you're having an informational interview will offer to help move your application along. When that happens, it can be a real advantage for you. But whether you get that offer or not, the nuggets of information you've gathered can be essential in helping you to sort out your options and present yourself more effectively.

Ten Steps of a Job Search

1. Plan your time - make a to do list for everything you will do to look for a job.
2. Identify Occupations - make a background experience list to identify jobs that use your talents.
3. Identify Employers - ask friends, relatives, etc. to help you find job openings. Visit your local Iowa*WORKS* office or Access Point. Visit IowaJobs.org.
4. Prepare Materials - assemble a job search kit that includes: pens, notebook, maps, bus schedule, clean résumé copies, applications, background/experience list, Social Security Card and photo ID.
5. Contact Employers - review job announcements to determine how your skills apply to the opening. Go to companies to fill out applications, if necessary. Call employers directly.
6. Prepare Interviews - learn about the company interviewing you. Assemble résumés, application forms and make sure everything is neat.
7. Go to Interviews - Dress right for the interview. Be clean, concise and positive. Remember to thank the interviewer.
8. Evaluate Interviews - send a typed, signed thank you letter within 24 hours of the interview.
9. Take Tests - find out about the test you are taking. Brush up on job skills. Be confident and relaxed.
10. Accept the Job! Be flexible regarding salary - but don't sell yourself short. Understand job duties, expectations and work hours.

SIX TIPS TO A BETTER INTERVIEW

Introduction to the Application

First impressions are important. So your appearance is important, even when submitting an application. Every time you make contact with an employer, dress as though you are ready to go to work. The employer may have a job that needs to be filled and want to interview you immediately.

Remember to bring everything with you that you will need when filling out applications. It does not create a business-like impression when a job seeker needs to borrow the employer's pens or telephone books to complete an application. Be organized. Bring ball point pens and a personal fact sheet if you think you might be completing an application.

Your completed application is a reflection of you. Make it a good one!

How to fill out an application:

- It is important that you read the entire application form before you start filling it out.
- Read the instructions carefully and follow them exactly.
- The application is your first chance to present your skills to the employer so make sure you fill it out completely.
- Employers review the information on job applications when deciding who to schedule for job interviews.
- Remember, employers often judge the appearance of an application as a clue to how much importance you put on the quality of your work.

Here are some helpful tips to follow when completing applications:

1. Greet the receptionist politely when requesting or submitting an application. The receptionist's first impressions are often passed along.
2. Be honest in your answers.
3. Use blue or black ink pens. (Erasable pens are also helpful.)
4. Have all the information on hand that you might need to fill out an application.
5. Print clearly and legibly.
6. Fill out the form neatly and accurately.
7. Apply for a specific position, rather than entering "anything," or "open" for the desired position.
8. Leave no blanks.
9. Write "Does Not Apply" (or "N/A" for Not Applicable) in the space if the question does not apply to you.
10. Explain lengthy gaps in your work history, for example "attending school."

INTERVIEWING

Preparing for the Interview

The most important thing to do in an interview is to sell yourself! Many people don't get the job because they fail to do just that. Here are a few tips to help:

- When an interviewer asks "Tell me about yourself," talk about your accomplishments, skills and abilities– NOT your family, hobbies or interests.
- Explain what you mean by using examples or stories. Look the interviewer in the eyes. Smile. Be an active participant in the conversation.
- Try to turn trick questions to a positive. Such as "What's your greatest weakness?" Respond with "I'm a workaholic. I like to get things done before I go home at night."
- When the interview is coming to a close, finish by asking for the job. Such as "Mr. Smith, I want this job. I can offer you (state your skills, abilities, talents)."
- Demonstrate you have the ability to help their company.

The best way to prepare for an interview is to role play. Grab a friend or relative and have them play the interviewer. The more you practice, the more comfortable you'll feel in an actual interview.

During the interview, try your best to address the fears/concerns of most employers. Convince them:

- You won't need a lot of time to become productive (quick learner).
- You put in an honest day's work.
- You do not need constant supervision.
- You are a hard-worker, always give 100 percent.
- Your attendance record is good. You don't constantly call in sick, arrive late, leave early, refuse overtime or constantly ask for raises.
- You are humble and positive.
- You work with integrity. You are honest and admit your mistakes.
- You're not a quitter and you won't leave when needed.
- You're not arrogant, conceited, rude, pushy, antagonistic or moody.
- You take pride in your work, appearance or behavior.
- You don't lie, cheat or steal.
- You take pride in the company you work for and will do everything you can to help the company.

Be prepared to ask the employer questions as well. Be positive, and avoid asking questions that give the negative impression that you are only interested in what the employer can do for you. Sometimes your questions will get answered during the interview, but here are some suggestions. Bring these questions along to the job interview:

- What would my job duties be?
- How would I be trained?
- How would my progress be rated?
- Are promotions possible?
- Who would I be reporting to?
- Why is this job open?
- May I have a tour of the work area?

Save the "what's in it for me" question until the end of the interview. If the employer hasn't volunteered this information, ask them about the rate of pay, fringe benefits, and any probationary period.

Interview Appearance Checklist

Before you leave for the interview, take a minute to review the questions below to make sure you make the best first impression.

- Are my clothes clean and neat? Are they appropriate to the job? Do they fit, or are they too revealing? When applying for a job, wear the type of clothes you would wear on the job. This is where your research pays off.
- Are my shoes clean? Don't leave a lasting reminder of your visit on the employer's carpeting.
- Do I need a haircut?
- Men — are you clean shaven, or is your beard or moustache trimmed? Women — is your makeup neatly applied?
- Are your teeth clean and your breath fresh? A beer with lunch can be a red flag at your afternoon interview, and if the employer doesn't allow smoking at the facility, don't have a cigarette and then claim you don't smoke.

During the Interview

You never get a second chance to make a first impression, so don't blow it by showing up at the employer's business in dirty clothes, bare feet and bright green hair. You might be there just to pick up an application, but that first impression may prevent you from getting an interview.

During the interview:

- Be pleasant and friendly, but businesslike.
- Let the employer control the interview. Your answers should be frank and brief, but complete without rambling. Avoid strongly opinionated statements.
- Be flexible and willing, but give the employer a clear idea of your job preferences.
- Stress your qualifications without exaggeration. The employer's questions or statements will indicate the type of person the firm needs. Use these clues in presenting your qualifications. For example, if you are being interviewed for an engineering position and the employer mentions the job will require some customer contact work, use this clue to emphasize any work experience or courses you have had in this type of work.
- If you have not sent your résumé in advance, present it or your work history, references, work samples, or other materials to support your statements when the employer requests them.
- In discussing your previous jobs and work situations, avoid criticizing former employers or fellow workers.
- Don't discuss your personal, domestic or financial problems.
- Don't be in a hurry to ask questions unless the employer invites them. But don't be afraid to ask what you need to know. If the employer offers you a job, be sure you understand exactly what your duties will be. You also should discuss what opportunities for advancement will be open to you. A definite understanding about the nature of your job will avoid future disappointment for either you or your employer.
- Be prepared to state the salary range you want, but not until the employer has introduced the subject. Be realistic in discussing salary. If asked, it is also acceptable to answer with this question: "What is the normal starting wage for this position?"
- If the employer does not definitely offer you a job or indicate when you will hear back, ask when you may call to learn of the decision.
- If the employer asks you to call or return for another interview, make a written note of the time, date and place.
- Thank the employer for the interview. If the employer indicates you will not be needed, ask for suggestions on other possible employers.

After the Interview Assessment

Make each interview a learning experience. After it is over, ask yourself these questions:

1. How did the interview go?
   - What points did I make that seemed to interest the employer?
   - Did I present my qualifications well? Did I overlook any that are pertinent to the job?
   - Did I pass up clues to the best way to "sell" myself?
   - Did I learn all I need to know about the job?
   - Did I forget or hesitate to ask about factors that are important to me?
   - Did I talk too much? Too little?
   - Did I interview the employer rather than permit the employer to interview me?
   - Was I too tense?
   - Was I too aggressive? Not aggressive enough?
2. How can I improve my next interview?

HELPFUL TIPS

Thank You Notes

Thank you letters and notes should be standard tools in your job search.

- The thank you letter should be a standard business letter format, while the note may be a simple, handwritten note or card.
- You may consider sending your thank–you note by e-mail.
- Write a thank you letter or note no later than 24 hours after the interview, even if things didn't go well.
- Be brief and to the point.
- Note the job you interviewed for and also list the date of your interview.
- Use the name and title of person who interviewed you.
- When thanking a potential employer, restate your interest in the position and the company. Offer to come to another interview or to provide more information if needed.

Follow-Up Calls

After the interview is over, and you've sent a thank-you note expressing your appreciation for consideration, wait a couple of days and make a follow-up call to see if the employer has made a decision. If you got the job – congratulations! You'll probably find out when you'll start, etc. If you didn't get the job, don't be afraid to ask why not in a non-threatening manner. If the manager hasn't made a decision yet, find out if there is anything else you can do, but don't be pushy and don't beg.

Assessment Testing

Some firms may require a test as part of the application process. The assessments most commonly used are those that indicate intelligence or general aptitude. In addition, some firms use assessments that give them information on specific aptitudes, personality traits and interest patterns.

Don't let tests scare you off. None of the commonly used tests require advance preparation. Remember that your scores are only one of many factors employers will consider in judging your qualification for a job.

If the assessment is timed, you will be told how much time you will have to complete it. Listen carefully to the instructions – if you do not clearly understand what you are expected to do, be sure to ask questions. The time for questions, however, is before the test begins. After you start the test, work steadily and carefully because seconds lost in asking questions after it starts could seriously affect your score.

Once the assessment is finished, don't second guess your results. If the assessment is well constructed, you probably would achieve a similar score if you took it again. Remember, too, that employers do not regard your score as an infallible measure of your abilities - but as an indication of them.

Reasons People Don't Get Hired

- Poor personal appearance
- Overly aggressive
- Inability to express information in a clear and concise manner
- Lack of interest and enthusiasm
- Lack of planning for career; no purpose or goal
- Nervousness, lack of confidence and poise
- Over emphasis on money
- Lack of tact and courtesy
- Negative attitude about past employers
- No genuine interest in company or job
- No eye contact with the interviewer
- Application form is incomplete or sloppy
- No sense of humor
- Late for interview
- Failure to express appreciation for interviewer's time
- Gives vague responses to questions
- No follow up with thank you note or phone call

HELPFUL TIPS

Helpful Hints for Job Seekers

Choose Your Target Carefully

Put your time and energy into opportunities which interest you. Focus on those that give you the best chance of receiving an offer. Pick a few companies you're interested in and pursue them, no matter if they have openings or not.

Work Your Network

Flip through your Rolodex, business and social media contracts and let them know you're looking.

Sell Yourself

Learn how to talk about yourself in a way that's meaningful and powerful. One great way to do this is to type a list of potential interview questions along with bulleted answers. This will give you some great talking points.

Consider Freelancing

If you are in a field that supports freelancing, don't think twice – take the opportunity. It's a great way to keep money coming in and your skills sharpened until full-time work comes along.

Take a Temporary Position

If freelancing isn't an option, consider interim staffing. No matter what the economy does, work still needs to get done. Many staffing agencies pay well. Like freelancing, this will keep money coming in and your skills well-honed until you can secure a full-time job.

Sweat the Small Stuff

Personal touches make a huge difference. Make sure each letter addresses your specific skills and qualities which may interest the company. Remember to always send a thank you note or e-mail after the interview.

Above All Else, Stay Positive

In tough economic times, a positive attitude is the most important thing. Here is another perspective: Even if there was a 10 percent unemployment rate, that still means 90 percent are still employed. Plus, with an average of 3 million jobs available each year in the U.S., each job seeker is only looking for one. Those are pretty good odds.

Tips for Starting Over

It can be very intimidating to start over. The first few weeks on the job are a chance for you to start over. A key part of this is settling-in and learning the ropes.

1. Be friendly
2. Be flexible
3. Show Initiative
4. Be dependable
5. Don't be fake
6. Obey the rules
7. Admit your mistakes
8. Hold your ideas
9. Solve your own problems
10. Find a role model

Job Search Resources

Publications

More information is available at your local Iowa*WORKS* office. Call or stop by for some one-on-one help with your questions, or ask for copies of these helpful publications:

- Creating Résumés
- A Veterans Guide for Successful Job Interviewing
- Job Search Tips for Older
- Job Seekers
- Billfold Résumé for Job Interviews
- Successfully Interviewing Job Applicants

SKILLED IOWA

Skilled Iowa Initiative

The Skilled Iowa Initiative will improve the job training and marketability of Iowa's workforce and drive future economic growth for the state. Similar initiatives throughout the country have changed the landscape of local economies through programs that incorporate this nationally recognized assessment system. The assessment was designed to measure individual workers' skills in the areas of applied mathematics, reading for information and locating information.

Proven Worker Benefits

- Ability to demonstrate skills to current and potential employers
- Valuable job training opportunities
- Opportunities for career change and advancement

Proven Business Benefits

- Assurance that employees have the right skill sets
- Improved hiring procedures
- Reduced turnover and training costs
- Increased productivity
- Higher employee morale

Proven Community Benefits

- Valuable tool to attract new business to the area
- Proof of a talented workforce to fill current and future jobs
- Economic growth opportunities

Skilled Iowa Internship

Individuals collecting unemployment insurance can participate in Skilled Iowa Internship opportunities as a way to build their skills while they look for a permanent job. The program links job seekers with firms looking to hire and are willing to provide job-skills training. Interns are prescreened and matched with the business needs.

What is the Certificate?

Each day employers receive stacks of applications for only a handful of open positions. With Skilled Iowa, you can take the National Career Readiness Certificate (NCRC) and prove you have the skills for the job. The NCRC is the work-related skills credential. Whether you're looking for a job or want to enhance your diploma or résumé. NCRC provides proof of your job skills for employers nationwide. It is composed of three WorkKeys® assessments that measure skills critical to on–the–job success:

- Applied Mathematics
- Reading for Information
- Locating Information

Job seekers wanting to improve their scores and obtain a higher-level certificate can receive additional training from providers across the state. IWD utilizes the KeyTrain® program.

Iowa Workforce Job Listings

www.IowaJobs.org

At any given time, over 20,000 jobs are posted. Many of Iowa's top employers have their job openings automatically added directly from their web sites. This ensures that only the most current jobs are posted. IWD encourages all Iowans to begin their job search with IowaJobs.org.

IOWAWORKS RESOURCES

Local Iowa*WORKS* centers are here to assist all job seekers through the sometimes challenging process of finding a job. If you find yourself in need of a job, visit your local center. These workshops help to meet the immediate needs of Iowans in transition. The topics include dealing with job loss, basic computer skills, applying for financial aid, résumé development, job search methods and tips on keeping a job in today's environment.

Your local office can provide a number of resources and services to enhance your search efforts for a new position. Each office is equipped with a resource center to serve the needs of Iowa job seekers.

- Assistance with self-guided employment searches
- Résumé and cover letter writing assistance
- Referral and applications for local employers
- Job development and placement assistance
- Labor Market Information
- Interviewing skills workshops
- Assistance filing unemployment insurance claims
- Business directory of local employers

In addition to assistance with the unemployment process, regional Iowa*WORKS* Centers a wide-range of workshops on a rotating basis. These workshops help to meet the immediate needs of Iowans in transition. The topics include dealing with job loss, financial management, applying for financial aid, résumé development, job search methods and tips on keeping a job in today's environment.

IWD Access Points

Hundreds of access points are available across the state. The department has dedicated workforce professionals ready to assist throughout the week. New access points are added on a regular basis and the map is updated instantly to reflect the points of service.

Access Point Services Include:

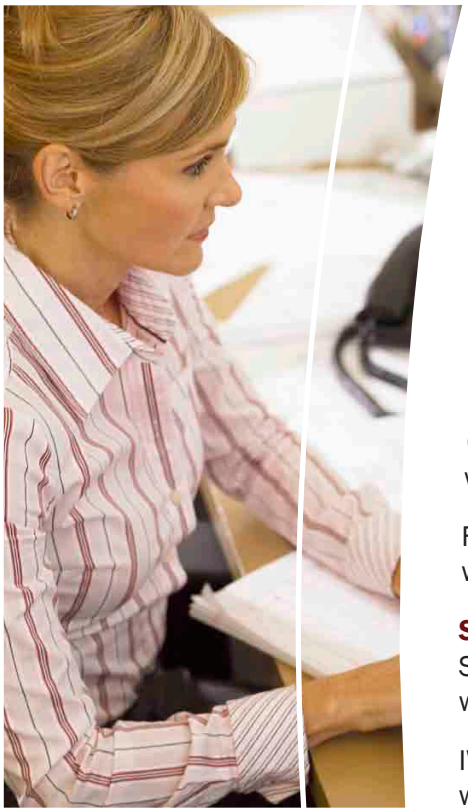
- Job search and résumé development assistance
- Access to thousands of employment opportunities
- Skill assessment and testing tools
- Information for veterans
- Workforce data and trends
- Job posting assistance for employers

For a complete map of all the Access Point locations, visit www.iowaworkforce.org.

Iowa*WORKS* Resources and Services Available

- Self-guided employment searches
- Résumé and cover letter assistance
- Referral and applications for local employers
- Job development and placement assistance
- Labor Market Information
- Interviewing skills workshops
- Business directory of local employers
- Iowa Access for Iowans with disabilities
- Migrant and Seasonal Farm Workers Program
- Services for US military veterans
- PROMISE JOBS
- Assistance with Iowa child labor forms

Job Search Websites



Federal Job Listings:

R.I. Arsenal Federal Jobs
www.cpol.army.mil/

Department of Veteran's Affairs
www.jobcentral.com/vetcentral/

Federal Job Opportunities
www.usajobs.gov/

U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service
www.fws.gov/jobs/

Job Central
www.jobcentral.com

Federal Job Search
www.americajob.com

Careers In Government
www.careersingovernment.com

Federal Jobs Digest
www.jobsfed.com

State Job Listings:

State of Iowa jobs
www.das.iowa.gov

IWD Job Site
www.iowajobs.org

Career Websites:

O'Net
online.onetcenter.org

Career One Stop
www.careeronestop.org

Public Service Employees Network
www.pse-net.com

Iowa Workforce Information Network
http://iwin.iwd.state.ia.us/

Career Builder
www.careerbuilder.com

Career.com
www.career.com

Student Information
www.youthforiowa.org

Educational:

U.S. Department of Education
www.ed.gov

Financial Aid Information Page
www.finaid.org

Miscellaneous Sites:

Work In Iowa
www.workiniowa.com

ExecSearches.com
www.execsearches.com/

Summer Jobs
www.summerjobs.com

Employment Guide
www.employmentguide.com/

Dice
www.dice.com

Monster.com
www.monster.com

Job.com
www.job.com

All Star Jobs
www.allstarjobs.com

Adquest-Help wanted
www.adquest3d.com

AARP/SCSEP
www.aarp.org/work/job-hunting/

East Central Intergovernmental Association
www.ecia.org/

Black Hawk County
http://www.co.black-hawk.ia.us/depts/hrjobs.html

Indeed
www.indeed.com

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