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## AG & FOOD CAREER GUIDE

2021/2022



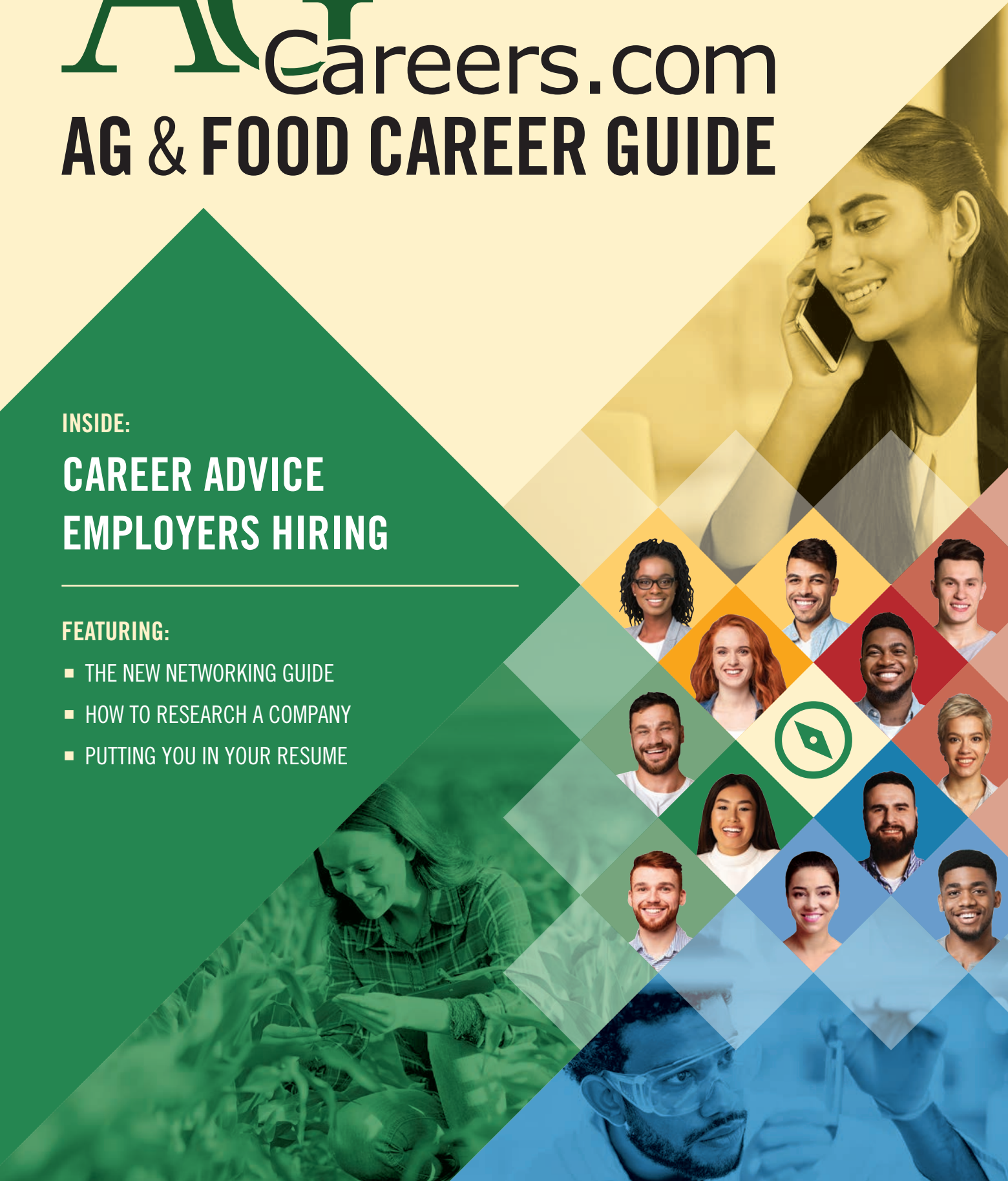
U.S. 15<sup>TH</sup> EDITION

INSIDE:

### CAREER ADVICE EMPLOYERS HIRING

FEATURING:

- THE NEW NETWORKING GUIDE
- HOW TO RESEARCH A COMPANY
- PUTTING YOU IN YOUR RESUME



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We are excited to bring you AgCareers.com's Agriculture & Food Career Guide. Whether you are completing internships, summer experiences, accepting your first job, or continuing development throughout your professional career, thank you for bringing us along on your career journey; we are here to support & connect you!

The past year brought changes none of us predicted or prepared for, but as college & university campuses adapted, so did employers with recruiting and hiring. We are thankful to be part of agriculture & food, an industry essential to feeding the world that perseveres even in challenging times.

We have creatively evolved this Ag & Food Career Guide for 15 years, enhancing it each year to remain relevant in the current job market and educational environment. Yet, the goal of the Career Guide has remained the same, to be a resource for students and young professionals interested in careers within the agriculture and food industry. What started as a small print publication has developed into a robust magazine and digital flipbook with online enhancements filled with engaging content relevant to the present employment marketplace that provides advice to job seekers.

The Ag & Food Career Guide is pleased to produce this edition as we return to a sense of normalcy verses last year's guide focused on the pandemic's impact on the workforce. We all learned over the past year to increase efficiency and connect virtually. Remote work, virtual career fairs, and online interviewing are some of the positive efficiencies we expect to be part of ongoing recruitment. Articles in this guide cover these timely topics, along with advice on researching a potential employer, keeping confidence during the job search, careers you wouldn't expect in agriculture, and networking and resume strategies.

In this edition, review the elite agricultural and food businesses highlighted throughout the magazine. These organizations are actively recruiting students for internships and entry-level positions. If you're debating on continuing education, check out the article, "Professional Development vs. Master's Degree," plus the University Partners featured inside this publication who offer ag related online and traditional college programs.

Save this publication throughout the school year and beyond as a resource for your career search. Also check out and bookmark our digital edition at [www.AgCareers.com](http://www.AgCareers.com) which includes links to employers hiring and bonus content. In addition, sign up for the Career Success Kit which delivers career content direct to your email over the next few months. View the back cover for your invitation to the kit's exclusive videos, graphics, and interactive content to help you thrive in the job market.

Use some of this advice to put the finishing touches on your resume and then add it to the AgCareers.com Resume Database so employers can find you. You will want to be proactive in your search and apply to opportunities on [www.AgCareers.com](http://www.AgCareers.com). Employers post thousands of job openings each month!

We hope that no matter where you are in your career journey, this guide and AgCareers.com's resources can help you along the way. On behalf of our industry partners, thank you for exploring this guide and starting your career in agriculture and food!



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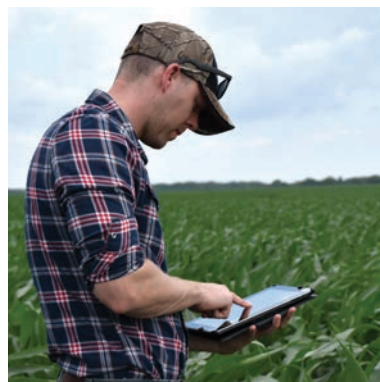
## ARTICLES

- 5 PUTTING YOU IN YOUR RESUME
- 9 THE NEW NETWORKING GUIDE
- 13 YOU KNOW MORE THAN YOU THINK
- 15 INTERVIEWS - THE BIG STAGE
- 18 MY DREAM JOB I NEVER KNEW EXISTED
- 23 HOW TO RESEARCH A COMPANY
- 26 PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT VS. MASTER'S PROGRAM
- 29 NAVIGATING VIRTUAL CAREER FAIRS
- 33 KEEP THE CONFIDENCE
- 39 AGCAREERS.COM HOW TO

## EMPLOYERS & ORGANIZATIONS

SYNGENTA	4
CHRISTENSEN FARMS	7
WILBUR-ELLIS	8
FARM CREDIT	11
CORTEVA	12
COMPASS MINERALS	14
DIDION INC.	17
BECK'S	20
CLAAS	21
CIBUS	22
BAYER	25
BIG IRON	27
NATIONAL FFA ORGANIZATION	28
NUTRIEN AG SOLUTIONS	31
HARTUNG BROTHERS	32
AGRICULTURE FUTURE OF AMERICA	35
UNIVERSITY PARTNERS	36
UNIVERSITY PARTNERS	37
DE LACY EXECUTIVE LTD.	38
CAREER SUCCESS KIT	40





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# Putting **YOU** in Your Resume

*How to showcase your professional experience and your personality on your resume.*

by Kylie Farmer, AgCareers.com Marketing Intern

Your resume is your future employer's first impression of you. Sure, you want to show you are professional, but you also want your personality to shine through.

"Your resume is you on paper," said Lexie Lee, lead counselor at the Texas Tech University Career Center.

If your resume is a representation of yourself, how can you show your personality in such a professional document?

We spoke to three career professionals in the US and Canada to answer just that. Here are their tips on how to feature both your professional experience and personality on your resume.

## CHOOSE A STRUCTURE THAT FITS YOUR INTERESTS

All of these career professionals agreed that the structure of your document is a great opportunity to personalize your resume to reflect your experiences.

Think about how you spend your time outside of school and work. Activities like volunteer work, hobbies, certifications, and accomplishments are all section titles that can be added to a resume.

Another way to find a structure that fits your resume needs is to look at the types of professional experiences you want to list.

"If a student is applying to law school," Lee said, "she might only list her sales experience and then expand upon her

time working at a law firm, because that's more relevant for her."

Traditionally, entry-level jobs teach job candidates about customer service, sales, and teamwork, and are worth mentioning, but those positions should not overshadow more relevant experiences.

## TAKE ADVANTAGE OF BEING A STUDENT

The classes and projects you have completed are unique to you and are worth sharing to employers, especially if you gained skills that an employer is looking for.

"Let's take knowing Excel for example," Lee said. "If you learned Excel in school and haven't used it professionally yet, maybe we add relevant projects and classes under education, because you might not have the chance to add that under experience."

Additionally, many college and university campuses have career services available to students free of cost. These campus staff are specifically trained to help you with all parts of the job search and have seen an abundance of resumes. Take advantage of these experts – especially while it's free!

**SUPPLEMENTING YOUR RESUME WITH A COVER LETTER IS ANOTHER OPPORTUNITY TO ADD MORE OF YOUR PERSONALITY TO YOUR FIRST IMPRESSION.**

## SUPPLEMENT YOUR RESUME WITH OTHER SOURCES

The impact of your resume does not have to end with your single page of experiences.

Margaret Heard, career advisor at Conestoga College recommends adding the URL of your LinkedIn profile or digital portfolio to the header of your resume. This gives an employer the chance to match your name to your face and browse an in-depth listing of your work and achievements.

"Both types of tools give you the opportunity to be more narrative and creative in the presentation of yourself, your experiences and what drives you," Heard explained. "Uploading files, videos and pictures can further support the story you are presenting."

Fikrija Skarep, a Canada-based career professional, adds that supplementing your resume with a cover letter is another opportunity to add more of your personality to your first impression.

"I once submitted a poem as a cover letter when I applied to company with a very creative and relaxed environment," Skarep said. "While that is an extreme example, it shows that you do get to be more creative in how you present yourself in the cover letter."

Since a cover letter is more conversational, you can give an employer their first glance into how you will interact in the interview and as their employee. >>>

## ADD A PROFILE STATEMENT

Employers are typically more interested in what you can do for their company than what you want to gain from them, so use a profile statement to share that with them.

“If you are using a profile statement category,” said Heard, “you can incorporate part of your mission statement and/or values into that area.”

Profile statements let your resume’s audience know a lot about you right off the bat, but Skarep warns about making it all about you.

“Keep in mind that the resume should not talk about what you want, but what’s in it for the employer,” Skarep said.

“That is why you should stay away from the outdated objectives that say that you are looking for a position to grow your skills, to advance your career. Tell the employer what you are bringing to them instead.”

The profile statement is your chance to sell yourself. Let your future employer know how you can bring your purpose, passions and skills to fulfill their mission by adding this section to your resume.

## BE INTENTIONAL ABOUT DESIGN

While your resume should look personalized to you, you should always keep it easy-to-read and purposeful in design. To be intentional about design, first consider your industry and job position.

“As in everything—read the room,” Skarep said. “Depending on the type of position you are applying for or the type of company receiving your resume, your resume should or should not be more creative than usual.”

Lee explained that being intentional about the design of your resume

requires you to have a reasoning behind your design choices.

“Have it for a reason,” Lee said.

“Maybe it’s your favorite color, or it matches the colors of Texas Tech and you’re a Tech grad, or this follows the design of the company you’re applying for. You want it to be intentional. Don’t just say ‘I’m going to add color because I want to.’”

Even if your industry does not give you a lot of room for creativity, Skarep described how you can use color to create a sense of familiarity and connect with the individual reading your resume.

“One of the easy ways to decide on the colors to use is to look at the company’s logo or a color scheme,” Skarep said. “If their colors are blue and white, use dark blue for your headings, it will seem familiar but not overly obvious. Just be sure to avoid bright colors and keep high contrast between the text and the background.”

A professional resume should not leave you choosing between design and content, but basic design elements will allow you to represent yourself beyond your word choice.

## SHOW HOW YOU ADD VALUE

When drafting your resume descriptions, Lee said to sit down and ask yourself, “How did I add value in this position?” Then, choose wording that represents the value you brought. Often, if a previous employer or advisor saw value in your contributions, the employer reading your resume will too. The following sections dive deeper into choosing words that reflect you.

## SHOW YOUR ACCOMPLISHMENTS

Accomplishments are a personal element to be proud of. More than likely, no one has achieved the same set of achievements as you. Not only are accomplishments very personal, but incorporating them into your resume is a way to elevate the descriptions of your professional experiences.

“Don’t just list the duties you were tasked with,” Skarep said. “List the accomplishments and results.” One example of this format is “exceeded sales target by 60% in October, resulting in the Weekly Sales Champion award.”

Like in the above example, Lee said putting a number in your descriptions shows employers the exact impact and value of your accomplishments. You can quantify the number of interactions you have, number of projects you manage, percentage of growth – really, any element of your previous positions. Numbers define your accomplishments and also give your reader a visual break from words.

Accomplishments are an essential part of showing how great you are!

## MAKE IT SOUND LIKE YOU

Lee recommends using the combination of an action verb, example, and result in each of your bullet points. Even when using an outline like this, you have the freedom to choose words that sound like you.

“You don’t want to just copy and paste the job description, because anyone can do that,” Lee said.

However, using singular keywords and short, key phrases can make it easier for employers and Applicant Tracking systems to see that you are qualified for the position. When it is appropriate, follow action verbs >>>

with keywords, which Skarep said can be found by highlighting recurring words in the job posting. Keeping these keywords short allows you more room to use language that sounds like you.

“Avoid trying to stack your statements with keywords that feel awkward or forced,” Heard said. “Also avoid using what feels like a generic description of a job duty with no reflection of how you approach things.”

Resumes use many keywords and action verbs that are not commonly used in everyday speech. Though the tone of resumes is more formal than what you use every day, you still want your resume language to sound like you.

“In crafting your phrases, use language that you are comfortable with and is also industry appropriate,” Heard said. “For example, don’t try to use ‘million-dollar words’ that feel forced or get used in the wrong context.”

Overall, the use of action verbs and keywords in a resume requires you to balance the formal resume tone with your own personal speaking style.

## KEEP YOUR TONE CONSISTENT

Especially when adding action verbs and keywords, it is important that your resume has a similar tone throughout. If you start your resume sounding very professional and finish the document with an informal tone, it will leave the employer to wonder which one is the real you. Keeping your tone consistent ensures that you are presenting an accurate representation of yourself.

## HAVE SOMEONE ELSE READ IT

Sometimes, you have spent so much time reading your resume over and over that you miss things.

“Having that outside looking in perspective can help you see things that are bigger picture and help you find what you’re missing,” Lee said.

Not only can a second set of eyes pick out typos and spelling mistakes, but if they know you well enough, they can also let you know if you are presenting who you are accurately.

A resume is first and foremost a professional document, but it is a window into what kind of person you are. Your resume is your first chance to show your future employer who you are, so be sure to make your resume **YOU**.

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# THE NEW NETWORKING GUIDE

*Making networking easier than ever*

by Katie Gaebel, Ph.D., Agriculture Future of America Director of Programs

Within the past year, making connections and gaining experience in careers became increasingly difficult. With cancelled career fairs, internships and conferences it's challenging for college students to find opportunities to build or expand their networks. It's difficult enough to land that first internship or job in a normal world. Add in the factor of limited personal connection and it's a recipe for stress.

There's no need to fret, though. When you build a healthy network of individuals to help you gain new skills and stay connected to opportunities in the industry, you set yourself up for success. When you proactively prioritize networking, you're sure to get plugged in to more opportunities. While opportunities to meet face-to-face are limited, new and creative opportunities to connect with others and build networks have risen from the ashes of the pandemic.

*Here are twelve tips to keep your networking skills sharp.*

## 1 START FROM THE GROUND UP

Take a few minutes to think about those who have impacted your life thus far. Teachers, professors, public speakers, friends and family shaped you into the person you are today. Let these people know the impact they have on your life. Reaching out to professors to

let them know you enjoyed their class or connecting with an industry professional you admire through LinkedIn are great ways to begin building your network.

## 2 REMEMBER THEIR NAME

One of the easiest ways to make a connection with someone is by remembering their name. After someone introduces themselves, address them by their name throughout the conversation to make it more personable. Even on video chats and emails, addressing them when you begin to speak or including their name at the beginning of an email will stand out.

## 3 USE YOUR NETWORK

Your personal connections are powerful and when utilized, they can lead to a plethora of new opportunities. If you are speaking to someone who suggests you reach out to another individual, take their advice and act on it. Ask for contact information and take time to contact the individual and be sure to let them know who sent you to establish immediate mutuality. You can also ask your connection to make an introduction on your behalf. You can even bring up names of individuals in your personal network that have a connection to the employer or company you are interviewing with. Studies have reported that most employees were hired as a result of someone making an

introduction or connection, so it is worth your time to build your network in this way.

## 4 APPLY FOR JOBS

No matter what stage you are in your college career, job applications are ever-present. As a junior, start applying to jobs even if the likelihood of landing the job seems improbable. However, be transparent about your intended start date for employment. Getting your name out there is the only way for employers to know you exist. If you don't get the job, an employer will likely keep your name in the back of their mind and think of you when other positions open.

## 5 ADAPT TO THE VIRTUAL WORLD

Embracing the virtual world is critical to cultivating a vibrant network. Although the virtual world comes with its own set of hiccups, it provides a wonderful opportunity for introverts and extroverts alike to thrive through online outreach and connection. You might not be able to shake someone's hand and give a hearty "thank you" in person, but you can follow up with a personalized message through LinkedIn or email to showcase your appreciation and make a lasting impression.

## 6 FIND YOUR AFFINITY

One of the most unique parts of agriculture is the diverse community of individuals working toward >>>

one common goal — providing food, fuel and fiber for the world. Within this diversity, niches exist within the agriculture community that you can take advantage of. Women in agriculture are great resources for female students. Students of diverse ethnicities can connect with people of color in the agriculture industry to learn about their career journeys and successes. Find the national associations and other groups that members of your niche are members of to begin making these connections.

## 7 UPDATE YOUR LINKEDIN PROFILE

No matter your career field, your social media presence is a vital aspect of networking. LinkedIn is the primary social platform industry professionals utilize to support recruitment, so it's important your profile accurately reflects your skills and experience. Be sure that your headline — the sentence listed immediately under your name — incorporates your career goals. When your profile is up-to-date and you engage with your network on a regular basis, your odds of finding new opportunities are pretty good. For example, someone studying agricultural communication could add "aspiring graphic designer for a marketing communication agency."

## 8 DEEPEN YOUR CURRENT CONNECTIONS

We all have a network of individuals valuable to us. However, we often find ourselves connecting with people on LinkedIn but never take the relationship any further. Those individuals obviously have knowledge, skills and a repertoire beneficial and valuable to us. So, why not utilize the connections we already have to reach goals and drive

success? Initiate conversations about your career goals and take note of leads given to you. Don't be afraid to lean on your network for advice, job recommendations and introductions to those who can help you achieve your goals.

## 9 DON'T OVERDO IT

It's important not to abuse the connections you've made by continually making asks of those individuals. Rather, spend time getting to know your current connections, what they care about and find ways to bring value to them. Networking is a two-way street — when you invest in others, they'll invest in you. That's the sweet spot of networking that pays off throughout college and even into your early career.

## 10 DO YOUR RESEARCH

When planning for your future, it's important to find a company or organization that aligns with your career goals and values. When you identify companies and organizations of interest to you, research the company's website and LinkedIn page. If you come across employees in the area you hope to work in, reach out via email or connect with them on LinkedIn. Demonstrate a strong understanding of the mission behind the company or organization to showcase your passion about their work and its importance. You can even ask for a quick 15-minute informational interview by phone or video call for a more personal interaction.

## 11 GET INVOLVED

Though many events continue being held on virtual platforms, that shouldn't scare you from dipping your toes in the water. Check your college or university's website for a list of

clubs and organizations to get involved with. Outside of college, attending events and conferences that build your technical and professional skills is a great way to set yourself apart from your peers. Events like Agriculture Future of America (AFA) Leaders Conference develops practical skills for navigating a successful career. Not to mention, these spaces provide wonderful opportunities to network with peers and leaders in the food and agriculture industry.

## 12 FIND A MENTOR

Seek out structured mentoring and coaching programs to elevate your skills and grow as a young professional. According to MENTOR (mentoring.org), young adults with a mentor or coach are 130% more likely to hold leadership positions. AFA's Leader Fellowship™ is a great place for students to develop further in six competencies with help from a trained coach selected by each student in the program.

Building a network is more than connecting with individuals on LinkedIn and calling it a day, they take time and intentionality to build. Networks require you to follow up with those you look up to on a regular basis, while also providing value to those you call upon in your network. Remember these tips for building a strong network and when the day comes where someone asks you to be part of their network, reflect on those that built you up and return the favor. **AG**

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# YOU KNOW MORE THAN YOU THINK

*But you might still become victim of the Imposter Syndrome. Here's how to avoid it.*

by Owen Roberts, Ed.D., University of Illinois, Department of Agricultural Leadership, Education and Communications.

Consumers' interest in food production is shining a new light on agriculture – and on people who can talk about it publicly, from a podium, on social media and through traditional media.

This is an amazing opportunity for agriculture, and for you. Agriculture is constantly diversifying, and journalists' endless quest for new sources may lead to your door. They want to hear real stories and opinions from a breadth of people in the field.

Similarly, you may decide now is the time to tell your story and proactively seek out opportunities to have your voice heard.

If either scenario sounds like you, congratulations! Welcome to the community of people who are accepting the challenge of publicly portraying agriculture accurately and widely.

This role is no longer exclusively for someone else, like official spokespeople. The community needs as many people to join as possible in agriculture. If consumers, decision makers and others are anxious to understand more about the sector from the very people who make it hum, why not jump at the chance to oblige? Why not tell how sustainability, safety and profitability intersect on farm?

But first, be aware of a few facts. Some journalists are headline hunters and have burned farmers before, but the vast majority rise to their role of telling accurate, balanced stories. Now that doesn't mean they will always be your friend or present agriculture in a positive light – expecting them to be on “your

side” or pro-agriculture, is a mistake.

But it also doesn't mean you need to be instantly suspicious of their motives. They want to know what the public wants to know, and research by entities such as the Canadian Centre for Food Integrity tells us the public wants to know more about food production.

Here's something to remember: Connecting with the public with or without the media's involvement means you will get asked a lot of questions. You may be unfamiliar with some of the topics. After all, given the breadth of the agri-food sector, how many of us can go in depth on its entirety?

Intrinsically, that makes sense. But unfamiliarity can lead to self-doubt and a spiralling rabbit hole from which it's hard to emerge. It's a scenario in which a devil is perched on your shoulder, incessantly asking, “Who are YOU to speak about a multi-billion-dollar industry?”

This is called **Imposter Syndrome**. It was identified decades ago, defined in part as “an internal experience of intellectual phoniness.” It can send its victims running for the exits, missing the chance to raise agriculture's profile, not to mention, their own.

***Imposter Syndrome can be avoided. The key to avoiding it is to talk about what you know and avoid or defer on areas you don't.***

For example, I know about communications. So when I get asked questions about certain technologies (genetically modified organisms, for example), I offer to discuss

communication issues surrounding them, but that's it. I will refer questions about the science of technology to people whose professional lives are immersed in it.

Maybe you're not an expert yet in a particular field. But you know more than you think you do, like your understanding of the culture of agriculture, which is perfect for telling certain stories.

You can explain family-farming values, such as sustainability and how generation after generation has kept the family farm productive by emphasizing sustainability.

You can explain how crop protection and animal health is vital to farming operations, and how technology – government tested and approved – is used by farmers to keep plants and animals out of harm's way.

***You are not an imposter when you talk about what you know.***

If you ever need help working with the media, you can always seek advice from communications professionals at commodity organizations and elsewhere. They're eager to have people in the field acquire or further develop communications skills. **AG**

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# INTERVIEWS: THE BIG STAGE

*Are you disclosing too much in your debut?*

*by Bonnie Johnson, AgCareers.com Marketing & Communications Manager*

No matter the interview platform, whether it be phone, virtual, or in-person, the stage is all yours! This is your time to shine, showcase your talents, and highlight your skills. Your debut may be the one chance to sell yourself as the perfect contender for your dream job.

Beyond showing up on time, dressing professionally, and greeting the interviewer with a smile, you are expected to do a lot of talking. You're eager to share everything you know and all that you can bring to the organization.

***I've done that! I can do that! I know how! I, I, Me, Me, Me.***

Yes, the interview is about you, but it's also about determining your fit into the organization. It's human nature to feel compelled to fill that uncomfortable, awkward void, and lull in conversation, however that can lead to us babbling and spouting out too much information.

The oversharing consideration is especially imperative in an interview when you're asked that common question, "Tell me a little about yourself." The keyword here is LITTLE!

Honesty is the best policy, and obviously it's imperative in a job interview. However, as in your personal life, there can be a risk of interview "oversharing." We can also express this concept in the notorious acronym, "TMI"—too much information. These expressions showed up in 90s pop-culture, but the dawn of social

networking proliferated the use. In fact, overshare was Webster's New World Dictionary's Word of the Year way back in 2008! We have all seen social media users' tendency to spill the beans, give too many details, or share too much personal information.

Beyond social networks, reality TV's rise in popularity encouraged us to update everyone on our status, even if it's just a photo of what's for dinner. For instance, it's the person you just met that shares their entire life story, including significantly more personal details than necessary. Generation Y/ Millennials (born in the 80s & 90s) are sometimes even referred to as the overshare generation and the next generation is taking note and learning from their predecessors.

Even though it's prevalent in social media, oversharing does not need to be prevalent in your interview.

When you're excited about the opportunity, it takes extra effort to LISTEN. Don't just concentrate on the next thing you're going to say! This is exceptionally problematic when you're supposed to showcase your skills and talk about your talents. When you overthink what you are going to say next, you are not showing the interviewer your ability to listen and engage in conversation.

There's no doubt interviews require you to think quickly on your feet.

If the interviewer is doing their job effectively, they won't ask you a lot of simple "yes" or "no" questions. They'll ask behavioral questions to relate your past experiences, or situational questions to see how you would respond in a particular situation in the future.

When you really listen to what the interviewer is asking or sharing, take a few brief seconds to pause, collect your thoughts, and formulate your responses.

Ask yourself, "How can I effectively communicate that my abilities, experiences, and skills will support the organization?"

Remember the old cliché, "less is more." When formulating these responses, it's not about how much you share, it's the quality of your responses and questions. Respond to interview questions with relative, succinct answers that do not ramble on and on. When responding, provide a brief overview of the situation, task, actions you took, and results. >>>



Also, relinquish some of that spotlight; refocus on the employer and interviewer to let them shine. Remember your questions for the employer are just as important and give you extra opportunity to listen and learn. Prepare questions ahead of time and don't hesitate to ask new questions as they arise during your interview. Asking questions will also combat your tendency to overshare. Consider asking the interviewer about their role in the organization, how long they've been there, why they enjoy working for the organization, and what a typical day looks like.

As a guide, here are ten things you shouldn't share during an interview:

## AVOID THESE 10 INTERVIEW OVERSHARES

- 1. Excuses**—Reasons why you're late, your GPA is low, wrinkled clothes, you seem stressed or are unprepared.
- 2. Ambivalence**—Words that show you're indecisive, disengaged, or uninterested. Avoid "Sure," "That's fine," "Like," "I don't care," "Um...maybe."
- 3. What's in this for me?**—Stay clear of asking about perks such as days off, flexible hours or work from home options (especially during the first interview).
- 4. Clueless**—Do your research on the company, or at least relay your desire to learn more. Don't highlight your lack of knowledge by sharing that you "really don't know what the company does."
- 5. Complaints**—Weather, traffic, my parents made me do it, how little sleep you got last night.

**6. Guesses**—When a question stumps you, it's better to say, "I don't know" than to wing it. Ask for clarification or offer to return to the question later. You could even address the question in your interview follow-up/thank you.

**7. Personal circumstances**—A breakup, the death of your beloved pet, bankruptcy, a messy divorce, surgeries, and health information.

**8. Desperation**—"My last employer fired me." "When will I get my first paycheck?" "My parents said I must have a job by spring semester." "I need health coverage for my family." "My rent payment is overdue."

**9. Politics & religion**—Your views, even if you think your interviewer might or should agree!

**10. Burnt bridges**—Disparaging comments about your former boss, coworkers, employer, or educators.

Be cautious of interview oversharing. Knowing what NOT to say, in addition, what TO say, will certainly enhance your chance of securing a new position. **AG**

## VIRTUAL INTERVIEW REVELATIONS

The potential employer contacts you to set up your first interview virtually. You may give a sigh of relief for an online interview, but wait, just because you don't have to worry about your shoes or fingernails, doesn't mean there aren't other unique considerations. In contrast to in-person, virtual interviews invite the potential employer into a little of your world. Think about your background and your computer technology skills, among other aspects.

Rather than an in-person interview where you're on the employer's stage, it's your turn to set the stage in a virtual interview. You don't want your environment to cause a virtual interview "overshare." Consider your surroundings, both audibly (think loud roommates, music, dogs barking) and visually. Are your surroundings clean and clutter-free, or can you see towels hanging over your closet door and dirty clothes on the floor? Is your desk cluttered with empty beverage containers? Cat crawling around on your lap? Blinding light coming through your window?

If your backdrop is less than ideal, you may be guilty of visually oversharing in a virtual interview. Turn on your computer camera—what do you see? Are you presenting the image an employer wants to hire? Since the pandemic, many meetings, events, and even entire workplaces have moved to a virtual environment. Employers want to know you're self-aware and recognize how the background presents you and potentially represents your future employer in a virtual environment.





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# My Dream Job I Never Knew Existed

## *Unique Ag Careers & How to Find Them*

by Kyle Hampel, National FFA Organization

When Ronda Hamm was a university graduate, she never expected to be using her Ph.D. in entomology to work for a company in agriculture.

“I work for Corteva Agriscience, and I am our global academic relations leader,” Hamm said. “That probably doesn’t mean much to a lot of people, but essentially, what it means is ... I do education and outreach for all ages.”

When she was young, Hamm’s membership in the National FFA Organization helped her grow an interest in agriculture — she particularly loved animals — but her career path took an unexpected turn when an FFA internship placed her in an entomology lab.

“The entomology lab for me was scary because I was not a fan of insects, so I thought this was going to be the longest summer of my life,” Hamm said. “But it ended up being a fantastic, life-changing experience for me.”

Hamm’s current work involves a variety of duties, but she primarily focuses on leading educational symposiums for classrooms, conferences and other agricultural spaces around the globe. Because she works with such a wide range of people, Hamm likes to say she is a “K through gray” educator rather than K through 12.

“A lot of people are familiar with what an agriculture teacher looks like, and that’s somewhat similar to what I do, but it’s different in the fact that I’m

representing a company when I go out,” Hamm said.

Hamm added that although it is not a requirement for the job, her entomology doctorate often guides her lesson plans due to the “behind the scenes” importance of insects in agriculture.

“I’m an entomologist, so I talk about insects a lot – why they’re important, and why we should care,” Hamm said.

As a global educator, Hamm has spoken to hundreds of agricultural professionals in various careers, including some unique ones that some may not know much about. Because Hamm describes her occupation as “my dream job I never knew existed,” she says young people need to recognize the wide variety of job opportunities in the industry by using tools like AgCareers.com and FFA’s AgExplorer. FFA.org. Here are just a few examples of unique ag careers that are often hidden from the public eye.

### LOGISTICS SPECIALISTS

Logistics specialists are vitally important to the global agriculture industry. According to the World Bank, agriculture is a crucial part of international trade, and it can account for as much as 25% of a country’s gross domestic product. For this reason, every major agricultural company around the world employs logistics specialists to ensure that people and products are always going where they need to be.

“They are basically in charge of

planning how you get a product from point A to point B and making sure it’s done on time, you have enough supply available, and that you do it within a reasonable cost,” Hamm said. “All those steps cost money, so how can you do it efficiently?”

Like any industry, agriculture’s success relies on a steady supply chain — or, as National FFA calls it on its website FFA.org, a value chain. Research is done, goals are established, products are made and shipped, and consumers buy as the process repeats. Logistics specialists can focus on some or all parts of the value chain depending on their employers’ needs, but good organizational skills are always a must. An agricultural logistics specialist typically needs a bachelor’s degree at minimum, and many universities offer degrees in logistics, supply chains and related skillsets.

The mainstream image of a typical ag worker is someone toiling away on a farm, but the research and development that occurs in the ag sector is a vital part of keeping the industry thriving and growing. As someone from an academic background, Hamm says there is an incredible variety of scientific ag careers available to researchers from all kinds of disciplines.

“There are so many different kinds of scientists [in agriculture],” Hamm said. “Just pick your favorite topic and add ‘-ology’ to it.” >>>

## PLANT PATHOLOGY

One such scientific career is in the field of plant pathology – the study of diseases in plants. Disease is one of the “silent killers” in the world of agriculture, and plant pathologists are paid to investigate the pathogens that infect crops around the world so they can find ways to prevent infectious outbreaks from ruining farmers’ yields.

Bacteria and viruses can cause disease in plants just like they can in animals, but plant pathologists also study infectious fungi, parasitic plants and other sources of illness. The results of this research are then used to produce chemical treatments and draft quarantine plans as needed. Geneticists can also breed disease-resistant crops to stop pathogens at the source effectively.

Any aspiring agricultural professionals wanting to work in plant pathology will likely need an advanced degree in biology or a related field of study. However, some universities have departments and degrees focused solely on plant pathology, such as the University of California, Davis.

## AERIAL APPLICATOR

Not all agricultural careers require advanced degrees, though. For example, anyone interested in getting a pilot’s license can become an aerial applicator and use small airplanes to drop fertilizer, pesticides and other protective treatments directly onto a farmer’s crops from above.

Aerial application – more commonly known as crop dusting – is a practice first invented in the early 1920s as a joint effort between the U.S. Department of Agriculture and the U.S. Army. While it requires specialized airplanes, agricultural aviation training programs

typically only take a few months to complete. As a result, workers who earn their pilot’s license can also become aerial surveyors, air freighters and more.

## BRANDING AND TRADEMARKS

Although agriculture is often thought of as an industry built on working outdoors, working indoors is always an option. Becky Fouard, a global learning and development consultant for Elanco Animal Health and a former National FFA Officer, has used her marketing background to work in several corporate jobs throughout her career, including a unique stint as a specialist in branding and trademarks.

“My very first job out of college was with the Kansas Department of Agriculture as the state trademark programmer,” Fouard said. “It was a job I had never heard of, and I absolutely loved it!”

Fouard worked on branding, trademarks and other legal filings for agricultural products made in the state of Kansas. At the same time, she also worked as a food export liaison, traveling overseas with farmers and other ag producers to build international trade connections.

“It was an awesome chance to learn about multiple agriculture products and services, as well as travel,” Fouard said.

## AGRICULTURAL ATTORNEYS

Most agricultural corporate jobs will likely require some kind of college degree, especially true in the legal side of ag. Before she became a global educator for Corteva, Hamm worked in the legal department of Dow AgroSciences, and she said agricultural attorneys are a vital part of keeping the

agriculture industry going.

“That can be from a branding standpoint – brands need to be protected, so we have legal that works with that,” Hamm said. “Attorneys also work on intellectual property, so if you really like law and science, that’s a great combination for you.”

While she is not an attorney herself, Hamm worked as a patent liaison for over four years, writing patent applications and serving as a connection point between scientists and attorneys.

“If you love writing and you love brand new technologies ... it’s super exciting,” Hamm said. “These are things that have never been done before, because you can’t patent something that’s been done before.”

Attorneys who specialize in agriculture need to be highly qualified individuals. In addition to earning a bachelor’s degree and an advanced degree from a law school – typically a seven-year commitment at a minimum – a deep knowledge of the inner workings of the agricultural industry is also a natural requirement.

## SAFETY MANAGER

Another unique yet vitally important ag job is working as a safety manager. Statistically, farming is a dangerous job – twice as deadly as law enforcement, according to the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics. While their exact duties can vary greatly depending on their location and employer, safety managers are generally responsible for ensuring that farmers, researchers and other ag workers follow safety regulations and use safe equipment.

“People don’t really think about all the safety that goes into ag,” Hamm said. “Not only on the farm but in a >>>



place like Corteva where we have lots of laboratories that have potentially dangerous chemicals or equipment that could be dangerous to use.”

Overall, safety management is a broad career path in agriculture. Safety managers can test agricultural equipment to ensure it meets safety standards, enforce regulations at farms or laboratories, and even work with emergency services. Many universities offer degrees in safety management, but some jobs in this field only require a trade school degree. It all depends on the specifics of the job.

In addition to everything listed above, there are hundreds of other unique ag jobs out there waiting to be discovered. For example, you can supervise the grass on football fields and golf courses as a **TURF MANAGER**. You can farm fish, lobsters, seaweed and

more as an **AQUACULTURE SPECIALIST**. You can even help run the National Cowboy Poetry Gathering as a **NONPROFIT ORGANIZER** with the Western Folklife Center.

As former FFA members and specialists in education and outreach, Hamm and Fouard both said learning to find these job opportunities for yourself is a valuable skill. They recommend using websites such as LinkedIn.com, AgCareers.com and AgExplorer.FFA.org to find out about unusual jobs that suit your interests. AgExplorer.FFA.org is a highly recommended resource for discovering new careers and seeing how they connect to other jobs in agriculture.

Additionally, Fouard’s top recommendation to students is applying for internships.

“I highly recommend going to your

high school or college career fairs and making connections with businesses there, and hopefully finding a few companies you like and want to apply for internships with,” Fouard said.

Meanwhile, Hamm’s biggest recommendation is to keep an open mind toward entrepreneurship and creating jobs that don’t exist yet. **AG**

**“IF YOU DON’T FIND IT, CREATE IT,” HAMM SAID.**

***To learn more about National FFA Organization, visit [www.ffa.org](http://www.ffa.org).***



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# How To Research A Company



by Lindsay Malcom, AgCareers.com Virtual Career Fair & Social Media Intern

**W**hether it's before applying, the interview, or accepting a job offer, the importance of researching a company and getting to know what they are all about is second to none. Conducting research on a company that you are considering working at will tell you many things, including company culture, work environment, social atmosphere, core values and ethics, and even the type of people that work there. Here's how you can successfully research a company so you can knock your next interview out of the park.

## KNOW WHAT MAKES THE COMPANY STAND OUT

Every company has something that makes them unique. To find this, understand why the company was created, what principles it was built on and what purpose it fulfills. What makes the company different from its competitors? What is its market share like? What is the company's value proposition? These are all essential pieces of information you will want to know before interacting with the employer in an interview or conversational setting.

The answers to these questions are almost always on the company's website. Typically, you will find this information under the "About Us" page. Be on the lookout for sections titled "Core Values" or "Mission Statement" as these sections reveal how and why the business stands out from the crowd. Read closely and after, ask yourself

what the company stands for and what their purpose is. Some examples of core company values are "commitment to client service" or "sustainable and ethical practices." When you are reading the "About Us" section on their website, be sure to jot down anything that you find interesting, any values or tidbits that resonate with you or anything that sparks your curiosity. Review this section and any other company basics you should know: when and where the company was founded, the founders, CEO or top executives, the size of the company, current location, general company history and any statistics or certifications that are mentioned.

Use your research to understand what the employer values and connect with them on company-specific topics during your interview and other interactions. Of course, don't recite their website content verbatim during the interview, but do bring up certain points that stood out to you. You could say something like, "I was skimming through your website and I noticed that (company name) strongly values giving back to the community. Could you tell me more about how that value has impacted company culture?"

Ensure you cannot easily answer your questions by looking at the website. This shows that you have done your research and that you value the company's efforts. By asking or mentioning specific things from the website, the employer will know

you took the time to learn about the organization.

## CHECK OUT THEIR SOCIAL MEDIA

The company's social media is a window into their organization. By checking out the company's social media profiles, you will get a good sense of who they are. Find their social media, see what platforms they are active on, and scroll through their posts to see what updates they are sharing. Checking out their social media will give you an insight into their customer base, interactions, tone, brand, purpose, and events and initiatives that they find important. Remember, if they spend time promoting something, it's probably because they think it's important!

This information will allow you to gauge the type of customer they appeal to and interact with. As always, remember to make a mental note of positive news and examples so that you can use them to your advantage in the interview. If there is a post that stands out to you, a positive comment or review from a customer, or a company referral, take note so you can reference the positive experience later on—you may even pick up on something the employer has not seen yet and surprise them! Knowing how a company interacts with its customers, its community and in some cases, its own employees online can help you know what to expect when interacting with the employer yourself.

>>>



## KEEP A CLOSE EYE ON LINKEDIN

LinkedIn has features different from other social media platforms that are helpful when researching a company. Visit the company's profile to learn what kind of news and updates the organization communicates to the public—this is what they want you to know. Find content that stands out to you and use it as a talking point when interviewing. Company-specific questions are sure to impress an employer who applauds candidates who teach themselves about the company before even working there.

Be sure to head to the “People” tab. This will give you an overview of the employees at the company, their current roles, and their backgrounds. On the people tab, you can identify who works at the company, where they live, their responsibilities, what they studied, skills they have identified as needed in their jobs and how you are similar. For further research, you can filter people out based on what they do. For example, if you select “Sales & Business Development” you can view every person doing that job function at the organization. This is a valuable tool to keep in mind during your research as it shows you how other people got to their jobs, and it helps you find skills you already have and those that you would like to develop.

**Quick tip:** be sure to view the profiles of the people who will interview you. This will give you knowledge about what they do as well as their experience. Make sure you have the setting turned on where they can see that you viewed their profile—it will show them you care and that you thoroughly prepared for the interview!

## FOCUS ON THE NOW

Knowing recent company news and industry trends shows you can stay relevant and well-informed. Has the company recently launched a new product or service? Did they win an award this past year? Were they recognized for their achievements in sustainability? Did they form a new partnership? Mention it! Or even better, congratulate them on their accomplishments and elaborate on why you think they did a good job. For example, if the company recently received a Fair Trade Certification, you could share your thoughts on how important it is to adhere to ethical standards and ensure that businesses are accountable for the way they impact the lives of others. The employer will appreciate you taking the time to show them you are knowledgeable about what is going on in their world.

Another word of advice when researching a company would be to refresh yourself on recent trends or events happening in the market that the company operates in. The most effective way to bring this up in an interview is to reference something that is occurring in the employer's industry and ask how it could affect their business. This will demonstrate your internal knowledge of the company, while acknowledging external market factors that could be positively or negatively affecting them.

Mentioning timely, current events or trends lets the employer know you are on the ball when staying on top of things. This will display a drive to be proactive in your work—an essential trait that employers are looking for.

Now that you have done all this research about the company, remember that your objective in the interview is to convince the employer that you want to work at their organization. Back your answers up with your ability to talk about what makes their company unique and express your excitement by showing your knowledge. Work with examples that you know and answer interview questions confidently. Knowing exactly what you're talking about couldn't be any more effective!

**AG**

## Questions to Consider when Looking at a Company's Social Media

- What type of content are they posting?
- Do they have a large or small following?
- Are their followers international or more local?
- How often are they posting new content?
- Do they have a professional or more casual tone?
- Who is their audience online? How does this compare to their target market?
- What is their communication style like?
- How do they handle customer complaints or unsatisfied clients?
- Are they responsive to consumers online or do they rely more on in-person interactions?
- Why do they post to social media? Is it for brand awareness, event promotion, getting sales leads, or something else?



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# PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT



# MASTER'S PROGRAM

by Kacey Toews, Talent Solutions Customer Success Specialist

Whether you just graduated with your undergraduate degree, or you have been in the workforce a couple of years, you may be pondering going back to pursue a master's degree. A few questions typically come to mind when thinking about pursuing your master's degree: "Do I really need it? Can I afford it? Do I want to wait to start making money?" There are many factors to consider when weighing this decision but before you make the decision, there are a couple of things that you need to nail down. What are your career goals? What type of career are you looking to have? This may be hard to navigate straight out of college with little experience, but it is something to keep in mind when thinking about the bigger picture. Here are some factors to consider when thinking about this bigger picture.

## WHY YOU SHOULD PURSUE A MASTER'S PROGRAM

### CERTAIN JOBS REQUIRE IT

Depending upon which type of job you are pursuing, some companies and roles may require a master's degree.

### PAY INCREASE

In some organizations and roles like extension or education, a master's degree can warrant a pay increase.

### GAIN KNOWLEDGE BENEFICIAL FOR FUTURE CONSULTING ROLES

Specialized knowledge in a certain subject matter can help give you experience and credibility if you are looking at transitioning into a consulting role at some point in your career.

### FOCUSED EDUCATION AND RESEARCH OPPORTUNITY

A master's program can allow you to become an expert within a specific subject or niche focus and conduct research to better understand subject matter.

### CREDIBILITY TO CLIENTS AND PEERS

In some situations, it can help you gain credibility whether networking with your peers or trying to find a job after graduation or further into your career.

### PASSIONATE ABOUT THE SUBJECT

When you are passionate about something, why not learn more about it?

## WHY YOU SHOULD NOT PURSUE A MASTER'S PROGRAM

### TIME COMMITMENT

Typically, a master's program lasts about 2 years. It can be spread out even longer if you are pursuing your master's degree while working full time.

### MONEY COMMITMENT

There are many opportunities for fellowships, scholarships or even employment through the university to fund your degree, but that may not be an option for some.

### EDUCATION REQUIREMENTS

Depending on what master's program you are pursuing, you may be required to take the GRE or have taken certain undergraduate classes.

### NOT FULLY INTERESTED IN SUBJECT MATTER

If you aren't fully interested or invested in what you are studying, you probably won't get very much out of it. That is why figuring out your goals and how a specific program can help you achieve them is key!

If you find yourself looking at the list and identifying with the "should not" list more than the "should", there is another alternative if you are wanting to continue your education and build on a specific skill set. Professional development is a great alternative for those who went straight to the workforce after college. It can come in the form of hiring a career coach, attending a free webinar, earning a certification, attending a conference and many more. You can find just about anything you are looking for to sharpen a specific skill set. >>>

## WHY YOU SHOULD CONSIDER PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT AS AN ALTERNATIVE

### MAKE MONEY SOONER

Going straight into a full-time role instead of going back to school gives you the opportunity to start making money sooner than you would going down the master's degree path.

### CUSTOMIZE AND DIVERSIFY BASED ON INTERESTS

If you are interested in many different topics, you can enhance those skill sets by completing professional development in each area rather than focusing on one in a master's program.

### CHEAPER

Workshops, conferences, certifications, etc. will add up but will be significantly cheaper than a master's degree.

### NOT AS MUCH OF A TIME COMMITMENT

Typically, these professional development methods will not be years long like a traditional master's degree program. It is easy to find professional development that fits your timeline.

### CONTINUOUSLY BUILD ON YOUR KNOWLEDGE

By keeping up with a certificate, attending conferences every year or even completing a webinar series, you will be able to build upon your current knowledge and further your expertise in a specific subject beyond the couple years spent in a master's program.

### EXPERIENCE IS ENOUGH

As you navigate through your professional career and start applying for other jobs, you will find that in some cases, experience is enough, and many roles do not require a master's degree.

### YOU DON'T LIKE SCHOOL

Bottom line, school is not for everyone! Do not sign yourself up for additional time in college if you know that it is not something you enjoy. **AG**

### STILL UNSURE OF WHICH PATH IS FOR YOU?

Make a pro/con list specific to your situation and write down your goals. If you are still unsure, there is nothing wrong with entering the workforce for a couple of years, gaining experience, and then going back to school. The beauty of education is that you can always go back for more and everyone's path is different!



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# Navigating Virtual Career Fairs

by Kylie Farmer, AgCareers.com Marketing Intern

After seemingly endless Zoom classes, virtual conferences, even digital social gatherings, hearing the word “virtual” provokes an almost immediate eyeroll. While the different modalities can be difficult at first, you can use these differences to your benefit and find even more opportunities to connect to employers. So, what are some of these differences?

## JOB SEEKER RESPONSIBILITY

Joleen Hueftle, Recruiter at Gavilon, notes the increased responsibility of the job seeker as a key difference between in-person and virtual career fairs.

“One of the main differences I’ve noticed relates to the intentionality required for students and candidates to engage with employers,” Hueftle said. “At an in-person fair, job seekers can physically walk around to explore all employers. Virtually, job seekers must review companies in advance and make an intentional effort to meet with employers whereas in-person environments often invited conversations that wouldn’t otherwise happen.”

This increased responsibility places increased importance on job seekers researching and preparing for the event, but also requires both job seekers and employers to be intentional about their interactions once the career fair begins.

## INTENTIONAL COMMUNICATION

Bill Baker, Talent and Cultures Lead at J.R. Simplot Company, explains that

even with the increased job seeker responsibility, virtual career fairs typically provide a student more time with an employer.

“We’ve spent more time in those conversations at virtual career fairs than we would have in at an in-person career fair,” Baker said. “It was probably closer to a five to eight-minute dialogue, maybe even 10 minutes in some instances. Where I think at an in-person career fair, if we go beyond three minutes and don’t transition on, our line gets intimidating and people stop stopping.”

Despite the differences, both Baker and Hueftle emphasized making virtual interactions personable and memorable. Without the typical person-to-person contact seen at career fairs, creating personal connections through dialogue is even more important. With more individualized time, conversation starters can be more appropriate for both parties to get to know each other and find common ground to connect on. For less experienced job seekers, this can be a time to be honest with employers by expressing where they are in their career and what type of guidance they need. Creating a personal dialogue with a representative increases the likelihood of them remembering you after the event.

Though they require more effort from all parties, virtual career fairs can provide more opportunities. Refining your virtual career fair approach will help you make meaningful connections

with representatives and stand out among your peers. To help you build your virtual career fair toolkit, we asked these employers some questions from students about virtual career fairs.

**How have employers adjusted to online connections? How can attendees of virtual career fairs implement similar practices to be successful?**

**Baker:** “A lot of what we trained people on internally was to put the calendar away, put the distractions away. It’s almost easier than in-person to really understand if someone is listening and connecting with you. People can easily tell if you’re typing on a keyboard or looking elsewhere, so limit the distractions.”

**Hueftle:** “Be flexible and go with the flow. As an employer shifting to a virtual environment, we’ve had our fair share of technology battles and navigating the various platforms that each school and organization uses. It is important to keep in mind that we’re all in this together. If all else fails, don’t hesitate to take down contact information and follow-up via email or phone later.”

**What should a job seekers’ body language and facial expressions look like at a virtual career fair? What vocal tone is appropriate?**

**Baker:** “I recommend approaching it like a job interview. You should be comfortable, but seeming too relaxed can make you seem uninterested. If your body language, appearance, >>>

and the way you are approaching the conversation is similar to a conversation with a friend, you are probably missing the sense of formality needed in a career fair.”

**Hueftle:** “Body language is an aspect that changes a bit in a virtual environment but is still important. Some of the basics still apply – lean in, make eye contact, smile. Keep in mind there is more focus on your facial expressions in a virtual environment since the video is often only of the head and shoulders. Regarding tone, virtual environments don’t require the elevated voice to speak above the hustle and bustle of an in-person fair. Regular conversational tone is perfectly acceptable in a virtual environment.”

### *How can one connect with employers through a chat box when video calls are not an option?*

**Baker:** “If it’s just chat alone, I can almost guarantee that it’s going to be a quick and transactional conversation, so have a message prepared that is something like, ‘Hey it’s really hard for me to approach my background and education through a chat, would you be open to connecting on the phone?’ I use this a lot when connecting with job seekers.”

**Hueftle:** “Treat the chat just like a video call – introduce yourself, explain what you’re interested in/looking for, and ask questions! Don’t forget to share contact information as well for future follow-up.”

Virtual career fairs are here to stay. According to Handshake, a virtual networking platform for university campuses, 93% of employers plan to host virtual career events this fall. They also found that many students find virtual events to be less anxiety-inducing, easier to balance, and more accessible. Now is the time for students and young professionals to take advantage of the opportunities at virtual career fairs to make connections, leave an impact, and be remembered.

“If you make a good impact,” Baker said, “people will want to advocate for you and find you the right connections and opportunities.”

# Finding Success at a Career Fair

Regardless of if a career fair is in-person or virtual, there are a few things that all job seekers should do to help them find success. Emily Ballweber, Talent and Culture Programs Partner at J.R. Simplot Company, walked us through how to be successful at a career fair regardless of the modality.

## PREPARE

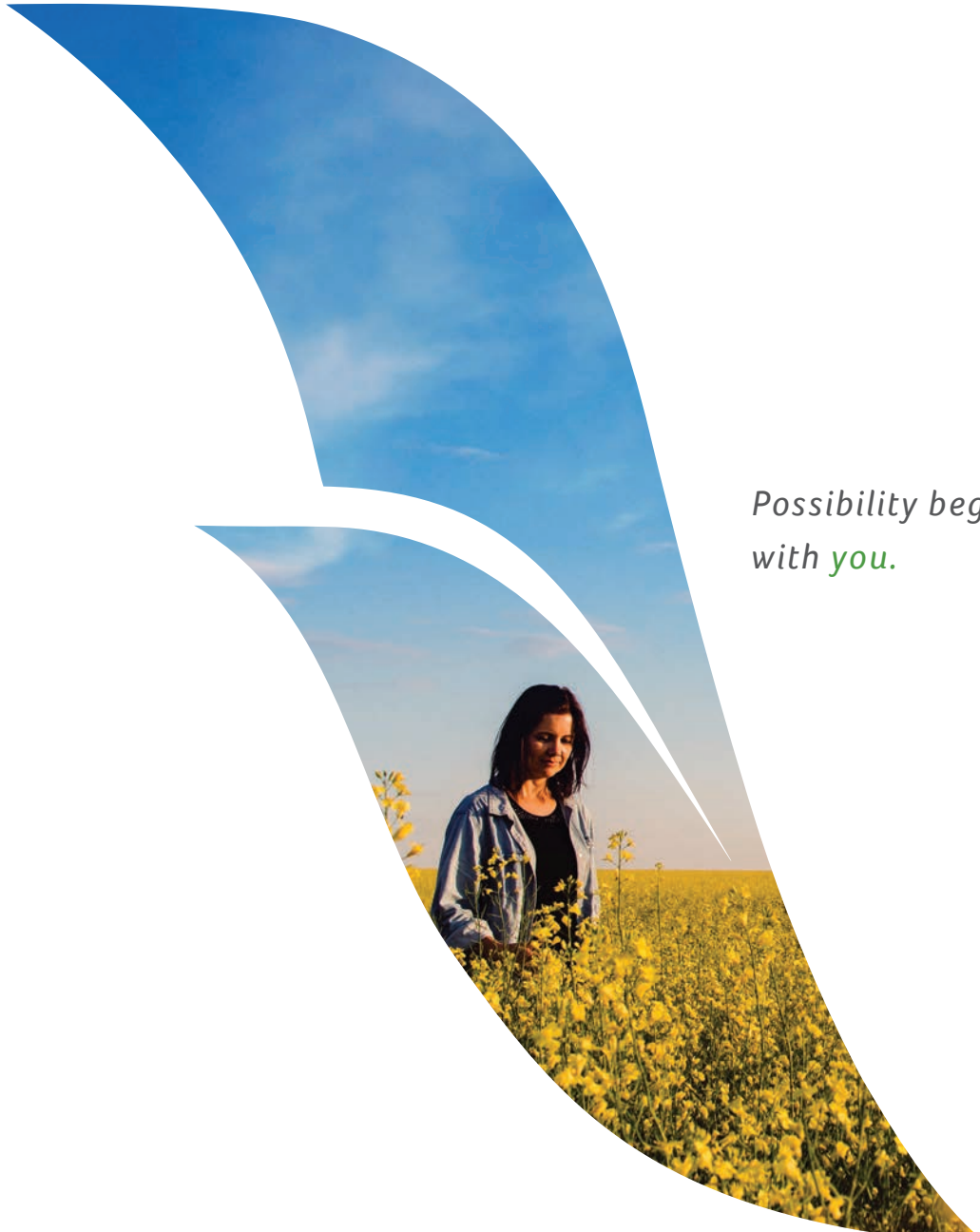
Ballweber highlighted the importance of doing your homework. Explore the employers listed on the career fair directory, especially those you have never heard about. Use the internet to find out more about the company’s mission, services, products, and opportunities you are interested in. When you come into conversations well-prepared, employers will notice.

## ENGAGE

Employers want to see that you are interested in their company and engaged in conversation, Ballweber said. Use your research to create questions that you want to ask each employer. When you research the companies beforehand, it is also easier to guide the conversation toward your own interests, which will show employers you are engaged and want to know more.

## FOLLOW UP

Following up after contacting an employer continues your connection beyond the career fair. Ballweber suggests connecting on LinkedIn with the individual you met, sending them a thank you through LinkedIn or email, and forwarding them a digital copy of your resume. This communicates to the employer that you are serious about pursuing opportunities within their company. **AG**



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# KEEP THE CONFIDENCE

by Clara Boles, AgCareers.com Talent Solutions & Digital Marketing

The job hunt can be so exhausting! Being turned down is hard to hear, not being told anything is even harder to fathom. Questioning thoughts come into play, “after all this school, why is it so hard to find a job?”

I have been there! A lot of us have!

***So, how can you keep your confidence during the job search, the interview process, and how do you take rejection with grace?***

These are some tips I learned from my personal job hunt, AND advice from Brandi Adkins, 2021 Purdue University animal science graduate.

## START EARLY

This may be what all of us think coming into the job search, start early, but not necessarily so you can secure a job early, but so you can gain a lot of experience. Adkins explained by doing this she felt like she was able to gain a competitive edge because she had so much more practice not only with filling out applications and writing cover letters, but also practice having professional conversations in interviews.

“This is a good way to set yourself apart on applications because you have had all this practice filling them out,” Adkins said.

If you are not a college senior, you can start early by talking to people in your industry, building your LinkedIn network, applying for internships, keeping your resume updated, and attending career fairs.

## KNOW WHO YOU ARE

Now this can sound pretty self-explanatory, right? Know yourself. But this is about knowing yourself on a professional basis because you are now entering a different world. How are employers supposed to get to know the real you if you don’t know yourself? Learn more about yourself by making time for some self-reflection, asking yourself, “What am I good at? Where does my light shine the most?” If you are struggling with this, ask your friends, what qualities they see in you. This is one of the realest answers you will receive. You could find out things that people see in you that you didn’t even know

## KNOW HOW TO PORTRAY YOURSELF

This means on paper, through your resume and cover letter, online through your LinkedIn profile, and in the interview through professional conversation. It shows confidence if you truly know your strong points!

Prepare examples of how your strongest skills have come into play and how you have used them in your professional experience. In an interview this is what employers want to hear! What sets you apart? What makes you different from the person interviewing before you? Also, be transparent and know what your weak spot is because we all have one! But what is more

important is to mention how your strengths make up for your weakness.

## PREPARE MENTALLY

“I went into the job hunt thinking I was going to get an interview every time,” Adkins said. I thought that too, but we both came to the harsh reality that this process is out of our control. Now as you are going into your job hunt, think about this. Know that unfortunately, you may not hear back every time. Prepare yourself mentally that the job hunt will take a lot of time and a whole lot more dedication. Go in thinking, “this will be will not be easy, but I have the skills to do this!”

## SET GOALS

I love to check off boxes and set goals for myself, so that is what I did! I set a goal for my senior year to apply to one job a week. Once I did that, I put in the work, researched the company, updated my resume, and wrote my cover letter for that one job I applied for that week. I was able to find confidence within myself by knowing I did it and was working towards the end goal. Keep track of these jobs on a spread sheet, or some other way that works best for you, and keep track of if you have heard from the employer. If you are super passionate about a certain job position, reach out to the employer after a while and tell them you are still very interested. This will show persistence and confidence! >>>

## RESUME & COVER LETTER PREPARATION

The first way employers learn about you is through your resume, so make it stand out! Do not fabricate yourself, but make sure you are transparent with your skill set and be genuine. Make your resume as “you” as possible! Adkins gives the advice to make sure your resume is constantly being updated. “I always had at least two people look at and read over my resume and cover letters before I attached them to an application,” Adkins said.

You should also know your resume. When an employer brings up your past experiences in an interview, you should be able to know this without having your resume in front of you. This shows a lot of preparation and also a lot of confidence.

## THE INTERVIEW PREPARATION

Once you have scored an interview, do not take this lightly!

Adkins mentioned she would not let herself get anxious and worry about the interview until two days before, and then she would prepare and research the company. “I feel like if you come to an interview and you don’t know what the company does, or what their main mission statements are, you are probably not 100% prepared for the interview,” Adkins said. This is a strong way to set yourself apart from another candidate in the interview process.

Connect with your interviewers before the interview on LinkedIn and try to learn more about them. Find some common ground with those who will interview you. This will make you feel more comfortable and make the interview more conversational.

## APPLY EVEN WHEN YOU DON’T FEEL QUALIFIED

Just do it — apply!

I talked to so many people during school who I would recommend a job to. I would say, “this looks great for you!” However, they would come back saying, “well I don’t have experience in XYZ...” That may have been true for them, and maybe you don’t have one particular skill that is listed in the job description.

Have confidence in yourself and think about it, you might have an additional skill not listed in the description that sets you apart. That employer may think this could add even more value to the team.

Adkins agreed. She applied to several positions in her job hunt where she did not meet all the qualifications. Her advice is to be truthful and transparent, but don’t sell yourself short before you even have a chance. “If they bring up the issue of qualifications, let them know you are a very motivated individual and would love to learn that skill to better yourself and the company,” Adkins explained.

## KNOW YOU ARE NOT ALONE IN THIS

Talk to your college advisor or find a mentor. I did this all the time while I was a student! This is their job, and they have been in our shoes. They might not be able to hand us the perfect job, but they can give some pretty great advice. Adkins was also very grateful to have a careers specialist in her college’s department who had her back during her job hunt.

Know that your friends and colleagues are going through the exact same thing. Find support from people around you and also support them. Reach out, vent, and support one

another. “Try and find the little rays of sunshine during this process,” Adkins said.

One thing I did with my friend during my job search was celebrating the victories—small victories and big ones! Celebrate that you even landed an interview! Celebrate that your friend found another job to apply for!

## TAKE THE REJECTION WITH GRACE

If you are avid about getting a great job and not settling, odds are you are going to be having a decent amount of interviews. Keep in mind you are not going to get it on your first try. If you are applying a lot (college seniors) you may hear “no” more than you hear “yes.” It is unfortunate, and it is hard to hear!

Adkins said she tried to not take it as a personal stab. “Try and let that rejection fuel you to find the next best job,” Adkins said.

Never burn a bridge! Make sure to thank the employer for taking the time to talk to you and learn more about you. You never know what the next 10 years of your life could bring, so take the rejection with grace, be thankful for the opportunity and know something better is coming.

## KEEP. THE. CONFIDENCE.

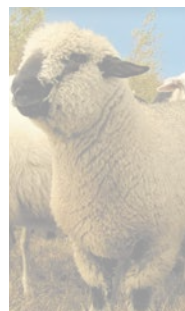
I hope these tips will help you keep your head high during the job search. Remind yourself often that this is not easy!

Keep the confidence and enjoy this journey. Before you know it, your senior year will fly by and you will walk across that stage confidently, knowing your hard work is about to pay off in the career you are beginning! **AG**





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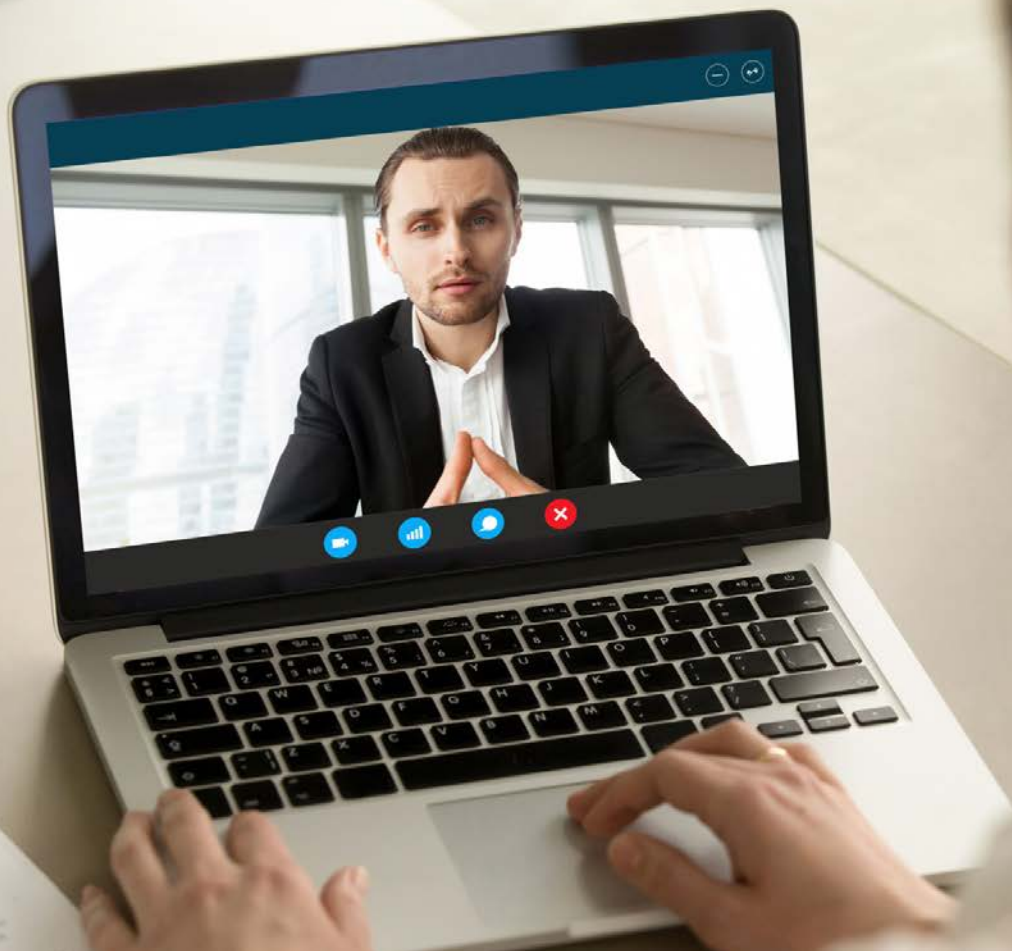


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- Once you find a job and view the description, click "Save this job" to come back later, or "Apply to This Position" to do it now.
- Add your email address. If you create an account, you may streamline this process and record your application in your application history.
- Fill out the required fields. Attach an optional cover letter by clicking "Browse" or copy and paste into the text box.
- Attach your resume in .doc, .docx, or .pdf format by clicking "Browse." You may also select a resume from your account if logged in and if you have uploaded a resume.
- Click "Submit Application."
- Some employers require you to complete the application process on their site. If this is the case, you will see a note in a red box and be redirected. Follow directions given on their site.
- View all the positions you applied for in your candidate account application history.



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- Upload a .doc, .docx, .pdf, .txt, or .rtf by using the "Upload Resume File."
- Click "Process & Preview Profile." If you need to make changes, click the back button. Once satisfied, click "Save & Exit" at the bottom.
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