

Interview tomorrow!  
1:00 - arrive early

# job search DON'TS

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- Keep references off resume
- Stay off electronics
- Bring copies of resume to interview

## THROUGHOUT YOUR JOB SEARCH

there are many details you need to cover, but there are several pitfalls you should avoid. Want to make a great impression and land that dream job? Don't sink your chances before you even get started! Follow these tips on what NOT to do during the application and hiring process.

## RESUMES & COVER LETTERS

### One big mistake is using the same materials for every application.

"Tailor your resume and cover letter to the job you are applying for," shared Jackie Bass, Director of Human Resources, Christensen Farms. "Research the organization to have a good understanding of the job you are applying for so you are prepared for your first contact with your potential employer," added Bass.

**Objective statements seem to be a thing of the past;** they take up prime real estate at the top of your resume. "Objective statements are typically canned and often not relevant to the actual job," said Deb Franklin, VP HR, CLAAS. "Sometimes there is such a disconnect, the HR professional will discount the resume and move on," added Franklin. Save the space normally taken up by an objective statement and use it to enhance your accomplishments and add a marketing/

branding statement. "Start out with a BAM! statement about your signature strength, something exciting that makes the reader want to learn more about you," added Franklin.

"If you don't have much actual work experience, insert a skill table (without lines) including one to three word phrases that describe you, such as 'customer centric' or 'problem solver,'" shared Franklin.

"When just graduating from college, the degree seems most important to you, however the employer may want to know more about your competencies and potential. Resist the temptation to list that degree first—start with a marketing statement, skill table, work experience and then degree," added Franklin.

**Don't neglect customizing your resume with keywords.** Make sure to build relevant keywords from the employer's job description into your resume. Many employers utilize an online applicant tracking system (ATS) to manage the flow of applications. The technology within the ATS system is designed to search your resume for particular keywords and phrases that match the job they are trying to fill. If your resume doesn't include these keywords, it may never make it into the hands of the hiring manager.

## Keep references off your resume.

Employers will request references if needed; then you'll have a hint that they are interested in hiring you. You also need to keep references in the loop when you are handing out their contact information, so it will save you time if you aren't sending them with every application.

**The biggest mistake regarding cover letters? Not including one at all!** Employers may see a missing cover letter as laziness and not even consider your application. Even if you are applying to numerous positions, you must take the time to include a cover letter specific to each one. Like your resume, build some of those keywords into your cover letter as well.

**You don't want a cookie-cutter cover letter.** There are numerous cover letter templates, but be wary of copying them word for word. Don't reiterate what is in your resume either; use the cover letter to enhance what is offered in the resume by presenting additional details and information. Your cover letter is meant to complement your resume and entice the reader to find out more about you.

**Keep cover letters short and to the point;** they should be compelling, but not lengthy. "Explain why you are a good fit for the position—bullet points and white space are good," shared Franklin.

## AFTER YOU'VE APPLIED

**Don't answer the phone unprofessionally.** You never know when an employer might contact you after you've applied. Make sure you are answering the phone in a professional manner. Your voicemail greeting is also important. "Remember you are creating a first impression with what an employer hears on your voicemail," said Bass.

Haven't heard back from an employer after your application was processed? **It is fine to follow up on your resume, but...** keep messages short, clear and repeat your phone number at the end of the message. Give the person a compelling reason to call you—"One of the most effective techniques I've seen is a person who called me regarding the position stating even if they are not a perfect fit, they may have referrals for me. Of course I called that person back!" said Franklin.

## THE INTERVIEW

**"Show you are engaged by asking questions prior to the interview,"** said Bass. "You could ask who you are interviewing with, get the interview schedule and dress code," shared Bass. If you are visiting a farm or meeting with the CEO, you may want to change your outfit. Don't look sloppy. It is safe to be on the dressier side with your interview wardrobe. Clothes should be clean, wrinkle-free and fit well. Your outfit should indicate professionalism, but not be distracting when you are expressing yourself and your qualifications.

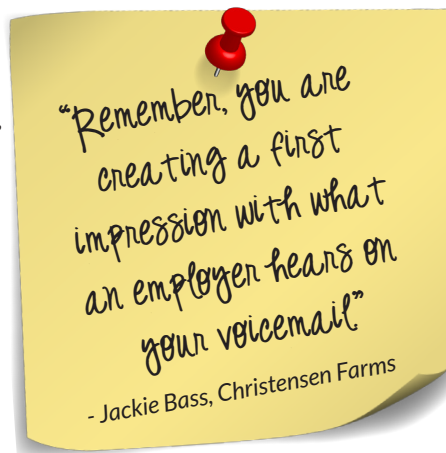
**Don't be late!** This should be obvious, but the importance shouldn't be underestimated. Plan your travels to ensure you arrive 5 to 10 minutes prior to your interview time.

**First impressions begin while you are waiting.** "Stay off electronics, smile at everyone you encounter and treat them with respect," shared Franklin. The receptionist often will report first impressions to the hiring team.

**Get rid of your cell phone during the interview.** Leave it in your car, or if you must bring it along, ensure that all sound is turned off.

**Don't arrive at an interview empty-handed.** Bring additional copies of your resume and references, but also paper and pen for note-taking. "If you are nervous, write down key strengths in your notebook. Ask the interviewer if you may refer to your notes. It is okay to tell the interviewer that you are nervous as most will likely put you at ease," added Franklin.

**Don't tell the interviewer you have skills, training or qualifications that you do not.** What if you are asked



a question and you know your answer won't be what the interviewer wants to hear? Be honest—share with them how you could work towards obtaining some of the skills you might be missing. Some qualifications are preferred, but not required.

**Don't say "I have no questions" at the end of the interview.** The majority of the interview will consist of the employer asking you questions, but it is your turn at the end. Prepare several questions ahead of time and make sure they are specific to the organization and position. Employers often are discouraged when candidates are worried more about "What's in it for me?" rather than thinking about what they can provide for the organization.

Ask questions that demonstrate you want to know how you would contribute to the company. Examples might be "What would a typical day in this role look like?" or "How can I be successful in this role?" Follow their response with how you could contribute to this success.

**Speaking of questions, don't ask about salary in the first interview.** In fact, candidates shouldn't be the first to bring up salary at any time. Let the employer take the lead about if and when to discuss money.

## AFTER THE INTERVIEW

**Don't forget to verbally thank the employer for their time at the end of your interview and follow-up with a thank you note.** Handwritten thank you notes are a nice touch and will help you stand out. However, if time is of the essence, an email thank you is acceptable. Aim to send your thank you in the first 24 hours after your interview while it is fresh on your mind, and you are still top of mind for the interviewer. If the interviewer asked you to send in samples of your work or other information, do that within this time frame as well.

**Follow-up, but don't be a pest!** Don't be afraid to ask the interviewer where they are in the hiring process, when they expect to make a decision or when you might hear back from them at the end of the interview. "This can be especially important if you are interviewing for other positions, as a company doesn't want to lose good candidates," said Bass. You could even ask, "Do you mind if I follow up in ten days?" If that time passes, feel free to touch-base with a phone call or email to check in. If the company is dragging their feet, it is a two-way street and may say something about the organization. "Is that really an organization you want to work for?" added Bass.

To pave your way for job search success, consider what NOT to do, then incorporate some of our suggestions to impress potential employers!