



# STEPS TO SUCCESS



# INTRO

Walrath Recruiting, Inc. provides staffing, recruiting and executive search services to New York State's Capital Region and beyond. We have maintained a high reputation of finding the best of the best for top organizations since our inception in 2010.

Over the years, many candidates have asked us recurring questions on various topics, which led us to writing this guide. Our expertise and advice will help you find your next role or ideal career.

Each topic we discuss is important to landing your next move. As you know, **it's a job to find a job.**

From writing an attention-grabbing cover letter, to handling interviews with confidence, to sending the all-important thank-you note, you will find valuable advice in this guide.

Best of luck in your job search!

**Renee Walrath**  
**President & CEO**  
**Walrath Recruiting**



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**CHAPTER  
ONE :  
RÉSUMÉS  
& COVER  
LETTERS**

# CRAFTING A STRONG RÉSUMÉ

BEING AWARE OF KEY WORD FILTERS, AND GETTING THE RIGHT ATTENTION.

## Learn how to:

- Optimize for keywords
- Tailor to specific jobs
- Proofread for mistakes

Before working on your résumé, it is essential to understand its purpose and the process it will go through. Because hiring managers don't have time to interview every applicant, they use résumés to streamline the vetting process.

Some companies will use applicant tracking systems. Such systems screen and filter out résumés missing specific keywords. So, if a company is looking for someone with Photoshop skills and "Photoshop" isn't on the résumé, it will automatically be filtered out before anyone has a chance to look at it. Utilizing a recruiting company can help you get your résumé past those filters and in front of human eyes.

## Tailoring Your Résumé

Before we can discuss how to pass keyword analysis, we have to talk about the importance of tailoring your résumé, which will:

- Make your résumé stand out.
- Contain the right keywords.
- Appeal specifically to that position.

Tailoring your résumé starts with taking notes about your current and previous jobs.

## An Ongoing Record

Updating your résumé after you leave a job can be tough. It's challenging to remember all the little details. Being proactive and taking notes before that happens is a huge help. The best way to do this is to keep a master document that contains notes and information on your past positions

Statistics stand out on a résumé but aren't often included. Present your achievements as statistics whenever possible. For example: "Increased annual revenue by 15% through marketing initiatives." Did your workload increase? By how much? Think in terms of hard numbers.

By taking notes as you go, you will develop a comprehensive and detailed list that covers your work history, and hopefully, it includes statistics or other concrete numbers. From those notes, you can begin to build a better résumé.

### TAKE NOTES ON:

- Achievements
- Awards
- Certifications
- Products
- Proficiencies
- Projects
- Responsibilities
- Skills



## Build Your Résumé

Whether you're updating an old résumé or building a new one, you should find it easier with those notes to reference. Start by breaking down your experience at each job, then arrange the material with bullet points. Bullet points are easier to read than full paragraphs. Your résumé should be succinct and thorough. Once you've built a generic version of your résumé, it's time to tailor it.

## CHECK DESCRIPTIONS FOR:

- Education
- Experience
- Proficiencies
- Qualifications
- Responsibilities
- Skills



## Check the Job Description for Keywords

Now that you have a starter résumé, look at the job descriptions of positions you plan on applying for. On those descriptions, look for the key qualifications listed in the list above. Once you understand what the hiring company is looking for, you should update your résumé to reflect their interests. Highlight any crossover between your résumé and the posted requirements. Also, make sure your phrasing matches that of the job description. This will optimize for keywords. Finally, rearrange your bullet points to highlight the skills and experience most relevant to the hiring company.

## Formatting

When it comes to your résumé, the way you present the material is just as important as the material itself. A chronological résumé will list your experience from present to past. A functional résumé will list experience grouped by skills and focuses.

## Visuals

The moment a hiring manager sees your résumé, they will form an immediate impression. So, the type of résumé you have should reflect the industry you work in. For creative professionals, a unique, well-designed résumé is acceptable and likely expected. Alternatively, if you are in a more technical profession, it's probably best to take a straightforward approach.

## Readability

Mixing formats, or styles, on a resume is jarring. Stick with one style for consistency. If you have a linear career path, a chronological résumé is usually a wise choice. If you have a unique career history, a functional résumé may be more suitable.

You also have to be aware of your font selection. To make it easy, choose one font and stick with it. When you get to items like headings, dates, and job titles, just change the font formatting, such as using bold or italics. Stick with serif and sans-serif style. These fonts are typically easier to read. We've listed a few of the best fonts in each category below.

### SERIF FONTS:

- Times New Roman
- Georgia
- Bell MT
- Goudy Old Style
- Garamond

### SANS SERIF FONTS:

- Arial
- Tahoma
- Century Gothic
- Lucida San
- Helvetica

## Proofreading

Now that you have your résumé organized and tailored, you are almost ready to submit it. There is just one last step, but it is essential: proofreading. Proofreading ensures your résumé is free of small or big mistakes that might cost you a job opportunity. We will go over the best ways to efficiently and effectively review your résumé for grammatical or formatting errors.

## The Rules of Proofreading

The first rule when you complete your résumé is always to proofread. (Even if your résumé was professionally written.) Never assume it's 100% mistake-free. It's also essential not to proofread immediately after creating your résumé. You are more likely to make mistakes by doing this. Give it some time, then look it over.

## chapter one

Next, find out how you edit best. If you notice mistakes easier on a printed copy, print it. Then read it out loud, word by word. This will help you notice any odd phrasing or missing words. Also, make sure to run spell check at the end. If you do it at the beginning, it's possible you will have new errors from fixing sentences and rewriting.

Be sure to look over any numbers as well. There is a big difference between generating \$1 million in sales and generating \$100 million. Finally, find a fresh pair of eyes to look at your résumé. A second person may catch mistakes you've missed. They can offer a fresh perspective and give suggestions to improve it.

Your résumé is important and should be proofread before you send it to any employer. Follow these rules, and your résumé should be free of mistakes and misspellings.

### **RULES OF PROOFREADING:**

- Always proofread
- Don't do it immediately after creating
- Find out how you edit best
- Read it out loud
- Spell check at the end
- Check your stats
- Find a second pair of eyes



# WRITING A CONVINCING COVER LETTER

APPEALING TO THE NEEDS OF  
YOUR POTENTIAL EMPLOYER.

## Learn How To:

- Appeal to a hiring manager
- Compose with the company in mind
- Differentiate it from your résumé

## COVER LETTER BASICS:

- Address it to the hiring manager
- Mention the job you want
- Indicate where you heard about it
- Explain your value to them
- Mention how they can contact you



## Marketing Yourself

Today, cover letters stand out. We are so used to sending simple, short emails that a long-form letter can lose our attention. Many hiring managers still prefer receiving a cover letter. We will discuss the best way to write an introductory cover letter and what the letter should accomplish.

## The Right Mindset

Many candidates approach their cover letters incorrectly, and instead of highlighting their strengths, they detract from their candidacy. There are two common mistakes.

The first is simply repeating the information on your résumé. You may be tempted to heavily reference your résumé, but it doesn't accomplish anything.

The second mistake is to think of only yourself while writing the cover letter. When you write a cover letter, you should think of yourself from the company's perspective, not the other way around. Focus on what you know about the position, and examine your résumé as if you were a hiring manager at that company.

Your cover letter should highlight the crossover between the company's needs and your qualifications. A good cover letter should begin by indicating the job you are interested in, how you heard about it, and then make a case that you are the best person for the job. To do this, explain how you would be a valuable resource to the employer. Sell them on how well you would meet their business objectives and help them hit their goals. Then close by thanking them, mentioning next steps, and indicating your preferred method of contact.

## More Tailoring

It's also important that your cover letter be significantly differentiated for each company you apply to — even more so than differentiating your résumés. The cover letter you write should appeal specifically to the company and describe how you could meet their needs. Every company and job is different, so every cover letter should market your skills for that specific role.

## Tips and Recap

Here are a few best practices to follow when composing your cover letter:

- **Address your Hiring Manager or Recruiter directly.** This ensures your cover letter gets in front of the right person and that you were paying attention.
- **Make it one page.** A short cover letter increases the likelihood the hiring manager will actually read it. Résumés are reviewed for only 6 seconds on average, and cover letters don't get much more than that.
- **Avoid buzzwords and clichés.** This goes for both résumés and cover letters. Hiring managers have heard them all. Instead of talking about synergy, explain how you engaged your team. Keep it simple and to the point.
- **Don't just rehash your résumé.** A cover letter should complement a résumé, not duplicate it!



**CHAPTER  
TWO:  
SEARCHING  
& APPLYING**

# PREPARING YOUR ONLINE PRESENCE

PRESENT YOURSELF AS A QUALIFIED,  
PROFESSIONAL CANDIDATE.

## Learn How To:

- Leverage social media to help your search
- Convey professionalism with your online accounts
- Set up alerts for jobs you are interested in

## Why Social Media?

The way hiring managers vet their candidates constantly changes. References and background checks are usually followed up with a quick online search. Updating and polishing your online presence is crucial before a job search.

## WHAT TO AVOID ON SOCIAL MEDIA:

- Discriminatory comments
- Bad mouthing your employer
- Inappropriate photos
- Controversial opinions
- Poor grammar

### Covering Your Bases

If you're going to have recruiters and hiring managers browsing your social media profiles, you must take the necessary steps to prepare. It's not a bad idea to set your more personal accounts to private (except for LinkedIn). You should also go through all your profiles and remove anything that may discourage a hiring manager or recruiter from reaching out to you.

What typically scares off recruiters and hiring managers? We've listed the top issues in the box on the previous page. If any of those are spotted on your social media accounts, recruiters may not contact you. How you choose to represent yourself online says a lot about you. If they were to hire you, you would then be representing their company. No company wants to hire an employee who would reflect poorly on their reputation. Remove any inappropriate photos or posts you don't want seen.

### Google It

Google has become so popular as a search engine; Merriam-Webster's lists the verb "to Google." It should come as no surprise, then, that recruiters and hiring managers use Google to research their candidates. You should do the same: Google yourself. In the search box enter your full name with the city and state you live in. Check out the first few pages of results and images. It's entirely possible that Google is pulling photos from your social media or blog pages. You may not want those items to be seen. Always do a "Google audit" before applying.

If you want to find out what is being posted about you online as it happens, consider setting up a Google alert. You can set up a notification every time your name is mentioned online. Once you type in your name, you will have options to determine when you'd like to receive specific updates. It's a great way to stay on top of your search presence.

### The Value of an Online Presence

If you're someone who typically isn't on social media, you may want to reconsider doing so for your job search. Since most recruiters use the web to research their candidates, having a professional, active profile can actually help your chances. That's not to say you can't conduct a successful job search without social media or an online presence. However, it can hurt your chances, especially if you don't have a LinkedIn profile (which we'll discuss later).

**If you don't have a presence online, some recruiters will make assumptions about why you're not online, such as:**

- You may be hiding something.
- You aren't technologically savvy.
- You aren't qualified for the position.

Opening new, professional accounts or updating old ones for your job search will help. LinkedIn is typically where they start. Check out the next section to find out why having a profile on LinkedIn is so valuable.



# TAPPING YOUR NETWORK

USING YOUR CONNECTIONS TO BOOST YOUR HIRING CHANCES.

## Learn How To:

- Let your network know you're looking for a job.
- Know when to reach out to someone about a job.
- Turn a conversation into a job opportunity.

## The Power of Networking

When you begin a job search, your network is one of the strongest tools you have. Recruiters see referrals as one of the most reliable sources for strong candidates. If you are able to get someone to represent you at a place you want to work, it will significantly help your chances.

## PEOPLE IN YOUR NETWORK:

- Family
- Friends
- Co-workers
- Alumni
- Former colleagues
- Recruiters

### **Growing Your Network**

In order to tap into a network, you will need a network. If you haven't yet put the effort into developing your network, start now! Begin with the people with whom you are closest. First are your family and friends, followed by your co-workers. On the outside of the network, you have alumni, former colleagues, and recruiters. If you are a member of associations, boards, etc., those connections can be valuable as well. Make sure you have updated contact information from these people. You'll be thankful to have it when you reach out.

LinkedIn is a great way to utilize and build your connections. Although it is a professional site that is built mainly for networking, it offers many other career tools and resources. Once you complete your profile with your work history, education, skills, etc., you will be able to connect with others. You can receive notifications about what people in your network are up to, such as whether they have been promoted or changed jobs.

Having a profile, along with a professional photo, is key. LinkedIn is also a great resource for recruiters who may want to contact you.

### **Hey, I'm Looking!**

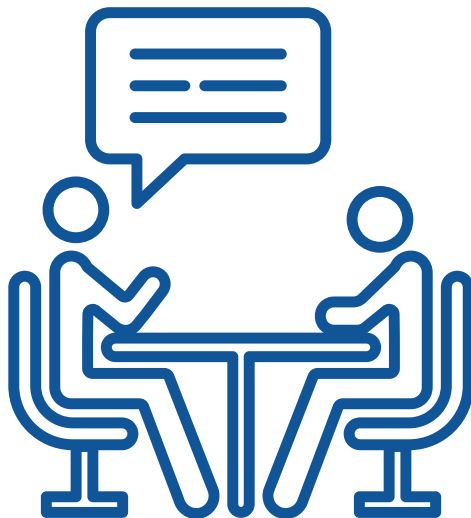
Now that you've established your network, it's time to put your connections to work for you. Notifying your network that you are currently searching for a job allows them to look out for any opportunities that might be a good fit for you. You do, however, have to be careful whom you tell.

### Ask for advice instead

Most people are flattered when someone asks for their advice. It means you value their opinion and insight. At the same time, it signals that you are job searching, and they have an opportunity to extend an offer or consider hiring you. Consider drafting an email similar to the one below. (remember to tailor it!):

“Good afternoon Mr. Smith, I am a [enter your field] professional with (3) years of experience and have just started my job search in the area. I saw that you also attended [College/University] and was wondering if you wouldn’t mind sharing some advice with a fellow alum looking to get into the same field. Any advice or tips you may have on breaking into the industry would be incredibly valuable. I look forward to hearing back from you. — [Job Seeker]”

Of course, it’s entirely possible that you don’t hear back from them, but you can always contact other people in your network. If someone is interested in meeting with you, it’s smart to jump at those opportunities. In the worst-case scenario, you walk away with some valuable advice, and in the best-case scenario, you potentially walk away with a job offer.



# KEEPING TRACK OF OPPORTUNITIES

KEEP YOUR JOB SEARCH  
ORGANIZED AND OPTIMIZED.

## Learn How To:

- Track current opportunities and their status
- Maintain files to benefit your search
- Put your smartphone to good use

## Staying Organized

If you are truly going to be applying full force, then the importance of being organized is crucial.

## The Online Problem

Having job postings online makes it easy to apply and find new opportunities. Unfortunately, it means those postings can be taken down just as easily. It's not uncommon for hiring managers to take down a job posting once they contact the first batch of candidates. While this makes sense given that they may hire someone from the initial applicants, it also causes a problem. Candidates interviewing no longer have a job description to reference when they are preparing to interview. Don't let this happen to you! Job descriptions are one of the most valuable documents to look at before you go into an interview. So, after you apply, make sure you copy the description and save it on your computer. That way, you have something to reference.

## Tracking Your Opportunities

If you are applying to multiple opportunities, it can be tough to keep them straight. To stay on top of them, we highly recommend putting together a spreadsheet. You can track columns as such:

- Date applied
- Job applied for
- Interview date
- Application source
- Company
- Notes

This document will not only help you manage when to follow up, but it will help you remember details about where you've applied.

Knowing the who, what, when, and where of your applications becomes valuable when you start to receive calls after applying or interviewing.

Additionally, it will help you keep track of the timeline following your application. Knowing when to follow up and send a thank-you note is much easier to remember when you have the dates stored. If you aren't sending a thank-you, you are doing yourself a great disservice as a candidate. We'll have more on that later. For now, use this spreadsheet to keep track of your opportunities and where your candidacy stands with each role. You'll find it comes in handy.

### **Staying in Contact**

If you're applying to multiple companies, you want to be sure your contact list is up to date. It can be challenging to keep those phone numbers and names straight. The first time you get a call from a potential employer, enter the information into your contacts as [Name] (Company). That way, when they call you back to set up an interview or conduct a phone screen, you won't have to worry about trying to figure out who is calling you. It's much easier to respond correctly when a name is already attached to a corresponding phone number in your contacts.



**CHAPTER  
THREE:  
JOB  
INTERVIEWS**

# RESEARCHING AN EMPLOYER

FINDING OUT WHAT YOU NEED TO  
KNOW TO ACE THE INTERVIEW.

## Learn How To:

- Find out useful information about the company
- Better understand the open position you are interviewing for
- Market yourself as the right candidate

## Why Research?

Researching your potential employer before a job interview gives you a huge advantage. It's such a common practice now that it's almost expected. It shows your genuine interest and helps to inform your interview answers. Additionally, you won't be caught off guard when the interviewer asks you how your skills would fit into their organization.

## Where to Start

The obvious starting point is the company's website. Here you will find their "external" presence, mainly aimed at customers and others looking to do business with them. Take note of how they position themselves. What are their main products and services? What purpose do they serve? What are their selling points? These are questions that are more easily answered when you are looking at the company website. Be sure to check out their "About" section for background information, a mission statement or company values.

## **BEST PLACES TO LOOK ONLINE:**

- Company website
- Glassdoor page
- Google listing
- Social media

If the company site has an “Our Team” section, you may also be able to find out more about who you will be interviewing with and their role at the organization. If you are meeting with a hiring manager in your field, they will understand your jargon. If you are meeting with a recruiter, you may have to explain things in less technical terms. Once you’ve done your research on the company website, it’s time to move on to social media.

## **Social Media Sleuthing**

While the company’s website will give you a formal look at the company, their social media is a good way to go behind the scenes a bit more. With some companies, you may find out more about their culture and how they operate from their social platforms.

## **Making Connections**

Facebook and LinkedIn will show you the more formal side of the business’s social media. On Facebook, you may find out about events the company has held in the past, such as community volunteering or charitable fundraising, and how they interact with customers. LinkedIn is another opportunity to find your point of contact at the company and connect with them. Doing so will ensure they see your profile (which may be more extensive than your résumé).



### **Behind the Scenes**

If you're looking for a more organic feel of the company, Instagram and Facebook are your best bet. Instagram is the place most companies post behind-the-scenes photos. This is where you'll most likely find out about the company's culture, such as whether they have company holiday parties or a bring your dog to work day. For Facebook, check the companies reposts and likes to home in on topics and trends your potential employer is following.

Lastly, whether on their website or social media, make sure you note their address and phone number for your interview. Confirm the address with your point of contact. Some companies have multiple locations, and you want to make sure you show up to the right place, and on time.

### **A company without social media?**

Keep in mind, not every company will have a social media presence. In lieu of social media, you can always search an employer online and see what you come up with. Search through Google News or business news sites such as Bloomberg or Fortune.

# PREPARING FOR A JOB INTERVIEW

Minimizing what you need to worry about on the big day.

## Learn How To:

- Gather everything you will need to bring to the interview
- Plan out your commute ahead of time
- Analyze a company's dress code

## Thinking Ahead

On the day of an interview, you should be focused solely on knocking it out of the park. This means you should prepare as much as possible before the interview.

## Gauge the Commute

Showing up even just a minute late to an interview could mean the company turns you away. To avoid this, it's important to consider the location where you are interviewing and the length of the drive. Beyond thinking about it as a potential daily commute, make sure you're prepared to drive it on the day of your interview. If you're really worried about it, do a test drive around the time of your interview, a few days before, so you know what you can expect. It may seem silly, but the familiar drive will actually calm your nerves on the day of the interview.

### Dressing to Impress

Your manner of dress plays a significant role in every job interview. It can be challenging to know what is expected. It may seem safe to dress business professional, but some companies prefer a more casual look. Thankfully, there are a few ways to find out what a company expects. There are subtle and not-so-subtle approaches. The approach that is right for you will depend on your relationship with the hiring manager at the company where you are interviewing.

If you are comfortable with the person you've been communicating with at the company, just outright ask what you are expected to wear. However, if you're not too sure about the direct approach, do some sleuthing. Look for photos of the office. What are employees wearing? A good rule of thumb is to dress one level up from what the employees wear, unless told otherwise. If they are wearing dress pants and a collared shirt, wear a suit. If there is any question of what to wear, it's always better to be overdressed than under.



## What to Bring

Here are a few crucial things to bring to an interview:

- **Pen and notepad:** Having a place to take notes is critical. During a job interview, a lot of information will be thrown at you, and you will want to remember it. Writing it down is a better option than trying to remember everything. This also shows that you are seriously interested in the position. You should consider bringing a portfolio, as it is convenient to carry and looks professional.
- **Résumés:** Bring a few copies of your résumé to hand out. You'll want your own copy to look at if you are going over it with the interviewer. You don't need to bring a huge stack but print out some extra copies in case you have multiple interviewers or rounds to go through.
- **Folder:** If you have a portfolio, it can double as a folder. If not, you will want a folder to carry crisp, uncreased copies of your résumé and references (see below). The folder can also hold any documents you receive during the interview.
- **References:** Finally, it's wise to have references prepared. Most companies will want them at the interview stage and having them ready will save you time when you arrive. It's also much easier than scrambling to fill out a reference sheet at their office.

## REFERENCE POINTS:

Before you sit down for your interview, print out your résumé and the job description, along with any questions you've prepared, so you may reference them.

## The Night Before

Planning should help keep your stress levels down and make it much easier to focus. You are almost ready to go! There are just a few things to do the night before the interview.

### **Save Time**

Before you go to bed, do everything you can to cut down on wasted time in the morning. Have your outfit ironed and ready to go, arrange the materials you are bringing in a prominent spot, so you know where to find them, and print copies of your résumé the night before. And lastly, pre-program the company address into your phone or GPS, so you don't have to worry about finding it in the morning. You will be surprised by just how big a difference these little preparations will make on the day of the interview.

### **Get Adequate Sleep**

There is no way you will ace the interview if you can't keep your eyes open. Don't cheat yourself out of an appropriate amount of sleep. It is recommended that adults get 7 to 9 hours of sleep each night, so aim for at least 7. Do what you need to do to be awake, alert, and your best self during the interview.

### **Remote Interviews**

If you're relocating for a position or the business is far away from your home, you may be scheduled for a video or phone interview. Since you won't be sitting down with someone in person, there are a few factors to take into account when preparing for these types of interviews.

The first thing to remember is that it is still an interview. You should research the company, dress appropriately, and get enough sleep. You want to take these types of interviews just as seriously as in-person ones.

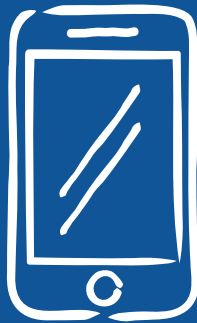
### Video Interviews

We'll cover video interviews first since they are most similar to an in-person interview. You will still meet face-to-face, except it will be on a computer screen. With both video and phone interviews, you have to take another factor into account: technology. Having your computer restart for updates in the middle of an interview can have a negative impact (even if it was an accident). Before your video interview, make sure to test that:

- The videoconferencing software is installed.
- The computer is fully charged or plugged in.
- The microphone, speakers, and camera work.
- Wi-Fi/internet is accessible and functioning.

Make sure you are ready to take the call at the scheduled time. Tardiness across the web doesn't look good either. Be readily available 10-15 minutes before the scheduled time. Lastly, consider your surroundings. If the dog next door is prone to barking or there is loud construction work, your interviewer can probably hear it too. And lastly, make sure nothing unprofessional can be seen in the back of your video frame.





### Phone Interviews

Phone interviews are the most convenient, but they are also the most limiting. Since you won't be able to see each other, it can be challenging to get the interviewer on your side. To counteract this, you have to be mindful of the inflection in your voice. Make sure you sound confident and excited. If you are monotone or quiet, it may send the message that you aren't seriously interested or enthused. Just as with a video interview, you have to take the technology into account and plan for it. Here are a few things to do:

- Make sure your phone is fully charged.
- Ensure the place you take the call has reliable cell reception.
- Check for loud background noise.
- Print out the job description and your résumé to reference.

Following these points should keep you from running into trouble. You may be thinking that because there is no video, you can just roll out of bed and take the call, but this isn't a smart approach. You don't want to sound tired. Before the call, make sure you are well dressed and wide awake. Going through these motions will give you confidence and help you psychologically feel better prepared. If you are forgetful, especially since it's just a phone call, set an alarm 10 or 15 minutes prior to the interview and make final preparations. No recruiter wants to get a busy signal or voicemail when they reach out to a candidate for a scheduled call.

# ACING THE JOB INTERVIEW

WHAT YOU NEED TO DO TO LEAVE A GREAT IMPRESSION.

## Learn How To:

- Avoid negative body language and display confidence
- Draw in your interviewer with engaging stories
- Ask pertinent questions at the end of the interview

## First Impressions

From the moment you walk through the company doors, the spotlight is on you. How you conduct yourself and how you interact are going to be acknowledged. Treat everyone with respect and kindness, no matter who they are. You never know who you may be working with if you are hired. Many companies don't rely solely on the opinion of the interviewer. Some will have hiring meetings, where everyone is asked what they think about the candidates. From the moment you leave your car, have your game face on. Smile, make eye contact, and shake hands firmly and confidently (but don't have an iron grip). Hold the grip for a second or two.

### Body Language

Before ever answering questions and interacting with interviewers, it's crucial to make sure you don't send the wrong message nonverbally. To avoid that, you have to be acutely aware of your body language. A few specific types of body language can send the right (or wrong) message to the interviewer:

- **Eye Contact:** Even if you are nervous, it's important to maintain eye contact with the interviewer. Looking down or away will tell them you aren't confident. Maintain eye contact throughout the interview.
- **Posture:** When you sit down for the interview, make sure you're sitting upright. Slouching is associated with laziness, and you don't want anyone to make assumptions based on bad posture. Try a quick, discrete deep-breathing exercise before entering the interview.
- **Facial Expressions:** Staring blankly at your interviewer or looking overly serious may give off a still impression. It may cause them to assume you wouldn't be enjoyable to work with. Don't be afraid to smile and naturally engage.



### Active Listening and Engagement

Listening is crucial. If you aren't acknowledging the conversation or nodding periodically, you will come across as disinterested. That's certainly not the impression you want to leave. Listen throughout, and ask questions when appropriate.

### Nervous Habits

Although you may be stressed during the interview, you have to resist any nervous habits you may have. Much like body language, nervous tics can ruin an otherwise great interview. Common nervous interview habits include:

- Foot tapping
- Hair twirling
- Knuckle cracking
- Pen clicking
- Nail biting
- Using filler words like "um"

These will distract your interviewer from the points you are making and how qualified you are. As you go on more interviews, you will get better at identifying your nervous habits and be more aware of them. Be mindful of all these factors while keeping the focus on your skills and qualifications.





## The Power of Storytelling

Movies and books are both incredibly successful industries for a reason. Everyone loves a compelling story; people want to be drawn in. Keeping this in mind when it's time for you to interview can be extremely beneficial. Storytelling is a tool every job candidate should use. In this section, we will discuss how to craft engaging real-life, on-the-job stories for your job interviews.

## The S.T.A.R. System

If you've landed an interview, it means your skills and qualifications on your résumé impressed the hiring manager. That's great! However, now that you are interviewing, you have to prove that those skills and qualifications would translate into a valuable employee. How are you going to do that? You guessed it — with true stories. If you're not sure where to start, consider the S.T.A.R. system. This stands for **Situation, Task, Action, Result**. Hit all four points, and you've got a complete story! It's a simple formula that will help you convince an interviewer that you are more than qualified. You have experience too! Let's break down each step:

- **Situation:** To start your story, you simply describe the situation you were in. This basically covers who was involved, why they were involved, and what was happening. For instance, “Management noticed our quarterly profits were down and put the marketing department in charge of getting our name out.”
- **Task:** Now explain what your goal was and how you set out to achieve it. It’s important to include any constraints, like budgets or deadlines. Such details illustrate to the interviewer what the stakes were and how you overcame them.
- **Action:** Discuss how you carried out the plan and met the goals you set out to achieve. It’s OK to be somewhat detailed here, since it will showcase your knowledge. But don’t go overboard and drone on and on. Think of how a good movie or book keeps people interested.
- **Result:** You share the outcome of the entire story. Since you are in a job interview, the story should have a positive outcome. If you are able to refine the results into numbers further, even better. For example, you could say, “After we finished our campaign, we saw a 45% increase in profits.” Numbers like this quantify your success and leave a strong positive impression.

### TYING IT ALL TOGETHER:

Wondering how to quantify your successes? If you’ve been taking on-the-job notes about your significant projects recommended in the first chapter, you will already have those statistics on your résumé. It doesn’t hurt to keep more detailed notes. You can look them over before a job interview to make your story more impressive.

As a candidate, your ultimate goal should be to get the interviewer on your side. You want them to believe that you are the best fit for the job and that, if hired, you could accomplish everything expected of you and more.

Relying on the **S.T.A.R.** method will keep you from using generic statements that are hard to back up. Telling stories in this structure will do a much better job of proving, as opposed to just telling, an interviewer that you are capable, and beyond. Pointing to past results, especially quantitative, demonstrates you have a history of success and backs up your résumé. This is what an interviewer wants to hear. Candidates who use this method will stand out significantly from others who step into an interview and merely repeat what is on their résumé.

### Turning the Tables

At a certain point, usually toward the end of the interview, you will be given the chance to ask the interviewer some questions. Having questions proves you're interested! We'll describe a process you can use to come up with questions, including examples that can be used in most interviews.

### Adaptive Questions

Employers want to hire someone who is genuinely interested in the position. Fumbling around to come up with questions implies you aren't taking the opportunity seriously or don't care enough.

Throughout the interview, it's important to be attentive and take in everything discussed by the interviewer. Anything that stands out could possibly be turned into a question later. Asking these questions show that you've been listening and want to find out more. The types of questions you ask will vary depending on what is discussed, but these organic questions can be the most telling ones you ask. Now we'll move on to questions that you formulate before the interview.

### The Future

Sometimes, the best way to ask questions is to flash-forward and imagine that you were hired. What questions would you have? What would you want to know? Thinking in this mindset can help you ask insightful questions.

### **“What will a typical day in this role look like?”**

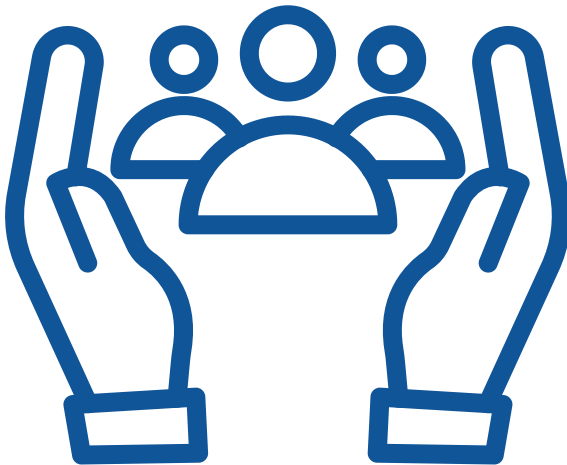
This question is best asked of an interviewer who has some oversight of that role. If you are interviewing with someone in human resources, they may not have a thorough understanding of the position and its duties. You may want to steer clear of asking this specific question of them. However, if you do have the opportunity to interview with someone in the department, you would be working, it's a great question to ask and will help you learn more about the role.

### **“What is the career path for someone in this role?”**

This will help you find out if there are opportunities for growth or promotion. It's not easy for an employer to shy away from this question, and it's important as a candidate to know what the position may offer in terms of growth.

### **The Culture**

Every company has a culture, and no two are the same. Asking about the company's culture can tell you a lot about what it would be like to work there — the people, the attitudes and the environment. The following questions are designed to help you uncover this information.





### **“What is the culture like at this company?”**

This broad question is straightforward, and your interviewer may have a prepared answer. Some companies have a certain perception of the culture they like to sell to candidates, which may be entirely different from the actual culture. At the very least, this will give you a better idea of how they want the culture to be perceived.

### **“What do you like the most about working for this company?”**

The answer may tell you what the culture is really like. If someone truly enjoys the environment, this should be an easy question to answer. Maybe they’re passionate about the team or thrilled with how much creative direction they have. If an interviewer struggles and hesitates before answering, it could be a red flag. If this is the case, it’s probably not a great place to work.

### **“What do you think are the most important qualities for someone to succeed at this organization?”**

This is a great indirect way to inquire about the culture, without making it obvious. Finding out what skills and traits are valued at the organization will also help you realize whether you would be a good culture fit for the company. At the end of the day, your goal in asking these questions is to find out more about the culture of the company. You want to know if you would fit in and be able to work comfortably.

### **The Process**

As a candidate, you may have certain expectations about the hiring process. However, every company is unique and may conduct their candidate searches differently. Asking about the hiring process will help you know what to expect after the interview. Save these questions for the end.

#### **“What are the next steps in the hiring process?”**

This question is general and open-ended, without being intrusive. No matter the exact answer given, you will walk away with a better understanding of the hiring timeline. You may find out that all candidates are discussed with multiple managers before a decision is made. This could mean you have to wait. Either way, this question will give you a better understanding of what to expect moving forward.

#### **“What is your timeline for making a decision, and when can I expect to hear back?”**

This question is slightly more demanding. Make sure the room feels right to ask this question. Some interviewers have no problem sharing the timeline, but others may find this question intrusive. Use your judgment when deciding whether to ask this question.

#### **“Is there anything I can clarify about my qualifications?”**

Some hiring managers and interviewers may have some concerns about your qualifications that they keep to themselves. By asking this question, you give them the opportunity to share them. It's a bold move, but it can pay off if it gives you the chance to clear up anything that would have cost you a job offer.

**CHAPTER  
FOUR:  
FOLLOWING  
UP**

# FOLLOWING UP & NEXT STEPS

## BOOSTING YOUR CHANCES OF GETTING HIRED AFTER AN INTERVIEW.

### Learn How To:

- Remember key parts of your interviews
- Follow up in a professional and appropriate manner
- Send a thank-you note that significantly helps your chances

### The Waiting Game

While the job interview may be the most influential hiring factor once you've been contacted, it's definitely not where your work ends. Many candidates fall victim to that mindset. After the interview, all that is left is for the company to call you and say yes or no, right? Wrong. As a candidate, you have to be persistent.

As described in the previous chapter, you should be tracking your opportunities. But you have to do more than that. Following up and checking in are key parts of the hiring process. We'll explain how you can increase your chances of getting hired even after the job interview.

### More Note-taking

From the previous chapter, you know how valuable taking notes during the job interview can be. The note-taking doesn't end there. There are some things you just won't have time to get on paper during the interview, so take the first opportunity you have to jot down more notes after the interview. Write down your initial thoughts about the interview and anything else that comes to mind. Things like:

- How was the office?
- Whom did you interact with?

- How do you feel about the opportunity?
- What is the timeline for a decision?

Any similar thoughts should be written down as soon as possible. You can use various apps to get your thoughts down quickly. If you have multiple job interviews and more than one of them results in an offer, you're going to want all the information you can possibly have. Your notes will help you make an informed decision.

### **A Little Thank-You Goes a Long Way**

Your notes will also come in handy when you compose a thank-you note. A Career Builder survey found that 57% of candidates fail to send thank-you notes. A thank-you note in any form can make a big difference. Email is the best method, since it is fast and reliable. Within 24 hours after your interview, compose and send a thank-you note to the interviewer. This means you should get their contact information during the interview if possible. If that's not possible, connect with them on LinkedIn and send the note there. When composing the note, start with a basic structure. It's not specific enough to make all your notes the same, but it serves as a good foundation. We suggest the following structure:

- Refresh memory
- Demonstrate value
- Show interest

You want to remind them who you are and how impressive you were as a candidate, all while demonstrating your genuine interest in the position. The best thank-you notes are short and simple. Refer back to something about the position that was discussed and mention how you appreciated them taking the time to meet with you. The thank-you note shouldn't read as if you've sent the same note to five other hiring managers. Don't use a cookie-cutter template and simply adapt it to each position. Every position and every company is different, and every thank-you note should be different as well. Remember to proofread the notes, including spelling the interviewer's name correctly.

# CHAPTER FIVE: THE BENEFITS OF USING A RECRUITER



# CONSIDER A RECRUITER

FIND OUT THE BENEFITS OF WORKING WITH A RECRUITING AGENCY.

## Learn How Recruiters:

- Negotiate the best possible salary for you.
- Give you access to job opportunities not publicly available.
- Help you become a more attractive job candidate.

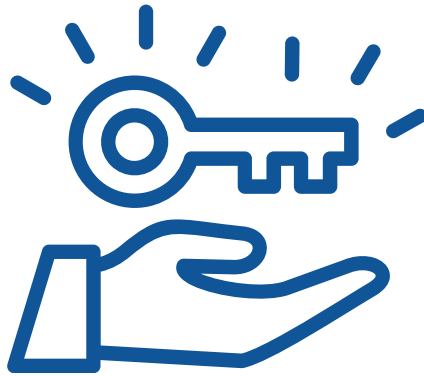
## Why Use a Recruiter?

We've designed this guide to help you have the best possible chance of finding your next job. We also want to discuss the option of working with a recruiting agency, which can boost your chances of getting hired.

## The Typical Process

Understanding how a recruiting agency works will make it easier to realize the benefits. First, we'll break down how the typical recruiting agency works with job seekers.





At Walrath Recruiting, we work for our corporate clients to fill their open positions. Once we know what our clients are looking for, we begin searching for qualified applicants, which is where you come in!

Once you submit your résumé, the recruiters will review it. If they think you are a good fit, they will have an initial phone conversation with you.

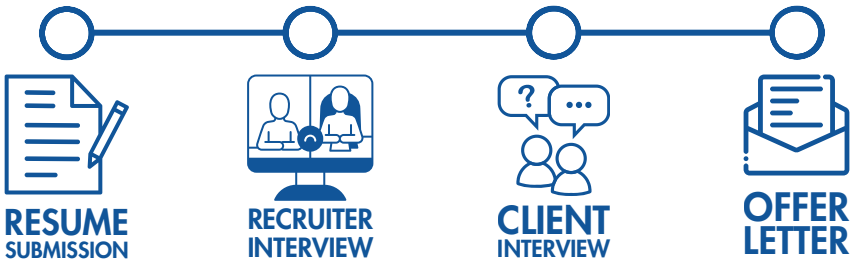
Following that, if your needs align with the position, we will arrange an in-office or video interview with one of our recruiters. Next, we will forward your résumé to the client. If they are interested, we will coordinate a job interview with them. If all goes well, we will be in touch with the job offer!

Obviously, that is the ideal scenario. In the event that you apply for a job but aren't qualified, we will keep your résumé in our database. Being in our database means you will come up in our searches, and we will contact you whenever we receive a new position for which we think you are qualified. There is no charge associated with our services to job seekers.

### **The Benefits of Working With a Recruiter**

Now that you're more familiar with the process, we can detail exactly how using a recruiter can be beneficial in increasing your chances of **finding the perfect fit** and being hired.

- **Feedback:** One of the most common frustrations during a job search is the lack of feedback throughout the process. After submitting 30 résumés, you may hear back from only five employers, whether or not they are interested. Even if it is a no, it's still nice to know. Thankfully, if you work with a recruiter, you don't have to worry about that uncertainty. Throughout all stages, you will get feedback from any client to whom we submit your résumé. If they aren't interested, we can tell you why and make suggestions for future positions and interviews.
- **Interviewing:** Going into a job interview, it can be tough to know exactly what you should emphasize. Despite reading the job description 100 times over, you can never know exactly what the employer wants. Thankfully, recruiters can help you emphasize the skills you have that line up with the employer's needs. This helps you better prepare, and it's always nice to know you have someone in your corner rooting for you.
- **Non-Publicized Job Opportunities:** Recruiters work with multiple companies for many positions, so most recruiting agencies are widely connected. That, in turn, means recruiting agencies may begin looking for prospects before positions are posted. Companies also use recruiting agencies for confidential searches, meaning recruiters have access to positions that will never be posted publicly. Working with a recruiter gives you access to those jobs.
- **Compensation:** Every time a recruiter finds a candidate a job, the recruiter is paid a percentage of that candidate's salary as commission by the corporate client. Since recruiters know the salary range the client is willing to pay, they can ensure that you receive the best possible offer based on your skills and experience. It's also important to note that the fee paid to the recruiter in no way affects your salary. You will still receive the amount discussed in the offer letter.



### THE PROCESS (IF ALL GOES WELL):

- Résumé submission
  - Initial phone conversation
  - Interview with the recruiting agency
  - Résumé forwarded to client
  - Interview with the client
  - Job offer extended
- 
- **Confidentiality:** Recruiters understand the importance of confidentiality. It is the essence of the business on both the client and the candidate side. Both parties sometimes want to keep their search quiet, so recruiting agencies specialize in discretion. If you're looking to conduct a confidential search, you can go to a recruiting agency knowing that they will be discreet.
  - **We Keep Looking for You:** A recruiter will keep your search going constantly. If you submit your résumé, it will be kept on file, and you will be contacted if opportunities arise that fit. It's great to be contacted about a job instead of having to seek it out!
  - **Job Fit:** Part of recruiting is being able to match up the needs of the company in terms of skills, qualifications, culture, fit, and personality with the right candidate. This works both ways. When working with a recruiting agency, you can rest assured your name will be submitted for a position that is a good fit for you.
  - **The Price Is Right:** Best of all, for the candidate, recruiting services come at no cost, at least if you're working with **Walrath Recruiting**. Our corporate clients cover the placement fee.

# A FEW CLOSING WORDS

We hope you found some valuable advice within these pages! Searching for a new job is no small task. There are many factors to consider, and we've attempted in this guide to touch upon everything you need to know to conduct a successful job search.

If you would like even more advice, check out our blog, Coffee Break, which is regularly updated with new content. The blog's topics are centered around job searches, careers, and employment. Walrath Recruiting, Inc. is a New York state-certified Woman-Owned Business Enterprise that provides recruiting services to the Capital Region and beyond. At Walrath Recruiting, Inc., we specialize in, but are not limited to, accounting, finance, human resources, sales, legal, IT, and medical fields, and staff all types of positions.

Whether you're a company looking to hire or a candidate looking for employment, we can be reached at 518-275-4816 and/or [jobs@walrathrecruiting.com](mailto:jobs@walrathrecruiting.com).

## WE WISH YOU THE BEST OF LUCK DURING YOUR JOB SEARCH!

# RENEE WALRATH

Since founding Walrath Recruiting, Inc. in 2010, Renee has transformed the firm from a one-room office into one of the Capital Region's most respected executive search, recruiting, and staffing agencies, now operating across two offices with a dynamic team.

A people-first leader, Renee is deeply invested in the success of her clients, candidates, and team members. Her approach goes beyond recruitment; it's about building long-term relationships and delivering career solutions that create lasting impact. As a two-time Albany Business Review Power 50 honoree (2022, 2024), Vice President of Finance for Capital Region Association for Talent Development, (CRATD) and a leader of a New York State Certified Woman-Owned Business Enterprise (WBE), she continues to break barriers and set new standards in executive search.



Renee is a dedicated advocate for women's advancement in the workplace. For more than a decade, she has served as a mentor with the Albany Business Review's Mentoring Monday program, offering guidance on leadership, networking, and professional growth.

Her support directly extends to the next generation of women leaders. Since 2020, she has provided scholarship funding to female students, reinforcing her conviction in the transformative power of education to unlock opportunities and drive systemic change.

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