

Initiating Contact with Employers

Making a positive first impression is crucial to job search success. Before making that first impression, contact must be made with the employer. Use the following tips to evaluate and prepare for the initial contact.

Getting Started:

It is imperative to analyze yourself before beginning to search for employers and companies that will be a good fit. Below are guidelines for beginning this process. You can also read Ready Reference Set B for more information on self-assessment.

- Write down your strengths and weaknesses.
- Write down both potential career and personal goals.
- Think about the hiring process from the employer's perspective. Write down what characteristics and skills you would seek in a potential employee.
- Use direct, articulate language to give focus to all communications.

Read over your written thoughts and form a personal mission statement. It should envelop your strengths and the benefits you would bring to an organization. Use this statement to guide all your correspondence with potential employers. For example, if your statement involves "using strong technical skills and analysis to provide superior product development," you'll want to include that statement in the first paragraph of your cover letter and elaborate with specific examples. You'll also want to paraphrase that statement when you introduce yourself to employers at Career Fairs or in interviews. Having this clear understanding of yourself will allow you to better utilize your time.

Developing The Details:

While having a mission statement will help guide your conversation and give your first impression focus, specific examples and tangible items will definitely place you ahead of your competitors. You may wish to assemble a professional portfolio. In *Major In Success*, Patrick Combs discusses "show and tell" items that may be helpful in both building your confidence and helping you make that outstanding first impression. Some of Combs' "show and tell item" suggestions include:

- Articles you've gathered which are related to the job of your dreams.
- Newsletters, flyers or brochures that you helped create for a campus club or organization.
- A binder that contains pictures of your design projects from important or applicable classes.
- If you want to work at a particular company, news articles about that company.

The following methods will help you gain information about an industry or employer of interest to you.

- Attend company information sessions and presentations on campus.
- Research organizations on company websites.

Initiating Contact:

Resolve to get started. After you have thought about your goals, have a clear idea of what skills and abilities you are selling. Put together some show and tell items and make yourself start. Initiating contact with an employer can be difficult. Combs lists the Five Big Job Search Fears:

- Fear of failure
- Fear of what other people think
- Fear of not having the right experience
- Fear of not making enough money
- Fear of competition

You can convince yourself to not dwell upon these fears and to jump into the job search with the following statement, attributed to the Wright brothers, aviation pioneers. They said "So many times people end up so fixated on doing things right, that they end up doing nothing at all." Don't make that mistake. Start somewhere – just start!

Search Tips:

- Initiating contact with employers begins by identifying employers. We suggest using multiple job search methods such as those listed in Ready Reference D-4, "*Learning About Job Opportunities*."
- Search for prospective employers on the web or through the *Job and Interview Portal*.
- Check with CEAT Career Services for additional contact information and employer literature.
- After you've identified which employers you're going to contact, do your research on those organizations! See Ready Reference Set D for some great company research tips.
- Write a letter, send an email or call the company directly. Open the channels of communication and find a personal contact within that organization who can be a resource. Ask for an informational interview; express an interest in gaining experience, but remember that the purpose of an informational interview is not to apply for a position. For tips on Informational Interviews, see Ready Reference C-6.
- Continue these steps and follow up as often as possible. Each time you speak with someone, gain information from someone, etc., write a letter or send an email to thank them for their time. You can utilize Ready Reference Set F for tips on Job Search Correspondence.
- Formal situations, such as informational interviews, definitely deserve a follow-up letter. Be specific about what information you found useful and what you think you have to offer the industry now that you have a greater understanding of the issues the industry is facing.