

Careers

Your

Future in

Corrections

One's philosophy is not best expressed in words: it is expressed in the choices one makes . . . In the long run, we shape our lives and we shape ourselves. The process never ends until we die. And the choices we make are ultimately our responsibility.

—Eleanor Roosevelt

Career development experts tell us that career development is a life-long process that involves continual and consistent maintenance. Your interests, skills, and preferences change throughout your life. Thus, it is important that you know the steps involved in career planning, developing employability and job readiness, and finding the right job.¹

Career Planning

self-assessment

A method of enhancing self-understanding—identifying your unique characteristics: what you do well (skills), what is important to you (values), and what you like to do (interests)—clearly and accurately.

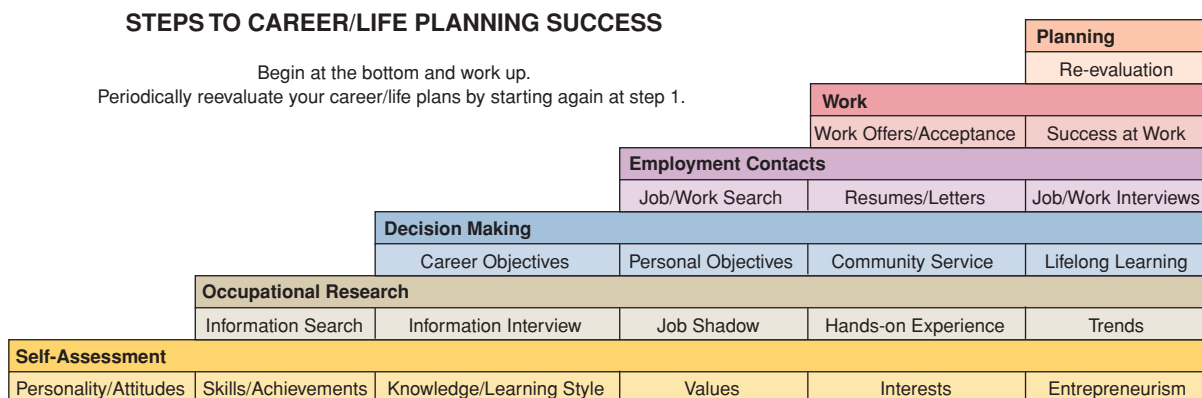
Successful career planning is a continual process of self-assessment, occupational research, decision making, contacting potential employers, working at a job, and reevaluating your situation (see Figure 16–1).

Self-Assessment

Career planning begins with **self-assessment**—learning who you are and what you can and want to do by evaluating your interests, skills, and values. Self-assessment tools, which pose a series of questions and identify potential career choices based on your answers, are available from most col-

FIGURE 16–1

Steps to Career/Life Planning Success



You may need to move from an upper step to a lower one; e.g., from step 4 to step 2, should a lack of openings in a particular field require research into a different one.

Source: Career Services at University of Waterloo

lege and university career counselors, as well as in book stores and on the Internet. The questions involved pertain to: (1) personal information—education, experience, achievements, personality factors, and interest in various activities; (2) skills—abilities in such areas as athletics, analysis, management, communication, and persuasion; and (3) values—ranking work-related issues (such as job location, pressure, security, responsibility, teamwork, and wages) in order of importance.

Occupational Research

The second step in career planning is research. Make a list of the potential career choices identified by your self-assessment, as well as any additional careers that you would like to know more about. Research job requirements (training, education, certification, licensure), job characteristics, working conditions, duties, employment outlook, salary, and methods of entry for each of the career alternatives: read everything you can find and talk to people.

Reading Information on careers and job opportunities is available in libraries (public, school, and special), career development centers, and on the Internet. Among others, three U.S. Department of Labor publications—*Dictionary of Occupational Titles*, *Occupational Outlook Handbook*, and *Guide for Occupational Exploration*—provide information on more than 20,000 jobs, and cross-reference each career field with others that are similar in nature. The U.S. Department of Labor also publishes two periodicals, *Occupational Outlook Quarterly* and *Monthly Labor Review*, that are excellent sources of information about occupational trends and salaries.

Talking to People **Networking** is meeting new people (often through people that you know) who can give you information about careers, the job market, and specific positions. Broadening your acquaintance base to include solid professional contacts, through networking, builds long-term professional relationships that facilitate job hunting and professional development and enhance personal growth.

Developing a network is an integral part of job hunting; networking is considered the most effective method of job searching and is the number one way people obtain jobs. It has no time limit, nor does it end when you secure a position. Start developing contacts before you begin your career planning, and keep in touch with those contacts—they might hear of a job opening for you. Continue to keep in touch after you get a job—you may need to use your network again.

How do you begin networking? How do you establish contacts if you do not have any? Anyone can be a contact: the student who sits next to you in class, your parents' next-door neighbor, your doctor, your professor, previous supervisors, people with whom you have something in common (attending the same school, working out at the same gym, membership in the same professional association, etc.). Join organizations and participate in local programs that are related to your area of interest.

One of the key elements of networking is talking to people about your career interests and goals. Most people are more than willing to share infor-

networking An ongoing process of building professional contacts.

informational interviewing A process for obtaining firsthand information about a particular job or career.

mation; in fact, the majority are flattered by the attention and truly want to help. Talk to the people you meet about what they do, their backgrounds, and their perspectives on the job market for their specialties, and ask if they know anyone else you might speak with. Take advantage of any and every opportunity to build your network—talk to people while you are waiting in line, riding the bus, attending a seminar, playing golf. The other key element is follow-up—keep your contacts apprised of your career status; let them know about your latest career move or your progress in a new job.

Informational interviewing, talking to people who are currently employed in a career field that you are interested in exploring, is an excellent means of researching a particular job or position. Introduce yourself to the person you wish to talk to, either by calling or writing, and ask if you might have 30 minutes of time to discuss the job or position. Explain that you're gathering career information, and ask for an appointment. An informational interview can provide:

- An accurate portrayal of the career field you are investigating.
- Specifics about necessary skills, entry level positions, employment trends, etc.
- Information about related volunteer, part-time, or internship opportunities.
- Additional professional contacts.
- Increased confidence in interacting with professionals.
- Information about possible job openings.
- A good chance of “being at the right place at the right time.”
- Information about concerns that should not be discussed in a job interview (e.g., salaries, hours, and minority issues).

Decision Making

The third step in career planning is making your career decision. Carefully review all of the information that you have gathered. For which of the careers that you researched are you best qualified? Which are most appealing? Which are most likely to enhance your career development? List career choices in order of preference, then begin your job search (see Figure 16-2).

Seeking Employment

Finding a job can be a tough process that requires an overwhelming amount of thought, time, and energy. Make the job search part of your everyday routine; decide how much time you will devote to the search and when, and stick with that decision.

Be creative in your job search; utilize all of the resources available to you—classified ads, Internet ads, professional associations, advisors, employment services (local and Internet), etc.—to identify available positions.

resume A written summary of your education, interests, skills, achievements, and goals.

Writing Your Resume

A good **resume** may not necessarily get you the job, but a bad resume can ensure that you don't get the job. Your resume is not meant to convey

FIGURE 16-2

Job Search Checklist

JOB SEARCH CHECKLIST

- ✓ Establish specific goals. Determine two or three potential career areas that are compatible with your values, skills, and interests.
- ✓ Prepare your search tools. Write a resume and sharpen your interviewing skills. Are you ready for your interview?
- ✓ Identify and research potential employers by utilizing different resources, such as:
 - Career Development Center
 - Professional Associations
 - Newspaper Classifieds
 - Internet Sites
 - Deans/Professors/Other Advisors
 - Trade Organizations
 - Career Library Resources/Texts
 - State/County Employment Offices
- ✓ Conduct informational interviews, which differ from job interviews—they provide you with an excellent opportunity to meet with individuals in a specific career field and obtain up-to-date information on that field. This can help your career decision making and develop a network of contacts.
- ✓ Initiate contact with employers. Establish a mailing list of potential employers within the targeted fields you identified from your earlier research. Mail your resume with a focused cover letter and then follow up with telephone calls to request interview appointments.
- ✓ Follow up with each contact. Remember, follow-up is your responsibility.
- ✓ Get organized, and stay on schedule. Devote at least 20 hours a week to your job search. Develop a schedule and create a list of organizations, contact people, contact dates, and outcomes.
- ✓ Accept an offer—consider these factors when deciding on which:
 - size of the organization
 - job security
 - travel/relocation requirements
 - hours
 - formal training arrangements
 - people you met with
 - advancement potential
 - entry level salary
 - salary potential
 - geographical factors
 - education/fringe benefits
 - name recognition of employer

your complete life history. Through your resume, you convey your capability for a particular position; it must be clear, directed, and persuasive—its objective is to secure an interview.

Your resume should (1) support a career direction and (2) be selective. Career direction gives the resume focus; all of the information included in the resume should support the career direction that you are trying to convey. Career guidance experts tell us, “You should make yourself as attractive as possible on paper so that the employer feels as though she would be missing out by not interviewing you.”² Your resume should project you as someone who produces, accomplishes, and is results-oriented. Use active verbs and descriptive terms; i.e., “researched and drafted reports” rather than “responsible for research and reports.” What works best today is a conservative style and a focus on key achievements—particularly those that relate to the position for which you are applying; find out as much as you can about the prospective employer, then modify the resume to highlight those items that will most benefit the company or organization. The most effective resume is one that is tailored to a specific job; the results are well worth the extra effort. According to Tom Jackson, “The Perfect Resume is a written communication that clearly demonstrates your ability to produce results in an area of concern to selected employers, in a way that motivates them to meet you.”³

FIGURE 16-3

Tips for Writing Resumes

RESUME WRITING—QUICK TIPS

- One Page
- Font Size: 10 (minimum)–12 (preferred)
- Paper Weight: recommended, 24 lb; acceptable, 21 lb.
- Paper Color: white or off-white
- GPA is required dependent upon major
- Margins: .5–1.5 inch, portrait
- Include your objective
- Do not use personal pronouns
- Use action verbs
- Use conventional English, preferably one- or two-syllable words
- Use short paragraphs—preferably no longer than five lines
- Use a chronological or functional format
- Use “bullet” format where appropriate
- Proofread and have others proofread for you
- “References available upon request” ends your resume

When creating your resume, keep the following in mind:

- The “one page rule”—one page is ideal; two is acceptable (however, do not add a second page simply to expand content); three is unacceptable.
- Your resume should be easily scanned: effectively organized to carry the reader’s eye from major point to major point (a prospective employer will look for words and phrases that convey the necessary qualifications).
- The eye is drawn to eye-catching type; **bold**, CAPITALIZE, or underline to emphasize a particular item.
- Bullets break job and skill descriptions into easy-to-read component parts that begin with eye-catching verbs.
- Talents, skills, and experience should be highlighted to some extent, but don’t overdo.
- Word processing allows great flexibility in the selection of fonts, but choose something simple. Avoid ornateness, and avoid combining several fonts.
- Employers want employees who can set goals and complete tasks; present yourself as someone who gets things done.
- You must identify your strengths and convey them on paper; this is not arrogance or boasting. The person who is reading your resume wants to know that you are exceptional.
- You should always honestly summarize your work experience and skills, including any technologies you are familiar with (such as computers, calculators, fax machines, telephone systems, word processing, spreadsheet or database software, etc.).
- Personal pronouns should not be used; “I” is implied.
- Complete sentences are not necessary.
- Abbreviations should be avoided.

Your resume is a primary tool in obtaining more attractive positions; thus, extra time spent on its preparation is a good investment. All resumes should be accurate and truthful, but each should highlight different strengths, as they relate to the potential job. The resume should go through several stages of drafting and editing until it is as perfect as it can be.

Resume Format

The selected resume format should establish a natural flow of information that simplifies the review process, and should incorporate a consistent pattern of information placement, allowing the reader to anticipate where certain information will be found. An employer usually reviews information on the left side first—names of employers, job titles, etc., should be placed on the left. Less important information (dates, locations, etc.) should be placed on the right. No resume format is universally preferred, although the **chronological resume** and the **functional resume** are the most widely used. (See Figures 16–4 and 16–5.)

Chronological Resume The chronological resume format is the most widely accepted and preferred resume style. It is most effectively used by

chronological resume

An historical resume, in which work experience and personal history are presented, in reverse chronological order.

functional resume

A qualitative resume, in which work experience and abilities are presented by major area of involvement, usually with dates.

people who have established or are establishing credentials within a particular field, or whose credentials show career growth and direction within one particular employment environment. To be effective, the chronological resume should project a sense of quality by emphasizing skills and accomplishments, and should be carefully organized (in terms of layout) to most effectively present a particular background. In this format, your education and work experience are presented in reverse time sequence, with the most recent degrees and jobs appearing first. In developing a chronological resume:

- de-emphasize history for the sake of content; place dates and other less relevant information on the right-hand side of the page;
- devote more space to the most recent position;
- fully describe the three or four positions most supportive of the career direction—summarize other work experience unless it is exceptionally meaningful;
- avoid excessive repetition in detail and substance; and
- emphasize career growth.

Functional Resume The functional resume emphasizes abilities over work history by organizing information according to skills, results accomplished, contributions made, or functions successfully performed. It is best used by those who are changing careers or have been out of the work force for some time. In developing a functional resume:

- select functions that describe job-related abilities (versatile abilities, if possible);
- list functions in order of importance and relevance to your career direction, emphasizing accomplishment and achievement while illustrating specific abilities;
- avoid including employment detail (employer names, dates of employment, job titles) within the functional descriptions; include a work history section that sets forth this information.

What To Include Regardless of which resume format you use, your resume should include:

1. Identification—name (first, middle initial, last), address (permanent and/or present), telephone numbers (work and/or home, fax), and e-mail address (if applicable). Accurate information is critical; a prospective employer who is unable to reach you with the information provided is not likely to try to verify contact information. If the information changes, correct your resume and reprint it.
2. Objective/Career Interest—your career objective specifies the type of work you want to do, the position you want, or the skills/attributes you anticipate utilizing, and the employment sector in which you wish to establish a career; a career interest statement is a broader, long-range career direction, which simply lists the field or occupation in which you wish to be employed.

FIGURE 16-4

Reverse Chronological Resume Format

<p>Derrick A. Salyer 1555 Campus Lake Drive, Richmond, KY 40477 (606) 555-1212</p>	
OBJECTIVE	To secure a position as a juvenile court probation officer.
EDUCATION	<p>Bachelor of Science, August 1999 Eastern Kentucky University, Richmond, KY Major: Correctional Services GPA: 3.20/4.00 Dean's List, Distinguished Undergraduate Award</p> <p>Associate of Arts, December 1995 Houston Community College, Houston, TX Major: General Studies</p> <p>Self-financed 50% of education through work, loans, and scholarships</p>
EXPERIENCE	<p>Intern, January–May 1999 Kentucky Department of Juvenile Justice, Richmond, KY</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">– Assisted department staff with hosting of three live national satellite videoconferences– Served as liaison to downlink sites– Attended all planning sessions <p>Intern, August–December 1998 Richmond Juvenile Court Services, Richmond, KY</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">– Assisted intake officer with predisposition investigation and report writing– Attended detention and adjudication hearings– Answered questions relating to the predisposition report <p>Sales Associate, March 1996–July 1998 Just For Feet, University Mall, Richmond, KY</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">– Coordinated sales associates' schedules– Managed evening cashier sales associates– Achieved and maintained Best Shift/Least Checkout Errors monthly in 1998
ACTIVITIES	Criminal Justice Student Association, 1998 President, 1997 Vice President Alpha Phi Sigma (Criminal Justice Honor Society) Spirit Award, 1996
REFERENCES	Available upon request.

FIGURE 16-5

Functional Resume Format

Tanisha Williams

1500 Maplewood Drive, Palmdale, CA 93510
(213) 555-1212

CAREER INTERESTS:

Correctional industry management

SKILLS:

PLANNING/ORGANIZATION

- Successfully established and operated a T-shirt design shop
- Developed market/trade survey programs to determine customer interest
- Initiated radio T-shirt give-away contests
- Established connection with local homeless shelter to employ the homeless

ADMINISTRATION/MANAGEMENT/SALES MARKETING

- Supervised team of 20 sales associates
- Hired and delegated supervision of 18-person T-shirt design shop to two associate managers
- Approved corporate sales contracts
- Increased corporate sales 32%
- Managed commercial sales advertisements—three radio, one television, and one newspaper—averaging \$32,000 annually

EMPLOYMENT EXPERIENCE

OWNER AND OPERATOR **1990–Present**
TANISHA'S SHIRTS AND DESIGNS
Lancaster, California

SALES ASSOCIATE AND MANAGER **1987–1990**
HUTTON'S TEES
Lancaster, California

EDUCATION

BACHELOR OF SCIENCE, CRIMINAL JUSTICE ADMINISTRATION, 1999
California State University
Northridge, California

REFERENCES AVAILABLE UPON REQUEST

3. Education—schools attended, degrees received, dates of graduation, majors and other concentrations of study, and academic achievement (class rank and grade point average for an undergraduate or graduate program). The education section can also include extracurricular activities of particular significance and academic honors and awards.
4. Skills/Accomplishments/Qualifications—descriptions, grouped by major functional skill area. Choose three to five functional skill areas that correspond to your career objective.
5. Experience—for a chronological resume, list experience in reverse chronological order, beginning with your current or most recent position.
6. Optional—Other information that can be included in your resume includes: personal statements (relatively neutral comments about personal interests such as foreign language, community activity, travel, sports, public speaking, unique hobbies, and military experience); honors and awards (academic honors, memberships in national honor societies, scholarships, etc.); curricular and cocurricular activities (those that demonstrate leadership), community activities or volunteer experiences (demonstrates personal work habits, leadership potential, and level of motivation/commitment); professional associations and licenses, and publications.

References should always be listed on a separate page, not on the resume. Do not approach the selection of references casually; your references are critical to the strength of your employment credentials.

The resume copy should be meticulously reviewed before it is forwarded to a potential employer (you might have a friend or a qualified professional critique it):

- Is the resume easily scanned?
- Does the resume immediately project a career direction and provide supporting evidence?
- Is the resume neat, clean, and professional? Is the layout attractive?
- Are the margins wide enough?
- Are there typos? Check and recheck spelling, punctuation, and grammar—proofread by reading the resume backward.
- Is the highlighting (bold, capitalization, underscore) excessive?
- Is the language direct and concise?
- Is the resume action- and results-oriented?
- Is the resume free of jargon that the reader may not understand?
- Are sentences short? Are paragraphs short? Are they vivid and descriptive?
- Is all repetition eliminated?
- Are there time gaps that the employer might question?
- Is all irrelevant information excluded?
- Is the verb tense consistent?
- Are there any personal pronouns?
- Does the resume represent you at your very best?

Many employers and employment services now encourage online job application. Be aware, though, that if you used a word-processing program or desktop publishing program to create your resume, it may not look the same to the online recipient as it did on your computer—a resume that is to be submitted online should be translated to text format. Here are some guidelines:

- Line length—line lengths in excess of 80 characters have a very good chance of wrapping prematurely, creating an annoying double-spaced window.
- Vertical alignment—vertical alignment is achieved by using an equal number of spaces from the left-hand margin; to ensure that all characters are the same size (including spaces), use a fixed-width font such as 10-point Courier and use spaces rather than tabs to indent text.
- Other issues—if your resume design includes columns or bullets, take advantage of ASCII characters such as dashes (-), asterisks (*), and arrows (>).

The Cover Letter

A cover letter (see Figures 16–6 and 16–7) should always accompany your resume. Like the resume, the cover letter should be direct, persuasive, descriptive, and attractive. Remember, the cover letter is specific to the potential employer; it should emphasize credentials and experience that apply to the position. Your cover letter can differentiate you significantly from others competing for the same position. The following is the basic format for the cover letter:

1. First paragraph—serves to get the attention of the person receiving the letter and answers the question: “Why are you writing?” This can be as simple as stating that you are “a graduating student seeking employment at [name of employer],” or that you are “responding to a job posting from [name of source].” If (in the ideal situation) you are referred by a professional or personal contact, use it to your advantage—begin your letter with “John Smith recommended that I contact you regarding employment.”
2. Second paragraph—details your interest in and your fit with the company or organization. Keep in mind that employers are more interested in what you can do for them than in what they can give you. Answer implied questions, such as:
 - a. “Why are you interested in working for this firm or organization?” This part need only be a sentence or two, but should include reference to specifics about the organization—its mission, type of work, geographic location, size, reputation in the community, and/or types of positions available. Employers’ hiring decisions are often based not only on qualifications, but also on level of interest in the firm or organization. Be genuine. This is an opportunity to show that you researched the employer.

WRITING A COVER LETTER

Your Street Address
City, State Zip Code

Today's Date

Contact Person's Name
Contact Person's Title (if applicable)
Company/Organization Name
Street Address
City, State Zip Code

Dear (Contact Person's Name, or Contact Person's Title if name is unknown):

OPENING PARAGRAPH: Clearly state why you are writing, name the position or type of work for which you are applying, and mention how you heard of the opening. If you are writing without prior knowledge of an available opening, say that you are interested in openings that may currently be available.

MIDDLE PARAGRAPH: Explain why you are interested in working for this employer, and/or your reasons for desiring this type of work. Describe applicable experience, achievements, or other qualifications in this environment or type of employment.

MIDDLE PARAGRAPH: Refer the reader to your enclosed resume, which positively illustrates your training, skills, and experience. **DO NOT DUPLICATE RESUME INFORMATION IN THE COVER LETTER**—"highlight," and elaborate on how you can make a tangible contribution to this company/organization.

CLOSING PARAGRAPH: Use a closing appropriate to acquiring an interview. If you know the contact person's name and telephone number, use a pro-active strategy—say that you will call to request an appointment in the very near future. If you do not know the contact person's name, ending your letter with a question often encourages a response. (e.g., May we meet soon to discuss this matter further?)

Sincerely,

Your signature

Your Full Name (typewritten)

Enclosure

FIGURE 16-7

Sample Cover Letter

1500 Maplewood Drive
Palmdale, CA 93510
January 12, 2000

Ms. Caroline Butterworth
Human Resources
State of California
Department of Corrections
Sacramento, CA 94283-0001

Dear Ms. Butterworth:

I am applying for the position of Supervisor of Correctional Industries in your Southeast Region. I am a graduate of California State University, Northridge, with a bachelor's degree in criminal justice administration. I believe that my work experience and education make me a strong candidate for this position.

My degree in criminal justice administration has given me an excellent understanding of the criminal justice field, particularly institutional corrections and the corrections industry. I completed a 15-week internship at the Chino, California Institution for Men, where I gained considerable insight into prison industry operations—especially security—and the importance of helping prisoners to develop and maintain job skills prior to release.

My work experience spans 10 years, which includes self-employment (in T-shirt design and sales—I hired and supervised a staff of 20) and industry organization and management.

I look forward to speaking with you about utilizing my business skills and criminal justice qualifications in the position of Supervisor of Correctional Industries. I will contact you next week to arrange an interview. Please call me if you have questions.

Sincerely,



Tanisha Williams

Enclosure

FIFTY QUESTIONS MOST OFTEN ASKED BY EMPLOYERS DURING AN INTERVIEW

1. Tell me about yourself.
2. What personal goals, other than those related to your occupation, have you established for yourself for the next ten years?
3. What do you see yourself doing five years from now?
4. What do you really want to do in life?
5. What are your short-range and long-range career objectives?
6. How do you plan to achieve your career goals?
7. What are the most important rewards you expect in your career?
8. What do you expect to be earning in five years?
9. Why did you choose the career for which you are preparing?
10. Which is more important to you, the money or the type of job?
11. What do you consider your greatest strengths and weaknesses?
12. How would you describe yourself?
13. How do you think a friend or professor who knows you well would describe you?
14. What motivates you to put forth your greatest effort?
15. How has your college experience prepared you for your career?
16. Why should I hire you?
17. What qualifications do you have that makes you think that you will be successful in this environment/setting?
18. How do you determine or evaluate success?
19. What do you think it takes to be successful in an organization like ours?
20. In what ways do you think you can make a contribution to this organization?
21. What qualities should a successful supervisor possess?
22. Describe the relationship that should exist between a supervisor and those reporting to him or her.
23. What two or three accomplishments have given you the most satisfaction? Why?

A typical first job interview usually lasts 30–60 minutes, although it may be longer. Often called a screening interview, the first interview is often used to shorten a long list of candidates. You also may be asked to complete a job-related questionnaire that may serve to shorten the list of candidates (see Figure 16–9). Those who make a positive impression are invited back for second interviews.

Remain alert for indications that you are on track. If the interviewer seems relaxed, is following closely, and encouraging you with comments and nods, you are probably on target. If the interviewer appears puzzled, stop and restate your reply. If the interviewer has obviously lost interest, try getting back on track by asking if you covered the point adequately. Maintain eye contact when answering questions, but do not be afraid to avert your eyes when thinking about an answer.

FIGURE 16–8 (continued)

Sample Interview Questions

24. Describe your most rewarding college experience.
25. If you were hiring a graduate for this position, what qualities would you look for?
26. Why did you select your college or university?
27. What led you to choose your field or major?
28. What college subjects did you like best? Why?
29. What college subjects did you like least? Why?
30. If you could do so, how would you plan your academic study differently?
31. What changes would you make in your college or university? Why?
32. Do you have plans for continued study? An advanced degree?
33. Do you think that your grades are a good indication of your academic achievement/ability?
34. What have you learned from participation in extracurricular activities?
35. In what kinds of environments are you most comfortable?
36. How do you work under pressure?
37. In what part-time or summer job have you been most interested? Why?
38. How would you describe the ideal job for you following graduation?
39. Why did you decide to seek a position with this organization?
40. What do you know about this organization?
41. What three things are most important to you in your career/job?
42. Are you seeking employment in an organization of a certain size? Why?
43. What criteria are you using to evaluate the organization/employer for which you hope to work?
44. Do you have a geographical preference? Why?
45. Will you relocate? Do relocations bother you?
46. Are you willing to travel?
47. Are you willing to spend at least six months in training?
48. Why do you think you might like to live in the area in which our organization is located?
49. Describe a major problem you have encountered and how you dealt with it.
50. What have you learned from your mistakes?

A prospective employer may request a second interview, either because initial interviews indicated that more than one of the applicants might qualify for the position or because others are involved in the hiring decision. Keep in mind when preparing for the second interview that you may now be in direct competition with others whose qualifications are as appropriate as yours; prepare carefully:

- Engage in a more extensive study of the organization to gain in-depth knowledge.
- Evaluate your skills, knowledge, and experience and how they are applicable to the position for which you are applying.
- Review general interview skills.
- Gather appropriate documents: resumes, references, transcripts, etc.

FIGURE 16-9

Sample Job Screening Questionnaire

**SUPPLEMENTAL QUESTIONNAIRE
SELF-SCREENING
PROBATION AND PAROLE OFFICER I**

The following requirements are needed by all candidates for this position. If you answer “yes” to all requirements listed, sign below and return this form with your completed application. If you answer “no” to any of the requirements, do not complete the rest of the form and do not submit an application. An answer “no” in any one area will result in a rating of “not qualified” for this position.

1. Are you willing and able to cope with unmotivated and hostile individuals who have committed all types of crimes?
Yes _____ No _____
2. Are you willing to do field checks knowing that you will be going into areas where you may be subject to threats or physical danger?
Yes _____ No _____
3. Are you willing to testify before the court, parole board, and other judicial hearings to answer questions, present progress reports, and make recommendations?
Yes _____ No _____
4. Are you willing to be trained in the use of firearms and deadly force?
Yes _____ No _____
5. Are you willing to be trained in the use of defensive tactics which involve physical contact?
Yes _____ No _____
6. Are you willing to participate in the arrest of criminal offenders?
Yes _____ No _____

The answers I have given are true and correct to the best of my knowledge, and I understand that I must be willing and able to perform tasks requiring physical strength and agility.

SIGNATURE _____ DATE _____

- Compare your personal agenda with the organization’s agenda.
- Make additional copies of pertinent records.
- Prepare a list of questions.

Remember, interviewing is a two-way street. Not only is it an opportunity for the organization to ask questions of you, it is also your opportunity to learn more about the organization. Get answers to your questions; this information will help you decide which of the job offers you receive you should accept, and asking the same question of different individuals will allow you to compare responses. Whatever the outcome of any job interview, bear in mind that the employer is thinking first of organizational needs, not of you. Don’t let rejections weaken your self-confidence.

The Thank-You Letter

A thank-you letter (see Figure 16–10 on page 472) should always immediately follow a job interview; in fact, you should start thinking about the thank-you letter as soon as the interview is over, and mail it within 24 hours of the interview. The thank-you letter is not just “a nice thing to do”; it’s also a sales opportunity—another opportunity for you to “sell” yourself. The thank-you letter should be simple; the following is the basic format:

1. First paragraph—Thank the reader for the interview and restate the position for which you are applying and your interest in it.
2. Second paragraph—restate your qualifications and reiterate what you have to offer to the company. Refer to specific points discussed during the interview.
3. Last paragraph—restate the first paragraph.

Securing Employment

Job offers are not typically made on the spot. However, if an offer is made, you should delay acceptance until you have had an opportunity to evaluate all of your job opportunities. When evaluating your options, be sure to consider all aspects of the position—type of work, location, salary, benefits, opportunity for growth, co-workers. Again, the job hunting process can be tough; choose a job that you will want to keep for a long while.

Re-evaluation

Because your interests, skills, and preferences change, you should periodically re-evaluate your career choice to determine if you could more effectively utilize your skills, abilities, and talents in a different occupation or at a different organization. Correspond with your contacts on a fairly regular basis and investigate available positions, but be careful not to take steps that may jeopardize your present position—you may find that it is still the best job for you.

FIGURE 16-10

Sample Thank You Letter

1500 Maplewood Drive
Palmdale, CA 93510
March 16, 2000

Ms. Caroline Butterworth
Human Resources
State of California
Department of Corrections
Sacramento, CA 94283-0001

Dear Ms. Butterworth:

Thank you for taking the time to meet with me on Wednesday and giving me the opportunity to learn more about California's prison industries program. The materials you gave me were very informative and interesting.

As we discussed during our interview, my education and work experience have prepared me for many of the duties of the Supervisor of Correctional Industries, and, based on the additional knowledge that I gained during that interview, I am certain that my performance in this position will exceed the requirements.

As you requested, I have asked the California State University records office to forward a copy of my transcript to your office; you should receive it within a few days.

Thank you again for your time and interest. I look forward to hearing from you.

Sincerely,



Tanisha Williams

THE STAFF SPEAKS

In the past two years, The Corrections Connection has received thousands of e-mails with questions about getting hired in corrections. So, we thought it would be helpful to get advice from two corrections practitioners in different parts of the country, who frequently conduct job interviews and review applications for employment. We interviewed Warden George F. Wagner from the Hunterdon County Jail in Flemington, New Jersey and Captain Ken E. Richardson from the Licking County Jail in Licking, Ohio.

Both were very willing to share their experiences, the dos and don'ts of interviewing, and the types of interview questions most frequently asked. Although they have two very different styles of interviewing, you can see that they both seek the same type of qualities in an employee: loyalty, dedication, honesty, and integrity. In fact, in an independent survey of 20 other facilities, we found these overall qualities to be important to most corrections employers, even more so than problem solving skills, writing and communication skills. Here is what else we discovered.



Q: What do you think are the basics that every job applicant should know?

Warden George F. Wagner: Arrive on time and dress appropriately.

Captain Ken E. Richardson: "Be on time! It shows dependability and that's critical."

Q: What are you looking for in the interview room?

Wagner: By the time they come in for the interview, I already know everything about them from their application and background checks. Now, I want to know if they can articulate their goals. Why do they want to work in corrections? What I usually find is that the conversation is one-way; I do all the talking. They should be asking me questions, taking an active interest.

Richardson: I am looking for people who are able to express themselves. I want people who are proud of where they work. Proud of their employer. Proud of their profession. It makes a difference in their level of performance. I am looking for dedication and, above all, loyalty.

Q: What is one big mistake applicants should avoid?

Wagner: Don't come too early. Arriving at 8:00 a.m. for a 9:00 a.m. appointment is not good. You are actually impeding the process because now we have to figure out what to do with you while you are here. Being too early is actually a bad decision.

Q: What should an applicant wear to an interview?

Wagner: You should take the interview seriously and wear something appropriate. I'll tell you a true story. Last summer we were conducting interviews. I looked out into the lobby and saw this guy in shorts, a tee-shirt, flip flops, and a hat with the brim turned to the back. I asked my Lieutenant who he was, and he said, "That's your 10 o'clock. Should I bring him in for the interview?" My response was simple: "He just had his interview!" So sorry I interrupted his day at the beach.

Richardson: You should look professional (a suit or sports jacket and tie; a nice tailored dress or suit). You want to make a nice first impression.

Q: If someone is currently working in law enforcement or is in the armed forces, would you recommend that he or she wear the uniform to the interview?

Wagner: No, I would not. It just reminds me that you are working for someone else while you are looking for another job. I want to know that you're interested in me. Plus, as employers, you can't trust that the uniform is real. I once had a man come in a uniform, saying that he was a veteran. In reality, he

continued

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had picked up the uniform in a local thrift shop. I'm going to do a thorough background check on you, check your references, meet with you, read your application, so I am going to know all that I have to know about you anyway. I don't need the uniform.

Q: What should an applicant bring to the interview?

Wagner: You need to look prepared and be prepared. If there are documents that you think we need, bring copies so we don't have to make the copies ourselves. Otherwise, I have to get up, get my secretary, have her make the copies and bring them back to you. Show a little planning on your part. I like it when someone has everything prepared.

Q: Do you always conduct a background check?

Wagner: We always check background. You can't trust documents, i.e., college records, certificates, etc. We are getting into scannable documents, where you can create anything with a computer and say it's real. An applicant may say he or she has a Ph.D. and have documents and certificates, but they are not authentic. We always do background checks.

Richardson: Absolutely. We do a thorough background check on every applicant.

Q: What kind of information should be included in a background check?

Wagner: We want to know everything. Where you were born, siblings, boyfriends, girlfriends. Financial obligations you have, financial obligations you've had, education, all employers from day 1, any interaction with any law enforcement agency, any judgments of any kind. I have had people come in to the office for an interview who have a criminal record, and they just don't put it on the application. People think if they don't list it, nobody is going to find out. That is simply not true.

Richardson: Everything should go on the application. To me, silence is a form of deception.

Q: What kind of preparation should applicants do prior to the interview?

Wagner: Do a little research on the institution to which they are going for the interview. Contact government authorities and find out how the position being interviewed for fits into the organizational chart. Know a little bit about the facility. It shows initiative to do that. On my end, I like to give them the tour before the interview. They need to know the kind of inmates they are dealing with, as well as our set-up and procedures.

Q: What about political and moral philosophies? How important is that?

Wagner: Their personal feelings don't matter because their professional behavior is guided by policy. It doesn't matter to me whether they are liberal, conservative, democratic, pro-choice, pro-life, right-wing, left-wing, or pro capital punishment. We formulate their professional conduct via policy and procedure. As long as they are following our procedures, I don't care what their personal views are. I think that's the way it usually is.

Q: What is the procedure for testing and applying?

Wagner: Well, it is going to depend a lot on the individual requirements of your state. We are a civil service state so applicants test and are ranked according to their scores and by their residence. We run a county jail, so people who live in Hunterdon County would be ranked first; then bordering counties in New Jersey; then state wide; then nationwide. We do give veterans preference. You should find out what your state requires. Of course, we do background checks; conduct oral interviews; require you to provide three references (vouchers) signed by a notary; take a physical which includes a drug test; then take a psychological test. Then you're hired . . . if you pass all that.

Richardson: In addition to the tests, the background checks and the interview, we do a writing



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exercise. We tell applicants to write about the most important day of their life. This serves many purposes. One, we have in their own words what is important to them. Two, it shows us their report writing abilities and how well they can spell, etc. It's just one or two pages, but it gives us great insight into the way they think.

Q: Does military experience help? What about a B.A.?

Wagner: We are making a 25-year investment in this person, and, based on the pool of applicants we've been seeing, we can afford to be picky. Does military experience count? Is a BA going to help?

Absolutely. Not just because the applicant pool is bigger, but because it shows the willingness of the individual to commit and complete things, and that is very important to an employer.

Q: What kinds of questions do you like to ask?

Wagner: Employees aren't prepared to ask any questions; it always seems to be a one-way conversation. I am going to look at the background packet. I am going to know about you before you come in. Then I want to hear your answers to the following questions:

1. Why do you want to work here?
2. How did you end up in corrections?

I have yet to find anyone who grew up wanting to work in a state jail or a prison. I have no problem with someone being honest and saying "I am graduating from college and I want to work for the FBI, but I saw you had openings and thought this would be a good segue." I would rather know from the employee what his or her career aspirations are.

3. What are your career goals?

Be able to articulate your career aspirations. I find it confounding that people don't know how to interview. You are given the opportunity to sell yourself. Why do I want to pick you as opposed to the other

328 people? Based on turnovers, I have done a lot of interviews. A majority of interviewees now have bachelor's degrees, but they don't know how to interview.

4. What would you do in the event of a riot? How would you prepare for such an event?
5. Are you prepared for the hours of work and varied scheduling?

This place runs 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. You might have to work 8 hours, plus be required to stay and work mandatory overtime when you were planning to go to a family picnic on July 4th.

Richardson: Our questions are subjective by some standards, but I think the responses are very useful to determine the person's psychological make up. We are looking for persons with substance to them. I

want to know the answers to the following questions:

1. What motivates you?
2. What values are important to you?
3. What is the most significant problem you have ever had to contend with and how did you deal with it?

What is a problem to the interviewee and how he or she perceives it shows problem-solving abilities.

4. What is the most important personal quality you have? What is of value to you? If a person responds "defend myself," that is not really a value. However, responses such as "I have a lot of personal integrity," "I am a compassionate caring person" "People respect me for being honest" show important personal values.
5. Why do you want to work here?

We want to know if this a career to them or just a job. We just started using these kinds of questions in the past year or so. The last bunch of people we hired is about 10 notches above anyone before it.





ENDNOTES

1. John Barker and Jim Kellen, *Career Planning: A Developmental Approach* (Upper Saddle River, NJ: Merrill, 1998).
2. *Ibid.*, p. 75
3. Tom Jackson, *The Perfect Resume* (New York: Doubleday, 1990).