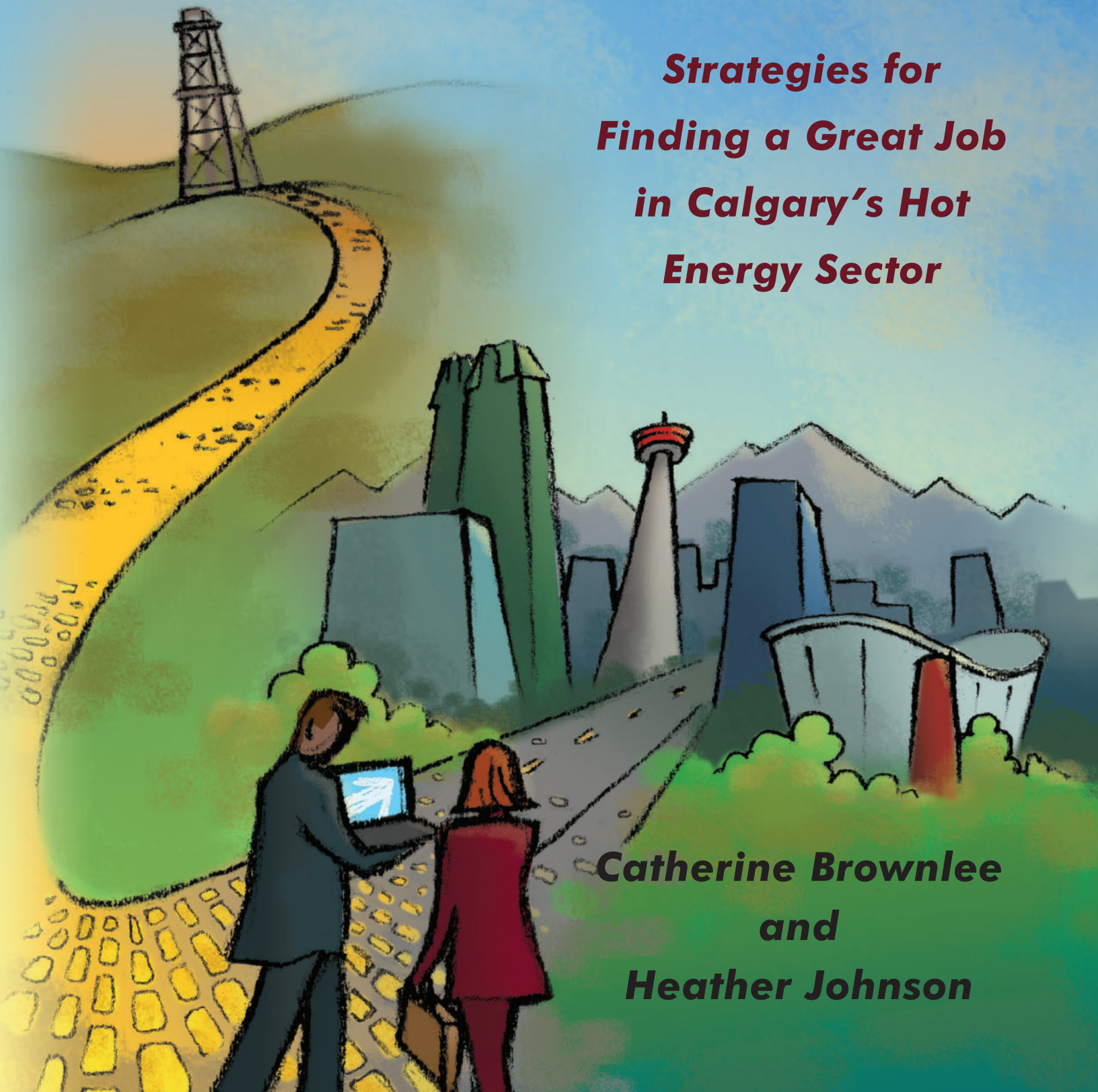


Want to Work in OIL AND GAS?

***Strategies for
Finding a Great Job
in Calgary's Hot
Energy Sector***

**Catherine Brownlee
and
Heather Johnson**



**WANT TO WORK IN
OIL AND GAS?**

Copyright ©2007 Catherine Brownlee and Heather Johnson

All rights reserved. No part of this book may be reproduced in any manner without prior written permission except in the case of brief quotations embodied in reviews.

Library and Archives Canada Cataloguing in Publication

Brownlee, Catherine, 1965-

Want to work in oil and gas? : strategies for finding a great job in Calgary's hot energy sector / Catherine Brownlee and Heather Johnson.

ISBN 978-0-9783353-0-4

1. Petroleum industry and trade--Vocational guidance--Alberta--Calgary.
2. Job hunting--Alberta--Calgary. I. Johnson, Heather, 1961- II. Title.

HD9574.C33C35 2007 650.14'09712338 C2007-902878-0



For ordering details, contact:
Prominent Personnel Ltd.
600, 205 – 5th Avenue SW
Calgary, Alberta
Canada T2P 2V7
Website: www.prominent-personnel.ca
Email: book@prominent-personnel.ca
Telephone: 403.686.4360

Cover Design & Illustrations: Heather Schmidt
Internal Design: Skyline Design
Editor: Fran Kimmel

**Want to Work in Oil and Gas?
Strategies for Finding a
Great Job in Calgary's Hot
Energy Sector**

**by
Catherine Brownlee and
Heather Johnson**



DAVE BRONCONNIER, MAYOR

A MESSAGE FROM MAYOR DAVE BRONCONNIER

On behalf of City Council and the people of Calgary, I am pleased to congratulate authors Catherine Brownlee and Heather Johnson on the publication of *Want to Work in Oil and Gas? Strategies for Finding a Great Job in Calgary's Hot Energy Sector*.

As Calgary's economy grows, so does the need for increased employment as new jobs are created. The Calgary Economic Region has seen an increase of nearly 8 percent in just one year in total employment. *Want to Work in Oil and Gas?* is an invaluable tool for those interested in pursuing a career in Alberta's red hot economy.

Catherine and Heather are perfect examples of what hard work and dedication will get you here in Calgary and in Alberta. We are a province of great opportunity and success is within arms reach.

Calgary is proud of its link with this vital and prosperous industry and also proud to be home to a new book which promises to add information and expertise in the search for employment in oil and gas.



Dave Bronconnier
MAYOR

ABOUT THE AUTHORS

CATHERINE BROWNLEE

Catherine Brownlee is founder, president and CEO of Prominent Personnel Ltd., a Calgary-based search firm specializing in professional placement in the oil and gas industry. After receiving a marketing education and working for a number of energy leaders in technical sales positions, Catherine established Prominent Personnel in 1997. A highly successful entrepreneur, she has since built a powerhouse corporation, known throughout the industry for its extensive corporate and individual client base, its highly productive team of research specialists, and its well-deserved reputation for outstanding performance in the recruitment profession.

A native Albertan, Catherine is passionate about close-to-home community development projects. Catherine's firm is highly regarded as a corporate supporter of charitable institutions. She and her team support a number of specific charities, raise funds for annual and seasonal events, and volunteer time and resources for worthwhile causes.

A dynamic presenter with a contagious laugh, Catherine speaks with authority on a range of oil and gas recruitment topics. Her popular and informative Twomanaga News e-newsletter reaches 17,000 subscribers every two weeks.

HEATHER JOHNSON

Heather Johnson is Global Chi's CIO (Chief Improvising Officer) and founder. An accomplished motivator and career development professional with more than 20 years experience, she has facilitated the development of teams and individuals locally, regionally and nationally for some of Canada's largest companies. Heather's career highlights include placing more than 800 Imperial Oil clients in just three months, teaching the Employment Counseling Certification Program at two BC colleges and envisioning the Global Chi concept.

Heather founded the innovative Global Chi concept in 1999. Her Global Chi company offers corporate clients a unique fusion of Eastern philosophy and Western business practices boosted with a dash of improv to recharge and revitalize creative synergy in individuals and teams. Global Chi now has operations in Calgary and Vancouver with clients in the oil and gas, biotech, hi-tech, financial services, banking and primary resource industries.

A native Calgarian, Heather has a Masters degree from the University of Calgary and developed her passion for holistic belief systems in community development work with First Nations organizations in western Canada and Mexico. She is gifted in helping people create vision and reach measurable goals. Heather, who also speaks French and Spanish, keeps her chi flowing with a steady diet of improvisational theatre and yoga.

PREFACE

Every few weeks we fill a Calgary downtown boardroom to deliver a session on job search tactics. We have approximately two hours to work with 15 to 20 eager participants from all walks of life. Some just starting out. Some seasoned veterans with decades of know-how. Many new to Calgary. Most with little to no oil and gas experience. Despite their differences, these individuals have one thing in common: they all want to land their next great job in Calgary's booming oil and gas industry. And who can blame them. Oil and gas jobs are bountiful here and provide a myriad of challenging and rewarding positions.

During these afternoon sessions, we cover a full range of tips on resume and letter writing, networking and interviewing. Time and again we have been asked by local and international candidates to write down our advice. Taking those requests to heart, we are thrilled to bring you our newest offspring, *Want to Work in Oil and Gas?*

This book is intended for people who want to break into or make a move inside the oil and gas (O&G) industry. Our advice comes directly from our experiences with hundreds of job search clients and dozens of client companies. While the tactics we discuss are readily transferable to all industries, our focus is concentrated on O&G and the Calgary market.

As you will soon discover, the O&G industry has a unique personality, especially in Calgary. It's a city with heart and an industry comprised of philanthropists and volunteers. It's also a science-based business run by those who must get oil and gas out of the ground at the most reasonable price and using the best technologies.

Throughout this book we will teach you, our reader, how to present yourself and your resume in a way that appeals to all types of O&G professionals – with specific, measured results. When connecting with industry people, being able to prove your contribution to a company's bottom line will be one of your most critical tools.

In large part, we believe your success will be realized by the connections you make. Indeed, resumes are important, and we do cover some excellent strategies for creating resumes that get read. But neither of us has ever been hired because of our stellar resume. Instead, we connected with people through networking and volunteering and were then led to the right jobs. This book will help you create opportunities to be in the right place at the right time, and then to know what to do and say when you get there.

Read on and enjoy! Those who do follow our suggestions have had great success in breaking into O&G and then moving forward to lead exciting O&G careers. We hope you, too, will soon join this tight-knit family.

Blessings,
Catherine Brownlee and Heather Johnson

Table of Contents

| | |
|--|-----------|
| 1: So you want to work in Calgary's oil & gas industry? | 12 |
| High energy growth ••• New York, London, Tokyo and now Calgary ••• Oh give me a home ••• Open doors, open people ••• Volunteerism ••• Work hard, play hard | |
| 2: Preparing for breakthrough | |
| What do you want? What can you offer? | 21 |
| Discovering what you want ••• The Law of Attraction ••• Storybooking your dream job ••• Climbing the tree ••• Articulating your strengths | |
| 3: Demystifying the O&G job market | 32 |
| Who do you know? ••• O&G culture and in the box thinking ••• How to uncover the hidden job market ••• Preliminary research ••• People research | |
| 4: The art of pitching | 49 |
| 90 second commercial or elevator pitch ••• Extra tips for success ••• The wow factor ••• It's all about them | |
| 5: Mastering schmoozing events | 57 |
| Make each connection count ••• Schmoozing etiquette ••• Give your elevator pitch ••• Gain key information ••• Keep moving on ••• The follow up | |

| | |
|---|------------|
| 6: Getting connected and staying front and centre | 66 |
| Connecting by phone ••• When meeting with decision makers ••• The power of written communications ••• Great email subject headings ••• Letters | |
| 7: Resumes that get read | 88 |
| Design principles ••• Resume content ••• Resume samples ••• Business references ••• Character references | |
| 8: From mediocre to great interviews! | 119 |
| Interview preparation ••• Different types of interviews ••• Lining up your success stories ••• Answering the tough questions ••• The Day of ••• Waiting in the lion's den ••• Follow up | |
| 9: Evaluating and negotiating offers | 155 |
| Identify your top three criteria ••• Power play ••• Your best negotiation tactics ••• Wrapping things up after acceptance ••• The resignation letter | |
| 10: Tips for foreign-trained professionals | 168 |
| If still in your home country ••• Know the paper pushers ••• Start conducting research ••• Resumes that work in Calgary ••• Once you arrive ••• Career Loans ••• Network, network, network ••• Put your best foot forward | |
| Last Word | 179 |
| References | 180 |
| Acknowledgements | 185 |

CHAPTER 1

SO YOU WANT TO WORK IN CALGARY'S OIL & GAS INDUSTRY?



So you want to work in Calgary's oil and gas industry?

**A city to be
proud of**

"Calgary is the most dynamic city in the country...Energy is the commodity of the 21st century, making Calgary a destination and career-maker. Calgary is in a current state of robust job creation, despite a global shortage of talent. For three out of four of our businesses, the labour shortage is the number one issue. With so much corporate change in Calgary, this huge churn makes for new opportunities. Companies here will continue to scramble to fill spaces well into the future."

*Heather Douglas,
President and CEO
The Calgary Chamber of
Commerce*

Excellent – we're ready for you!

Calgary is consistently Canada's top economic performer boasting a diversified economy and an enthusiastic, entrepreneurial and well-educated workforce. There is just one problem: there aren't enough skilled people to fill all the exciting employment opportunities being created in this thriving city. As was recently reported in the *Calgary and Area Labour Market News*¹, "Calgary and Alberta remain the bright lights in the Canadian economy. New jobs in the province and city are soaking up all the labour the rest of the country can throw our way." What is more, the city's job market is expected to create 90,000 new positions over the next four years. And those jobs pay well: the average per-capita income in

¹*Labour Market News, Calgary and Area*, December 2006, Alberta Human Resources and Employment, www.employment.gov.ab.ca/Calgary-Enews

Calgary for 2004 was \$39,150 per year. That's significantly higher than the national average of \$30,560 and is over \$5,000 higher than Toronto's income average².

HIGH ENERGY GROWTH

Calgary's prosperity is indeed driven by the energy industry. Known as Canada's "Oil Patch," the city is home to most of the country's oil and natural gas producers. Major firms, like EnCana, TransCanada Pipelines Ltd., Canadian Pacific Ltd., Amoco Canada Petroleum Ltd., Petro-Canada, Suncor Inc. and Shell Canada Ltd. have established head offices in our city, and more are coming. As a result, Calgary has a large concentration of expertise in oil and gas (O&G) technologies, petrochemical engineering, construction, natural gas compression and heavy oil development and engineering. Calgary is also home to a large portion of Canada's energy service industry. This includes engineering, geological and data processing.

If you already have O&G experience, and want to make a shift within the industry, this book will help you brush up on your networking and resume-writing skills.

If you have not yet worked in O&G but would like to, or if you are from another country and want to break into the Calgary market, then this book is a must read. Whatever your experience, in whatever industry, you very likely have

²*Labour Market News, Calgary and Area*, December 2006, Alberta Human Resources and Employment, www.employment.gov.ab.ca/Calgary-Enews

valuable skills that will transfer to O&G. We can help you identify those skills, choose companies to approach, and recommend some practical, and even a few unorthodox, ways to meet the right people and break into Calgary's close-knit O&G community. Read on!

Bursting at the seams

Not too long ago, we got together with engineering employees in a downtown pub near their office. One colleague joked that he had a solution to the company's shortage of office space: "Start piling desks on top of each other!"

NEW YORK, LONDON, TOKYO ... AND NOW CALGARY

Calgary is currently experiencing one of its cyclical "boom" economic periods largely due to high oil and gas prices and the ramp-up phase of developing a number of unconventional energy sources, including the oil sands in northern Alberta. Downtown, construction cranes are flying high.

Canada's leading national newspaper, the Globe and Mail, recently reported that Calgary's downtown has joined the world's elite – at least when it comes to renting office space. "The vacancy rate in the best downtown towers has dropped to a nearly imperceptible 0.2 per cent, making it one of the toughest places on earth to rent an office."³ Developers are building towers as fast as they can, with four towers expected to come on stream in 2007. EnCana's billion-dollar, 59-storey tower, "The Bow", targeted for completion in 2010, will fill two city blocks. The new floor space should

³*Employer Labour Market News, Calgary and Area*, July 2006, Alberta Human Resources and Employment, www.employment.gov.ab.ca/Calgary-Enews

bring the vacancy rate up to a more manageable level. In the meantime, Calgary downtown office rental rates are easily the highest in Canada.

OH GIVE ME A HOME...

The city is crackling with energy that can be felt when simply walking downtown. Parking lots are jammed by 7:30 a.m., and all those who arrived for work between 6 and 7 hit the nearest Starbucks for their 8:30 a.m. coffee break, the time when the rest of the country usually starts work. Young people are buying jets and private islands with the proceeds from oil revenue, but may not be able to buy a house; competition for new house listings is fierce. The influx of people into the city is revving up the residential real estate market as well. The Calgary Real Estate Board recently reported that the average sale price of a home in Calgary (single-family, condominium and mobile home) rose by 38.17% to \$345,673 from 2005's average of \$250,906.⁴ Prospective buyers line up outside the night before condominium buildings are open for sale. These buildings often sell out by noon.

OPEN PEOPLE, OPEN DOORS

Calgary is a great place to live. It's one of the easiest places in the world to meet new people (largely because many other people are new to the city, too). Very seldom will you run into someone actually born in Calgary. Most of the population hails from Saskatchewan, Ontario, the Maritimes, Asia

⁴Calgary Herald, January 23, 2007.

and Africa. Calgary was a small city when we were growing up here, with a population of 250,000 in the '60s. It has recently grown to over a million people, most who have come from somewhere else.

Heather's view of old versus new

"I lived on the Westside of Vancouver for five years where the old established families reside. These are the Canadian Old Money families with traditions of certain ways of doing things, clubs to belong to, churches to go to and old established relationships. That is a much more difficult social milieu to engage in."

In Calgary the door is open; you just have to knock.

Most Calgarians came here from elsewhere and have had to start from scratch with making friends and creating community. This cultural approach continues today and creates a climate of openness to newcomers. People in Calgary are more likely to make time for you than would be the case in older established communities.

Old money in Calgary was made from farming and ranching. Most of the wealthy people we know in Calgary grew up working on farms and ranches, and while they under-

stand the value of hard work, they remain very laidback. There is little pretension in this city. Calgary is famous for its "White Hat Hospitality." When visitors come, we give them a white hat as a symbol of the Calgary Stampede and to demonstrate our warm welcome. We are a city of people who roll up our sleeves and make pancakes on 8th Avenue during Stampede and ride around in ATVs and snowmobiles simply for fun.

In an authentic environment like this, the more you are yourself, the greater your hope for success. There is little judging going on because Calgary doesn't have an established rulebook. It is easy to meet people in a city where people pride themselves on their friendliness and on being down-to-earth.

Calgary boasts the highest Internet use, library use, and the highest degree of education in Canada. The majority of decision makers in Calgary are educated and enlightened people who have traveled the world and are highly cultured. While they do, at first, trust people who are similar to them, they are also open-minded to other cultures and contributions.

VOLUNTEERISM IS THE HEART OF THIS CITY

Volunteerism has become an important part of the Calgary culture, resulting in the highest volunteer rate in the country. Take W. Brett Wilson, chairman of FirstEnergy Capital Corp and recipient of numerous honours over the years, including Avenue Magazine's 2006 and first annual "Person of the Year" award. Brett financially supports and works closely with a number of charities. A few years ago, for example, Brett climbed to the top of Mount Kilimanjaro in support of Alzheimer's disease. (Brett had completed radiation treatment for cancer recently himself.) He claims the trek was a celebration of life for him; a life that involves a generous giving back to the community.

Calgary is a city renown for those who donate their time and money for worthy causes: people can be counted on to pitch

in. Most of the people we know who worked hard making millions are now working hard to give it away! Heather attended the Woodrow Wilson Awards Dinner in October 2006 and saw Harley Hotchkiss win the “Community Service Award.” In addition to directing the Board of the NHL, Harley donated millions to the Calgary Neurological Centre. Harley was brought up on a farm in Saskatchewan. He came to Calgary after he graduated as a geologist, did very well financially, and is now spending much of his time serving his community.

Volunteers have also been at the heart of the Calgary Exhibition & Stampede since its inception in 1912. Over 2000 volunteers – a great many from the O&G sector – work year-round to organize the events and activities that take place during the Stampede and throughout the year.

We will talk more about volunteerism in later chapters. The Calgary volunteer frenzy is a trusted door opener for the job seeker. In fact, Catherine landed her first several jobs in sales and O&G precisely because of her volunteer and charity efforts.

WORK HARD, PLAY HARD

Calgary’s proximity to the spectacular Rocky Mountains provides tremendous opportunities for outdoor activities including hiking, skiing, fishing and camping. If you are from a warmer climate, you’ll be happy to learn that while Calgary does, indeed, experience a Canadian winter, it also

enjoys warm breaks, thanks to the warm Chinook winds that blow down from the mountains.

The city itself is bisected by two rivers (the Bow and the Elbow). There are plenty of parks and over 400 kilometers of paved bike paths. As the city has grown (its population passed the one million mark in 2006), it has also experienced a tremendous growth in cultural, artistic, ethnic and religious centres. Calgary remains proud of its legacy of world-class facilities from the 1988 Winter Olympics and continues to build recreation and entertainment complexes to keep pace with its burgeoning growth.

A recent study from Geneva, Switzerland, placed Calgary among the top 15 cities with the best quality of life in the world. There's no better time than now to find out why.

CHAPTER 2

PREPARING FOR BREAKTHROUGH: WHAT DO YOU WANT? WHAT CAN YOU OFFER?



Before you begin putting yourself out there, you must know what you want. What is it that you believe in? What do you stand for? What gets you jazzed at work? What interests you the most? What are you willing to do – and not do? What can you offer?

Self-discovery is where you begin. This is the time to assess your skills and interests and all the other factors important to your career. Through your experiences with work, school, hobbies, social activities, volunteer work and leisure activities, you have already developed hundreds of skills and preferences. Now is the time to mine your past and choose the skills, interests and values you want to take forward.

Remaining centred in the midst of a job market feeding frenzy

It seems like a job hunter's dream: employers tripping over each other to fulfill your every want and need in frantic attempts to entice you to join their team. But, as an applicant in today's frenzied job market, it remains critical to ensure that the needs being addressed are long term and core to your career goals. Jumping for the jelly beans – an immediate increase in salary or apparent promotion in status – may feel good in the short term but could prove to have been a Faustian "deal with the devil" later in your career.

In recent years professionals within the career management and executive search fields have consistently witnessed the phenomenon of Baby Boomers who, in mid-career, confess that they have never liked their jobs. The typical story is of having passively fallen into inappropriate careers, enticed by employers' incentives or the simplicity of not having to make an active decision. As I watch the decision making of many Gen X and Gen Y job seekers in the current boom scenario, I worry that today's "golden opportunities" for these generations may also take a Faustian turn down the road.

There is no doubt that exceptional career opportunities are out there for the alert and diligent job seeker of whatever generational group. But the need for self-management of one's career has not diminished one iota and, in fact, may have increased in the current situation. Taking the time to assess and explicitly inventory your career values, interests and goals will provide a decision framework within which you can critically assess opportunities and offers. This will also help to ensure you actively choose career directions which will prove satisfying and fulfilling for you in the long term.

And the good news: in this economy, the opportunities will wait for you. You can take the time to centre yourself and ensure you chart your own course to meet your career needs for today and the future.

Murray Vines

Murray is a registered psychologist and a seasoned career consultant. He currently serves as Program Director, Business & Professional Programs with the University of Calgary Continuing Education

DISCOVERING WHAT YOU WANT

Someone once said that when intention comes from a pure place, bearing fruit will be natural. We couldn't agree more. Catherine likes to tell a story in our seminars about how her intentions have netted powerful results. Her dad was a tool push and from the time she was a little girl, she always wanted to work for the yellow trucks. When she got older, she learned the company was called Fracmaster Ltd, one of the world's leading providers of high- pressure oilfield service equipment. Step by step, contact by contact, she did indeed end up at Fracmaster in the sales job of her dreams. Today she is leading one of the successful search firms in Calgary.

THE LAW OF ATTRACTION

There is a "Law of Attraction" at work here, and it will work for you if you know how to use it. We believe that everything that comes into your life you are attracting by virtue of your thoughts and the images you hold in your mind.

Like attracts like, so if you hold onto the thoughts of what you want – let's say working in O&G – those thoughts will help put you in the right place at the right time.

Try imagining yourself already in the O&G industry, working at the perfect job. Are you in downtown Calgary or out in the field? Are you with a large or small team? A producer, service or manufacturing company? Public or private? What type of work are you doing – sales, administration, accounting, production testing, roughneck? What

type of people surround you – aggressive, assertive, spontaneous, fun, passive, steady? What kind of hours are you working?

Attract the job, the industry and the people that you want in your life by imagining it all in advance. Keep your dream job top of mind and talk about it as though you already possess it. You will be amazed at what is possible.

It all starts with you

- ☐ Focus on what you want
- ☐ Believe in the power of intention
- ☐ Be open to possibility
- ☐ Work hard, stay positive

Thinking about what you want and focusing on it with intention is the first step in making dreams a reality. From here, you must be open to everything that comes your way. This is precisely how you attract possibilities and opportunities to grow, learn and advance.

STORYBOOKING YOUR DREAM JOB

Catherine has certainly experienced this Law of Attraction first hand. When she was just 18 she put together a storybook of what she wanted her life to look like. Using a picture collage and snippets of writing, she described living in a log home with a mountain view, owning her own business, traveling, writing a book, experiencing great relationships, and having an open door for anyone who needs it. Piece by piece, it has all come true.

The more tools you use to articulate and visualize the type of job you want, the better able you will be to attract that job into your life. Cut out images from magazines and books

that align with your wants, dreams and desires. Write down ideas about a perfect day on the job. Share details with others about what you are looking for. (For free inspiration, check out Barbara Sher's *Wishcraft* online at www.wishcraft.com.)

CLIMBING THE TREE

When Heather moved back to Calgary from Vancouver in the spring of 2005, she had \$3000 and no home. Each day she felt like she climbed up a tree and then went far out on a branch, making offers to different people and companies. Many of these offers did not pan out. Each rejection felt like a branch had broken and down she crashed. The irony is that the further out one goes on the branch, opening oneself to making vulnerable offers, the better the reward.

Heather actually found that once she had crashed down from a few branches, it actually became easier to shimmy up the tree again. The more connections she made, the stronger the tree, the more plentiful each branch. She did everything she could to hold the thoughts and images of a new life in Calgary. And it worked. Her business is thriving.

ARTICULATING YOUR POTENTIAL: YOUR SUCCESS STORIES ARE KEY!

We are strong advocates of Success Stories, or “PAR Stories” as they are sometimes called. Success stories are short stories that capture results you have achieved in the past. Stories need to be specific enough that they can be told

with a “Problem/ Action/ Result” (PAR) format.

Be open to opportunity

Last December, a client dropped by our office in the late afternoon. He had broken into O&G by working through a temporary personnel firm that had placed him at an independent oil company. When Heather asked him how things were going he said, “Good for everyone who is full-time in the company -- they all just got a bonus today. The lowest bonus was \$9000 for the mail room staff.”

Heather asked why he wasn’t at work and he replied that the whole staff was at a Christmas party. Then she asked him if his manager knew he was interested in full time work. When he said no, Heather pounded her fist on the table and told him to get himself over to the party and talk to his manager about his ambitions.

Off he went, and he got that full-time job. This story illustrates the amazing opportunities to make money in this city. More importantly, it shows how people fail to see the open door in front of them and how to go through it. That’s what this book will show you!

Successes include those times when you feel proud of your accomplishment. They are times when you feel you’ve made a difference or contributed something of value. We suggest that before connecting with employers you spend time writing out as many stories as you can to refresh your memory and make recall easier.

Your stories can be dramatic or ordinary. What’s important is that you feel proud of these experiences and feel good

about your involvement. For each story, start by describing a particular problem or situation you encountered. Then describe the action you took. Then describe the result. Give each story a title so that you will remember it easily.

This may seem an onerous task, but it's time well spent. Once you have your stories documented, you will begin to see patterns of skill sets emerge. Beyond your training, education or work history, these stories provide concrete evidence of your unique value to an employer.

Why document success stories?

Several good reasons. Success stories can:

- Energize us and boost our confidence, particularly when making a career change
- Help us to see our skills and values more clearly
- Point us in the right direction when searching for new opportunities
- Provide employers with evidence of our skills and abilities
- Set us apart from other candidates with similar qualifications
- Help solidify connections
- Help us excel in interview situations

You will use these stories repeatedly when you begin to network. They will help guide you to companies where you can add value. You will include them – in condensed versions – within your cover letters and resumes. And you will not succeed in a behavioural descriptive interview without a story lineup that proves you have the skills you say you have.

GET SPECIFIC

Remember, your stories need to be specific enough so they can be told in just a few minutes with a PAR format.

“Working in Engineering”, for example, is not a story in and of itself. Instead, it involves hundreds of specific stories where you project manage, trouble shoot, coach, mentor, assist, solve problems, etc. We recommend you scale down your story to a more specific incident or series of incidents.

GET STARTED

Don't know where to start? Look for your stories in:

- Situations when you turned a negative into a positive
- Things that you built, fixed or improved
- Projects that you implemented, participated in, or completed
- Procedures that you developed or used to save time or headaches
- Risks that you took in order to undertake new challenges
- Your travel, volunteer work, community work, course work, hobbies
- New skills or key learnings you initiated through work or key leisure pursuits
- Times when you resolved conflict between colleagues, peers, or clients
- Times when you helped someone else with a problem or challenge
- Ideas you had for improving the way things were done

You may surprise yourself at how many you have.

SUCCESS STORY EXAMPLE

Story Title: Training Track e-Newsletter

Problem:

When my last company went through a major reorganization, the mandate of our corporate sales division changed drastically. Within the new structure, sales personnel were required to concentrate their sales efforts on end-to-end training solutions for major energy clients. This caused dissension among the ranks, and a number of sales consultants chose to resign. Our clients felt abandoned and confused during the flux. They were unclear what we could offer going forward and didn't know who to turn to with their training requests.

Action:

My business development support team implemented a campaign to connect with valued clients and raise awareness of our energy training products and services. Working with a third-party software company, we created a subscription-based monthly e-newsletter complete with articles, tips and tools related to training needs. In the early days, I was responsible for writing and sourcing all content. Over time, the content team grew to four internal writers and two external columnists.

Result

The e-newsletter met and exceeded our goals, reaching over 1000 subscribers in 16 months. This resulted in numerous new leads and direct sales totaling over \$350,000. Our e-newsletter client satisfaction surveys were overwhelmingly positive – over 95% of respondents found the content of high quality, timely and relevant. In 2004, our team received the Alberta e-Business Leadership Award, e-Learning Category, for our innovative approach to customer service.

Skills demonstrated:**Leadership & Team Skills**

Results-oriented, team player, deadline driven, client-focused, relationship building, trouble shooting, multi-tasking

Functional Skills

Researching, writing, editing/proofing, technology usage, data management

Summarized version of story:

(which can be used in cover letters and resumes)

- Designed concept and produced monthly content for award winning client e-newsletter, resulting in a strong subscriber base, lead generation and direct sales totaling over \$350,000.

CHAPTER 3

DEMYSTIFYING THE O&G JOB MARKET



If companies are so desperate for people, why are so many O&G job seekers not being hired? We meet many people who are angry that they have not landed a job. One woman we know, for example, came to Calgary with an MBA from Harvard. The Harvard School of Business had actually contacted O&G presidents on her behalf and yet she still didn't have a job. (She did not follow our suggestions by the way.)

It feels like a modern day gold rush, where some gain fortune prospecting and others miss the mark. So what's the secret to breaking into the O&G market? We think the answer is threefold. First, you must believe in the power of intention. Second, you must be open to possibility. And third, this province is built on a huge work ethic, so your willingness to work hard, combined with your winning attitude, will open doors. It's that simple!

WHO DO YOU KNOW?

It is important to remember how almost everybody in every industry ended up in his or her current role. Basically, the stories sound like this, "I knew someone who knew someone who introduced me at their volunteer function at the local community hall."

Here is one of Catherine's stories:

"Early in my career, I was doing everything I could think of to land an O&G sales job. Basically, this just meant I was applying madly to blind ads. On the weekends, I also volunteered at the downtown YMCA for a preschool swim and gym program. I quickly bonded with a little guy named Curtis, and we would run towards each other every Saturday morning, oblivious to his parents. Finally, I managed to get an interview and low and behold, who should come around the corner – Curtis' dad. I was hired quickly without any previous oil and gas experience."

Variations of Catherine's story are repeated again and again in this city. It seems that when you get involved, you often end up emerging in the lifestyle that you want to start living. Our advice is to join the gym, the local community association, special interest groups and associations. Volunteer. Get involved and go to all of their functions.

Remember, there are six degrees of separation (at least) and everyone you meet will get an impression of you that will transfer to who they know as well. Why not be gracious and interested in everyone? Then when your name comes up with decision makers for your industry, it will be favorable for you personally and professionally.

O&G CULTURE AND IN THE BOX HIRING

O&G is an industry run by engineers, geologists, accountants, human resources personnel and great administrators.

These people are by nature conservative. They trust the status quo, what they know and can measure. Their first question is usually, “Do you have oil and gas experience?”

If you have been looking for a Calgary-based O&G job, that question must sound like a broken record. O&G professionals trust hiring people who have been down their path – people who look like them, talk like them, think like them. Anything outside that mold is unproven and risky.

But rules are made to be broken. Even if you have no direct O&G experience, your chances of breaking into the industry are better than ever. Possibly for the first time in O&G history, exceptions win out more often than they lose. With companies facing such huge labour shortages, they can no longer so easily discard candidates who do not fit the mold. Companies, and the professionals that staff them, are now being forced to think outside the box.

Remember, companies are looking for people who can do the job and who fit with their corporate culture. That is why so much of our book is focused on networking and making connections. To break into O&G, you absolutely must know people who can go to bat for you. Without previous O&G experience, it is highly unlikely that you will open up opportunities by applying to postings. Your resume will be scanned and once your lack of O&G experience is exposed, you will be notified that you are not a fit.

Take a young man we will call Tom. He arrived here from

South America with a certificate in accounting and a few years experience. Tom was able to get a job with a small manufacturing company, which soon moved its operations to Manila. Out of work, he decided to talk to his best friend's father, who was a vice president with one of the major oil companies. The father contacted accounting and put in a good word for Tom. Tom had an interview, the father followed up after and put in another word for Tom, and presto, Tom is working at one of the best companies in the city with no prior O&G experience. If Tom had applied to a posting on the Internet or in the newspaper, he would not have made the first cut. He got his foot in the door because of who he knew.

Or then there's Henry, one of our favourite clients. Henry wanted to break into the O&G industry with a background in telecommunications. When he was asked, "Do you have oil and gas experience?" he responded by saying, "I bring a fresh perspective to challenges that will create new solutions." Then he launched into his success stories. You will learn how to do this as well.

Catherine's View: "The Family"

This industry works like a close-knit family. In this city, everyone in O&G is protective of everyone else. Once you are in – which is by far the most difficult task – you are in for life. The more people you get to know in O&G, the better your chances of securing a great opportunity and joining "The Family".

RESEARCH YOUR WAY TO THE RIGHT CONNECTIONS

An important part of any job search is hunting for information and making connections. Given Calgary's overheated job market – where employers are desperate to find people – you are doing employers a favour by researching opportunities and taking steps to open doors.

Basically, looking for a job is like looking for a vegetarian lasagna recipe. You are just seeking information. In other words, you are following your recipe for success.

HOW TO UNCOVER THE HIDDEN JOB MARKET

Statistics indicate that 75% of jobs filled have never been posted. These jobs comprise the hidden job market. The remaining 25% of jobs are posted, either advertised in newspapers or websites or through search firms and placement agencies. Ten years ago, we encouraged people to minimize their time looking for posted jobs and maximize their time by uncovering the hidden job market. However, the Calgary labour market is so active today that time spent on the exposed job market is also time well spent.

Many O&G companies use every means available to find new hires. They might have recruiters on staff, work with a search firm, or use a combination of approaches. Some give their employees a bonus when they help to hire a new employee. The priority item on the agenda at many executive level meetings is how to get the personnel they need to

complete major projects. At some companies, for example, the recruiters report directly to the president because the priority associated with hiring is so high.

Because companies are now using multiple means to hire new staff, job seekers must too. The first step of an effective job search is to do your homework. Educate yourself about the O&G industry, the companies and the players. Here's how.

STEP 1: START WITH PRELIMINARY RESEARCH

The more information you have about the O&G industry and the people you connect with inside companies, the better impression you will make. When you meet with people, always try to use their time to gain information that you can't find elsewhere. This shows that you respect their valuable time, and helps ensure their respect of you as well.

Perusing posted ads can give you a snapshot of the job market, as well as the kinds of skills and experience employers are looking for. When it comes to volume of ads, traditional newspapers win out in Calgary. According to a 2006 Calgary Labour Market News "Job Ad Analysis", 5071 ads were posted in the Calgary Herald and Calgary Sun papers over a three-month time period. The ads in the Calgary Herald Careers section "tend to be targeted at well-educated, high wage bracket job searchers with a particular emphasis on the oil and gas sector."⁵

⁵*Employer Labour Market News, Calgary and Area*, Aug. 2006, Alberta Human Resources and Employment website, www.employment.gov.ab.ca/Calgary-Enews

Monster.ca and Workopolis.com are national job search websites and good resources for finding out where the opportunities are. Both are important sources of jobs for high tech positions⁶. CalgaryJobShop.ca, as the name implies, is a local job search website. We have heard of many interviews generated through this site.

But you can't just study job ads and assume you are getting the whole picture. Other sources of great information include company websites and, if you live in Calgary, the fourth floor of the downtown branch of the Calgary Public Library. The librarians there will help you find detailed and hard-to-find information. When a job ad is posted in the Calgary Herald, for example, the library will have created a file with information about the company placing the ad. This can include the company's annual report as well as relevant articles from local and national newspapers and magazines such as the Globe and Mail, Macleans, the Calgary Herald and others. Taking advantage of this valuable resource can save you valuable hours.

There are also websites that categorize companies and types of services. For example, there is a public company website found at www.sedar.com that will give you access to the latest information companies publicize to their shareholders.

⁶*Employer Labour Market News, Calgary and Area*, Aug. 2006, Alberta Human Resources and Employment website, www.employment.gov.ab.ca/Calgary-Enews

The Petroleum Services Association of Canada, (PSAC), www.psac.ca, is another valuable website. This national trade association represents the service, supply and manufacturing sectors within the upstream petroleum industry. PSAC member companies represent over 80% of the business volume generated in the petroleum services industry, so it's a great place to start.

The Canadian Oilfield Service and Supply Directory, (COSSD), www.cossd.com, is provided by June Warren Publishing, Canada's largest publisher in the energy industry. The company provides a varied range of information products serving the upstream and downstream O&G sectors. It is recognized for providing petroleum industry information about Canada through its authoritative directories, atlas, magazines, newsletter and online resources.

The Petroleum Technology Alliance Canada, (PTAC), www.ptac.org, is also worth checking out. PTAC is well connected, offering a variety of services to its members and the upstream hydrocarbon energy industry.

The Alberta Government has a wealth of career, labour market and industry information as well as qualified staff, who can provide career direction and help you access the in-

Extreme research!

Want to take a more interactive approach to learning about the O&G industry?

SAIT offers one-day O&G introductory courses that will arm you with the right lingo and basic terminology.

Or check out what Enform has to offer. This is the training, certification and health and safety services arm of the upstream petroleum industry.

formation you need to make informed career, employment and training decisions. You can get more information about these resources and services near you by visiting www.alis.gov.ab.ca.

These resources and more are listed at the back of this book. Catherine's website, www.prominent-personnel.ca, has an up-to-date association listing as well and suggested seminars.

Caution: Don't get lost in cyberspace

One of the greatest errors we see people make is to spend too much time surfing the net in a passive way, becoming intimate with Workopolis.com and Monster.ca and a spattering of websites. If 75% of all jobs are not posted, you need to spend only 25% of your time searching the web. The remaining 75% of your time is best spent in active contact with others, which includes sending emails. The exception to this is people in Information Technology who are typically placed through the web.

RESEARCH SEARCH FIRMS EARLY ON

Your preliminary research needs to include learning about what search firms can offer. Search firms are typically comprised of individuals who have huge networks in the specialty area that they work within. Check out their websites to understand which firms best match your area of interest in O&G. The Prominent Personnel website posts a comprehensive listing, organized by specialty, industry and contact information.

We recommend you email your resume, cover letter and

business/character references to those firms that match your interests. Mark a “read receipt” on your email so that you will know when your email is looked at. Unfortunately, many search firms have neither the time nor the staff to return all the phone calls and emails they receive on a daily basis. (Prominent Personnel receives 300 resumes a day from all over the world and has hired five assistants to make sure each resume at least gets a response.) Many firms will keep the candidate’s resume for future-related assignments and will contact them only when an opportunity becomes available and not before. It will be important to find out what the search firm’s process is in terms of how they handle their resumes. Once you know, then follow up with a short email once every two months.

Whether or not you receive a prompt response, it’s important to always be professional with a recruiter. If you behave unprofessionally, even once, it will change that relationship forever, and the recruiter will not be able to “market” you in the same way.

STEP 2: PEOPLE RESEARCH COMES NEXT

So let’s say you’ve now done your preliminary homework. You have checked out websites and learned all you can about the O&G situation here in Calgary. Your next step is people research. People research, as the name implies, means getting out there and talking to people to gain information.

Your preliminary research has helped you find the companies that you believe you would like to work for. These are

the companies where you will concentrate your people research. For example, you may have researched production-testing companies and believe there are ten firms to which you would like to apply. Your next task will be to try and make yourself known to the folks who could potentially hire you from inside these companies. Chapter 6 is devoted to specific communication strategies for getting connected and staying front and centre. For now, we'll discuss the importance of networking as a way to get started.

BUILDING BRIDGES

Networking can take on many forms in this industry. Calgary hosts an annual O&G Show at the Stampede grounds. Prominent Personnel hosts a Gathering every two months for up to 300 people already in O&G, as well as those interested in breaking into the industry. Charity events abound, as do golf tournaments and/or the local downtown pub get-togethers on Friday afternoons (especially in the summer). Stampede week has networking opportunities peppered throughout the downtown core.

VOLUNTEERING IS TIME WELL SPENT

As we've already emphasized, Calgary is the volunteer capital of the world. Volunteer work provides tremendous opportunities to work alongside decision makers in O&G or the people who know them.

Not sure where you should volunteer? Do something that pulls at your heartstrings; put all your heart and soul into it. Approach each of your volunteer tasks with the same

positive work ethic as you would a fulltime job. Remember, someone is watching you. It could be your future boss or his neighbour.

One of the best places to volunteer is with the associations and charities that represent your discipline or specialty (or those that you want to belong to once you are established in your dream job). Your goal is to get to know members in O&G with similar professional experience to you. Find out where you can help and get involved. Most associations have networking functions, charity fundraisers and newsletters to be sent out. Take any job available, especially if it is visible. This will put you in direct contact with the right circle of people who can assist with your career move.

Prominent Personnel has an up-to-date listing of associations in Calgary so be sure to check out Catherine's website at www.prominent-personnel.ca. There is also a listing of associations in the References section at the back of this book.

Not sure you can make the time to volunteer? Try adding a volunteer role to activities you already participate in. For example, if your son or daughter plays hockey, and you attend the games anyway, you might volunteer to be Team Manager or Scorekeeper. These are great for boosting resumes. Or, if you attend church each week, why not offer to become a reader or make the weekly announcements. This will enhance your public speaking skills, give you some public visibility, and likely warm your heart at the

same time. Calgary believes that “Giving is Receiving”.

Volunteer experience is valued by employers

We know of two Certified Accountants who were recently interviewed for the same CFO position. They had identical qualifications and work experience in the financial industry. One of these men had seven children, the other had lots of volunteer and board experience.

Which one of these individuals landed the position? The CA with the volunteer experience. In this city, the volunteer wins out nearly every time.

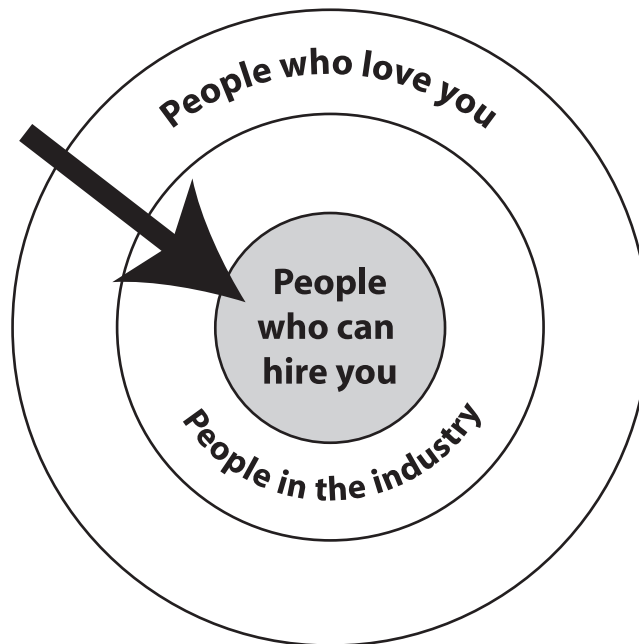
TALK TO EVERYONE

Take a look at your current network. We commonly hear people say that they do not know anyone in O&G. If you started with your immediate circle and asked them who they know in O&G, we bet people could come up with at least one contact each.

Reaching your target involves a simple formula. Start with the people who know you (we call these the people who love you). Ask if they can help you connect with people they know in the industry. Eventually, you will get in front of the people who are in a position to hire you. Take the attitude that everyone you meet will be important, so continue to probe until you work out the reason they have come into your life.

Remember, there is a Law of Attraction at work here. Your attitude and openness will open the right doors.

REACHING YOUR TARGET: A SIMPLE FORMULA



Catherine landed her first job in sales through her charity efforts. Here is her story:

Charity Bread

When I was Marketing Administrator for a small mall in Calgary, I was responsible for putting together a Stampede BBQ. I wanted all proceeds to go to a children's charity and with that in mind, I started approaching supply stores to obtain the BBQ products for free.

The general manager at the bread company I approached was next to impossible to reach. I left several messages before actually catching him one day between meetings.

He was not pleased to hear from me and insisted I be brief. Fortunately, I had practiced the spiel so many times that I could summarize what I needed inside of two minutes. He said he could sell us product at cost but that he was unable to give it away for free. I insisted that it was for a charity and his company could benefit with signage and a charity tax receipt. He told me he would think about it and discuss the idea with his vice president, but this kind of thing was typically not done at his company. He asked that I call him again in two days.

I phoned back in two days and left a message. In fact, I left messages every two days for the next two weeks. When the general manager finally took my call, he said he had an update for me but was in the middle of something. Would I mind holding? I held. For 45 minutes in fact.

When he came back on the line; he said, "Hello; who is this? Oh...are you still there?" He said very well then, I could pick up the free product that afternoon at 5:00 p.m. Fabulous. I would send a maintenance man with our company truck. "No," he said. "If you want the product, you will have to come pick it up yourself".

Big issue for me! I still had so much to finish before the upcoming function. But of course I agreed and arrived at his office with our truck at 4:45 p.m. I waited in his reception area while all of his staff left the building for the day – another 45 minutes it turned out.

When he finally stepped out of his office to greet me, he said, “You’re still here. Let’s talk.” He wanted to know if I’d ever considered sales? Coming from the marketing side of the business, sales seemed to be too much like “Herb Tarlek” from WKRP. I told him that marketing was more of a love for me and off I went, product in hand, to frantically get ready for the BBQ.

Somewhere throughout this experience, the tables had definitely turned. The general manager wooed me for the next two months, and we negotiated our way to my future career in sales. I stayed with his company for over a year. The manager turned out to be an excellent mentor for me as a professional salesperson, so it was a great training ground for everything to follow in my life.

CHAPTER 4

THE ART OF PITCHING



The way you ask for information and present yourself is one of the most crucial aspects of your job search. When someone asks you what you do, always lead with the information or opportunity you are seeking. Have the following script ready, which is often referred to as your “90 second commercial” or “elevator pitch”.

“90 SECOND COMMERCIAL” OR “ELEVATOR PITCH”

STEP 1: START WITH YOUR PURPOSE

What is the information you are looking for?

- **Are you in career exploration and want general information?** “I am in career exploration and am looking for information about a career in the energy field.”
- **Do you want industry information?** “I am making a career shift, and I am looking for general information about oil and gas.”
- **Do you want information about specific companies?** “I am searching for work as a business analyst in oil and gas, and I am looking for information about small to medium sized oil and gas companies.”
- **Are you interviewing and trying to get insider information?** “I have an interview with *Great Oil Company* next

week, and I am looking for information on their interviewing process.”

- **Have you targeted a few companies you would love to work for?** “My research has led me to target ABC, XXX and YYY and I am looking for information about these companies.”

Heather’s Story:

From information interview to offer in one fell swoop

A woman once asked me for an information interview. When she arrived at my office, she already knew all about the company I worked for as well as my specific career history. She asked intelligent questions about how my values were expressed in my work. I was completely impressed.

I found out she was an artist who had attended the Alberta College of Art and was making a career change. She had been through counseling training for the Crisis Centre and had signed up for more courses. She knew a lot about my field, the company and me, and it was clear that she was eager to do this kind of work. It turned out we were looking to hire more people. So I hired her!

She worked in the career-counseling field for four more years and then went to Switzerland to train as a Jungian therapist. She now has a thriving private counseling practice in Calgary.

STEP 2: BUILD YOUR CREDIBILITY

If you tell people a bit about yourself here to provide credibility, they will be much more open to helping you. One of our seminar participants told us he was looking for project

management work in O&G and was always asked up front, “Do you have experience and education?” Once you’ve said what you’re looking for, people immediately wonder what qualifies you to do that. Here are specific ways to build credibility:

- **Provide your career summary.** Include the number of years you’ve worked, in what industries and what type of work. “I’ve worked as a Sales and Marketing Team Leader at Koala for over 15 years.”
- **Share one of your best success stories.** You may lead into it with, “I am proud that during my career...”
- **Have five accomplishments (or condensed success stories) ready to pepper throughout the conversation,** when appropriate. “I broke into a new territory that had been dominated by a competitor with a team of five and ended increasing our sales by 110% within 6 months.”

STEP 3: TELL THEM HOW THEY CAN HELP

Next, it’s important to tell people exactly how they can help you. The vast majority loves an opportunity to be of service to others. If you ask an adult a question that can be answered with a yes or no, they will usually default to no, so make sure your questions are open-ended.

- “I am looking for information, referrals and advice and/or opportunities in your company?” This is a wonderful opener because most people have advice for you!
- To conclude, let them know that contacts in the oil and gas field would be helpful for you and ask, “Who do you recommend I talk to?”

- Avoid asking “Do you know anyone?” or “Do you have any openings at your company” Nine times out of ten, the answer will be no.

Sample 90 Second Elevator Pitch

I am looking for a position in marketing, community relations or both.

I have eight years experience in marketing, sponsorship and sales, most recently as Regional Director responsible for CA, AZ, TX, AB and BC. Are you familiar with GPS or H&G?

- When I was responsible for the Calgary Home & Garden Show, it grew by 20% and produced the highest profits in our sector for North America.
- I initiated and developed a great partnership with the CDIC – explain...
- I am really proud of the fact that all of my staff won company awards.

I am looking for info, referrals and advice regarding opportunities in your company. Who do you recommend I speak to?

EXTRA TIPS FOR SUCCESS

NO HISTORY PLEASE

When people are asked what they do, they typically will tell the history of how they arrived where they are today. Do not do this! Keep your conversation forward moving and positive.

Imagine you ask someone why he's at the biker club gathering and he rambles on about how he used to ride a Honda, but it got boring, and now he'd really like to find a Harley. No!

It is better to start with the future in a specific way – “I’m looking for a 1961 Harley- Davidson,” or “I’m looking for a job in human resources in oil and gas,” or “I’m looking for information about sales and marketing in oil supply companies.”

STAY POSITIVE

When people adopt baby girls from China, they are counseled to speak positively about China to their daughters, which makes sense because it is part of their daughter's identity. We encourage you to keep your entire conversation with contacts and future employers positive – especially when you talk about your previous employment.

Attribution Theory is a wonderful construct from sociologists. This theory has shown that whatever you say will be attributed to you. For example, if you say your company was boring, then the person you are talking to will associate you as being boring too. In our seminars we ask people to introduce themselves, giving a summary of what they have been doing. At least 60 % of participants go on to say they find their past or current work boring. Many actually say they hate it. We can't help but associate them as being negative, unmotivated people. They seem to forget that Cath-

erine has the opportunity to present them to companies and is forming an opinion about them based on what they say. Here are some of the best negative lines we've heard. Please, do not use these:

- “I work in the post office. If I stay there any longer I think I'll go postal.” We attribute this person as very scary. This could be transformed to, “I have loved working with the post office. I have honed my interpersonal skills and work ethic and am excited about getting into oil and gas because...”
- “I'm a chiropractor. If I crack another bone I'm going to scream.” This could be transformed to, “I have dedicated myself to training and wellness for 15 years in my profession as a chiropractor. Now I am excited about bringing my training abilities into oil and gas.”
- “I own my own business and spend too much time alone.” This could be transformed to, “I have honed by business skills and grown my bottom line by 20% each year for the past ten years. I would like to bring my sales savvy to an oil and gas service company.”
- Or, people will say they want to get into oil and gas for the money. Imagine approaching a wealthy man and telling him you want to date him for his money. This is not an attractive tactic. It is always better to focus on what you bring to the relationship or to the employer.

THE WOW FACTOR

Imagine you're at a party and your friend says, "I can introduce you to Joe, the mailroom clerk, or Ted, the company CEO." Which individual would you rather meet?

People are attracted to success. Let them know about your accomplishments and provide them with a reason to join your expanding circle!

IT'S ALL ABOUT THEM

Your elevator pitch is 90 seconds for a good reason. The rest of the conversation should be focused on finding out about the other person. Where does he work? Does she like her role? What are the challenges? What is he proud of? How did she get her first job in O&G?

All people naturally love to talk about themselves. Besides filling this need, you are gathering important information you can apply in creating your own future. Be genuine and view each person you meet as a fascinating resource for you.

Heather's Story: Pitching run amuck

I was recently at a social event with a VP from a major oil company in Calgary. We were talking to a young man who was so eager to blow his own horn about selling some kind of new pipe to major oil companies that he never found out who he was talking to. I tried to intercede to let him know the VP's role, but couldn't get a word in edgewise.

CHAPTER 5

MASTERING SCHMOOZING EVENTS



Strategic networking is where you do your research and target contacts. The other kind of networking is where you show up at events and fate more or less decides who you bump into. This is chaotic networking at its best and can yield wonderful results.

A typical event is one like “The Gathering” that Prominent Personnel hosts at the downtown Mynt UltraLounge every two months. People looking for opportunities in O&G and people already in the industry gather there to connect with each other. Other schmoozing events include attending the Oil and Gas show, the Oxford Stomp, meeting at a downtown bar on St. Patrick’s Day, a Rotary Club Lunch, and the Calgary Stampede.

For the less than gregarious and extroverted, these events can be challenging. The following pointers include suggestions to make these gatherings more fruitful and comfortable for you.

MAKE EACH CONNECTION COUNT

First and foremost, you attend networking events to connect with others and to build relationships. You may meet a future employer, or someone who knows an employer who

is hiring, or someone who works for the company you'd like to work for too, or a future mate, or a tennis partner, or someone who shares your love for gardening, cooking, horseback riding, hockey and so on.

The only way you'll find out who people are is by asking questions and being interested in them.

ARM YOURSELF WITH PERSONALIZED BUSINESS CARDS

Part of always being ready at networking events is having a personalized business card that includes your specialty or discipline – described in three words or less – and your personal coordinates. This is crucial if you don't want to correspond on your current employer's email or if you don't have a current employer.

Create a card that stands out and tells people who you are. If you are a graphic designer, you may want to use designs and lots of colour. An accountant – potentially ivory, thick, pleasing to touch, with shiny black print. If you like foil, add it. Whatever you believe will best present your “first impression”, make it so!

Make sure your business cards are not stained brown around the edges after hanging out in your wallet. Keep business cards protected in a business card holder and stock up before you leave home.

BUDDY UP

Take an outgoing friend who enjoys meeting new people. This will give you someone to talk to, no matter who you might bump up against at the event. And who knows, your friend might help you double your connections.

TAKE AN INTENTION WITH YOU

Have an intention. If you and your buddy agree to a common intention, your interactions will be much easier. Make a game out of it, have an audacious goal and be content with obtaining 10% of your target. Here are a few suggestions:

- I will collect ten cards.
- I will hand out three good leads.
- I will set up three coffee meetings.

SET UP CAMP

Arrive early and find a comfortable spot to camp. If possible, find a place where you can sit down and others can join you. You can also mingle around from here. Or choose the spot where everyone must pass through to enter the room. Appoint yourself the unofficial greeter, welcome them, tell them where drinks and snacks are, find out about them, say you'll catch up later. Your warm welcome will make an impression and also help them feel comfortable.

FOLLOW NAMETAG ETIQUETTE

Ensure that your nametag is on your right shoulder when at networking functions. Ladies, do not let it hang on that

lanyard. Think about where people have to look to see your name.

GIVE YOUR ELEVATOR PITCH

When a person asks you what you do, be prepared with your elevator pitch. Remember, it is not all about you – 80% of the conversation should be focused on the person you are talking to. Be clear about the information you are looking for and how they can help.

USE ONE-LINERS TO HELP SMOOTH OUT THE ROUGH SPOTS

Everyone at a networking event is interested in meeting other people. Focus on making it easy for them by introducing yourself and by having a great one-line question like:

- “How do you know the host/hostess?”
- “What brings you out tonight?”
- “I’m looking for work, what brings you here?”
- Mention a recent current event (e.g. The Flames latest game, the provincial election, the latest merger).
- “What do you do for fun when you’re not having a drink at the Mynt?”

OBTAIN OTHERS’ CARDS

As important as it is to give out your cards, your primary goal is to get other people’s business cards so you can follow up. Make a game out of collecting as many business cards as you can. Follow up with your new contacts within 48 hours of the event.

If people don't have cards, write their name and contact information on the back of your card – using the pen you brought with you, of course. Jot down a few details about the person. You can use these details to “break the ice” when you get in touch with this person after the event. “How is your daughter feeling?” for example, creates warmth and connection.

GAIN KEY INFORMATION

People can eliminate social anxiety when they switch their focus to the people around them. There may be some valuable information you could potentially learn from each person you talk to.

- Where do they work?
 - o How long have they been with their company?
 - o What do they enjoy about their work?
 - o What have been their greatest accomplishments in their career?
 - o What are their greatest challenges?
- If you're at an association or club, how long have they been involved? What benefits have they gained from joining?
- What brings them to the event? What would they like to accomplish?
- Where were they born?
- What do they do for fun?
- What tactics do they have for surviving these kinds of events?
- How many hours a week do they spend chauffeuring children around?

KEEP MOVING ON

Unless you have fallen in love at first sight with the person you are talking to, both of you need to keep circulating and meeting other people. Once you have exchanged cards and developed rapport, tell them you see someone else you'd like to meet, say how nice it was to meet them and move on. Keith Ferrazzi, the author of *Never Eat Alone* recommends being blunt and saying, "There are so many people here tonight, I'd feel remiss if I didn't at least try and get to know a few more of them. Would you excuse me for a second?"

AVOID BEING A DREADED WALLFLOWER

When you reach that awkward moment when you are not talking to anyone and feeling like you're 13 years old at a dance again, take a deep breath and look around to find someone who may be having the same experience. You can say something like, "I was standing by myself over there and saw you and thought I'd come and introduce myself..."

DON'T RELY ON THE SOCIAL LUBRICANT

- ALCOHOL

Many Calgary social events centre around alcohol, bars and massive parties. The majority of successful O&G people we know either do not drink or drink very lightly. If you have trouble stopping after two drinks, it is better to abstain. This is not the time to pass out in the lobby's revolving door. If you strike up a conversation with someone who is inebriated, you can just jokingly remind them in your follow up call or email, who you are and what you talked about.

HAVE FUN

Relax and have fun. You may be meeting potential friends, work associates, even partners. Remember, you're just looking to expand the circle of people who love you! People are stunned to learn that eight marriages have come out of Prominent Personnel's quarterly Gatherings at the Mynt. We're not. When people are open to opportunity, anything can, and does, happen.

IT'S UP TO YOU TO CONTROL THE CHAOS

It's your job to control the information you give and receive. Always keep in charge of your contacts.

- When someone says, "I know someone at Encana; I'll send him an email about you," respond with, "Thanks. May I have your card so that I can get the contact information from you and email this individual myself? Would it be all right if I used your name as a referral?"
- When your golf pro says, "I'll send your resume to my cousin at Petro-Canada," you provide the same response. You will have a much quicker and more efficient job search (with less nagging) if you get the contact's email and send your resume yourself.

THE FOLLOW UP

Do follow up within 48 hours of meeting someone at a networking event. You might have to drop a few hints as to who you are and what you are contacting them about.

Hopefully, you will be able to set up meetings with several new contacts. After meeting, always follow up with a thank you note, either emailed or hand written. Let your contacts know you appreciate their advice and referrals and will keep them informed of your progress. And then do that!

It's appropriate to give your network contacts progress updates on a monthly or bi-monthly basis. People like to know when their assistance has been helpful, so share how you have used their advice or if you have met with their referrals. Keep them posted on how your search is progressing and always ask about them.

Follow up has the added bonus of keeping you top of mind. Your communications might spark new ideas and/or referrals from these contacts that can eventually lead you through the right door.

CHAPTER 6

GETTING CONNECTED AND STAYING FRONT AND CENTRE



Your primary objective is to get face-to-face with the people who can hire you. After you have done some networking, you will likely have a growing list of contacts. In order to get your foot in these doors, you must rely on your persuasive skills, both verbal and written. In this chapter, we will explore telephone and written communications and how they work together.

When making connections, consider the characteristics of the person, as well as the company he or she represents. Are they extroverted sales people who do all their work on the phone? Are they Reservoir Engineers who deal better with emails and minimal human contact until they warm up to you? Is the company formal, where management wears suits and ties? Or is it an anything-goes company, where staff wears flip-flops and t-shirts?

To the best of your abilities, you want to tailor your presentation and style to match theirs, while still being true to yourself. This doesn't mean pretending to be someone you're not. Everything about your job search – from your resume, to how you dress, to what you say – must reflect the real you.

Let's start with telephone communications, since for most people making cold calls can feel like the most dreaded part of a job search. Following these strategies will help put you at ease.

ON THE PHONE

When contacting a company cold, first make a call to general reception to find out the supervisor's contact information, including the correct spelling of their full name, their current title and email address.

When you call back, ask for the person by their first name. You'd be surprised how easy it is to get through to someone when you sound determined that you know who he is and you have something to say. The receptionist will feel your energy over the phone.

WHEN LEAVING A MESSAGE

If you end up in voicemail – which is likely – leave a detailed message. First acknowledge that you are aware that the person is extremely busy. Then immediately mention that you will email your documents within a short time frame like 10 minutes.

So should I phone or write first? It all depends

Catherine is a strong advocate of the cold call. She recommends calling a person first and then following up with an email immediately and a second call within 48 hours.

But again, it depends on the situation. If you are in marketing and sales, public relations, investor relations, or any position where your ability to pick up the phone and make a cold call counts, do phone first.

However, if you are applying to an engineer or an accountant, who tend to be more introverted and may prefer some time to think before responding, a letter may be the better way to start the process.

Similarly, if you are introverted (and probably not applying for sales) and prefer to warm up with a letter, this is your best starting approach.

Next, state the reason that you would like to meet with the person. For example, you might say you are looking for advice about securing a position in the industry, and you want to learn about the steps the person took to achieve success.

“How did the person get where he is?” This is the kind of information you want to gain. When you do not have the “right experience”, people are going to have to meet you on other terms to determine who you really are. They are far more likely to view you as a potential candidate for future openings if you impress them with your knowledge of their company, your awareness of their teamwork, and how they deliver to their clients. The more information you are armed with – either about the company in general or the supervisor as an individual – the more successful you will be in obtaining a meeting within a month or two.

Before you hang up, state that you will follow-up within 24 or 48 hours to ensure receipt of your documents. Leave your coordinates and wish the person a great day!

DIARIZE EVERY CALL

It’s very important to diarize your calls and follow up when you say you will. People often watch to see if you do what you promise, particularly those in sales. If you don’t hear back, leave another message acknowledging how busy the person must be. Emphasize that you are calling to ensure receipt of your documents and to ask if it’s possible to meet

within the next few weeks. Let the person know that you will follow up again within one week, and then do so.

If the next time you call you receive voicemail again, leave another detailed message, again acknowledging the person's busy schedule. State that you will not contact them again in the near future. However, should their schedule open up to allow for a short meeting, you will be delighted to meet at their convenience. Restate your goal of obtaining information about how this individual has achieved standing within this industry.

Always leave your coordinates on your documents and by voicemail. Ensure that the answering machine you have chosen for messages will sound appropriate and professional. Check messages regularly, and call back within one business day of leaving a voicemail.

QUICK TIPS: Leaving a telephone message

1. Strive for a friendly, positive tone.
2. Pronounce your name clearly, both at the beginning and end of your message, especially if you don't know the person you're calling.
3. Slow down when giving your telephone number and repeat it twice.
4. Stand while talking (this helps you to project your voice and exude confidence).
5. Smile when speaking (this helps to keep your tone light and positive).

Here's a sample telephone script that worked brilliantly for Henry, our star client. Henry changed the *italics* sections for every call he made.

SAMPLE TELEPHONE SCRIPT

Hello *John Doe*. My name is Henry Waters.

- In a recent discussion with *Eileen Dover* from your "*operations*" team, I was so impressed with everything that *she/he* had to say about *Acme Explosives* that I want to learn more. OR
- I am calling today because I am so impressed that...
all your major projects are progressing on time, on budget and on track. You are associated with a progressive and vibrant organization, which makes Acme Explosives very appealing to me.

I am looking for information and/or opportunities with your company and would like to learn more about your department and take any guidance you might offer.

I believe I can bring added value to your project management group. Recently, for example, I implemented at GreatCom an agile approach to delivering projects that resulted in 70% faster delivery and a 39% cost reduction.

I know that you are extremely busy, but wondered if you might be able to spare 30 minutes in the next few weeks so that I can buy you a coffee and chat with you about your great organization.

In the next few minutes, I will forward you a copy of my resume. I will then follow up with you in the next 48 hours to see if there is a time slot that we can book. Again, this is Henry Waters at 488-8899. Thank you for your consideration. I really look forward to meeting with you.

WHEN YOU DO CONNECT BY PHONE

Here is when you go into your elevator pitch as discussed in Chapter 4 and in the sections below.

After you have introduced yourself, be sure to ask, “Have I caught you at a good time?” before you launch into the rest of your script. It will be helpful if you have your pitch written out, so you can reference your talking points, particularly if you feel nervous. Your objective is to try and get a face-to-face meeting.

WHEN YOU MEET WITH DECISION MAKERS WHO HAVE UNMET NEEDS

If you are blessed with the opportunity to have an information interview with a serious decision maker, find out what keeps him up at night and respond with a solution in the form of a proposal.

Start the meeting by delivering your elevator pitch and sharing about three of your success stories, which we discussed in Chapter 2. Throughout the remainder of the meeting, your objective is to find out what the company’s challenges are, what is working for them and what is not. It is certainly appropriate to share your perspective on the industry, based on your research, and to ask any questions you have prepared. Just don’t “oversell” yourself during this first meeting. Once you know what their greatest concerns are, and you have gained as much information about the challenges as possible, you can then follow up with a pro-

posal about how you could solve their problem. (There are some great tips about proposal letters later in this chapter.)

THE POWER OF WRITTEN COMMUNICATIONS

Letters are a powerful vehicle for communicating with people. They allow you to:

- Give people a heads up that you will be contacting them.
- Give introverts receiving your information time to think before you actually talk to them.
- Be clear about what information you are looking for and how your reader can help.
- Track your communications and commitments to action.
- Solidify and make more real your face-to-face communications.
- Show off your grammar and perfect spelling.
- Highlight your accomplishments.
- Attach your resume and any other relevant information.

TYPES OF COVER LETTERS

Ah, the dreaded cover letter. Many people are afraid of writing this simple document. But once you understand its purpose, and have an outline in hand, it becomes more a matter of filling in the blanks appropriately than of penning the next great prose. Let's define first the three types of cover letters.

INFORMATION COVER LETTER

Send this type of cover letter when you are requesting information about a career, an industry and/or a specific job. This letter can be sent to a friend or loved one, to a referral, or to someone you currently do not know and would like to meet.

"RESPONSE TO AN Ad" COVER LETTER

This letter tells the person opening your correspondence (not always the recruiter making the decision) the purpose of your writing. Your cover letter, if compelling, can help land your resume into the keeper versus reject pile.

When responding to an ad, it's important to identify the specific position you are applying for. You can certainly use a subject or Re line that includes the job posting number and where it was posted before you launch into the letter itself. Write down the position, company, job number and date as your first line.

SEARCH FIRM COVER LETTER

This letter accompanies your resume and tells the search firm the kinds of positions you are applying to. In the olden days, before the advent of the Internet, people sent a covering letter and a resume by post. Back then, those receiving the communication likely had more time for reading. The covering letter acted as an introduction and a statement of intent for the overall communication.

Since the advent of the Internet, the cover letter is often ignored by recruiters. Nonetheless, you must not skip this step. While your cover letter must be as compelling as you can make it, be sure that your resume is complete in itself, including all the information you want the recruiter to see. The resume is the document that will be read for sure.

QUICK TIPS: Salutation and Closing

Unless you know of a good reason not to, always address women as Ms. instead of Mrs. or Miss. Circumstances can change in a blink and you don't want to use the wrong title.

Never use Dear Sir or Madam or To Whom it May Concern. This is antiquated jargon. Do your best to obtain a name and title, and if your efforts fail, address the letter to the company and use a Subject or Attention line (or both) instead of a salutation. Here's an example:

January 30, 2007

Company Title
Full Address

ATTENTION: Sales Department
Subject: Application for Sales Position

Thank you for this opportunity...

And please consider closing your letter with something other than Sincerely or Yours truly. This is old school language. We suggest "Best regards" or "Warm regards" or "Respectfully" instead.

COVER LETTER SAMPLE: CONTACTING AN INDIVIDUAL FOR THE FIRST TIME

Date

Name

Title

Company

Address

Dear Mr. Smithers:

I am awed at how XYZ Company helps organizations define, build, measure, and expand their Internet strategy and presence. XYZ has a legacy of creating effective and distinctive interactive solutions for some of the most admired companies in the world, and I am impressed that Forrester Research has recognized you with the highest score for its current offering for the second year in a row. This is most inspiring and makes XYZ very appealing to me.

It is my understanding that there may be some exciting opportunities at XYZ that are in keeping with my current goals, and it is with great enthusiasm that I am sending you my resume for consideration.

My experience and achievements, which are detailed in the enclosed resume, include:

- Six years of management responsibilities with GreatCom's PMO.
- Implementation of an agile method of delivering projects with focus on delivering superior business value by accelerating project delivery, reducing costs and increasing quality through application of several rapid delivery practices.
- A Personal Leadership Certificate from Royal Roads University.

- Recipient of a GreatCom national innovation award for completing a complex, \$2.2m project on time, within scope and to a budget balanced to within \$600.
- Thirteen years of experience in marketing/sales and project management in the telecommunications industry.
- Track record of developing creative strategic solutions with diverse partners in dynamic domestic and international marketing relationships.

I understand the big picture as well as the bottom line and take great pride in a job well done. I am flexible and able to move between roles while handling multiple tasks.

I look forward to speaking with you about XYZ opportunities and will follow up this communication within the next few business days.

Best regards,

Henry Waters
Enc.

COVER LETTER SAMPLE: RESPONSE TO AN ADVERTISED POSITION

Date

Company
Address

Attention: Human Resources
Subject: Senior Marketing Specialist Application, Reference No.
2007-221

I am writing in response to the posting on your website for a Senior Marketing Specialist (Reference No. 2007-221). As a highly motivated individual, the challenges and rewards of this position appeal greatly to me, and I look forward to bringing my proven marketing, community relations and leadership success to ABC Oil & Gas Company Limited.

Highlights of my accomplishments developed during my tenure as Director and Manager at SAS Media include:

- Proven history of successfully managing multiple projects simultaneously resulting in financial expectations and event goals met or exceeded
- Successfully implemented market development strategies resulting in 10% year-on-year growth in a developing market
- Successfully fostering community relations by initiating and developing relationships with strategic non-profit and charitable organizations resulting in higher profiles and increased sales for their projects as well as increased visibility and good will for SAS Media
- Strong team building, coaching and leadership skills resulting in all direct reports winning company awards and recognition

My resume is attached. I look forward to meeting with you soon to discuss my qualifications.

Best regards,

Anne Smith
Enc.

INFORMATION COVER LETTER OUTLINE:

INTRODUCTION EMAIL WITH ATTACHED RESUME

The outline we suggest for this introduction email is merely an expanded form of your elevator pitch and includes the essential elements to get you a meeting or an interview.

Henry's Tactics

When Henry gleaned tremendous in-depth information about the oil company's IT department from reading and talking to people, he summarized the highlights in his cover letter. After reading Henry's letter, the CIO called him in for an interview the next day. Henry is now the Manager of Information Technology Solutions at one of the top five oil producers. He had no prior oil and gas experience before he secured this position.

Start by writing out your elevator pitch, adding a few paragraphs as follows:

PARAGRAPH 1: STATE YOUR PURPOSE FOR WRITING

The first paragraph tells them why you are writing. This paragraph should be focused on the receiver and will include two parts.

SUPPLY YOUR REFERENCE FIRST

If you have a reference, start off the letter with something like: "Joe Smith, Manager of Operations at Telus Mobility, suggested I write to you because of your knowledge of Project Management in the oil and gas industry."

THEN ADD GEMS FROM YOUR RESEARCH

Next, provide information about the individual and/or their company. This will show that you have done your research. Has their company won an award for their Annual Report? Did they develop a state-of-the-art tracking system for Project Management? Are they building or currently researching upgraders? Do they sit on the Board of Directors for an Energy Trust and a production company and therefore have great insight into the industry?

PARAGRAPH 2: STATE THE INFORMATION YOU ARE LOOKING FOR

In the second paragraph, state the information you're looking for. Are you looking for general information on community relations in O&G? Perhaps you are looking for work as a human resources generalist. Be specific.

ADD CREDIBILITY AND SPARKLE

Now give them motivation to want to help you. You have already impressed them by the in depth information you have about their company. Start off with a summary statement and then list three accomplishment bullets. Choose bullets that will make them interested and impressed enough to want to see you.

BE SPECIFIC ABOUT HOW THEY CAN HELP

Now be specific about what they can do for you. Usually it boils down to information, referrals, advice and/or opportunities in the company. It's important to be clear

in your communications from the beginning, so there will be no surprises later.

PARAGRAPH 3: CALL TO ACTION

Your next step is to request a meeting. Honour how busy they are and suggest a meeting at their convenience, sometime in the next three weeks. Offer to bring a coffee to their office. If the weather is good, ask if they'd prefer to meet while walking.

Then take responsibility for the next action step. Say you will follow up with them within two business days unless you hear from them first. Close your letter by stating that your resume is attached.

If you have a strong reference and have presented compelling research about the company, there is a good chance the person will either hit reply and state a meeting time, or refer you to an appropriate person within the company. Heather's clients use this format and their emails are responded to 80% of the time.

CHOOSING A GREAT EMAIL SUBJECT HEADING

When you email an introduction letter, remember that if the receiver doesn't recognize your name, your letter could be deleted before it's even read.

Some ways to make sure your email is opened include:

- Stating the name of the person referring you in the subject heading, e.g. Referred by John Dunsworth, ABC Oil Company.
- Researching the person you're sending the letter to and adding something pertinent to them in the subject heading. For example, one candidate found out that the man she wanted a meeting with had climbed Mt. Kilimanjaro to raise money for cancer research. She used the subject heading: Kilimanjaro in the office.

WHEN FOLLOWING UP, WHEN IS ENOUGH, ENOUGH

We recommend you try reaching an individual three times. If you haven't heard back by then, leave a phone or email message saying you imagine they are very busy and you will not contact them again, although you would enjoy meeting with them in the future should their calendar open up. It is important to provide this closure so your communication is not left dangling.

Consider sending this email letter to people who love you

It's amazing how many mothers have no real idea about what their adult children actually do. Sending a letter to your parents, siblings and dearest and oldest friends is a great strategy and great practice. This gives you a chance to pass on your resume to folks who will undoubtedly be wowed by your accomplishments! It also prepares you – and them – for the steps to follow.

Sometimes when you are networking with people who love you, it can be difficult to stick to your agenda. You might get to-

gether for lunch, for example, and end up talking about their cat's latest dose of Prozac for the entire hour. Starting with a letter is a smart way to clarify that you would like to meet for the specific purpose of discussing your career.

THANK YOU LETTERS

Expressing appreciation is important during all phases of your job search. Thank you letters or cards can be sent after meetings, interviews or even useful phone conversations.

Your thank you will be remembered and will help you to stand out and be noticed. One important tip here. Be specific in your thanks and express what it was the person said or did that has been of particular benefit.

Heather's view on thank yous

"I love receiving thank you letters by post. My realtor, Sano Stante, sends thank you cards with a gift certificate to Earls restaurant when we make referrals to him. It keeps him in my mind when I receive the letter, when I use the certificate, and every time I make another referral!"

FOLLOW-UP LETTERS

When following up with a new contact in writing, be sure to review your connection and briefly summarize your communication thus far. Express appreciation, highlighting anything you want to expand upon based on your last communication. Then outline how you will follow through on the contact's suggestions and advice. Try to think of ways

to give back to this person. If you run across an interesting article, for example, enclose it alongside your letter.

FOLLOW-UP LETTER SAMPLE

Dear Robert:

Thank you for meeting with me last Friday and for providing such an interesting perspective regarding Calgary's booming oil and gas sector. I'm attaching a recent *Maclean's* article that echoes your views.

As we discussed, I am interested in securing a middle management costing or accounting position. With my depth of experience, I believe I can make a positive contribution to an O&G company in need of a professional with my skills.

Following your suggestion, I plan to contact Walter White and Tanya Hicks this week, and I will advise you of the outcome of my discussions with both. I would appreciate your keeping me apprised of other contacts that may come to mind, and I will keep you updated on my progress.

Again, thank you for sharing your valuable time and expertise.

Best wishes,

Rodney Brown

PROPOSAL LETTERS

A proposal letter can be written only after you have a clear understanding of the employer's situation and needs, or in other words, when you know exactly what is keeping him up at night.

Start off by referencing your past meeting(s). Then move on to define the company's business problem or challenge that you discussed when you met and studied further through additional research on the topic. To write this type of letter effectively, you must step into the decision maker's shoes. If you get this "problem definition" part right, the decision maker will be convinced you understand his situation and will want to read further.

In the next paragraphs, describe yourself as the solution to the problem, showing how your skills and expertise can help address the company's needs. Go into as much detail as you need to show you are well matched to meeting this challenge and you are confident the solution you propose cannot fail. Describe the specific actions you will take, showing you have a definite plan and a firm foundation of knowledge and expertise, backed up with past successes with similar challenges.

A recommended approach is to propose your services with a specific and definable project. This will give you an opportunity to demonstrate your high quality work, with minimal risk to the company.

Be sure your letter clearly states the benefit to the decision maker in considering your offer. When he or she asks, "So what's in it for me or for my company?", the answer should jump off the page.

Don't forget to end your letter with a call to action. Offer to give a presentation to key stakeholders and take responsibility for follow up.

General tips on letter writing

- Keep the letter brief, using small easy to read paragraphs.
- Stick to one page for cover letters and up to three pages maximum for proposal letters.
- Use bullets whenever possible to capture accomplishments.
- Have a few people read your letter to ensure perfect grammar and spelling.
- Read the letter out loud to make sure it makes sense.
- Use an easily readable font and font size (most of your audience are boomers).
- Use the same letterhead on your cover letter as you do on your resume.
- If the letter is being mailed, use heavy linen paper.

LAST WORD: STAY ON TOP OF CHANGE AND KEEP YOUR FACTS STRAIGHT

Calgary is in a constant state of flux, particularly in the O&G sector. Never assume that yesterday's news is still applicable today. Departments, divisions, players and titles – everything can change in an instant.

Catherine learned this truth the hard way when she attended a function at her landlord's old-time saloon in the mountains. She was innocently chatting with a woman about the beautiful scenery surrounding them and about the woman's social work. When the conversation turned to Catherine's business, the woman mentioned that her husband also worked

in the O&G industry. Catherine introduced herself to the woman's husband, who told her the name of the company he worked for. When Catherine asked what his role was, he said he was the president. Disbelievingly, Catherine practically shouted, "No, you're not!" (She had met the president a few weeks earlier, and this was definitely not that man!) "Well yes, actually, I am," he replied. It turned out, he had accepted the president's position just days earlier.

The new president graciously overlooked Catherine's blunder, and they shared a good laugh. But Catherine has never made that mistake again. Nor should you.

Before sending out correspondence or meeting with new contacts, be sure you have your facts straight.

CHAPTER 7

RESUMES THAT GET READ



How vital is a good resume? Your resume is your introduction, your calling card, your marketing document. You simply cannot make a resume too well written or well designed.

DESIGN PRINCIPLES

The design of your resume is every bit as important as its content. Many recruiters will tell you that they have probably missed good candidates because the resume was too difficult to read. There are two things to remember: keep the look clean, and don't be afraid of white space.

TEXT FORMATTING

You can certainly create a reader-friendly resume by attending to visual appeal. Be sure to keep a consistent style throughout for titles, size and font, bullets, numbering, spacing and so on.

But don't go too far with your text formatting, which ends up confusing the eye. When too much is emphasized, nothing stands out. Try to keep the amount of italics and underlines to a minimum. And please, avoid ALL CAPS at all costs. The human eye identifies words by their shape more than by the letters. Using all caps makes each word the same rectan-

gular shape, thus making it harder to read quickly. Research shows that words in all caps take far longer to comprehend, bogging down your resume, and thus, your reader. And if that hasn't convinced you, remember that in the lexicon of this digital age, ALL CAPS EQUATE WITH SCREAMING, which is not likely the impression you want to leave with potential hirers.

Font

Depending on the font you use, the font size should be 11 pt or 12 pt. This font, for example, is 12 pt. Whether you use a Mac or PC, choose a font that is common to most platforms and easy to read. There are two major subdivisions in font type: serif and sans serif. The main feature of a serif font (as is this High Tower font) is the little tails on many of the letters. Serif fonts are considered easier to read. We suggest you choose a common serif font like Times Roman for the body of your resume and a sans serif font like Arial for your headings.

Do avoid less common fonts, even if they seem more interesting. If your resume is sent electronically or being scanned, you can't be sure that your readers will have anything on their system but standard fonts. If not, your font will be substituted for another, which will likely throw all your careful spacing and pagination out of whack. Better to appear a bit boring and clean than exciting and difficult to read.

TOP MATTER

It is important to create a letterhead that will be transferred to the top of all your job search correspondence, including your resumes, letters and reference lists.

Your letterhead will identify your name – big and bold to show healthy ego – followed by your telephone and email coordinates in smaller font. Letterhead material can be left- or right-justified, or centred at the top of the page. We like the centred look, but that's just our personal preference. Only include coordinates where you want to receive communications regarding your job search. If your preschoolers are picking up your home phone, or if you can't field calls at your current employer's, by all means consider using a private cell phone number with a professional sounding message.

While you can certainly include your city of residence as part of your letterhead, it's not necessary to give your complete mailing address, and given privacy and safety concerns, we do not recommend it.

The pages following your resume's first page should also have a header, which includes, at minimum, your full name on the left and the page number on the right.

Never include a picture or personal information such as date of birth, marital status or Social Insurance Number.

BULLETS

Bulleted lists on resumes are much loved by recruiters and candidates alike. Bullets serve to:

- Increase readability and flow
- Make your information easier to understand
- Make it possible to use a lead-in phrase, thus avoiding repetition
- Make your accomplishments stand out

In the list above, each bullet starts with a capital letter and uses no punctuation at the end. You can choose whatever format you like for your resume as long as you are consistent.

Be sure that every bulleted item within a list relies on the same grammatical construction. Here's where many resumes fall short, making them confusing to read (and ridiculous sounding if read aloud.) Fortunately, this problem is easy to remedy. To ensure correct bullet usage, read the line that introduces the bulleted items with each bullet. Does each bullet read properly with the introductory statement? If not, fix each bullet separately.

WHEN SENDING YOUR RESUME ELECTRONICALLY

There are two main software programs to use when sending an electronic (or emailed) copy of your resume: Microsoft Word (.doc) and Adobe Acrobat (.pdf). Acrobat is the safest medium, as it ensures your formatting stays intact and that your resume looks exactly as you want it. Some companies

will ask for Word, however. It's a good idea to have your resume saved in both formats, and when given the choice, attach within an email as a pdf document.

RESUME CONTENT: PUTTING IT ALL TOGETHER

Resume rules have changed, particularly if you are applying to busy O&G recruiters. Yes, resumes must still be polished, accurate and highly readable. But gone are the days

of functional or combination resume styles, which are much too dense and text heavy for today's market. Why? Consider a day in the life of Catherine's firm, Prominent Personnel, where we receive an average of 300 resumes before closing time. When we come across resumes with lots of white space and clear, short, succinct bullets of information, we breathe a sigh of relief. We can quickly scan these resumes to determine their match with current and upcoming opportunities. It's a win-win for recruiters and candidates alike.

QUICK TIP: Avoid first person

Avoid the words "I" and "my" within your resume. First person is assumed and therefore redundant. Additionally, "I" and "my" words can sound arrogant when used too often.

Instead of this:

- I served on multidisciplinary teams..

Use this:

- Served on multidisciplinary teams...

So how do you create a resume that breathes? In addition to relying on good design principles, your content must include all of what's needed and none of what's not. To get there, we recommend you include the following key parts:

1. A clearly stated **Objective**
2. **Career Summary** or **Highlighted Qualifications**, offered as a summary statement followed by a bulleted list of accomplishments, quantified with dollars, percentages, or numbers when possible
3. **Career** or **Professional Experience***, including job titles, company names and dates of employment, listed in reverse chronological order. Bullet points will be included under neath the jobs of most relevance
4. **Education & Professional Development***, including a listing of degrees, diplomas and certificates as well as relevant courses and seminars
5. **Community/Volunteer Activity**, including church work if relevant
6. **Computer Experience**, including your proficiency with a range of software programs
7. Additional relevant highlights such as **Professional Affiliations & Activities, Accomplishments, Accreditations or Awards, Hobbies & Other Interests, and Publications.**

**Note: Switch order of 3 and 4, depending on which is most recent.*

Let's explore these content parts individually.

PART 1: STATE YOUR OBJECTIVE

Stating a job objective at the top of your resume is a wise strategy for everyone, but particularly so for those transitioning from another industry into O&G. Including an

objective shows that you know what you want and helps position the reader's take on the information that follows.

The job objective should be customized for every job you apply for. If you are responding to an advertised position, the objective is the job title itself. Otherwise, your objective should be specific and conveyed in only one sentence.

Your objective will include three elements:

- The job you want to be considered for
- What you bring to the position
- What you want from the right employer

Here's an example of an objective statement that helped a candidate land a position:

- To obtain a technical sales position in a Calgary oil and gas service company that allows for personal and professional development while delivering high touch client service.

PART 2: STATE YOUR CAREER SUMMARY OR HIGHLIGHTED QUALIFICATIONS

Simply put, this next section of your resume summarizes what you are good at. And we don't mean motherhood statements like "hard worker" or "good attention to detail". These are called soft skills and everyone uses them. Give recruiters what they need to send your resume to the next step.

✓ Are you a sales and marketing professional? Then outline your expertise in market research, identifying client needs and developing sales solutions.

✓ Do you have experience in leading teams? Then state that.

✓ Experience in managing budgets? Then indicate the size of budget you have managed.

QUICK TIP: Use past tense only

To avoid confusion and tense mix-ups, write every point as though it happened in the past, even if you are currently serving in a position.

Change this

- Responsibilities include...

To this

- Responsibilities included

You can give this section any number of titles including Career Summary, Highlights of Qualifications, Areas of Expertise, Professional Achievements, or Career Synopsis to name a few. This section is particularly important if you are making a career change or if some of your best highlights are from jobs from years ago. The purpose is to make a case that your achievements and career are directly relevant to the position you are applying for.

Catherine's "First 4 Inches" Rule

"I can't stress enough how important the first half page of your resume is. Recruiters open your resume to see if you have anything applicable for the positions they currently have available. Most have neither the time nor the patience to scroll through page after page to find out if your skills and experience are applicable or not. Your resume must convince recruiters in those first 4 inches, or you've likely lost your chance."

CAREER SUMMARY How To:

Start by providing a statement of your years of experience and areas of expertise. Be sure to include any O&G experience you have had, even if it was twenty years ago, or even if you worked with O&G customers. Here's a sample summary statement: "Over 20 years progressively responsible experience in sales and marketing in the transportation and utility industry, culminating in promotion to Regional Manager."

Next, add a few bulleted points giving evidence of your skills. Here are a few ideas of what you might include in bullet form.

- **Your best achievements in summary form.** For example, a sales person might say, consistently exceeded quotas. A trainer could say consistently received excellent ratings from participants. Since this is a summary statement, present cumulative information. Do the math for your reader:
 - Promoted three times within five years
 - Promoted from Shipper/Receiver to Production Manager over ten year career span
- **Additional training or special skills.** If you have a Masters degree or PhD, add the title to your name at the top of the resume. However, if you have special training like project management, production accounting or leadership from the Banff School and it is applicable to what you're applying for, add it here. If you had a great GPA, add it here as well.

- **Any special recognition.** Recognitions such as Calgary Volunteer of the Year or Woman of Distinction would go here as well. If you received a bonus every year because of performance, this is where you can include this detail.
- **A particularly glowing sentence from a performance review.** For example, “Manager wrote on Performance Review that, ‘Tom’s powerful vision and team leading skills catapulted the team to the highest rank in the country’.” (2005)
- **A personal touch** can also be added here. For example, an administrative assistant included the phrase “Known as the ray of sunshine in the office” in her career summary and was offered an interview with each resume she sent out.

This Career Summary section is where keywords are vital. It’s often the first section recruiters really read and you may lose them if you do not use terminology applicable to their team or needs. This tactic is called echoing the reader and allows you to fit your message to specific needs.

How do you echo your reader? Research, research and research! Ensure that you have the “pulse” on the company’s corporate identity and mission statement. There are a few words that each company will use that should speak to who you are. Use these same words, peppering them throughout your resume. Decision makers will read your resume, and think, “This person speaks our language.” Likewise, if your

resume is being scanned, key words will help identify you as a match for the position.

Compare the following two examples for the bulleted points of the Career Summary:

| Candidate 1 | Candidate 2 |
|--|---|
| Career Summary <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Strong sales and marketing skills • Excellent management skills • Skilled at building relationships • Demonstrated ability to build teams • Strong financial management skills | Career Summary <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Managed sales and marketing portfolios of \$1.5M plus in the IT, real estate, pharmaceutical, and oil and gas sectors • Managed a core team of 12 specialized engineering and technical functions and advised executive management committees on overall strategy • Developed key strategic alliances and managed approximately 50 supplier/vendor relationships with partners and competitors including ABC, XXX, YYY • Coordinated professional, technical, support and management teams to meet the challenges of re-organization and high growth business development • Set up financial management program and managed \$8M budget |

If you were a recruiter and had only this section of the resume to go on, which candidate do you have a better sense of? Which candidate would you choose to meet first?

Here is another Career Summary example that helped land this client her job:

High energy, creative and versatile executive with 11 years cross-functional success in leadership, marketing/community relations, project management and team development. Knack for relationship marketing, media relations and employee morale. Strong performance in market share and revenue/ROI growth.

- Progressively promoted to director level as a result of consistently exceeding financial goals and exhibiting strong team-building and leadership abilities.
- Successfully designed and implemented market development strategies resulting in 15% year-on-year growth.
- Proven history of successfully managing multiple projects simultaneously resulting in financial expectations. All event goals met or exceeded.
- Coordinated and implemented national sponsorship partnerships resulting in 25% increased revenues for involved projects.
- All direct reports have won company awards such as Sales Leadership, Customer Service, Manager of the Year, and Salesperson of the Year.

"Anne is a focused, motivated manager who sets high standards and achieves her goals."

Russ Jones, Western V.P., ABC media 2004

PART 3: CAREER EXPERIENCE (OR PROFESSIONAL EXPERIENCE)

Now you can talk about what you've been doing all these years, in reverse chronological order.

Good news for baby boomers

Embrace your age and experience and go all the way back on your resume.

With the labor shortage worldwide, as well as the lack of skilled and professional workers in all disciplines, employers have started welcoming candidates with more experience.

The gap is so large between the experienced and the inexperienced, older workers with vast experience will be preferred for a number of positions, especially in leadership areas.

It is important to include the details of what you have been doing throughout your entire career. Account for each year since you completed your education. Any gaps may lead the recruiter to assume you are trying to hide something. There is nothing wrong with stating you were on maternity leave or caring for a sick parent. If you traveled the world, indicate the countries you visited. Present yourself openly and honestly from the very beginning. This type of energy and honesty will help you attract the right position and the right company.

Show everything – even summer experiences. Decision makers might know people in the companies where you have worked, and this is precisely what may help get your foot in the door.

The layout of your text is important. Many resume books will tell you to format your text as follows:

| | |
|-------------------------|--|
| 1990 to present | Big Oil & Gas Company, Calgary, AB Sales Representative |
| Then text is added here | |



Please don't do this. Are career dates more important than job titles? Absolutely not. It's an enormous waste of page space and highlights the wrong information. Look at the example above. What information does your eye light on first? It's the date that stands out, followed by the company and its location, and straggling in at last place, the job title.

When introducing your Career Experience section, consider this sequencing and layout instead:

| | |
|--|-----------------|
| Big Oil and Gas Company, Calgary, AB Sales Representative | 1990 to present |
| Then text is added here | |



Here are a few extra tips for laying out your career experience:

- If you were promoted several times inside the same company, you need only state the name of the company and the total years worked once. Make it look like one natural progression.
- If the reader is unlikely to recognize your former employer or type of company from its name, describe the

nature of the business briefly in a bracketed phrase underneath the company name.

- Add more bulleted points under the jobs most applicable to the position you are applying for (5 bullets maximum). Expand by showing measured results.

Remember, it is your job to take the reader's work out of interpreting your resume.

PART 4: EDUCATION & PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

(NOTE: Recent graduates typically list education before their Career Experience.)

Education includes a listing of degrees, diplomas and certificates. Professional development includes a listing of courses and seminars. If you are a professional requiring numerous courses annually and have pages of ongoing development, put the most notable courses under the Professional Development heading and then include a full list as a separate document. Be sure to include where you studied and the year you graduated, particularly in the Education section.

PART 5: COMMUNITY OR VOLUNTEER ACTIVITY

Because more and more recruiters are looking for community or volunteer activity, everything in this area is critical. Calgary O&G in particular, is highly philanthropic. You want to point to where your volunteer experience has been focused. Even if it's just canvassing, community activity shows you care about the world and provides a point of

interest. Should you add your volunteer church work? By all means. By letting your personality shine through, you will be better positioned to make valuable connections and attract the right opportunity.

When formatting this section, use the same structure as you used for your Career Experience section. For example:

Children's Miracle Network, Lethbridge, AB 1999 to 2006
Telethon Volunteer

If there have been measured results, be sure to include those too.

PART 6: COMPUTER EXPERIENCE

It's important to point out your proficiency with software programs. This becomes absolutely essential for scanned resumes. If recruiters or employers are looking for a specific skill not listed on your resume, you might lose your opportunity. Whether you are an executive or a frontline worker, list software expertise such as Outlook, Word, PowerPoint, database management software, etc. If you have experience working with a customized system, list the software program's title, followed by a brief explanation in brackets. Differentiate your experience according to "Proficient with," and "Working Knowledge of".

PART 7: PROFESSIONAL AFFILIATIONS AND ACTIVITIES

Do you belong to a professional association? If so, include the association and how long you have been a member. You may also include past memberships. If you have served on any committees or task forces, display the description of your activities in the same way you portrayed your job descriptions in the Career Experience section. For instance:

| | |
|---|------|
| Edmonton Association of Continuing Education and Recreation Director | 2004 |
|---|------|

| |
|---|
| This organization distributed more than \$1.2 million in provincial education funding annually. |
|---|

If you find your association listing is too large, shave off the ones that are no longer applicable to where you want to be next. But we suggest that you do include as many as you can; there's a chance the hirer knows of the association and may be passionate about it, which will increase your chances of being granted an interview.

PART 8: ACCOMPLISHMENTS, ACCREDITATIONS OR AWARDS

This section may actually include accomplishments that you would not normally think important. They are your "moments of glory" and can bring to light your drive and determination, qualities important to the majority of employers. Winning a Gold Medal in the Small Garden cat-

egory of the Calgary Horticultural Society Garden Contest might be precisely what sets you apart from otherwise similar candidates.

If you are unsure which awards, achievements or accomplishments should be included, be sure to get a second opinion.

PART 9: HOBBIES AND OTHER INTERESTS

Why are hobbies and other interests important for the O&G industry? Again, this is another way to set you apart and show who you really are. Everything counts. If you play hockey, for instance, put it down – especially if you are a goalie. You might get called just because the company needs an extra player at Friday's league game. If you are a golfer, mention this. Common interests and hobbies are a great way to connect with those doing the hiring.

PART 10: PUBLICATIONS

List those publications that relate directly to your career goal. Employers most interested in publications will be research organizations, consulting, and international organizations. If you have a long list of publications, we recommend you create a separate list.

It all counts

Catherine never wrote a full resume until she started at Frac-Master. When she was asked to provide a resume for their file, she put together a simple resume, including only her career experience and contact coordinates. Having known Catherine for many years, her manager looked at her resume and asked, "Where is your bodybuilding experience? Why haven't you included this?" When Catherine asked how bodybuilding could possibly be relevant, he answered by saying, "It shows your power of focus and drive to completion. Of course it's relevant."

RESUME SAMPLE

| | |
|---|---|
| HENRY WATERS | Tel: (403) 202-6888 Cellular: (403) 488-8899 email: henry.waters@pathway.ca Calgary, Alberta |
| <hr/> | |
| OBJECTIVE | |
| To contribute strong business analysis and development skills in a management capacity within a dynamic, high-growth organization | |
| CAREER SUMMARY | |
| An achievement-oriented manager experienced at developing effective program strategies that meet both customer and organizational goals. Highlights include: | |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Implementation of an agile approach to delivering projects at GreatCom.• Recipient of a GreatCom National Innovation Award for completing a complex, \$2.2m project on time, within scope and a budget balanced to \$600.• Driving and leading a product transformation activity for Integration Group that led to increased sales average over three years of 87%.• Obtained Personal Leadership Certificate from Royal Roads University. | |
| PROFESSIONAL EXPERIENCE | |
| GREATCOM , Calgary Alberta | 2000 - 2006 |
| Portfolio Manager , 2004 - 2006 | |
| Reporting to the Vice President, IT | |
| A Senior Project Manager, accountable for the total "health" of a portfolio representing a group of related projects. Responsible for GreatCom's integrated execution strategy and acted as | |

Resume Sample Continued

| | |
|--|--------------------|
| HENRY WATERS | Page 2 |
| <p>the primary interface between Portfolio Leaders, Governance Committee and Project teams. Performed a liaison role to ensure the programs and projects delivered to strategic business priorities.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Successfully implemented an agile delivery and iterative development approach to project management to drive low-cost product growth in a rapid delivery environment resulting in a 35% reduction in costs.• Managed several complex projects including a national new technology initiative with a cost of \$2.2m that was delivered on time, within scope and to a budget balanced to within \$600.• Project Managed the IT component for audit compliance, eliminated 26 areas of non-compliance.• Managed the day-to-day contract implementation, oversaw the technical functions and managed the overall business risk. | |
| Acting Manager, Corporate PMO, Reporting to the Director, IT | 2000 - 2003 |
| <p>Responsible for directing and managing all cross-functional corporate projects that touched GreatCom's internal customers. Provider of strong leadership to ensure all projects successfully designed and maintained in a way that met the needs of GreatCom and its customers.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Developed and implemented a new business assessment and project development process that aligned project delivery framework across divisions.• Led a team of nine with careful attention paid to GreatCom's Leadership Attributes while meeting stakeholder expectations and balancing competing demands. | |

Resume Sample Continued

| | |
|--|--------------------|
| HENRY WATERS | Page 3 |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Reduced attrition to zero by conducting quarterly team building, mentoring & coaching sessions to accelerate team development for high performance and to inspire extraordinary results. | |
| INTEGRATION GROUP , Calgary AB | 1996 - 2000 |
| Project Manager / Business Analyst | |
| Reporting to the Vice President and Chief Information Officer | |
| <p>Responsible for identifying opportunities for business process improvements and technology solutions that achieved business goals by working closely with customers, vendors and senior management to ensure projects were managed on budget and on schedule.</p> | |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Co-managed the assessment, procurement and implementation of a \$400K national transportation system project that was delivered on budget, on time and within scope.• Served as internal business consultant by working closely with various functional groups in assessing, developing and executing projects relating to their departments.• Developed key strategic alliances and managed approximately 50 supplier/ vendor relationships with partners and competitors.• Conducted market studies in several international markets for new product lines.• Developed a project prioritization, ranking and governance model to ensure that the right projects were executed to meet Integration Group's short- and medium-term strategic objectives. | |

WESTERN COMMUNICATIONS, Vancouver, BC 1990 - 1995

Project Manager / Business Analyst

Reporting to the Associate Director
of Information Services

Responsible for contributing to the objectives of the Information Services Department by coordinating, monitoring and directing customer and technical requests, ensuring appropriate action taken in resolving client issues, assisting senior management in operational issues, and acting as liaison between various technical and user groups.

- Supported external consultants by providing issue identification, system clarification and data gathering in order to integrate three marketing systems.
- Coordinated professional, technical, support and management teams to meet the challenges of re-organization and high growth business development.
- Consistently achieved 95%+ in customer satisfaction surveys.

EDUCATION

Bachelor of Arts in Economics, University of Calgary, **1987**
Calgary, AB

PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

Project Management Professional (PMP) **In progress**
Personal Leadership Certificate, Royal Roads **2004**
University, Victoria, BC

Resume Sample Continued

| | |
|---|-----------------------|
| HENRY WATERS | Page 5 |
| <hr/> | |
| VOLUNTEER ACTIVITIES | |
| Canyon Meadows Community Association, Board positions | 2006 - present |
| Canadian Diabetes Association Canvasser | 1998 - present |
| Canadian Cancer Society Canvasser | 2003 - present |
| Heart and Stroke Foundation of Canada Canvasser | 1998 - present |
| COMPUTER SKILLS | |
| Proficient with: | |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none">• MS Word, MS Excel, MS Access, MS Project• PEAK (data management software)• Powerpoint | |
| Working knowledge of: | |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Frontpage• MS Publisher | |
| INTERESTS | |
| Running, golfing, theatre, hockey and travel | |

REFERENCES

Many resume books will tell you to wait until the interview stage to supply your reference list. We disagree. If you are transitioning into a new industry or campaigning for a specific job, it is always a good idea to include references along with your resume – especially character references. Including your references shows you are willing to put your money where your mouth is. The same principle holds true for Letters of Reference.

A strong reference must:

- Consent (in advance)
- Be available to accept reference requests
- Want you to succeed
- Be able to articulate your strengths

References have additional influence if they know the industry and/or the company and its players

Your references should be a separate document with the same letterhead you created for your cover letter and resume. Always ask references in advance before including their names on your list. Likewise, obtain appropriate phone numbers and/or email addresses to list as contact information. Home phone numbers should never be given, (unless granted by your reference for this use), and mailing addresses are not necessary.

You might want to sit down with a few of your references and share the kinds of questions they could potentially be

asked by recruiters. Preparing for a reference check is a good idea, particularly if it has been a few years since you have worked together.

Here is a list of the questions Prominent Personnel asks all referees:

- **Position Held/Work Performed:** What type of work did the person do for your company?
- **Strengths and Technical Abilities:** How would you rate the person's technical knowledge as it related to the position? Did the person know what was required and did he/she learn inside of a reasonable time frame?
- **Flexibility:** In terms of scheduling, adapting to change, etc. have you encountered any problems with this person in these areas? If yes, please elaborate on the situation.
- **Pace and Deadlines:** Please comment on the person's effectiveness performing in a highly dynamic environment. Describe to me what "dynamic" is; that is, give me some words around what fast-paced looks like.
- **Organizational and Time Management Skills:** Please comment on the person's ability to plan, organize, and prioritize work, especially in multi-task situations.
- **Interpersonal Skills:** Please comment on this person's ability to relate to and communicate with people. What

do/did others in your company like most about this person?

- **Problem Solving and Learning:** How would you evaluate the person's ability to grasp concepts, learn new things, question, solve problems and analyze information, etc?
- **Trustworthiness/Reliability:** Please comment in areas of trustworthiness, dependability and reliability, etc.
- **Conflict Resolution:** Have you ever seen this person in a situation of conflict or heated emotions? If you have, please unfold the situation for me. How did the person behave? Was the person's behaviour effective? What was the end result?
- **Area for Improvement:** We all have them. In what area(s) do you feel this person should improve? In terms of self- improvement, what steps has this person taken?
- **Reason for Departure:** Would you happen to know why this person is considering leaving his/her current position or why this person left the position when you worked together?
- **Candidate for rehire/continued association:** Given an opportunity, would you rehire or work with this person again? If so, in what capacity?

- **Additional Information:** Is there anything that I have not asked, but that I should be aware of that would help us with the decision to hire?

It's fair for you to know in advance the kinds of things your references will say about you during a reference check. Whatever you can do to jog their memories and help them remember detailed information about you and your work will serve to your advantage. Likewise, the more they know about the positions you are applying for, the better.

This is particularly important if you feel there may be a "bad" reference on your list. By discussing potential questions and responses in advance, you will be able to grow from the opportunity to learn the good and not-so-good about how you performed your job responsibilities. And if required, you can remove some references from your list and choose others instead.

BUSINESS REFERENCES

Business references include people you have worked with. Put another way, if you have had money exchange hands through your association with an individual, he or she is considered a business reference.

Have no fewer than three and no more than five business references. If possible, include at least one past or current

supervisor, one past or current co-worker, and if you have been a manager, at least one past subordinate or mentee. If you have not been a manager, include a second past supervisor or co-worker.

You will include your reference's full name, business title, current company, and contact coordinates, including work telephone and email. Also include a short phrase outlining the relationship that you had with that person, as well as the name of the company you worked at during the time of your business association.

Here is how your reference information can be formatted:

| |
|---|
| Catherine Shelby, President Great Big Oil Company Telephone: 403 555 1212 Email: c. Shelby@gbo.ca Former supervisor at Shell Canada |
|---|

CHARACTER REFERENCES

If you do not have enough experience in a certain area, a character reference may be the person that gets you the initial interview. It is all about “who you know” in any industry. Therefore, include only character references of those already in the industry that you are applying for.

Who should be on your list? Include all your O&G contacts that know you well enough to comment on whether you would fit inside a particular O&G company. The bigger

this list the better, even if it covers two full pages. If you can actually show that you have a large network, recruiters and decision makers will know that you are committed to joining this industry. In addition, if they happen to know at least one or more of your references, they will likely phone those on your list they have connections to.

Character references in O&G will know the “way of doing things in this industry” and their comments are a reflection of who they are as well. Because their reputation is at stake, they will be very honest as to whether or not they see you as a fit in a particular company. This makes their opinions particularly valued.

As with business references, your character reference section should include their full name, title, company and appropriate coordinates.

CHAPTER 8

FROM MEDIOCRE TO GREAT INTERVIEWS!



"Yahoo!" as we say here in Calgary.

The leading company in the industry has called you in to interview for the job of your dreams. The primary purpose of the interview is to determine your suitability for the position and how well you would fit within the existing corporate structure. Now is your chance to shine! Are you ready?

INTERVIEW PREPARATION

Your research will help position you at the top

We had two clients this year who were applying for IT positions in O&G. Both were asked, "Do you know where we are drilling?"

Fortunately they had done their homework and knew the specific details so they didn't end up sputtering, "Up north? Somewhere near Fort McMurray I guess?"

Once you have been granted an interview with a decision maker and/or human resources person, you must research in earnest.

When you are phoned and invited to the interview, find out who is doing the interview and what their position is. Then Google them. If the interviewer is on the Board of the Calgary Zoo or gave a presentation on "Diversity in the Workplace", these gems will likely be exposed in an online

search. Go to the company website and find out as much as possible about the company.

You can also go to the downtown Calgary Public Library - fourth floor - and explain to the librarians what you are being interviewed for. If you ask nicely, they will pull up information for you.

Next, use your network to find out what the personality of the decision maker is, the culture of the company and any other juicy details you can get your hands on. Are they conservative or out-of-the box thinkers? Old school or new school? Formal or laid back?

One of our clients had an interview with a senior human resource professional at a major oil and gas producer. We happen to know that the woman detests formality and mostly wears jeans and t-shirts to work. Had our client turned up in a dress suit, she would not even have been considered. The HR woman is also extremely casual in her speech and demeanor and finds formal people stifling. It was crucial to have this information before the meeting.

Heather's Story: You can meet the "Who You Know" in a hurry

When I finished my undergraduate degree from Carleton, I applied for the Young Professional Program offered through External Affairs. This was a program set up for people who had completed a graduate degree to work in their area of special-

ization in Mexico. I didn't yet have a Masters Degree, and only a smattering of Spanish, but I applied anyway. My boyfriend's mother worked for Employment and Immigration, and she made sure my application was at the top of the screening pile. I was back in Calgary for the summer and received a letter stating that I was selected for an interview (strictly because of whom I knew of course!)

I got on the phone, trying to find someone who knew the man who was flying in to Calgary to interview me. I was applying to go to Mexico as a sociologist so I called the Sociology Departments at both the University of Calgary and Carleton to see if they knew of anyone who knew about this program. The secretary in Calgary suggested I try the Department of Anthropology and the secretary there said she thought one of the professors knew about this program. I went to see him immediately. He was definitely the right contact because he had dinner with the man doing the interviewing every time he came through Calgary! From the professor I got the best piece of insider news. Even though we would be working in the field, the man expected us to wear a formal suit to the interview and selected people who demonstrated how their participation would benefit Canada.

Off I ran to buy a suit and write up how much of a better country Canada would be if I went to Mexico on this work scholarship. I signed up for a Spanish course and lo and behold it worked. I was one of twelve students selected out of 1200 applicants!

The point of this story is to highlight the importance of gaining information about the people and company who are interviewing you in order to truly excel in the meeting.

ASKING GOOD QUESTIONS NETS GOOD RESULTS

As part of your research, prepare some intelligent questions to ask during the interview. These questions should be focused on the company and the position. At no time do you ask about vacations, breaks, benefits or compensation.

These are negotiable items that will be discussed just before an offer is made. Please see the next chapter on negotiating for more information.

For now, you need questions that illustrate your knowledge about their operations and challenges and reflect an interest in increasing their bottom line. You might choose to ask questions about:

- The latest technologies in use
- Your duties and responsibilities
- The chain of command (to whom are you responsible?)
- Career path and potential

Whenever possible, prepare open-ended consultation-type questions that show that you have done your research. For example: “Can you explain what other (applications, considerations, individuals) would influence this position?”

Remember, the kinds of questions you ask are almost as important as the responses you give during an interview. Think of it this way. Imagine you are renting out a basement suite. One of the potential tenants tells you his wife is quite a seamstress and would love to make new curtains for the windows, and that by the way, he is a carpenter and would be happy to build window seats. Another potential tenant just wants to know when rent day is and if he is required to write postdated cheques. Who would you be most likely to rent the suite to?

Write your questions down on a cheat sheet along with your PAR story titles (which we discuss in depth later in this chapter). Cheat sheets are important. Otherwise, by the end of the interview when you are asked the typical, “Do you have any questions?” you may be too burnt out to remember what they are.

DIFFERENT TYPES OF INTERVIEWS

There are as many types of interviews as there are interviewers. Interviews can be structured or unstructured, formal or informal. Some interviewers wing it, while others have a set of questions they ask every candidate. You may be asked to participate in a series of sequential interviews within a company, one person at a time, while others conduct panel interviews of two to nine people. The panel could include representatives from HR as well as the team members from the department doing the hiring.

In any case, your job is to make a good impression and show how you will add value. Here are a few tips for excelling at special types of interviews:

The Lunch Interview: Brush up on your etiquette and make this kind of interview – and your meal – go smoothly.

Do:

- Arrive at the restaurant earlier than the interviewer
- Turn off your cell phone
- Order water, juice, pop or milk
- Stand to greet the interviewer once he or she arrives

- Use a web-to-web handshake
- Sit down at the table at the same time as the interviewer
- Suggest the interviewer orders first
- Choose an entrée that costs less than the interviewer's order
- Begin to eat at the same time as the interviewer
- Finish your meal (or stop eating) within a few bites of the interviewer
- Order coffee or tea after the meal if the interviewer does also
- After the meal is paid for, and before getting up to leave, graciously thank the interviewer for the meal and for taking the time to meet with you

Do Not

- Order alcohol (With one exception: If this is your third interview, you can join the interviewer for one drink if you feel it will help him/her feel more comfortable. Never have more than one alcoholic beverage.)
- Order dessert
- Order coffee or tea refills (unless you know the interview will continue for several more minutes)
- Offer to pay for the meal. (This is the interviewer's responsibility.)

In order not to snag your future supervisor's dinner roll, remember "BMW". B is for bread, which is always to the left of your plate. M is for meal, your dinner plate. And W is for water, on your right side of your plate.

You must be prepared to wrap up promptly, so watch for the signs that your meeting is about to adjourn.

The Telephone Interview: Many companies now do a pre-screen over the telephone in order to save costs. If interviewed by this method, find a quiet room in order to eliminate background noises. We suggest you do not use a speakerphone even if the interviewer chooses to. Answer the phone professionally, as you would in an office environment. Be sure that you have all information laid out in front of you. It can help you to sound confident if you stand while you talk. And remember to smile. Smiling helps to lighten and relax the situation. Salespeople do this all the time; they know simply a smile can change the outcome.

The Panel Interview: If interviewed by two or more people, make sure to maintain eye contact with everyone in the room. Focus on the person asking the question. When answering, look at that person initially, then look around the room to see if anyone needs further clarification. Treat all interviewers with respect, regardless of gender or status. You never know who will have the greatest influence in making the hiring decision.

THE BEHAVIORAL DESCRIPTIVE INTERVIEW

This type of interview deserves its own section. Many companies today use the behavioural interview to screen candidates. Behavioral Descriptive Interviewing, also known as “Target Selection Interviewing,” is based on discovering how the candidate acts in specific employment-related situ-

ations. The logic is that how you behaved in the past will predict how you will behave in the future. This type of interviewing requires you to be confident and on your toes. The best way to achieve this is with practice.

LINING UP YOUR SUCCESS STORIES

Try to anticipate possible questions and rehearse your answers. Start by studying the job description or posting. What skills is the company looking for? What strengths? Typically these might include organizational abilities, problem solving, working well under stress, administrative/supervisory capabilities, attention to detail, enjoyment of certain tasks, etc. This is where your success stories are valuable.

As we discussed in Chapter 2, success stories are short stories that capture results you have achieved in the past. Stories need to be specific enough that they can be told in less than a minute or two with a “problem/action/result” format.

Coming up with success stories is one of the most onerous tasks in job search: we are taught that it is poor manners to brag about ourselves. Sharing success stories is not bragging. Quite the opposite! You do not need to state, “I am an incredible salesperson,” or “I am an extraordinary leader.” Instead, you let the success story say it for you. “I was awarded Top Salesperson three years in a row at Xerox,” or “Two out of my five-person team won top performer awards and two were promoted to senior positions.”

Sharing success stories allows you to articulate your strengths with specific measured results. Having your success stories prepared and ready can give you the confidence that moves an interview from humdrum to outstanding.

IT'S ALL IN THE TELLING

When answering an interview request like, “Describe a decision you made that was unpopular and how you handled its implementation,” it is human nature to focus on the problem. But which is more important, the problem itself or the solution you came up with to remedy the problem? When giving your examples in the form of PAR stories, be sure to concentrate most of your time on the actions you took.

QUICK TIP: Telling your PAR Story

In one to two minutes, spend your storytelling time as follows:

20% Problem/Situation
+
60% Action
+
20% Result
=
Complete PAR story

THE MORE SPECIFIC THE BETTER

The whole point of Behavioural Descriptive Interviewing is to force you to be specific. It gives you a chance to provide examples of when you completed a project, on time and under budget, or how your team achieved its goals despite demanding pressure and limited resources. If you are a leader, it is your chance to speak out about how someone you mentored went on to do great things, or how from your team of 12, three were promoted to executive positions within one year.

Your examples will come alive if you use specific dates and names. Open each PAR story by stating when the situation occurred. “In the third quarter... in the spring of 2005... last March.” Likewise, if telling a story about a work associate or manager, use their first name. This helps to ground your response and make it seem plausible.

JOGGING YOUR STORY RECALL WHEN UNDER FIRE

You are probably thinking, “How will I ever remember my stories when being grilled by interviewers?”

Here’s a quick tip. Give each of your stories a title. The title will be meaningful to you only and will not be shared during the interview. Instead, titling is a great way of helping you categorize each story in your mind so that when you are asked to provide examples of “A time when....”, you can easily call up your most appropriate story. So, for example, when you scan your cheat sheet in the interview and see your title, “ I’m OK, You’re OK,” you will instantly recall your story about helping a client solve a problem. We recommend you come up with between 25-30 stories and that you bring your list of titles to the interview for reference.

EXAMPLES OF BEHAVIOURAL DESCRIPTIVE QUESTIONS

Here are some predictable examples of interview questions in search of your specific competencies:

Troubleshooting: “Give us an example of when you had to deal with a particular (technical, personnel, client, supervisor) problem and how you handled it.”

Decision-making: “Describe a time when you had to subvert a company policy or procedure, or make an important decision on your own, and why you did what you did.”

Goal setting: “Give an example of a goal you reached and tell us how you achieved it.”

Team leadership: “Have you had to convince a team to work on a project they weren’t thrilled about? How did you do it?”

In addition to specific examples, you may also be asked to give a general example of a particular success or failure in your personal or occupational life, why you regard this incident as such, and what experience you gained from it.

Remember that every one of your responses may generate five to six additional interviewer questions. For example: Who was involved? What changes ensued? How did that impact your career path? Be as thorough as possible in your PAR story preparation and rehearse your stories out loud. This way, you will be ready for anything.

PROMINENT PERSONNEL'S BEHAVIOURAL INTERVIEW SCRIPT

Catherine's Prominent Personnel firm uses a standard script when interviewing potential engineering candidates. We've provided this script below to give you an idea of what might be asked during a Behavioural Descriptive Interview. With a bit of tweaking, these questions are transferable to a range of positions and roles.

1. Let's begin by having you review your duties and responsibilities at your most recent job. Thinking back on this role, pick out your finest hour; that is, describe the assignment or project that you feel best demonstrated your skills.
 - a. Where did the idea for this project or assignment originate?
 - b. What was your role in developing the project concept?
 - c. What did you do to promote the concept within the company?
 - d. How did you keep the project moving as things progressed?
2. Staying with your most recent work experience, please explain how you documented your project. Start with the initial design and take me through handing the project over to another department or through to completion.
 - a. When did you complete the documentation for each phase of the project?

- b. Did you receive any comments about your documentation?
 - c. What were the comments?
- 3. It is often difficult to keep track of all the new technical developments. Can you think of some work you recently completed that best reflects how you apply new techniques to solve practical problems?
 - a. What was the problem?
 - b. What was the new technology and how did you learn of it?
 - c. How did your solution work out in practice?
 - d. Did your boss or peers comment on this work? What was said?
- 4. Working with individuals can at times be frustrating. Tell me about the most frustrating time you had explaining your viewpoint to someone else.
 - a. What was it that you said that they seemed to have a hard time picking up on?
 - b. How did you eventually get your message across?
 - c. What steps did you take to avoid this kind of difficulty?
 - d. How often has this type of problem come up?
- 5. We can all recall a time when we had to make a presentation or attend a meeting on short notice when we weren't very well prepared. Tell me about the presentation or meeting you would most like to forget.

- a. What was the topic or objectives of the meeting or presentation?
 - b. When did you first learn about it?
 - c. What were you able to prepare prior to the meeting or presentation?
 - d. Did anyone comment on your participation? What was said?
 - e. Was anything decided at the meeting? Were there long-term consequences?
 - f. Is this a common occurrence at your workplace?
6. I would like now to change gears a bit and discuss how you interact with people. Could you begin by sketching out two or three key strengths you have in dealing with people?
 - a. Can you illustrate the first strength with a recent example?
 - b. What possible negative outcomes were avoided by the way you handled the situation?
 - c. How often has this type of situation arisen?
 - d. What happened the next time this came up?
7. Now let's look back at a recent major project that you were part of. Try to recall the details of the project meeting with your peers when you communicated what your thoughts and impressions were for that project. Tell me how you did that?
 - a. When did this meeting take place?
 - b. How was it determined who was responsible for each task?

- c. How was progress for the project monitored?
 - d. If there were problems, who was responsible for resolving them?
8. Handling conflicts between yourself and your colleagues is a part of everyone's job. I would like to hear about the most challenging conflict situation you have faced and how you handled it.
- a. Who was involved in the conflict?
 - b. What was the source of the conflict?
 - c. What did you do to help resolve the conflict?
 - d. Looking back, what do you think you would have done differently?
9. Sometimes we are involved in situations where we don't agree with corporate policies. Tell me about a time when you didn't agree with the policy.
- a. What was the policy and why did you object?
 - b. How did you make your objections known?
 - c. Were you successful in promoting your view? How do you measure that success?
 - d. How often do you make this kind of argument?

ANSWERING THOSE TOUGH QUESTIONS

There are a few tough questions worth specifically preparing for so that they don't become a noose that you hang yourself with.

TELL ME ABOUT YOURSELF

The best way to answer this question is to use your “elevator pitch”, maybe adding something about education and a more thorough summary and one interest, hobby or sport you enjoy. Interviewers don’t want to know about your early years on the farm in a dysfunctional family. Honestly.

WHY DID YOU LEAVE?

Be honest in your response to the inevitable question of why you are looking for a new job (e.g. career ceiling in present position, opportunities for personal growth and advancement, etc.). Avoid purely monetary considerations unless you are applying for a commissioned sales position. And never, never denigrate your current or past positions or bosses.

WHAT IS YOUR GREATEST WEAKNESS?

Almost every interview includes a question that goes something like this: “Tell us about your weaknesses?”

There are two strategies for answering this question. The first is to tell the interviewer about a weakness that is really a strength. For example:

- I am a perfectionist. I take care of all the details in each task I perform. The downside is that I work long hours to achieve results and sometimes get too involved in too many projects. I’ve learned a lot about delegating these past few years. Finding the positive in other people’s efforts has helped me let go of perfection.

- I have a hard time saying no. When people ask me to do something I typically say yes and then work overtime to get it all done. I've been working on this specifically, and I feel I have learned to share my priorities with the people on my team and engage them in delegating tasks.

**Heather's
Thoughts: Weak-
ness can be a
double-edged
sword**

When I was teaching interviewing to an intact work team, one team member said his weakness was working too quickly and not attending to details. Another team member piped up that her weakness was being too cautious and too slow.

They both laughed, realizing that over the years their different approaches had created tension. They had since been able to work through their differences and had become extremely productive together.

So remember, one person's strength is another person's weakness. It just depends how you look at it.

Your second strategy is to choose a weakness that you have overcome. For example:

- I was very shy and hated public speaking. I decided to overcome my fear so I joined Toastmasters and took a public speaking course through continuing education. Last year I was the MC at my cousin's wedding, in front of 200 guests! And my past company sent me to an investor-relations meeting where I presented our department's results.
- My natural personality type is disorganized. I have taken four courses on time management through Mount Royal College and U. of C. and have read numerous books on the topic. On my last performance review, my manager praised my organization not only in my workspace but in the way I complete

projects. I have a copy of the review here if you would like to see it.

WEAKNESS TIPS

- Do not brush over this question with a glib response. Provide an honest answer, using a true weakness and providing examples to support it.
- Review your weakness with your references to make sure they would agree. Coach them on how you plan to respond to this question so you will be in alignment.
- Don't discuss more than one weakness and never choose one that would directly affect the position.
- Be willing to be vulnerable. It is disarming to hear a person's true weakness and will draw the interviewer closer to you.
- Have specific examples of how you've overcome the weakness and what the results have been.

WHO DO YOU ADMIRE? OR WHAT BOOK ARE YOU READING?

Interviewers will sometimes ask you to discuss someone you admire or what book you are reading. These questions help to round out their perspective of your interests and values. It's best to have thought these through in advance. A good choice of someone you admire is always someone who has had a positive influence on your life.

Your book choice can be as varied as a library's bookshelves. If you are reading a current, well-known author or article, this might get the interviewer's attention.

WHAT ABOUT MONEY?

Be prepared for a question or two about your current salary or total compensation package. The verdict is still out on how you should respond. Many recruiters and hirers suggest this question must be specifically answered before a second meeting can be set. Others believe that candidates have the right to not divulge their current salary.

If queried in your first interview about your monetary expectations, try not to give specific dollar or range figures. You could handle this question by stating that while remuneration is important, you are primarily interested in this particular opportunity. Then give several reasons why you are seeking this particular position with this particular company (even if you have stated this earlier in the interview). If pushed further, mention your current salary range, and add that you would expect to be reimbursed commensurate with your qualifications, background and experience and the existing marketplace for such skills.

AVOIDING THE NERVOUS BREAKDOWN

Being well prepared will definitely help you with nerves. As will practice. Try to have as many meetings as possible leading up to an interview so that the give and take of information sharing becomes comfortable. Even interviewers are nervous until they have had plenty of experience.

It's true, being interviewed can still make you break into a cold sweat. A great way to combat nerves is to tell the interviewer right off the bat, "This is my first interview in

15 years and I'm nervous." Saying it out loud will dissipate some of the stress.

One man we worked with experienced close to a panic attack each time he was interviewed. We coached him to bring his fear into the open. At his next interview, he introduced himself by saying, "How I interview is not a reflection on how I work. I find interviewing extremely stressful since I'm introverted and like to focus on my work." He stumbled through the interview, highlighting his accomplishments through PAR stories and got the job.

THE DAY OF

An interview can seem to have an unequal balance of power. After all, interviewers have the authority to hire or reject you. You can choose to feel inferior. But there is another way of looking at the interview situation that will make you more comfortable with the process. Think of it as dating. You and the interviewer are both trying to decide who would be the best mate. Remember, you are two (or more) adults trying to determine if your joining the company is a fit. If they don't hire you, they are doing you a favor because they have determined you won't be happy and/or productive inside their company. Similarly, you need to decide before accepting their offer if the company culture is the right place for you. It is much easier to decline before taking the job than after you have made a definite commitment.

DRESS APPROPRIATELY

First impressions count! Research the typical dress at the company's office and then dress similarly but just a little bit "better". It's a general belief that when people dress too casually, they tend to behave too casually. You want to avoid generating this impression. For men this means a suit and tie, or sports coat and dress pants (no tie). For women, a skirt (and nylons) with jacket, or a pantsuit with sleeves or jacket. Always ensure that the colors are coordinated, that your clothes are clean and freshly pressed. If you are being interviewed on Casual Friday, do not wear jeans even though the dress code allows it. But do not overdress either – no suits or ties on casual days.

Men should avoid white socks. Shoes should complement the attire chosen as well and be darker than the rest of the outfit. Both men and women should polish their shoes, wear minimal jewelry and remove any facial piercings. If you require glasses, be sure to have the frames updated: do not wear sunglasses. If you have long hair, tie it back or pull it away from your face. Women, make sure your makeup is conservative and your nail polish is not chipped. We recommend a polish that is either clear, a light color or french manicured.

Note the outfit you wear to the first interview. Wear something different to the second.

We are not suggesting that you will not get the job if you wear red nails, heavy makeup and piercings on your tongue.

But we do know Calgary. More employers here prefer to interview candidates who are conservative and professional in their approach. Avoiding distractions will ensure the interviewer focuses on your skills and abilities rather than your outfit and accessories.

PRACTICE MENTAL IMAGERY

Before the interview, and as far ahead as possible, start imagining how the interview will go. Imagine how you will be received. Visualize a positive exchange and great conversation that allows you to really connect with your interviewers.

Interviewers are real people, just like you. They might have had a recent fight with their spouse, or their teenager is acting out, or their dog just passed away. Imagine you are being interviewed by a future friend who is genuinely interested in knowing all about you and is open to sharing about the company and team.

This mental imagery practice can have amazing results. Not only will you feel more confident, your connections with the interviewer can be stronger.

Try it. You have nothing to lose and everything to gain.

WAITING IN THE LION'S DEN

TURN OFF YOUR CELL PHONE

We know, we know. We shouldn't have to mention this. But you would be astonished at how many people forget to turn their cell phone off before they enter the interview room. By then, it's often too late. It is rude and annoying when the ring tone is left on and interrupts a meeting. So please, turn off your cell phone.

BREATHE

Be sure to arrive 10 minutes early so you are relaxed and have a chance to acclimatize yourself and check out the surroundings.

To calm yourself, you simply need to breathe. People who suffer from panic attacks and anxiety can turn their symptoms around merely by breathing. The proper technique is to breathe in slowly through your nose deep into your diaphragm, count your breaths and then try to exhale for longer than you inhale. When people are afraid, they tend to breathe shallowly in their lungs, which sets off the whole flight or fight syndrome. Once the body experiences shallow breathing it will begin to tremble, shake, the heart rate accelerates, and vision becomes blurred and tunnel like – all not good for making an ideal impression.

If you have a few minutes to sit in the waiting area, push both your feet firmly into the ground and breathe. You will find yourself much more relaxed.

The same rule applies if you get nervous during the interview. Don't hesitate to stop and take a deep breath.

GET THE LAY OF THE LAND

In the unlikely event that you haven't done your homework prior to arriving at the interview, you can glean important information while you're waiting.

If there is a receptionist, chat with her. Get to know her in a genuine way. Be interested in her. Lots of hiring managers will ask the receptionist about his or her impression of the candidate.

If the company's annual report or a recent promotional article is resting on the coffee table, take a minute to skim the highlights. Some companies even have their mission statement mounted on a plaque.

The waiting period between your arrival and the interview itself provides you a chance to come up with an icebreaker. In one company, Heather had a long walk down the hall with clients. She would discuss the weather on the way down to her office or ask the client whether he was able to easily find parking. Heather admits she would have been impressed if any of her clients had said something intelligent and informed about her or her company. (It never happened by the way.)

WHAT TO TAKE

Bring a leather portfolio with the following items:

- Your personalized business cards
- The nicest pen you own and blank paper for note-taking
- At least two copies of your resume and references. The interviewer(s) may not have a copy of your documents. Some interviewers will test you to see how organized you are. A list of references, presented at the end of the first interview, illustrates your level of confidence in your suitability for that perfect position. You may want to refer to your resume as well during the interview, to ensure the accuracy of dates, so bring a copy for yourself
- Copies of your performance evaluations, awards, letters of reference, neatly copied and stapled in case your interviewer(s) request copies. These should provide backup for points stated in your resume
- Your cheat sheet, which will include your list of questions, plus the titles of your 25 to 30 success stories in the following categories:
 - o Job related
 - o Getting along with others
 - o Time demands
 - o Special to your area (NOTE: Plant people need to have safety stories)

If you know the names of your interviewer(s) in advance (which we highly recommend you take the time to find out), you may want to have written their names and titles on a piece of paper. This will help you to remember who's who

and will allow you to more easily respond to interviewers by their first name throughout the interview.

FIRST IMPRESSIONS ARE EVERYTHING

There is great debate over whether or not the decision to hire is made during the first three minutes of meeting. If this is true, then you need to make the most of this time.

WHAT LANGUAGE ARE YOU USING?

The moment you enter the interview room, your body language clearly depicts your mental attitude. If you walk with your head down, stooping shoulders and heavy steps, you will give off a vibe that you lack confidence and energy. On the other hand, a straight head, erect shoulders, quick steps and straight posture will give the impression that you are confident, open and warm.

LIMP FISH OR POTENTIAL COLLEAGUE?

Your handshake, too, can convey much about you. A weak, limp, dead-fish handshake can make you appear cold and lacking in enthusiasm. A finger/hand crushing shake can leave an equally poor impression, as can grabbing the interviewer's hand with both of yours and then pumping frantically.

If you're out of practice, be sure to rehearse a firm-gripped, vertical handshake in the days leading up to the interview.

HERE'S LOOKING AT YOU

Of all the ways we communicate with people, eye contact is one of the most powerful. People judge sincerity, honesty and confidence through eye contact.

If you are particularly shy and it feels uncomfortable to look directly into the interviewer's eyes, then gaze generally at the eyebrow area or the bridge of the nose. It can also help if you let your vision go slightly out of focus.

We're not suggesting you stare unblinking at the interviewer through a 45 minute interview. Research shows that a gaze that lasts longer than seven to 10 seconds can cause discomfort or anxiety. It's certainly appropriate to look away as you collect your thoughts or prepare for each of your answers. But when you first meet the interviewer, and then throughout the interview, you need to show with your eyes that you are both sincere and interested.

QUICK TIP: Get business cards or jot down interviewer(s) names

In the unlikely event that you didn't find out the interviewers' names and titles prior to the interview, wait until you have been seated and introduced to everyone, and then ask if you could have one of their business cards.

If cards are unavailable, jot down their names on the blank paper from your portfolio and ensure you have the proper spelling. (This will come in handy as you refer to the interviewers by name throughout the interview and when you write your thank you letters after the interview.)

PREPARE AN OPENER

Your plan when you meet the interviewer is to stand straight and make good eye contact as you shake his or her hand, or several hands – firmly. But what should you be saying while everyone gets settled?

A good interviewer will put you at ease by talking about your interests or something pleasant on your resume. The problem is that there are not too many good interviewers, and those that are may have had little time to prepare.

So take charge and prepare your opener in advance. Of course you can always say the empty, “I’ve heard so much about you,” or “What an honour to meet you.” How about something more meaningful? “I’m so glad you had the time to meet with me, especially since you must be so busy with the Stampede expansion right now...or since it is budget season right now...or as the gas price is so low, or as you must be busy figuring out different strategies...or coaching women’s hockey.”

GENERAL RULES OF THUMB

CLARIFY

When the interviewer asks you a question, make sure you understand what is being asked. You have every right to ask for clarification if you’re not sure. When in doubt, paraphrase what you thought they said.

PAUSE. RESPOND. GET SPECIFIC

Once you've heard the question, take a little pause to think before answering. Refer to your cheat sheet of PAR story titles to find the one most appropriate to the question. You only need one example for each question.

You are looking for an example with a result. Each answer to a question will involve one story or example. Remember back in grade school when the English teacher said that each sentence is one idea? The same rule applies to your interview responses. Think of each example as an expansion of one bullet from your resume.

IF YOU BLANK OUT

Don't panic. This can happen to anyone. If you go completely blank, state that you are having trouble thinking of an answer. Ask the interviewer if it is all right for you to get back to the question later and then write it down on your paper. You must take responsibility for bringing the question up again before the end of the interview.

STAY HONEST

One plant manager we worked with said that he had people interviewed three times by three different people and that the answers were later compared to see if there were any discrepancies. Your best bet is to be honest. When we are interviewing and get the feeling the respondent is not being honest, we're like dogs on the bone, asking and asking

until we get the truth. Not a pleasant experience we can assure you.

BE YOURSELF

You may get the feeling in an interview that you are encased in ice or that you've suddenly become a robot. The whole interview process seems a bit bizarre. Here you are expected to make a decision about joining a company after one or more meetings. Imagine if marriages were arranged that quickly.

The interviewer wants to know if you have the qualifications they are looking for and if you fit. Even though it is a contrived situation, do everything you can to let your true self shine through. Crack a joke if that is what you usually do; talk about an interest you're very passionate about. Let them know who you really are so you can both decide if this is truly the right fit.

AVOID THE NEGATIVE

If you speak negatively during the interview, the interviewers will see you as a negative person. Remember the Attribution Theory we discussed in Chapter 4. Keep your responses positive. If you have to talk about a problem, keep your description fewer than six words "I was let go due to restructuring."

Heather interviewed one man who responded horridly to the question, "Tell me about a conflict you had with a superior." He said, "My supervisor was fat and smoked a pack

of cigarettes a day. He was lazy and we argued over break times.” As he spoke, it seemed like he too was putting on weight and becoming more sluggish. He could have said, “My manager and I had a different orientation to time.”

One of the greatest errors people make in interviews is to talk for too long about the problem. Remember, keep the problem under six words. The action and result are the bulk of what you want to talk about.

IF THE INTERVIEWER BECOMES A ZOMBIE

If you are responding to a question and the interviewer is staring into space with that deer-in-the-headlights expression and probably thinking, “Milk, eggs, bread, then I’ll fill up with gas...I wonder if I’ll have time to go to the drycleaners...Mary looked a little under the weather,” stop talking! Ask them the magic interview phrase; “Was that enough information?” Nine out of ten times, they will say, “Yes it is,” and you can move on.

GET FEEDBACK

Don’t be afraid to ask for feedback at any stage of the interview. When providing your own examples, you might ask if a similar situation has arisen within their company and if your solution would be applicable. This gives you the opportunity to identify and address major concerns that the company has. Maintain the attitude that all problems can be resolved and that you are quite serious in your expectations.

BEFORE YOU GO

There are a few things that you must determine before the interview is terminated.

First, ask how the interviewer regards your suitability for their team and your potential place within it. Ask if they have any particular concerns; this will be your final chance to deal with any problems.

Second, ask about the next step in the selection process. It is perfectly appropriate to ask how many candidates are being interviewed for the position. Show interest in the process and in the company.

Third, ask if there is anyone else they would like you to meet right away. In a final interview situation, you may ask if it is possible to meet with other members of the company.

If time allows, request a tour of the workplace. Companies often prefer eager candidates to those who are better qualified but indifferent.

FOLLOWING UP

As soon as you finish the interview, go and buy a coffee or something stronger. Write down your notes about the interview. Pay attention to any shortcomings they thought you had, anything you forgot to say that was important, and any challenges they are facing that you can think of solutions for. Use your notes to create a tailored thank you

letter, which should be sent to all interviewers, the same day if possible.

If you are working with a recruiter and they presented you to the company, then call or email the recruiter after the interview and confirm whether or not you are interested in going to the next level. The recruiter will then have the opportunity to request feedback from their client and pass this information back to you.

TIPS FOR THANK YOU LETTERS AFTER INTERVIEWS

If you definitely want the job, start your letter off by stating this, expressing appreciation for the interview. The body of the letter will then go on to emphasize the highlights of the interview and the reasons you are a good fit with the company. Feel free to use bullets to highlight the top three reasons why you are the ideal candidate for the job or why you would love the challenge of joining their team.

Here is where you can also address any shortcomings that were raised. Was there something they had an issue with? For example:

- “We like you, but you’re over qualified.” Reiterate that you are at the time of your career where you would love a challenge like they’re offering and have no desire for advancement.
- “We like you, but we wanted someone more senior.” Provide them examples of how quickly you’ve been

promoted in each previous job you've had. Even in high school you ended up managing the Grandma Lees you were working at.

- "You would need training in SAP to work with us." Go through your PAR stories and find examples of a time you were trained quickly on a new system.

Acknowledge clearly what they perceived as the shortcoming and then address, with examples from your past, why that is not a roadblock at all.

So many times people say, "I can't believe I forgot to tell them about this or that". Look on the bright side. You have something fresh to put into your thank you letter. Don't say you forgot to mention a particular strength or experience. Instead, just state that you wanted to highlight that you...and give the PAR story.

AFTER AN INTERVIEW, ALWAYS KEEP YOUR ACTIVITY LEVEL HIGH

We have a superstition about keeping the activity level high. Once you've had that great interview, there is a tendency to want to rest on your laurels and wait by the phone like a lovesick high school student.

Now is when you need to get three completely new activities started. Meet a new contact, take a course, research a new company and send off a letter.

The more energy you have going, the more energy you will attract. And you will also be less disappointed if you don't get the phone call because other fabulous activities are in the works.

IN THE EVENT THAT YOU ARE NOT HIRED

If the interview went well and for some crazy reason you are not hired, try not to be too disheartened. Allow the interviewer to enter the circle of people who love you. Feel free to ask for an information interview, from which you might gain information, referrals and advice. Request this interview within the next six weeks, explaining that you would like to include them as a networking resource. Then keep the 6x6x6 rule of keeping in touch with them – “six times over the next six months in six different ways.”

If you want to use the person as an information source, avoid asking for interview feedback or a list of reasons why you did not get the job. When a person feels a future meeting is likely to be negative or highly-charged, your chances of continuing the connection decrease.

CHAPTER 9

EVALUATING AND NEGOTIATING OFFERS



Right now negotiating an offer may seem very far off. Yet, preparing for the job offer is where your whole job search begins. While you are researching the industry in general, and companies specifically, it is vital that you research salaries and working conditions. You wouldn't buy a Harley-Davidson without researching prices. The same principle applies when searching for work. You need to educate yourself about how Calgary O&G companies compensate employees.

IDENTIFY YOUR TOP THREE CRITERIA

In Chapter 2, we discussed the important role of self-evaluation in job search. Here is where your needs and wants really come into play.

Before you start contacting potential employers, you should determine your top three criteria or your three most important deciding factors. Because job criteria will vary throughout your career, they need to be revisited often. People come up with all sorts of top criteria, each one valid for the situation they are in. We have hundreds of examples from clients we have worked with.

For example, one man took early retirement after working at the same company for 25 years. While financially secure, he still wanted to work. He had always loved graphic design and had completed several courses over the years. He had even dabbled in graphic design at his past job, though it was certainly not his major area of responsibility. Going forward, he decided his top three criteria were as follows:

- Graphic design would be a major job responsibility
- Training and/or opportunity to continue training would be encouraged
- A friendly, collegial atmosphere would be present

Obviously, compensation, security, or fast-track advancement opportunities were not important to this man. Following his passion, he landed an entry-level graphic design job in a medium size company. With ongoing opportunities to be mentored by another employee, while continuing with night classes, this job fit his needs and wants perfectly.

One woman we worked with had an administrative assistant background with some human resource experience. She cared only that her title was human resource advisor and that the majority of her responsibilities were HR related. Another woman with downtown O&G experience wanted to work in southeast Calgary and only applied for jobs in that area. She ended up accepting a position that was five minutes from her home.

Of course, money is a major issue for many. Heather assisted with a plant closure and three of the participants indi-

cated they had only one criterion – great compensation. As long as the money was good, they weren’t particular about where they worked or how much overtime was involved. All three ended up moving to a Canadian munitions factory in Iran and were thrilled with the opportunity because it allowed them to fulfill what was important to them – making money.

Another one of our client’s most important criteria was to make at least \$150,000. He had three offers come in short of his mark, but he decided to give his job search six more weeks and hold out for what he wanted. He ended up getting three more offers and negotiated his way to his acceptable salary.

What are your top three criteria? The following list gives you a starting point. Your list can certainly include different items like room for advancement, training opportunities, team composition, pension, etc. What is important is that you’ve thought about your needs and wants and identified criteria that are important to you.

| CRITERIA | DESCRIPTION |
|-------------------------|--|
| Responsibilities | Are there certain duties you would like to perform that would help you to advance in your career? How do the responsibilities fit in with your short- and long-term goals? Will the position make use of your skills and competencies? |

| | |
|----------------------|--|
| Location | Would you like to work in Calgary? Downtown? Only in the southeast part of the city? Would you consider moving to northern Alberta for O&G opportunities? |
| Compensation | What is your bottom line? What are you worth in the industry? What is the minimum salary acceptable to you? |
| Benefits | Believe it or not, benefits are negotiable. If a benefit package is important at this stage – say you have two kids needing braces – then you need to clearly present what your ideal package looks like. |
| Vacation | You may be a world traveler or a mother with school age children who wants time off during the summer. Or you may be a mid-career changer who has worked your way up to four weeks vacation in past jobs and you don't want to let this go. Bring up the vacation package in the negotiation and see what agreement you can make with your employer. |
| Parking | Parking has definitely become the most coveted criteria in downtown Calgary. If everything else looks good to you, there's no harm asking. |
| Stock Options | Stock options are where you can truly share in the bounty. They also provide a major reason why people are willing to work the demanding hours they do. |

| | |
|----------------|---|
| Balance | Many people want to work fewer hours, have flex days or time off when children and/or elderly parents are sick. Balance may be difficult to achieve in Calgary's red-hot labour market. However, if this is one of your most important criteria, you will be committed to a job that allows for it. |
|----------------|---|

POWER PLAY

Negotiation involves a very tricky balance of power that progresses through the following stages.

1. Power with interviewer

Interviewers hold the balance of power when you are first interviewed. They have something you want – the job. They don't yet know whether you have what they want.

At this stage, keep the focus on the value you would add to their company. Keep it all about them, avoiding questions about vacation, compensation, hours, training and anything that would benefit you. Keep all your questions and answers related to how you would positively impact their bottom line and the workplace.

2. Offer is made

Once an offer has been made, you know they want you, and the power shifts to your court. Now is when you begin to negotiate in the positive and careful way that we describe here.

3. **Tricky Timing**

What do you do when asked how much you would like to earn in the first interview, prior to knowing much about the company? If you have a good rapport with the interviewer, you could say, “I would like to discuss compensation once an offer is on the table. Are you making me an offer?”

However, if you sense they need to know your salary requirements in order to continue with the hiring process, you must provide them with a number. Hopefully you have done your homework and have an idea of what they offer. You can provide a range that would be acceptable to you, adding that the range can be refined once you are clearer about the contribution you would make to the company.

4. **Signed, sealed and delivered**

Once you have been hired and have agreed to the offer, your negotiation power dwindles. Your huge window of opportunity to design your ideal criteria occurs after they have made you the offer and before you accept it.

ONCE THERE IS AN OFFER ON THE TABLE

Once the offer is made to you, clarify the details as precisely as possible. What they are offering you exactly in terms of hours, benefits, responsibilities, compensation, vacation, stock options, etc. If they haven’t already put the specifics in writing, jot down notes during the meeting and have them verify that this is the offer and sign it. Then tell them you need 24 to 48 hours to review the offer. Arrange a time to

meet in a couple of days. It is in your favour to have a face-to-face meeting.

Revisit your top three criteria and see how closely the offer fits. Remember the man who wanted \$150K? He had researched the market and knew it was possible. At this stage, he received three offers that weren't high enough and went back to renegotiate them and walked away until he got what he wanted. Talk the offer over with your significant other and trusted mentors to help you gain perspective.

THIS IS WHEN PATIENCE COMES INTO PLAY

If you've been job-hunting for a while you may want to jump at the first offer, for fear it is the only one. However, we know after years of working with people that receiving one offer indicates more are on the way. Whatever you commit to will be hard to undo once you've accepted the offer, so be sure the terms are acceptable to you.

YOUR BEST NEGOTIATION TACTICS

Before returning for the negotiating meeting, organize your thoughts into three categories:

- What you like about the offer
- What you would like to change
- What else you would like to add to the offer

Here are some strategies for conducting the negotiating meeting itself:

TAKE CHARGE

This is your meeting. You've set the agenda, so be clear about what you want and on what you're willing to bend.

REITERATE THE GOAL

Positively let them know that you want to negotiate an offer and are excited about the job. During the process, repeat the goal as many times as necessary.

STRESS THE WIN/WIN

Both parties want the same thing, namely a great match and terms that can be committed to. State this and remain positive.

PUT EVERYTHING ON THE TABLE

Say everything you want, item by item. Do not play games or pull out cards later in the process. That will only erode their trust in you. If you liked their salary and only want to negotiate vacation time, say that up front. If you need \$10,000 more a year, let them know that and work together to see where you can come up with it. It could, for example, take the form of a bonus, stock options, or a matched saving plan. The more you work with them, the better it will be for both of you.

GIVE NO PERSONAL REASONS

You are negotiating in a work place, not with a future spouse. Your personal reasons for wanting what you do are irrelevant and inappropriate to bring up at this time. It is enough

that you want these items; you do not need to bring up sick parents, eight children at home, an unemployed spouse, or an expensive chocolate habit.

THINK BEFORE YOU SPEAK

In the interviewing process it was appropriate to be forthcoming with information. During negotiation, it is important to think before you speak. Allow time for pauses and let them fill in gaps in the conversation. Remain positive and friendly, but allow yourself time to reflect.

HANDLE MULTIPLE OFFERS GRACEFULLY

What if you receive two or more offers at the same time? This is very likely when you follow our recommendations. Do let them know that you are considering other offers. Try not to play them off one another, however. In the short term it may seem to work in your favor, but doing so can easily erode trust with two or more potential employers at this stage. Remember how connected those already in O&G are. Be up front about the companies and your important criteria. If they ask you the terms being offered by the other company, you may tell them that all offers are confidential, including theirs.

DON'T ACCEPT UNTIL YOU ARE READY

You may be ready to accept at this stage. If not, we suggest you request more time to think it over. (The amount of time one takes to consider an offer is also negotiable.) You are making a huge commitment and deserve time to be ab-

olutely sure. You may want to run it past an employment lawyer. Respect their time frame and be reasonable. Be sure both you and the company sign the offer.

YOU GOTTA KNOW WHEN TO FOLD!

Remember, both you and the employer are striving for a win-win. They want you to have a compensation package and work environment that keeps you committed, especially in this competitive environment. So ask for what you want, keeping your top criteria in mind. When a fair and reasonable offer is made, one that matches what is important to you, then it is time to accept and embrace your new role. We wish you the best in getting to this place. If you follow the steps we suggest, we are confident your next great job is just around the corner.

WRAPPING THINGS UP AFTER YOU ACCEPT AN OFFER

Finally, all your hard work has paid off. Now is the time to wrap up loose ends. Contact each of your references and let them know about your new position. Thank them for their contribution to your success.

It will be important to leave your current position with the best possible attitude. It's standard to give at least two weeks notice. If your employer wants you to work through your notice period, make sure your office and projects are in order. "Do unto others as you would have them do unto you," should be your motto. In other words, leave things

as you'd like to find them if you were the boss or your replacement.

While your coworkers might try to goad you into criticizing the company or the boss, avoid this temptation, no matter how bad the situation may have been. If people ask why you are leaving, it's appropriate to give general statements like, "This is a great opportunity I just can't pass up."

Stay positive. Help in whatever ways you can to make this a smooth transition for everyone. People remember both their first and last impressions of someone, so use this time to your advantage, not your detriment.

THE RESIGNATION LETTER

Your resignation letter should contain four elements:

1. The effective date of your resignation
2. An explanation for your resignation
3. A note about the positive aspects of working for your current employer
4. A note about your willingness to wrap things up effectively

Here is sample of a respectful, yet deliberate, resignation letter:

February 1, 2007

Russell Clark
Vice President
Kaleidoscope Systems
3737 190 Street SW
Calgary, AB T4X 2Z2

Dear Russ:

Please accept this letter as my official notice of resignation effective February 19, 2007. I have accepted a position with Shymt Engineering, which provides me with an opportunity to further my career goals in the oil and gas industry.

It has been my pleasure to work with Kaleidoscope Systems these past three years. I have appreciated the friendly environment and the interesting and varied projects our team has worked on from concept to completion. I wish you and Kaleidoscope continued success in the future.

It is my intention to work diligently with you to wrap up as much as possible within the next two weeks. If you have any suggestions on how we can best accomplish that goal, please share your thoughts with me, as I am eager to leave on the most positive note possible.

Thank you.

Respectfully,

Bob Brown

CHAPTER 10

TIPS FOR FOREIGN- TRAINED PROFESSIONALS



If you have decided to bring your education and expertise to Canada, we'd like to thank you in advance because, frankly, we need you! Canada's own population growth has plateaued, the workforce is aging with large numbers nearing retirement, and statistics show that the entire net increase in new skilled workers is going to have to come from outside our borders⁷. Federal and provincial governments are responding to the need for more skilled people by amending immigration programs to make it (at least a little) easier for you to get here.

But of course, Canadians are like people everywhere: we resist change and we like to hire people just like ourselves. You may encounter some resistance among employers when confronted with hiring someone different, especially someone who both looks and sounds different and who was educated and trained in another country. One South American environmental engineer we know observed, "I felt like I had somehow lost all my expertise and training in the 12-hour flight to Calgary."

⁷*Performance and Potential 2004-05: How Can Canada Prosper in Tomorrow's World?* Special Report by the Conference Board of Canada, October 2004.

It isn't fair, but it is a reality you may need to deal with. Fortunately, there are quite a few things you can do to make it easier for employers to understand your skills and credentials and hard for them to say, "No."

Right off the top, be warned that preparing to work in O&G will be like doing another degree. It will require work, energy and some financial investment on your part, all of which will pay off once you're employed. We have worked with some foreign-trained professionals who were disappointed at how difficult the process was. Being prepared to invest work and time in the process will make you an ideal candidate for success.

IF YOU'RE STILL IN YOUR HOME COUNTRY

The first thing you should do is decide how long you're willing to wait before arriving in Canada and starting work. For example, one of the most secure ways to be allowed to enter and remain in Canada permanently is to apply under the federal Skilled Worker Program. The advantage is that you, as the candidate, apply for entry yourself rather than having to work through a prospective employer. However, officials from Citizenship and Immigration Canada (the federal body that administers the program) report that the department is currently processing a backlog of 700,000 permanent resident applications. This processing time runs from two to seven years, with the average being about three years.

As an alternative, you may want to consider entering Canada under the Temporary Foreign Worker Program. It's an employer-driven program, which means you need to get a potential employer to do the paperwork for you. If you can secure the cooperation of an employer, overall processing time under this program runs between three and four months. The advantage for the employer is that if they need more than one person with your skills, they can obtain approval for more than one worker in a given occupation under a single application.

In addition, the Provincial Government of Alberta has negotiated a pilot program with the federal government of Canada to expedite the process of helping temporary foreign workers become permanent Canadian residents. It's called the Provincial Nominee Program, and so far, it has been able to move nominees up the queue enough to reduce processing time from the three-year average for a Permanent Skilled Worker to nine to 12 months.

GET TO KNOW THE PAPER-PUSHERS

There are separate federal and provincial government departments involved in expediting requests for foreign workers to enter Canada. But don't panic – there are people whose job it is to help you through the process.

- Employment, Immigration and Industry, Alberta Government, provides tremendous information for non-Canadians (www.alberta-canada.com)

- Service Canada provides Labour Market Opinions (LMOs) that are required in obtaining work permits for foreign workers (www.servicecanada.gc.ca)
- Alberta Apprenticeship and Industry Training (AIT) verifies credentials and administers exams if you need specific certifications. Be sure to consult with the International Qualifications Assessment Service by dialing 310-0000 then 780-427-2655
- Citizenship and Immigration Canada (CIC) considers applications for Permanent Skilled Workers to enter Canada and issues work permits for Temporary Foreign Workers (www.cic.gc.ca)

START CONDUCTING RESEARCH

The more detailed and all-encompassing your research is, the greater your chance of being hired. Fortunately, with Internet access, great information is at your fingertips no matter what country you reside in. Your research should include learning about the culture and the language, as well

Stay on top of current events

As we write this in January of 2007, gas prices are low and service companies are charging a fortune -- you need to know how this is impacting operations. Encana has let some people go on the gas side and some small gas companies have folded. Some of the big producing oil companies have stopped projects because of the crazy prices the service companies are charging.

Your knowledge of these developments, in addition to the technical aspects of what the companies are doing, will increase your chance of getting hired.

as knowing everything about Calgary companies and their drilling practices: where, how, why, when and who. Your goal is to find out what challenges companies are facing.

RESUMES THAT WORK FOR CALGARY

Check our guidelines for your resume in Chapter 7. In particular, do your best to show you have a presence in Calgary. We recommend you arrange for a Shaw or Telus email account, as that shows permanence in the Calgary market, as well as a (403) area code for your phone number.

Do not include any personal information like race, religion, physical stature or photographs. Although this kind of information is common on international resumes, it is not advisable in Calgary.

Language can be a barrier

We worked with a woman last year who had been fired because only 50% of what she said was clear due to her strong accent, in spite of the fact that her education and experience were stellar.

She found a private accent coach and worked hard on her accent and was re-employed in less than two months for more money!

ONCE YOU ARRIVE

If at all possible, arrive in Canada with sufficient funds to spend a little time improving your English and cultural skills as well as updating and localizing your professional credentials and expertise.

Look for programs that go beyond conventional English as a Second Language (ESL) courses, with components including:

- English upgrading specific to a particular occupation or industry

- Cultural instruction in western Canadian practices
- On-the-job practicum assignments
- One-on-one coaching
- Improving accent control, phrasing and language skills
- Upgrading technical skills or training to obtain local certification

ESL courses are abundant in Calgary and affordable.

THERE ARE LOANS AVAILABLE TO HELP YOU MOVE INTO YOUR CHOSEN CAREER FIELD

The mandate of the Immigration Access Fund (IAF) is to provide micro loans for the upgrading, training and accreditation of internationally trained immigrants. This fund was founded by local citizens who saw the need to assist newcomers in maximizing their careers in Canada.

These loans, of up to \$5,000, are available to legal residents of Canada living in Alberta. You must have an appropriate level of working English to apply. The funding can be used to pay for tuition fees, books and course materials, exam fees, living expenses during study time, travel expenses, qualification assessments, and professional association fees. IAF works in partnership with Momentum to market the program and find suitable applicants. (Momentum administers the loan program and will guide you through the process.)

To confirm that you are eligible to apply, phone the contact listed on Momentum's website at www.momentum.org.

WHEN YOU ARE READY TO START APPLYING FOR WORK

Canadian companies with little experience with foreign-trained professionals may have reservations about how someone new will “fit” their corporate culture. You can address this head-on by:

- Knowing what local credentials are required in your profession and having yours updated to match
- Addressing any problems you may be having with ESL
- Making sure you’re up to speed on the local O&G scene (we can help you with this)

Zero in on your match

Know your accomplishments and search for how they are transferable to Calgary O&G and what you bring that will improve production.

In particular, it’s vital to understand the Canadian way of doing a job interview. For candidates from some countries, it may seem brazen to look a prospective employer in the eye or to “brag” about one’s accomplishments. Others may think that the mere mention of their university

credentials will be enough to secure the position for them, because that would do it in their own country. Not so in Calgary!

Calgary retains much of the rough-and-ready flavour of its old “Cow Town” days. A direct glance, a firm handshake and straightforward assessment of your strengths are more likely to impress an interviewer than a demure and down-cast demeanour.

When you are invited to appear for an interview, start your preparation by doing your homework. Know what's new in the industry, and specifically what challenges and opportunities this particular company is facing. Much of this research can be done online. If you do not have a home computer with Internet access, make use of one at your local library.

Think about how your credentials and experience could be useful to the company you're applying to work for. Be prepared to tell your potential employers how you addressed problems in similar circumstances in your home country, and exactly what kind of results you achieved. (It may be more comfortable for you to talk about the results of your work rather than say things about yourself personally. This can work very well.) If at all possible, use numbers. For example, "We had no cost over-runs in the projects I managed," or "Overall employee safety improved 15% while I was in charge."

Also, be aware that having been born and trained elsewhere allows you to offer your prospective employer significant advantages over homegrown candidates. You likely speak at least one language other than English, or you may have contacts in your home country that could be useful in promoting the company's export sales.

Many foreign-trained professionals have more education than their Canadian counterparts, and it won't hurt to tell your interviewer about those accomplishments. Just don't assume that they'll understand your worth from the mere

mention of the university you attended – we know several foreign engineers who assumed that employers here would have the same understanding of what it takes to graduate from prestigious universities as those back home, and they didn't make it clear or talk about their skills and successes. The result was that they were offered only entry-level positions and had to work hard to prove their worth inside the company before being promoted to a more appropriate level that reflected their credentials and education.

NETWORK, NETWORK, NETWORK

You need to create opportunities to rub shoulders with the people you want to work for. Be sure to find out about the most influential professional associations in your area of expertise and join them. (There might be associations you want to join online before you even leave your home country.) Once here, you will not only meet the right people and demonstrate your willingness to invest personal time in your profession, but you will also have the opportunity to be part of conversations among people currently in the industry. This way you can learn the lingo and find out about the culture of companies you'll be applying to, hear about the latest technological developments or even about new, unlisted job prospects.

Joining an organization like Toastmasters is a great way to practice English and also to meet people. Be sure to attend a Toastmasters group where the downtown crowd is likely to hang out.

Finally, don't underestimate the value of volunteering. As we have mentioned, volunteerism is very high in Calgary. It is a way to gain local experience and contacts while doing something worthwhile. It also demonstrates commitment to your new home. Consider joining high-profile organizations like the Stampede Board, the Rotary Club or the Calgary Zoo Board, and look for places where you would be likely to meet the people you'd like to work with.

PUT YOUR BEST FOOT FORWARD

Start contacting employers once all of your research and documents are ready and your English is strong enough for you to communicate with ease. This city needs your skills and talents.

All the best in your endeavours!

LAST WORD

Thank you for sharing this adventure with us. While we have poured out our suggestions and biases, in the end, the journey is yours and yours alone.

Of course by now we hope you realize that this doesn't mean you have to go it alone. Quite the opposite! Calgary's oil and gas core is filled with people with big hearts. If you approach your search with a pure and focused intention – showing at every step how you can add value – there is a city full of people ready to support you. They remember their own stories. They know first hand how much effort it requires to get into the industry and the hard work and determination it takes to stay.

Where are these people with big hearts? You will meet them at networking functions and schmoozing events, volunteer activities, association and board meetings, and over cups of coffee in their downtown offices. 'John' will introduce you to 'David' who will introduce you to 'Susan' who will pass your name along to 'Joanne', and so on down the line until you meet 'Harold', who happens to be desperate to hire someone just like you.

It's who you know that gets you from here to there. People are willing to get to know you. So, what are you waiting for? Go shake their hands and introduce yourself!

REFERENCES

Councils and Associations

Alberta Society of Engineering Technologists
www.aset.ab.ca

Alberta Women Entrepreneurs www.awebusiness.com

Association of Chemical Professional Alberta
www.pchem.ca

Association of Fundraising Professionals
<http://afpcalgary.afpnet.org/site/c.etJSJdMUIuE/b.1074043/k.BD84/Home.htm>

Association of Professional Engineers, Geologists, and
Geophysicists of Alberta APEGGA

Canadian Association of Drilling Engineers
www.cade.ca/m.php?p=home

Canadian Association of Management Consultants
www.camc.com

Canadian Association of Oilwell Drilling Contractors
www.caodc.ca

Canadian Association of Petroleum Production Account-
ing www.cappa.org

Canadian Council for the Americas www.ccacanada.com

Canadian Heavy Oil Association www.choa.ab.ca

Canadian Information Processing Society www.cips.ca

Canadian Investor Relations Institute www.ciri.org

Canadian Oil Scouts Association (COSA)

Canadian Society of Exploration Geophysicists
www.cseg.ca

Canadian Society of Petroleum Geologists www.cspg.org

Canadian Society of Petroleum Landmen
www.capl.ca/member

Certified General Accountants Association of Alberta
www.cga-alberta.org

Certified Management Accountants of Alberta
www.cma-alberta.com

Chartered Accountants of Alberta www.cica.ca

Gas Processing Association of Canada
www.gpacanada.com

International Association of Business Communicators
www.iabc.com

International Facility Management Association
www.ifma.org

National Association of Fleet Administration
www.nafa.org

National Science and Engineering Research Council of
Canada www.nserc-crsng.gc.ca

Petroleum Accountants Society of Canada
www.petroleumaccountants.com

Petroleum Human Resources Council of Canada
www.petrohrsc.ca

Petroleum Services Association of Canada www.psac.ca

Petroleum Technology Alliance Canada www.ptac.org

Purchasing Management Association of Canada_
www.pmac.ca

Rotary Association www.rotaryclubofcalgary.org

Society of Exploration Geophysicists www.seg.org

Society of Petroleum Engineers www.spe.org

Society of Women Engineers www.swe.org

Young Presidents' Organization www.ypo.org

OTHER USEFUL WEBSITES

Alberta Connects www.alberta-canada.com

Alberta Learning Information Service www.alis.gov.ab.ca

The Canadian Oilfield Service and Supply Directory
www.cossd.com

Centre for Newcomers www.centrefornewcomers.ca

Citizen and Immigration Canada www.cic.gc.ca

Employment, Immigration and Industry, Alberta Government www.hre.gov.ab.ca

Employment, Immigration and Industry, Calgary Region
www.employment.gov.ab.ca/calgary

Enform (training arm for the petroleum industry)
www.enform.ca

Immigration Access Fund (IAF)
www.cobloh.com/iaf/index.html

Momentum (financial assistance to internationally trained immigrants) www.momentum.org

Service Canada www.servicecanada.gc.ca

System for Electronic Document Analysis and Retrieval
(SEDAR) www.sedar.com

Trade Secrets, Apprenticeship and Industry Training
www.tradesecrets.gov.ab.ca

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would like to thank co-author Heather Johnson for her positive spirit and for being so open to all that was possible. From our O&G seminars to the final touches on the book, she has been an inspiration and anchor for this project.

Our editor Fran Kimmel and graphic designer Heather Schmidt have been godsend as well. Both multi-talented, they were brilliant in their roles and at handling the details after we finished our initial writing. Bravo!

Thanks to everyone who took the time to read, proof and provide suggestions to improve the book and make it what it is. Special thanks to Anthony Ghitter, Liane Angerman, Jan Jeske, Jan Eden, Heather Douglas, Brian Schmidt and Tom Morris. We also greatly appreciate endorsement for this writing by Mayor Dave Bronconnier. His personal message is provided as an introduction to this book.

Lastly, I would like to thank all of the candidates who attended O&G seminars these past few years. It has been your feedback and ever-changing needs that expanded our mindset and inspired this advice in helping you obtain the job of your dreams.

CB

I would like to honour Catherine for her vision and commitment that made this book and the blessings in her life possible and that she so generously shares with others.

Kudos to our editor Fran Kimmel who is an absolute genius with words and ideas.

I would like to thank my clients, especially “Henry” and “Anne” for their amazing diligence and courage and faith that has so inspired my own journey.

Blessings to Karen, John, Jessica and Hannah who love me and make my dreams come true.

HJ