



*Building Confidence
&
Interviewing Well In Your Job Search*

**CA Transition Alliance Conference
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Overview

In order to build confidence during your job search and have strong interviewing skills, you **must** have a **strategy** (a **plan**) that helps you get from the point at which you start your search (**Point A**) to the point at which you are offered a position (**Point B**).

Point A

You start your search



Point B

You're offered a position

The plan has 4 steps:

1. Establish your goals

2. Tell your story
(develop an “elevator pitch”)

3. Network

4. Follow the Interview Process

Step 1: Establish Your Goals

The first step you need to take in your job search is to ***establish your goals***. If you can answer the following three questions (out loud!), you'll have a much better chance of being focused during your job search and successful in finding the right opportunities for yourself.

- 1. Why do I need a job?***
- 2. What kind of work would I like to do?***
- 3. How much money do I need to make?***

Step 2: Tell Your Story

Once you've established your goals, you need to develop an **easy** and **quick** way for people to understand what kind of job you are looking for and what (if any) **skills**, **training** and **experience** you bring to the table.

The **best** way to do this is to think of yourself as a **storyteller**. No matter how old you are or whether or not you have any work experience, you still have a story to tell. We are **all** storytellers!

Your story is a **narrative** with a **beginning**, **middle** and **end** that instructs people about your life, about your interests, about your background, and about what you'd like to do.

Tell Your Story

(continued):

An easy way to put your story together is to develop an **“elevator pitch.”**

An elevator pitch for a job seeker is a **short summary** that allows you to describe – in the amount of time that you would be riding in an elevator – **what you’d like to do, why you’d like to do it and how you can add value to an organization.**

The average length of your elevator pitch should be approximately 60 seconds.

Tell Your Story

(continued):

You should be prepared to give your elevator pitch to:

- Your network (family, trusted friends, trusted colleagues)
- Prospective employers
- Qualified professionals who can advise you and help you in your job search

Tell Your Story

(continued):

The 3 parts of an elevator pitch are:

Part 1: Introduce yourself and explain your current situation

Part 2: Describe where you would like to work (ideally)

Part 3: Describe your “inner core”

Tell Your Story

(continued):

Part 1:

Introduce yourself and explain your current situation

Always open your elevator pitch by giving your name and explaining whether or not you are still in school or if you've recently graduated or have completed your certification(s). For example:

“My name is Sheila Hart and I have just graduated from Lodi High School.”

Tell Your Story

(continued):

Part 1 (continued):

Introduce yourself and explain your current situation

Or, if you've graduated from college, you might say something along the lines of:

“My name is Sheila Hart and I've just graduated from Mt. Sierra College with a Bachelor's degree in Media Arts & Design, with a concentration in Graphic Design.”

Tell Your Story

(continued):

Part 2:

**Describe where you would like to work
(ideally)**

Be prepared to explain where you would like to work, and why. For example:

“I would like to work for a sporting goods store because I love sports and I want to help customers and teach them about all different kinds of sporting activities.”

Tell Your Story

(continued):

Part 2 (continued):

**Describe where you would like to work
(ideally)**

Or, if you've just graduated from college and have a more specific skill set you'd like to describe, you might say something along the lines of:

“I’ve always been interested in clean energy and in design, and want to apply my graphic design skills and experience to working for an ad agency or media agency or marketing firm that has clients in the clean energy arena.”

Tell Your Story

(continued):

Part 3:

Describe your “inner core”

Your “inner core” consists of your *principles* and *values*. “Principles” are guidelines of human conduct that have enduring value, and “values” represent the way that **you** behave in order to follow those guidelines.

What do you care about? And why do you care? If you can answer those questions, that will tell people a lot about your “inner core.”

Tell Your Story

(continued):

Describe your “inner core”

(continued)

Your “inner core” doesn’t have to be complicated. Just think of it as the source that drives you to work hard and care about what you do. For example, you might say:

“I am a hard working person who cares about people. I have a positive attitude and a strong desire to learn new things.”

Tell Your Story

(continued):

Describe your “inner core”

(continued)

Or, if you would like to add a few more details to the description of your “inner core” you might say something along the lines of:

“I am a creative and driven person who cares about the people I work with and about the work that I do. I have great interpersonal skills, a positive attitude and a strong desire to continue learning.”

Tell Your Story

(continued):

Sample Elevator Pitch

From a high school graduate:

“My name is Sheila Hart and I have just graduated from Lodi High School.”

“I would like to work for a sporting goods store because I love sports and I want to help customers and teach them about all different kinds of sporting activities.”

“I am a hard working person who cares about people. I have a positive attitude and a strong desire to learn new things.”

Tell Your Story

(continued):

Sample Elevator Pitch From a college graduate:

“My name is Sheila Hart and I’ve just graduated from Mt. Sierra College with a Bachelor’s degree in Media Arts & Design, with a concentration in Graphic Design.

“I’ve always been interested in clean energy and in design and want to apply my graphic design skills and experience to working for an ad agency or media agency or marketing firm that has clients in the clean energy arena.”

“I am a creative and driven person who cares about the people I work with and about the work that I do. I have great interpersonal skills, a positive attitude and a strong desire to continue learning.”

Step 3: Network

Once you have established your goals and are comfortable with your elevator pitch, the next steps are to **network**.

Networking is the art of keeping in touch with people you know, and getting in touch with people you would like to meet.

Networking allows old friends new friends, colleagues and future employers to have an up-to-date understanding of what you're doing or what you'd like to do.

Step 4: Follow The Interview Process:

Now you're ready to follow the interview process itself, which is the most important step in your job search. There are 3 stages:

1. Preparation

2. The Interview

3. Follow-up

Stage 1: Preparation

▶ *You MUST prepare for your interview!*

▶ *Preparation will:*

- Help you gain confidence.
- Allow you to be many steps ahead of the other candidates who don't prepare.
 - Allow you to show your future employer how you will add value to his or her company.
- Greatly increase your chances of landing the job you are seeking.

Stage 1: Preparation

(continued)

➤ *Preparation refers to Research and Practice*

➤ *Research includes:*

- Researching the company
- Analyzing the job description (if there is one)
- Anticipating which questions you'll be asked
- Coming up with questions you would like to ask
- Being prepared to give 1 or 2 examples of challenges you have faced in the past

➤ *Practice includes:*

- Practicing talking about your work experience, or volunteer experience, or simply talking about some of your interests in life
- Practicing showing how some of the classes you've taken could help you in your job
 - Practicing answering your questions out loud
 - Practicing asking your questions out loud

Stage 1: Preparation

(continued)

➤ *Researching refers specifically to learning more about the company in order to find out:*

- What kinds of services or products does it offer?
 - Who are the customers?
 - Is it local, national or global?
- Does it seem like the type of company or organization where you would like to work and, if so, why?

Stage 1: Preparation

(continued)

➤ *Analyze the Job Description:*

- If there is an actual job description, make sure you read it very carefully.
- You need to look at each bullet point on the job description and be prepared to demonstrate how you are able to tackle each of the ***responsibilities*** and ***qualifications*** listed.
- There might be some things listed on the job description that you don't yet know how to do, and that's ok! Just be honest about it with your interviewer and tell him or her that you are willing and able to learn.

Stage 1: Preparation

(continued)

➤ *You need to anticipate which questions you think you'll be asked about:*

- What you like or don't like about school.
- Any work experience or internships you might have had in the past. It's ok if you don't have experience yet, but if you do, you need to be prepared to talk about it.
- The company or organization where you are applying for the job. You want to be able to answer the question, "why do you want this job?" or "why do you want to work here?"

Stage 1: Preparation

(continued)

➤ ***You need to prepare questions YOU would like to ask about:***

- The company or organization.
 - The job itself.

For example, you might want to ask about what you'll be doing, how much training you will be given, if there will be opportunities for advancement, etc.

By asking a few questions you'll show that you have genuine interest in the company, and this will help you stand out as a candidate.

Stage 1: Preparation

(continued)

- *You need to be prepared to give 1 or 2 examples of challenges you have faced in the past...*
 - In your job, or in an internship, or in school, or in a school-related activity.
 - Explain **why** you were challenged and **how** you resolved each challenge (for better or worse).
 - Demonstrate what lessons you learned from those challenges.

Stage 1: Preparation

(continued)

➤ **PRACTICE!**

- In order to do your best during an interview ***you must practice beforehand!*** You need to practice demonstrating your skills and/or describing your accomplishments and/or discussing your career goals.
- You need to literally ***pretend you're in the room with your interviewer(s)*** and rehearse your demonstrations and practice answering all the questions you think you'll be asked.

Stage 1: Preparation

(continued)

➤ *Practice includes:*

- Practicing talking about any work experience or internships you might have had in the past.
- Practicing showing how some of the classes you've taken might help you do the job you're seeking.
- Practicing answering your questions **out loud**.
- Practicing (**out loud**) asking the questions you would like to ask.
 - Practicing (**out loud**) describing 1 or 2 challenges you have faced in the past.

Stage 2: The Interview

➤ ***An interview is a 2-way conversation in which:***

- You are an active participant
 - You have to listen
- You have to answer questions
 - You have to ask questions
- You have to do your best to converse

You are being judged mostly on your ***attitude*** and the way in which you show that you really want the job.

By being an ***active participant*** during the interview, this will help you have a better chance of landing the job.

Stage 2: The Interview

(continued)

➤ **Show up on time!**
(15 minutes early) and bring:

- Your resume (if you have one).
- Completed job application (if there is one).
 - Job description (if there is one).
- Any specific documents you have been asked to bring (references, academic transcripts, etc.).
 - If applicable, and if you think it will help demonstrate what you can do, bring a portfolio (electronic or written) of work you've done in school or in previous jobs.
- A list of questions you might want to ask.
 - Notepad and pen.

Stage 2: The Interview

(continued)

➤ *Dress Appropriately!*

Make sure you are presentable during your interview. Clean clothes, hair and nails are essential. It's highly recommended to wear solid colors (blues or grays) and some suggested colors for accessories are burgundy, blue, white, red or yellow. Please try to avoid wearing all black or flashy colors.

Women should wear slacks or dresses or skirts (hemlines should be no more than 1 ½ inches above the knee, with natural color stockings). Blouses, sweaters or other appropriate shirts should not be see-through. Heels should be no higher than 2 inches, and purses should be small or medium in size.

Stage 2: The Interview

(continued)

➤ *Dress Appropriately!*

(continued)

Men should have clean, pressed shirts and slacks. If you are wearing a coat and tie, make sure your tie isn't too "loud" and also make sure the color of your dress socks matches the color of your shoes and your slacks.

If you have long hair and think this will prevent you from getting the job you want, you should consider getting a haircut. Otherwise, if your hair is long, it should be combed back into a neat ponytail or in neat braids.

If you aren't wearing a coat and tie, wear a dress shirt or polo shirt and slacks, and don't wear jeans or oversize pants with cuffs/bottoms that come below your shoe soles.

Stage 2: The Interview

(continued)

➤ ***Greet your interviewer with:***

- Direct eye contact
- A firm handshake whenever possible
- Repeat his or her name out loud so that you will remember it

➤ ***Once you're in the room or wherever you are being interviewed...***

- Take your time to get settled
- Don't allow yourself to feel rushed
 - Relax and breathe!

➤ ***Answer questions***

- Slowly and concisely and let your personality shine!

➤ ***Be yourself!***

Stage 2: The Interview

(continued)

➤ ***Think of your answers as having two parts:***

1. What
2. Why (or How)

➤ ***So, for example, if you're asked: "What is your favorite subject?" you could answer as follows:***

[What:] *"My favorite subject in school is biology"*

[Why:] *"I had a great teacher who really motivated me to learn."*

Stage 2: The Interview

(continued)

➤ *At the end of the interview ask:*

“Are there any more questions you would like to ask me?” Or, “Have I answered all of your questions to your satisfaction?”

And then you want to ask:

“What are the next steps? Will I hear from you, or would you like me to contact you? If so, when?”

➤ *Before you leave the building:*

Look your interviewer in the eye, offer a firm handshake and thank him for his time.

Ask if he has a business card. If he doesn't have one, ask where he can be reached by mail.

Stage 3: Follow-Up

➤ *After any interview, you should always follow up by saying “thank you” to your interviewer. It’s important to do this because:*

- It’s the courteous thing to do.
- Very few people do it, so it will make you stand out as a candidate.

You can say “thank you” by writing a short letter or email, or by calling your interviewer on the phone. Do what is most comfortable for you.

Stage 3: Follow-Up

(continued)

- ***If you don't feel comfortable writing a follow-up thank you note or email...***

If writing is not one of your strengths then you should ***call your interviewer*** the day after your interview to thank him for his time.

You might not be able to reach him directly and might have to leave him a message, so ***be sure to practice leaving the message before you make the phone call.*** Make your message short, simple, polite and clear about your intentions.

“Hello, Mr. Smith. This is Sheila Hart calling and I wanted to say thank you for interviewing me yesterday for the cashier position at XYX company. I enjoyed meeting you and I am very interested in the job. Again, thank you for your time – and I look forward to hearing from you soon. My phone number is (123) 456-7899.”

Stage 3: Follow-Up (continued)

- ***After you have sent the email and/or letter, or after you have made your thank you phone call...***
 - Follow whatever directions your interviewer gave you at the end of the interview.
 - If you haven't heard from him after the specified period of time, and if he said it was ok to call him at that point, then call his office and ask to speak with him.
 - Take a deep breath, relax and remain positive.

Good luck!!

Stage 3: Follow-Up

(continued)

Sample thank you letter

Date

Dear Mr. Smith,

Thank you for meeting with me on (fill-in-the-blank-day) to discuss the cashier position at XYZ Company.

After learning more about the position, I am convinced that my great attitude and my desire to learn will allow me to do an excellent job.

During the interview you mentioned that the job might require that I work on Sundays, and I wanted to confirm with you that I am available to work whenever you might need me.

Again, I thank you for the opportunity to meet with you, and I look forward to hearing from you in the near future.

Sincerely,

Sheila Hart

Cell: 555-555-5555

Stage 3: Follow-Up

(continued)

Sample thank you email

Dear Mr. Smith,

Thank you for taking the time to meet with me today. I enjoyed hearing about the cashier position at XYZ Company and would like you to know that I am very interested in the job and I would really like to be a part of your team.

I look forward to hearing from you.

Sincerely,

Sheila Hart

Tel: 555-555-5555

Stage 3: Follow-Up (continued)

Sample Thank You Letter

Date

Ms. Erica Jones
ABC Agency
1234 Main Street
Los Angeles, CA 90032

RE: Graphic Designer Position

Dear Ms. Jones,

Thank you for meeting with me on (fill-in-the-blank-day) to discuss the Graphic Designer position at ABC Agency.

After learning more about the position, I am convinced that my background and experience will allow me to do outstanding work for ABC, and I am also very aware that I will learn a great deal from being a member of the team.

During the interview you mentioned the job might require that I work on weekends and in the evenings from time to time, and I wanted to confirm with you that I am available to work whenever you might need me.

Again, I thank you for the opportunity to meet with you, and I look forward to hearing from you in the near future.

Sincerely,

Sheila Hart
Cell: 555-555-5555
Email: sheilahart@emailaddress.com

Suggested template for your thank you letter

Date

[4 spaces]

Ms. Erica Jones
ABC Agency
1234 Main Street
Los Angeles, CA 90032

[2 spaces]

RE: Graphic Designer Position

[2 spaces]

Dear Ms. Jones,

[2 spaces]

PARAGRAPH 1: Thank him/her/them for taking the time to meet with you to discuss the position on fill-in-the-blank day.

[2 spaces]

PARAGRAPH 2: State that after learning more about the position, your background and experience will make you an outstanding candidate for the job.

[2 spaces]

PARAGRAPH 3: In this paragraph bring up one or two details that were discussed during the interview, just to show your interviewer(s) that you really are interested in the job and to remind them that you are the candidate they should hire.

[2 spaces]

PARAGRAPH 4: Repeat that you appreciate their taking the time to have met with you, and state that you're looking forward to hearing from them soon.

[2 spaces]

Sincerely,

[4 spaces]

Sheila Hart
Cell: 555-555-5555
Email: sheilahart@emailaddress.com

APPENDIX:

Sample Cover Letter

Ms. Erica Jones
ABC Agency
1234 Main Street
Los Angeles, CA 90032

Date

RE: Graphic Designer Position

Dear Ms. Jones,

My name is Sheila Hart and I am a recent graduate of the Media Arts & Design program at Mt. Sierra College in Monrovia, California. I am interested in the Graphic Designer position at ABC Agency and have included my resume, job application and ten samples of my work for your review.

Over the past two years, while completing my coursework at Mt. Sierra, I have had the opportunity to work five hours per week as an intern at a sign design company in Irvine, CA. The internship has given me the chance to work in a fast-paced environment, creating on-demand layouts using my 2D design, CorelDraw, Adobe Photoshop and Adobe Illustrator skills.

For as long as I can remember, I have always been interested in design. This is why I enrolled in the Media Arts & Design program and why I feel that my passion for what I do, my training at Mt. Sierra, my great attitude and my strong work ethic will make me a valuable member of the ABC Agency team.

I would very much appreciate the opportunity to interview for the position of Graphic Designer, and I look forward to hearing from you in the near future.

Thank you for your time.

Yours sincerely,

Sheila Hart
Email: sheilahart@emailaddress.com
Cell: 555-555-5555

APPENDIX:

Suggested template for your cover letter

Date

[4 spaces]

Ms. Erica Jones
ABC Agency
1234 Main Street
Los Angeles, CA 90032

[2 spaces]

RE: Graphic Designer Position

[2 spaces]

Dear Ms. Jones,

[2 spaces]

[PARAGRAPH 1: State who you are, why you're writing to them, and that you are including your resume and job application for their review]

[2 spaces]

[PARAGRAPH 2: State what you've been doing for the past several years, and include information (if possible) that explains how this ties in to your wanting to be a Graphic Designer (for example)]

[2 spaces]

[PARAGRAPH 3: State why you are interested in the position and that you'll be a dedicated member of the team]

[2 spaces]

[PARAGRAPH 4: State that you would like to have the chance to interview for the position]

[2 spaces]

Thank you for your time.

[2 spaces]

Yours sincerely,

[4 spaces]

Sheila Hart
Email: sheilahart@emailaddress.com
Cell: 555-555-5555

GOOD LUCK!

**Please contact me if you need further
assistance.**

Email: brad@bradpollak.com

Tel: (562) 795-6121

www.bradpollak.com