

Transitions: Life Skills for Personal Success

PrimeTime Computer Services, Inc

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CAREER PREPARATION MODULE

The old saying goes, “If you fail to prepare, you’re preparing to fail.” It’s true for anything in life—especially career development.

In fact, researchers have documented that career preparation is critical not only for high school students (The Kansas City Star, 2006), but also for successful and seasoned employees who must stay on top of career prep practices so they’re prepared if/when they need to find a new job (Demars, 2002). More importantly, successful career development has been found critical in the overall success of students in college (Quimby & O’Brien, 2004) so in reality, career prep is critical for school success.

The Career Preparation Module in the Transitions Program was designed to meet the expectations of employers from ANY industry—as well as arm our learners with the tools they need to get employed, stay employed and enjoy a prosperous career.

Our lessons and activities were painstakingly developed to ensure our learners would experience true to life situations that elicit the career preparation skills and behaviors that employers expect and demand.

In addition, we formulated a sequence of high-powered topics that begin with the fundamentals for success and culminate with the acquisition of skills that exceed expectations.

Informational Interviews

We begin the Career Preparation Module with a lesson about gathering specific information that is used to confirm the needs of targeted industries, companies and even individual hiring managers. In our lesson entitled: “Can We Talk? How to Use Informational Interviews to Your Advantage” we provide the rationale behind informational interviews, “how to’s” in conducting them, and advice on collecting valuable data that will help strengthen any career prep process.

Applying for a Job

Let’s say a person conducts an informational interview at a local company and learns that he/she likes it and wants to work there. Well, the next step is usually either filling out an application or submitting a resume or both. Which leads us to our next lesson: “Apply Yourself and Get the Job!” In this lesson our learners are given explicit details about job application do’s and don’ts. They also have an opportunity to complete a self-guided template that teaches them the importance of thorough information. Finally, the lesson includes activities involving the presentation of the application—did you know that you should wear professional attire even when you are just dropping off an application?

Writing a Cover Letter

In order to apply for a job, you will very often need a form of technical writing known as the Cover Letter. A cover letter is an employer's FIRST glimpse at your writing skills, and your cover letter has to officially introduce you, flow from one idea to the next and entice the reader to want to learn more about you. If it sounds like a tall order to fill for just one typed page, you're right! That's why learning how to make your cover letter compelling, informative and a reflection of your strong communication skills is critical. But don't worry, our exercises will show you how to do all of that and much more!

Preparing Your Resume

If an employer does not require an application, the employer will certainly ask you for your resume. Effective resume writing is so critical, we made it a two-part series. In our resume lessons we cover everything from choosing a format, organizing your skills sections, and thinking about how employers view resumes, to the most effective ways of presenting it to an employer. Upon the completion of this two-part series, you may not have another question about resume preparation ever again!

Acing the Interview

After the resume and cover letter have been sent, received and read by the employer, the desired outcome is for you to receive an invitation for an interview. In our next lesson called: "The 3 P's of Acing an Interview: Prepare, Practice, Perform" we show you how to do just that! In fact, in our follow up lesson called "Interviewing for Success" we offer our learners a long list of sample interview questions and answers!

Networking for Success

Our next lesson of the module has two parts because it covers yet another critical component of career prep success: Networking! Many job seekers think that the job search is over once an offer is accepted—not true! That's when the REAL job searching and career preparation begin! Networking at work is important because it helps you meet others in your company and out in the "field" who have similar goals, aspirations and plans for their careers. Networking on the job is simply a way of making friends who might help you find another job during a time when you might need them— after downsizing or when you decide to move on, for example.

Being 'Results-Oriented'

We conclude our Career Preparation Module with a lesson that seems unlike any other— it introduces our learners to the fundamental, universal, tried and true skill they need for successful career preparation: Bottom Line Oriented Thinking! What does being Bottom Line Oriented (BLO) have to do with finding a job? Well, BLO thinking is exactly what hiring managers do. Now, imagine if you could not only understand their reasons for thinking this way, but you could also prepare your cover letter and resume to present information about yourself that is important to THEM! Imagine how well your interviews will go when you can speak the language of a manager or supervisor! You see, the process of preparing for and conducting your job search should include understanding your main objective—to relate to the hiring managers' needs. And this is why this BLO thinking section is a two-part series.

At some point, when you find yourself job searching again and the career prep cycle starts over, you may refer back to this material for assistance. But your next time through the career prep cycle will find you much wiser and with many helpful contacts in your network to help you. They will be part of a process of life-long learning, for when it comes to career preparation, we ALL continue to learn how to be better job hunters and employees—every day and every year until we decide to retire. And, believe it or not, one day soon, you will be someone's most important contact for career advice and assistance—so keep learning! Ah, the circle of life!

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