Job Search Tools

Make no mistake about it: searching for a job is hard work. But with the right tools, the search can be easier. The purpose of this guide is to provide you with tools to help you in your job search.

Here in the College of Business, our Office of Employer Relations – working in tandem with the USF Career Center – can help you explore career fields, perfect your résumé, and sharpen your job-hunting skills.

We host a number of events and workshops designed to help you further develop as a professional. We provide opportunities for you to meet employers seeking to hire business grads and host events to help you hone your interviewing and networking skills. Most of these events and workshops are exclusively for business majors and are held in the College of Business.

Visit us in BSN 2202 (down the hall from Undergraduate Advising). We look forward to assisting you with your career search needs.

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- Embarking on the Job Search
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- Drafting Cover Letters
- Email Correspondence
- Building a Network
- Working Career Fairs
- Acing the Interview
- What to do After the Interview
- Dressing Professionally
- Receiving/Accepting an Offer
- Career Search Checklist

College of Business Offices and Contacts

Office of Employer Relations
Partnering with USF’s Career Center, the Office of Employer Relations offers career and professional development services exclusively for business majors and also works with employers to offer info sessions and promote internships and job opportunities for business students.

(813) 974-8155
BSN 2202

BizComm Center
Just for business majors, the BizComm Center aims to help students strengthen their communications skills. BizComm staff not only help students with academics (services are free), but are also available to help students polish résumés and draft killer cover letters.

(813) 974-6924
BSN 2101
Campus Career Resources

USF Career Center

Whether you are a first-year student exploring career options or a graduating senior looking for your first professional position, the Career Center can help. Located in the Student Services Building (SVC 2088), on the second floor, above Financial Aid, the Career Center offers:

- **Student Résumé Assistance**
  Upload your résumé to Career Connections for employers to view.

- **Career Connections Online Job Board**
  Register with Career Connections for access to current job and internship openings, where all job openings for USF students are posted.

- **On-Campus Interviews**
  Participate in on-campus interviews with employers seeking to hire.

- **Virtual Video Interview**
  Self-record a practice interview and receive a professional critique.

- **Career and Job Networking Fairs**
  Network with companies that are hiring for internships and full-time positions.

- **Vault Online Career Library**
  A library of print resources, including industry guides, assessment tools, career advice books, employer guides, and career topic guides with tips on networking, interviewing, résumés, etc.

College of Business Employer Relations

Exclusively for business students, the Office of Employer Relations provides services for graduate students seeking higher-level jobs as well as for undergraduate students who might be looking for that first job. Services for undergraduates include:

- **Corporate Information Sessions**
  Face-to-face sessions to learn more about a company’s culture as well as current or anticipated employment opportunities.

- **Undergraduate Job Postings**
  Job postings and business career listserv.

- **Professional Development Programs**
  Hosted or sponsored by employers who regularly hire USF business students, these workshops help students improve communications, networking, and other job-search skills, all provided from the hiring manager’s perspective.

  **Elevator Competition**: actually held in an elevator, this competition helps students improve their personal networking and communications skills. Prep workshops help students learn how to sell themselves and create a positive, professional first impression.

  **Dress for Success**: students learn how to dress for job interviews and also receive training on body language, handshakes, and other non-verbal cues.

- **Internship Referrals**
  Guidance for students applying for internships and assistance for companies seeking interns.

CareerBeam

CareerBeam is an online career success center (www.careerbeam.com/USFReg.asp ) providing:

- Self-assessment quizzes
- Résumé and cover letter tips
- Interview preparation
- Sample job search correspondence

- Networking tips and exercises
- Organization, industry, and international databases
- Tools to track job search and networking contacts
Increasing Self-Knowledge

Self-assessment is a critical first step in choosing a career. Answer the following questions with “yes” or “no.”

___ 1. Can you clearly state your career goal?
___ 2. Can you explain why you chose your major?
___ 3. Can you name your greatest strength?
___ 4. Can you name your greatest weakness?
___ 5. Can you name those work activities you do best?
___ 6. Can you list at least five job skills and document how you've used them?
___ 7. Can you list (for each of your most important job-related experiences):
   ___ a. five tasks you accomplished?
   ___ b. five things you learned?
   ___ c. a significant contribution you made?
___ 8. Have you identified which part of the U.S. (or the world) that you want to work (location) and any situations that might impact that?

**Scoring:** if you have more than three “no” answers, your job search should begin with a self-assessment.

Self-assessment is more than just figuring out the answer to the “what do you want to be when you grow up” question. A personal inventory will help you discover how your interests, talents, skills, and work values relate to potential career fields.

Assessment instruments are NOT tests. They are TOOLS to help you better understand yourself and see how your interests, skills and values fit into the work world.

There are a number of tools available from USF's Career Center including MyPlan.com, an online career planning service purchased by the USF Career Center for USF student use, and Sigi3, a tool to help examine key motivators, work-related values, career interests, and skills as related to educational and career paths. The Career Center’s counselors can also provide access to additional professional and self-directed assessment tools that may be better suited to your needs and interests.

Clarifying Your Direction

Smart business students explore career options in part by taking advantage of the employer info sessions and development programs sponsored by either the College or the Career Center. Answer the following questions with “yes” or “no.”

___ 1. Are you involved in any business student organizations or professional organizations?
___ 2. Have you participated in any of the College’s professional programs, such as the Corporate Mentor Program, Bulls Business Community, or the Career Clinic?
___ 3. Have you held an internship or coop position or enrolled in practicum courses?
___ 4. Have you studied abroad or explored international businesses?
___ 5. Do you know how to sell yourself or have you crafted your “elevator speech?”

**Scoring:** if you have more than two “no” answers, you are not taking advantage of services that will greatly assist you in your job search.
Gaining Experience

Everyone wins with internship programs. Employers are able to boost workplace productivity and students are able to strengthen business skills. Students gain real-life experiences, learn new programs, and experience life in a professional workplace. Employers gain temporary help from fresh, eager, aspiring business students. While internships and practicums are not designed to serve as extended interview, they often allow employers to evaluate potential new hires before extending an offer.

About Internships:

- Whether paid or unpaid, internships can help you gain valuable work experience and bolster your résumé.
- Internships help you build a professional network.
- The duration of the internship varies, but most interns average 10 hours per week, spending roughly 100 hours a semester as an intern.
- Practicums are essentially internships that are tied to a specific college class. Here in the College of Business, the marketing practicum is a very popular course for students nearing graduation (and is open to non-marketing majors).

Finding An Internship:

- To learn about business-specific internships for USF students, sign up for the College of Business listserv, where we post information about internships and other career events.
- Internships that are open to all majors are advertised through the USF Career Center’s Career Connections.
- Attend on-campus job fairs as many employers recruit interns as well as future employees through these fairs.
- National firms often recruit interns from universities nationwide and do not post opportunities at individual universities. Create a target list of companies and use the web to research internship programs.
- Most internships have an application process similar to the traditional job search. When you apply for an internship, include a cover letter with your résumé, prepare for the interview as you would for a permanent job, and follow-up with the interviewer.
- Even if you are several semesters away from graduation, attend career and professional development workshops to help you prepare for the internship interview and learn how to sell yourself.
- Community service and volunteer projects can give you a chance to use current skills and develop new ones. While unpaid, such service is often considered real work experience in the eyes of future employers. Seek out such service projects through USF’s Center for Civic Engagement or by contacting social service agencies directly. Most do not post internships but will tailor opportunities to an individual student’s skills and goals.

Once You Have Landed The Internship:

- Interns are expected to be punctual, responsible contributors who comply with all workplace rules and regulations, dress appropriately, and represent USF well.
- Try to establish contacts within the company and field for future networking purposes.
- Do not wait for projects to come your way. Be proactive and seek out new projects.
- Do more than is expected of you.
- Send a thank you note to your supervisor at the conclusion of your internship.
Sending emails, mailing résumés, and responding to postings are part of a job search, but educated business students know that the most effective job searches start with a career plan.

An effective plan goes beyond searching Monster.com. It begins with a little research, will lead you to a target list of 15-20 companies, and includes written action steps to promote yourself in order to land a job.

**Do Some Research**

**Research Occupational Fields**
Occupational research can help you discover interest areas and jobs you may not know about, as well as help find entry-points. It will reveal details about advancement opportunities.

**Research the Job Market**
Researching the job market will help you determine which companies and industries are hiring now and salary ranges for the jobs you are considering.

**Research Individual Companies**
After you have researched the market and industries, create a target list of companies. Learn about the company’s leadership team, look at its financial statements and evaluate the benefits of working for each firm.

You should find out:
- Products and/or services sold/produced.
- Ownership (publicly or privately owned), financial stability, whether the company is a subsidiary or a division of a national/international firm, headquarters location.
- Number of employees and corporate culture.
- Industry and company trends.
- Major customers, competitors, market position.

**Where can you find this info?**
- Online databases: CareerBeam, Hoover’s
- Print media: *Fortune, BusinessWeek, American Business Journals*, local newspapers
- Social media: Twitter, message boards
- Company websites, annual reports, investor sites, industry guides

Such research will not only help you create a target list but will also help you tailor your résumé and cover letter to each firm.

**Draft a Plan**
A Career Action Plan is very similar to a marketing plan, except in this case, the product is you. Key parts of a marketing plan include:

**Target Position(s)**
List the jobs you desire.

**Situational Analysis**
Similar to a business SWOT analysis, your personal analysis should list your key strengths and talents that might make you more marketable to employers. Think about the competencies and skills needed for your chosen career field and identify any skill gaps.

**Brand/Position Statement**
Summarize your past experience and describe what is unique about your brand (you). Note your values, your interests, and your future goals.

**Target Market**
Detail the type of company you aim to work for, including geographic area, size, and corporate culture.

**Strategy/Promotion**
List the skills you will gain while earning your bachelor’s degree. Determine if you need to earn an advanced degree and if you will do so while working full-time or part-time. List specific career events and programs you will use to promote yourself and steps you will take to accomplish your career goals.
Target Positions
Financial Analyst, Budget Analyst, Business Operations Specialist

Situation Analysis
Key Strengths:
• Excellent analyzer: financial data, budgeting; able to analyze and resolve problems
• Recognized for positive work ethic
• Effective, experienced team member
• Good written communication skills

Skills Gaps:
• Leadership, supervisory experience
• Specific industry experience
• Poor presentation skills

External Environment
Tampa Bay has a lot of entry-level opportunities in the financial services field. Several large organizations are headquartered here, and the overall economy is service-oriented. Within the next few years, service industries are expected to grow, thus creating job openings.

Brand/Position Statement
I am enthusiastic and self-motivated. I have a strong desire to succeed. I value integrity, variety, and a positive environment. I believe I will work best in a position that allows me to be creative while contributing to the overall success of the organization. I am known for my interpersonal skills and my ability to communicate effectively. In my next role, I would like to be known as a rising business leader who understands and can interpret data efficiently and effectively.

Target Market
• Geographic area: all of Tampa Bay, including Clearwater, St. Pete, Bradenton, Sarasota, Lakeland
• Industries: financial services, telecommunications, banking
• Size of organization: mid-sized
• Culture: high degree of integrity; involved in community and displays corporate social responsibility; encourages creativity

Target Companies
- Raymond James
- Jabil Circuit
- Bank of America
- Wachovia
- American Express
- JPMorgan Chase
- Franklin Templeton
- Morgan Stanley
- Tech Data
- Verizon
- AT&T
- AG Edwards
- Capital One
- SunTrust
- Nielsen
- TECO

Strategy/Promotion
1. Schedule an appointment with a career counselor at the USF Career Center.
2. Sign up for the College of Business listserv.
3. Draft a sample cover letter and take it to the BizComm Center for a free critique.
4. Attend workshops to improve presentation skills.
5. Take part in the Elevator Competition to learn how to make a better first impression.
6. Register with USF Career Connections and search the database weekly for open opportunities.
7. Begin reading trade publications to keep up-to-date on business trends.
8. Contact a fraternity brother who graduated and now works for TECO.
9. Talk with a finance professor to discuss potential referrals.
Craft Your Résumé

It’s been said you never get a second chance to make a first impression and your résumé often makes that impression for you. There is no single “perfect” format, but there are some commonly accepted standards.

Essential Info
- Include phone number, email, and mailing address.
- Include the university’s formal name, degrees earned, and year earned/expected.
- Include employer name, city and state/location, job title, and dates of employment or experience for paid employment, internships, summer jobs, and/or project work (project work may also be listed under education section but should not be included in both places).

Optional Content
- Include a website address with your contact information only if showing sample work. Be certain all aspects of your website/blog (included links from it) are suitable for potential employers to view.
- Consider a career objective to show self-awareness and commitment to a field.
- Coursework should only be included if it shows special training or expertise.
- List campus activities and student organizations, especially those where you held non-social leadership positions.
- Honors, awards, and scholarships may be included, but only those that are truly special.
- You may note that work samples, or portfolios will be furnished upon request.

Formatting Standards
- Keep your résumé to one page if possible; advanced degree students with several years work experience may require a second page. Make sure contact information is at the top of the second page.
- Keep headings consistent.
- Use a minimum .5” margin.
- Use standard, easy-to-read fonts such as Times New Roman or Arial. These easy-to-read fonts are standard on most computer systems; hiring managers who view electronic copies of your résumé may not have other fonts, which can alter your résumé’s appearance.
- Choose font size with the reader in mind; 10 pt is optimal.
- Use bold or underlining sparingly, just to provide emphasis. Do not overuse *italics*, which can be difficult to read.
- Be sure your résumé has clean, simple lines and use white space to your advantage. Business students should not use artistic résumés.
- Prioritize so that the most important information appears first.
- Be clear, concise, and use action verbs when describing previous job responsibilities, quantifying results (if possible).
- Avoid abbreviating organization names and job titles.

A Few Action Verbs

- Acted
- Aided
- Addressed
- Applied
- Assisted
- Augmented
- Balanced
- Boosted
- Built
- Calculated
- Centralized
- Chaired
- Compiled
- Completed
- Contributed
- Coordinated
- Created
- Demonstrated
- Developed
- Edited
- Established
- Expanded
- Evaluated
- Founded
- Grew
- Guided
- Handled
- Identified
- Implemented
- Initiated
- Joined
- Learned
- Led
- Maintained
- Managed
- Negotiated
- Offered
- Operated
- Organized
- Participated
- Planned
- Prepared
- Produced
- Projected
- Proposed
- Reconciled
- Reduced
- Represented
- Resolved
- Revamped
- Scheduled
- Served
- Streamlined
- Strengthened
- Tested
- Trained
- Verified
Sample Résumé

Rocky D. Bull
4202 Stampede Way
Tampa, FL 33620
(813) 974-0000
rdbull@usf.edu

QUALIFICATIONS

- Strong writing, editing, and presentation skills
- Proficient in organized and environmentally friendly administration
- Ability to develop rapport with people of all cultures and ages

EDUCATION

Bachelor of Science, Business Administration December 2010
University of South Florida
Major: Finance
Cumulative GPA: 3.87

Honors and Awards:
- Student Finance Association - Events Coordinator
- Managed monthly meetings involving 50 members and corporate presentations
- Dean’s List, 2007 – 2008
- ABC company scholarship recipient, 2008

CAREER SKILLS/KNOWLEDGE

Office Skills

- Answering phone calls
- Greeting clients
- Scheduling appointments
- Purchasing supplies
- Processing client orders
- Managing financial bookkeeping using QuickBooks

Interpersonal Skills

- Excellent communication skills
- Strong team player
- Attention to detail
- Dutiful respect for compliance in all regulated environment

Computer skills

- Microsoft Word, Excel, PowerPoint, Publisher, Access, Outlook
- QuickBooks
Rocky D. Bull

4202 Stampede Way
Tampa, FL 33620
(813) 974-0000
rdbull@usf.edu

Qualifications Summary

- Enthusiastic self starter adept at working independently with minimal supervision as well as contributing as a productive team member
- Proven ability to work effectively with diverse personalities and interests
- Strong interest in working in the financial services industry

Highlights of Professional Skills and Accomplishments

Marketing and Research
- Promoted events and programs to generate participation
- Projected advertising budgets and maintained financial records
- Conducted market research analysis for non-profit agency, including survey design and implementation and data management

Organizational
- Worked with vendors to ensure smooth event operations
- Organized event involving over 500 participants and a team of 30 volunteers
- Managed new employee training and orientation program

Communications
- Interacted with customers while handling requests and resolving complaints
- Communicated with people from different cultural backgrounds
- Assisted with writing, organizing and distributing press releases and maintaining relationships with media
- Worked with constituents at varying levels within organizations

Computer Skills

Microsoft Office, Excel, Access, PowerPoint, HTML

Work History

Sales Associate, ABC Retail Establishment
May 2007 - April 2008

Education

Bachelor of Science, Business Administration, May 2010
Major: Finance
University of South Florida
Cumulative GPA: 3.87

Volunteer Work

- Walkathon chairperson, American Heart Association
- Participated in several team-based volunteer activities including Habitat for Humanity and Paint Your Heart Out
Draft Cover Letters

A well-crafted cover letter can help “sell” you to the employer. It is your chance to highlight your skills and accomplishments while convincing the hiring manager that you are worthy of an interview.

Cover Letter Tips

• Never submit your résumé without a cover letter. It is your chance to call attention to specific items on your résumé and communicate how your skills, knowledge, and accomplishments align with the position.
• Be persuasive. Your letter should focus on meeting employer needs, not your desires. Avoid including too many details about your work history; instead, highlight a few of your best accomplishments.
• Be brief. Letters should not exceed one page.
• Tailor your letter to the firm and hiring manager. Research the company and include something specific about the firm in your letter. When possible, it should be addressed to an individual.
• Mention a contact name whenever possible. A contact can be a professor, friend’s parent, USF alumnus, or someone you know through networking events.
• If you send a hard copy, send your cover letter on the same quality and color paper as your résumé.
• Limit the number of times you use the words “I” and “me.”
• Proofread your cover letter and have someone else proof it as well.

Content

Paragraph 1: State the position title and how you heard about it. Include something that you learned about the company when doing your research, and indicate why you want to work there.

Paragraph 2: Include one or two highlights of your education and/or experience that sets you apart from other applicants. Explain why you believe you are the best candidate for the job and how your skills align with the skills the company is seeking. If there are specific skills listed in the job description, be sure to mention them here. If specific skills are not cited, list those you think a successful employee would need.

Paragraph 3: This optional paragraph can be used to point out qualifications not included on your résumé or to provide detail about particular successes (for example, a relevant project you tackled on the job).

Paragraph 4: Ask for an interview. State if, when, and how you plan to follow up.

Email Correspondence

Email is often the preferred communication method between job seekers and hiring managers. Use it wisely and you will stand out from the competition. Use it improperly and you’ll stand out from the competition as well, however you will brand yourself as immature and unprofessional.

Email Tips

• Use a meaningful subject header, more than just “résumé attached” (hiring managers may receive hundreds of such emails each day).
• Always be professional and businesslike. Use courtesy titles (Mr., Ms., Dr.) and verify the spelling of the recipient’s name.
• Your email is a mini-cover letter. Be brief and entice the reader to open your attachments.
• Ditch the emoticons and avoid slang, along with wallpapers, multi-colored backgrounds, and unusual fonts.
• Proofread and spell-check your email twice.
November 1, 2010

Ms. Jane Doe
XYZ Company
123 Company Way
Tampa, Florida  33333

Dear Ms. Doe:

It was a pleasure to meet you at the MMB Securities presentation for the Financial Management Association. Of the presentations I attended that week, I was most impressed by the opportunities at MMB. I am a graduate of the University of South Florida College of Business, where research and hands-on learning are key elements of its business curriculum.

While an intern at First State Securities, I developed considerable experience working with clients. I collected data to determine their needs, researched creative solutions, sold and defended my proposals, and worked with a diverse team while implementing projects. One of my biggest achievements was the creation of a new service team offering for a troubled Armed Services Program. As a result, the organization’s operations were transformed and began operating more effectively as based on commercial models.

Given XYZ’s Company’s excellent reputation for cutting-edge research, I know my leadership, versatility, and personal motivation to excel make me an excellent candidate for the Summer Intern Position.

Sincerely,

Rocky D. Bull

Rocky D. Bull
Build Your Network

Networking is one of the most important parts of the job search. It has been said that 80% of jobs are never advertised. Applicants learn of these “hidden job opportunities” through networking.

Build A Network

- Attend USF career events and functions, even if you are not quite ready to start or change jobs. Events are listed online at the College of Business Office of Employer Relations website and are posted to the listserv.
- Tell everyone about your job search (family, friends, professors, fellow students, current and former co-workers). One might introduce you to a contact or company that you never considered.
- Use social media (LinkedIn, Facebook, Twitter) and start by following various USF accounts (the College of Business, USF News, the Career Center, etc).

When Networking

- Be prepared. As you begin networking, prepare a concise, one-minute “elevator speech” about yourself so that people will know the areas in which you are interested and the skills you possess. Do not tell your life story; you will be meeting busy people, so get right to the point.
- Be deliberate. Don’t fall into the “I don’t know anyone” trap. Attend professional or trade organization meetings in your desired field. Get involved.
- Be professional. Start with a firm handshake, eye contact, and warm smile.
- Be patient. Networks aren’t built overnight. You must cultivate relationships. Be politely persistent and follow-up with people. Collect business cards from everyone you meet and jot notes on the back.

More Tips

- Arrive early and enjoy the drinks or the buffet, but do not spend too much time doing so.
- Do not dominate the conversation.
- Maintain eye contact and pay attention to non-verbal cues (yours and theirs).
- Keep one hand free from a briefcase or purse so you can shake hands.
- Avoid only talking to people you know.
- In large groups, don’t try to talk to everyone. It is better to have a few meaningful conversations than 50 hasty introductions.

Questions To Ask When Networking

Your goal is to get to know people who can provide information about careers and leads. When networking, ask for advice, not for a job. Ask open-ended questions and show interest in others.

Sample Questions

- How did you get started in this industry?
- What do you like most about your job?
- What education and experience do the most successful people in this field have?
- What is the one thing you wish you knew before you started in this line of work?
- What are the challenges of balancing work and personal life in this industry?
- Why do most people enter or leave this field or company?
- What advice would you give to someone who is trying to break into this field?
- Who would you recommend I speak to about breaking into this field (or getting started with this company)? When I call, may I use your name?
Attend Career Fairs

Job fairs come in all shapes and sizes, from small community events to mid-sized university fairs to giant regional expositions held at a convention center. Employers use job fairs to promote their opportunities and to pre-screen applicants.

Most fairs consist of tables or booths that are staffed by recruiters and other company representatives. Employers will often send alumni to campus events. Try to attend at least one job fair before you embark on your job search. For new entrants into the professional workplace, this is a great way to observe how fairs operate and ease into “self-marketing” without the formality (and possible nervousness) that can accompany a one-on-one job interview.

Dressing for the Career Fair

- Dress in professional business attire, even if you aren’t seeking a job at the moment. If you are unsure of the dress code for a particular event, err on the overdressed side.
- Don’t bring your backpack. It’s cumbersome to you, it gets in the way of others, and it screams “student!” instead of “candidate!”

Job Fair Etiquette

- Don’t interrupt company representatives or your fellow job-seekers. If someone seems to be monopolizing the employer’s time, try to make eye contact with the representative to let him know you are interested in speaking.
- Employers are listening carefully. Virtually all employers are looking for candidates with good communications skills. Avoid using slang when chatting with the reps.
- Your non-verbal communication matters, too. Don’t joke with other students in between booths, call out to friends, or practice “fist-bumps” with fraternity members. Behave in a professional, friendly manner.

Job Fair Tips

- Bring more copies of your résumé than you think you’ll need. Carry them in a portfolio or folder, not loose, inside a textbook, or in your jacket (or the backpack that you shouldn’t have!).
- Don’t just drop your résumé on an employer’s display table. Try to get it into someone’s hands. If the booth is too busy or you can’t seem to get a word in, jot a note on your résumé before leaving it behind (“you were so busy we didn’t get a chance to chat, but I am very interested in talking with you”).
- Bring a few pens and pencils and some sort of note-taking device (notepad, iPad, PDA).
- Keep track of the recruiters you speak to and send follow-up notes to the ones whose firm or opportunities interest you.
- Be an active participant, not a browser. If all you do is stroll around, take company literature, or load up on free promotional items, then you have wasted your time. Chat with company representatives and ask meaningful questions.
- A list of attending employers is usually available before the job fair. Do your research and (at a minimum) visit the websites of employers you might be interested in meeting. A little advance preparation can help you stand out among the masses.

Pay Attention!

Job fairs provide a great opportunity for you to subtly eavesdrop on questions asked by recruiters and answers students may provide. You might pick up some valuable info — or witness some real-life career search “do’s and don’ts.”
An interview is a way for an employer to see what the company will “get” if you are hired. It is crucial that you are well prepared. Interviewing styles vary by employer, but there are many things that you can do ahead of time to prepare. Some different interview styles include:

**The Screening Interview**

A screening interview is often done by telephone (but some employers use the first interview as a screening interview). The goal of this interview, which usually takes less than an hour, is to verify information presented in the résumé, get a glimpse of your ability to communicate, and determine if you are a solid candidate for a position. Employers often begin by providing a little bit of information about the job opening.

Sample screening interview questions:

1. I see you worked at XYZ company. What did you do there?
2. How long did you work there and why did you leave the company?
3. How do you think your former boss might describe your work?
4. Why did you choose to become a business major at USF?
5. What do you know about our company?

**The Typical Interview**

In typical interviews, employers often have a list of specific questions that each candidate is asked. Interviewers often ask how you might behave in a particular situation (but may not ask for specific examples).

Sample Typical Interview Questions:

1. Tell me about yourself.
2. What are your strengths and weaknesses?
3. What prior work experiences have you had?
4. What do you like about your current job? Dislike?
5. Where do you see yourself in five years? Ten years?

**Send The Right Signals**

It is tough to stand out in a crowded field. Now that you have someone's attention, you want to make a good impression. You know to dress professionally, arrive early, and bring extra copies of your résumé. You know to research the company and arrive prepared to ask questions about the firm.

But do you know how to send all the right signals and ace the interview? Avoid the following faux pas, which are often unintentional but could kill your chances of getting the job.

**You run late and don’t call ahead.** Call the day prior to confirm directions and parking. Consider driving the route a day ahead. If you absolutely cannot avoid being late, call ahead. When you arrive, be sure to thank the receptionist for sharing your message.

**You smell of smoke, heavy cologne, or perfume.** Mints can mask cigarette odor, but even expensive cologne or perfume can be bothersome to some people. Better to have no odor. Be sure to ditch the mints before you enter the office, too.

**You ramble when answering questions.** Rambling answers signal a lack of communications skills. Answer questions that are asked and stay on topic if you expound on the answer. Give concrete examples. If you do ramble, apologize and get back on track (“I'm sorry, I believe I got off track there. Did I answer your question fully?”).

**You ask about money too soon.** There's an adage that you should pay attention to: “he who asks about money first, loses.” Save questions on pay, vacation, and benefits for end of the interview or better yet, for the second interview. Asking about these things too early signals that you are simply looking for a paycheck, not a career. You should be asking about responsibilities, growth opportunities, the company, and the workplace.
The Behavioral interview
Instead of asking how you might behave in a particular situation, in a behavioral interview employers will ask questions to determine how you did behave. This is a popular interview format for companies seeking business majors.

Employers want to determine if you have the skills and knowledge for the job, of course, but they also want to evaluate fit with the company culture. Employers want to get a glimpse into your work style as well as your communication style.

Employers want specifics. If you cannot think of a work-related example, pull from a classroom experience or volunteer work. Give honest and thorough, but concise, answers. Describe what you learned from the experience and how you would do it differently in the future.

Sample Behavioral Interview Questions
1. Tell me about a time when you had to juggle several different priorities at the same time.
2. What was your most significant leadership experience? What did you learn from it?
3. What was the most challenging decision you ever made?
4. Tell me about a time when you worked with a team and it did not go well.
5. What major problem did you come across in your most recent job? How did you solve it?
6. Tell me about a time when you had to convince someone of something and how you did it.
7. What qualities do you admire most in co-workers? In supervisors?
8. Describe a situation when you had to work with ambiguity and how you dealt with it.
9. What is your most significant professional or personal accomplishment?
10. Tell me about the best boss you have ever had. The worst?

Sample Questions
1. How are the goals for this job set?
2. Aside from the tasks discussed, what other activities are a normal part of this job?
3. Where will the position be located? Will relocation be a possibility in the future?
4. What training will you offer your new hire?
5. What opportunities might be available for advancement in the future? How frequently do employees from this position advance within the company?

Interviewing Etiquette
- Give a good handshake. Grasp the interviewer’s hand firmly. Look people in the eye. Always rise when introducing or being introduced to someone.
- Be too polite rather than too familiar. Don’t call the interviewer by first name unless he asks you to do so.
- Overdress. Business students should always wear professional attire to an interview, even if the company has a business casual atmosphere.
- Be positive. Do not complain about former supervisors, companies, or jobs, even if the experience was unpleasant. Instead, talk about what you learned from the experience
- Do not mention salary first. Salary is best discussed after you receive a job offer. Do not mention a salary range without having done some prior research to back up your figures.

After the Interview
Send thank you notes or follow-up letters within 24 hours. Doing so is not only professional, but also provides an opportunity for you to follow-up on any unanswered questions. You can emphasize skills and your interest in the position.

Thank You Note Tips
- Handwritten notes are preferred, but email notes are acceptable.
- Be brief and concise, and reference specific points discussed in your meeting.
- As with a cover letter, avoid overuse of the words “me” and “I.”
- Personalize the letter, referencing a particular question or comment from the interview.
Rocky D. Bull  
111 USF Drive • Tampa, Florida 33620  
(813) 974-0000 • rocky@usf.edu

October 20, 2010

Recruiter X  
ABC Company  
111 Company Lane  
Tampa, Florida 33602

Dear Ms. X:

Thank you for taking the time to discuss the insurance broker position at ABC Company with me. I appreciate the time you took to acquaint me with the company. After meeting you and observing your business operations, I am convinced that my background and skills align well with this position and the organization.

Given the countless demands on your time, I am sure you are seeking people who can be counted on to carry out their responsibilities with minimal supervision. In addition to my qualifications and experience, I will bring excellent work habits and judgment to this position. Once provided with direction, I can be counted on to be an independent and diligent worker.

Again, thank you for your time and consideration. Based on our conversations, it is easy to see why ABC Company retains its employees for so long. I feel I could learn a great deal from you and would certainly enjoy working with you.

I look forward to hearing from you concerning your hiring decision.

Sincerely,

Rocky D. Bull
Tips on Dressing Professionally

You’ve heard it before, but it bears repeating: first impressions count. Dress professionally for every job fair or interview even if the company has a casual dress policy. Image and ability are linked when it comes to the job interview. If your image is poor, you will miss out on the chance to spotlight and showcase your abilities.

There is a difference between fashionable and professional. Business students are well-aware of the basic rules of professional dress (no flip-flops, well-pressed clothing, err on the conservative side, remove gauges and leave noisy jewelry at home). But many struggle with the difference between an attractive selection that might be worn to work (once you’ve landed the job) and a professional selection that is appropriate for the interview.

**Tips for men:**

- **Suit:** choose a suit over slacks and a sport coat. Colors are trendy, so avoid the extremes and select navy, black, gray, or subtle pinstripes.
- **Shirt:** button-down dress shirt (starched, not taken right out of the dryer). White shirts should be white, not yellowish.
- **Tie:** should have a conservative, tasteful print. Select good quality silk ties.
- **Shoes:** Wear polished leather or dark dress shoes and dark socks (mid-calf length so no skin is visible when you sit down).
- **Jewelry:** wear a conservative watch and no more than one ring per hand. Leave other jewelry behind.
- **Hair:** must be well-styled. Save spikes, braids, and extra hair gel for social events. Facial hair should be trimmed, natural looking, and well-groomed.
- **Personal grooming:** nails should be neatly trimmed and groomed. Aftershave or cologne should be light enough that only you can smell it.
**Tips for women:**

- **Suit/dress:** suits are preferred over dresses and should fit well (and be in excellent condition). Avoid trendy colors.

- **Skirt length:** Much of what masquerades on TV as professional attire is inappropriate for an interview. Don’t purchase a skirt or decide on a hem length until you sit in the skirt facing a mirror. That’s what your interviewer will see, so ask yourself if it will reinforce your image as a person who means business. High slits or showing a lot of thigh makes you look naive at best, foolish at worst. A skirt that ends at the knee when you’re standing looks chic and professional.

- **Blouse:** tailored blouse or simple shell. Avoid trendy pieces and plunging necklines. Select a simple style, pattern or color.

- **Shoes:** pumps or medium heels. Regardless of what is in style, avoid the “really cute” fashionable open-toed shoes as well as sling-backs and wedges.

- **Hosiery:** must be worn with a skirt or dress, even in Florida. Choose neutral shades without patterns.

- **Purse:** medium or small size that matches clothing. Choose between a purse or briefcase.

- **Hair and makeup:** hair should be neatly groomed and makeup should be natural. Avoid braids or hairstyles that look great in the nightclub, but not in the office. Avoid heavy or dramatic makeup.

- **Personal grooming:** clear or lightly tinted nail polish, light perfume. Minimize (or hide) multiple earrings, piercings, body art. No more than one ring per hand and avoid large bracelets or chunky rings that may become a distraction or an obstacle when shaking hands.
When evaluating offers, consider both monetary (salary, other benefits) and intangible benefits.

**Start by looking at the salary:**
- **Base salary:** Ask about the firm’s salary review cycle and when raises are given to determine if this is a flexible, structured, or based on performance.
- **Signing bonus:** A one-time payment used by companies as an enticement to accept the offer, bonuses are sometimes negotiable.
- **Short-term incentives:** These vary according to the performance of the company, department, or individual. They are commonly in the form of cash or stock and do not impact base salary.
- **Long-term incentives:** These link the employee to the success of the company and include things like stock ownership programs.
- **Insurance:** The amount the employer contributes to medical and dental, as well as disability and life insurance plans can significantly boost the offer.
- **Retirement/pension plans:** The amounts companies contribute or match varies greatly.
- **Leave:** Some firms offer modest sick and holiday pay, others have generous vacation and leave plans.
- **Other incentives:** Many larger companies offer tuition reimbursement programs, dependent care assistance, employee assistance programs, and on-site health clubs or amenities that should be considered when evaluating offers.

**Consider Intangibles:**
- **Business/Products:** Are the company’s business activities in line with your own interests and beliefs?
- **Size:** Does the size of the company allow for your desired career path and advancement?
- **Culture:** Does the management take a “hands-off” approach with its employees, or is there constant supervision?
- **Public vs. Private:** Is it family-owned or publicly traded? Does this make a difference to you?
- **Location:** How far are you willing to commute to work?
- **Work/Life Balance:** Does the company support and enrich employees’ personal lives?
- **Quality Management:** Bad management can lead to turnovers and low employee morale.

**Evaluate the Position:**
- **Skills:** Will this position allow you to utilize your skills?
- **Interests:** Is the job in line with your career goals and interests?
- **Travel:** Does the job require too much or too little travel?
- **Work hours:** Do you prefer working a 40- or 50-hour week?
- **Professional Development:** Does the company allow you to grow and develop professionally?
- **Autonomy:** Does this company/job provide the level of autonomy that you need/desire?
- **Responsibility:** Does the position offer you the level of responsibility you are seeking?
Freshman and Sophomore Year

- Visit faculty during office hours. Get to know as many faculty members as possible. This will come in handy when you need letters of recommendation later.
- Commit to spend time on career development, even though you may not yet be ready to enter the workforce.
- Do research in bookstores and career centers. Knowing more about different industries, companies, and jobs will help you make a better choice.
- Join at least one business student organization or participate in at least one career-related activity. USF has a number of honors organizations exclusively for business students.
- Volunteer at a local non-profit organization, seeking positions that might help you hone your business skills.
- Connect assignments, papers, speeches, and projects to your career interests.
- Visit the Career Center for assistance as you build your résumé. Update it at the end of every semester.
- Participate in workshops. Gather insight on topics such as researching a career, résumé writing, interviews, salary negotiations, etc.
- Attend employer info sessions hosted by the College of Business, even if you are unfamiliar with the company or think it might only be for students whose major is different from your own. You will gain insight into skills employers are seeking and the types of job opportunities that are available.
- Visit your faculty advisor and/or a career counselor for help with choosing a major, concentration, or emphasis that will complement your career goals.
- Contact three people from your field of interest.

Junior Year

- Research companies, non-profits, government agencies, etc. to see where your passion lies.
- Develop new or advanced skills through job, internship, or volunteer experiences.
- Look at job listings to know the skills and background needed to eventually reach your career goals.
- Continue to meet faculty on campus.
- Narrow down career options to reach a job target and industry to pursue.
- Talk to more people in careers you are considering and explore professional or trade organizations.
- Treat the job search like a class. It takes study, know-how, and preparation.

Senior Year

- Schedule an appointment with your career counselor for assistance with salary negotiations.
- Ask professors, employers, and advisors to write letters of recommendation. Ask for permission to include them as references on job applications.
- Write papers with an extra purpose in mind. Try to publish in campus publications or a professional journal.
- Seek out people in your field of interest who are willing to act as mentors or advisors.
- Network with alumni in your field and people your professor recommend.
- Make time to do a real job search. It is a good idea to think of finding a job as a job itself. It takes time and effort to find a position that pays well.
- Participate in programs offered by the USF Career Center and the College of Business Office of Employer Relations.
Augmented
Began
Crafted
Counseled
Defined
Doubled
Drafted
Earned
Eliminated
Enhanced
Examined
Facilitated
Forecasted
Generated
Gathered
Graded
Headed
Illustrated
Improved
Improvised
Increased
Influenced
Interviewed
Judged
Launched
Liquidated
Mapped
Marketed
Measured
Mediated
Merged
Monitored
Observed
Opened
Paid
Partnered
Permitted
Pioneered
Placed
Raised
Rated
Reorganized
Repaired
Responded
Revitalized
Salvaged
Screened
Settled
Simplified
Speculated
Spearheaded
Supported
Taught
Traded
Translated
Tutored
Uncovered
Validated
Visited
Wrote

A Few (More) Action Verbs