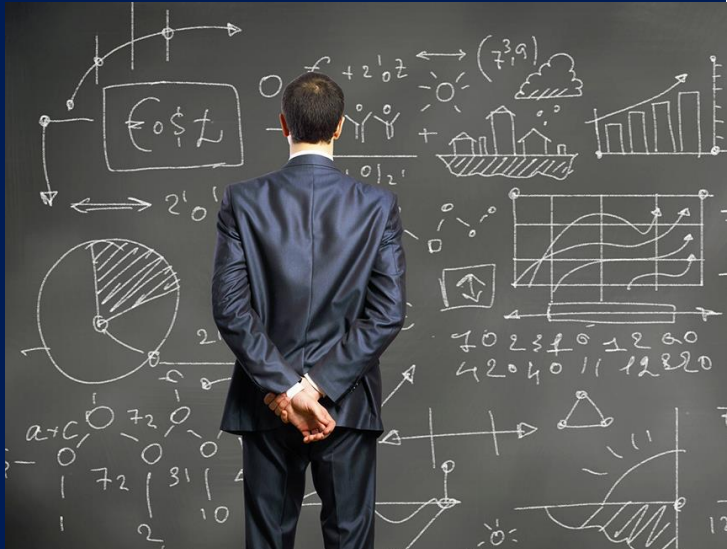


# Game Plan for Getting a Job



The right frame of mind means all the difference in getting a job. Think like an entrepreneur & own your own business.

Preparing for an interview? Take charge of your career and think like a business owner. Here's a game plan to help you think more confidently about who you are and what opportunities are right for you:

## Step 1: Develop the Right Frame of Mind:

Being an entrepreneur means you get to call your own shots. Even if you have no clue what your career will look like, pretend you do and act like an owner by building a business plan. A business plan can range from a few words on a napkin to a volume of pages. What's important is that it's in writing and not thoughts in your head. Your plan should describe what your business is and how you're going to make it succeed. Be POSITIVE and get FOCUSED on building your business!

## Step 2: Understand Your Product -- YOU:

To be successful, every company must have a clear understanding of what business it's in. No matter if you're a doctor, attorney, restaurant owner or professional athlete, you are selling a product or service. YOU are the product and you better



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have a really good understanding of who you are and what separates you from a crowd. Be honest and objective and ask tough questions about yourself: What do you like/dislike? What are your strengths/weaknesses? What examples do you have that underscore the intensity of your passions and interests? Do you prefer being a part of a team or are you comfortable taking risk on your own? What are your core personal values?

What gives you happiness, satisfaction and a sense of accomplishment? What is most important in your life (e.g., teaching, helping others, learning, money, fame, etc.?) What have you done in your personal, work, athletic or academic life that provide examples? Write down your responses so you have a point of reference to figure out a best fit for you.

### **Step 3: Understand Your Market:**

Next, shift your focus externally on the marketplace to gauge how well your business will be received. Close your eyes and think about events that are making headlines around the world. What trends do you see emerging in the future? Where is change taking place? What industries/companies will be winners or losers? What factors will create opportunities or present new challenges? Write down your thoughts and try to answer why events are happening or will happen in the future. Start with the big picture and refine focus on specific opportunities that are most interesting and relevant to you.

### **Step 4: Conduct Research to Confirm Your Beliefs:**

The next step is conducting research via “informational” interviews to confirm and validate your beliefs. This is where you leverage your connections with family, friends, alumni networks, career placement officers, etc. to schedule interviews with as many people as you can. Block out several weeks and set aggressive goals on how many meetings you can schedule. Meet with people in multipole industries and companies to get a deeper understanding of different businesses and, unless you are interested in human resources as a career, focus your efforts on individuals with direct business responsibilities versus administrative roles.

In preparation for meetings, take time to research each person's company and their job description. Read company news stories and headlines as well as stories on their competitors and customers. Being able to reference how individual companies in the same industry approach circumstances and situations differently reflects a more informed level of awareness and provides a context for asking questions.

Equally important, understand that these meetings are not job interviews. Never ask if they have job openings or if they can pass along your resume. Instead, ask about them and their career – what are their responsibilities, what career path did they follow, what skills do they need to be successful in their job, how is their company organized, what events are impacting their business, etc. Most professionals are flattered by your interest in them and very willing to talk about what they do for a living.

### **Step 5: Stay Focused:**

In the end, the more interviews you have, the more comfortable, informed and poised you will be when the time comes for interviewing for a job. It likely will not take long before you begin to develop preferences for certain people, companies or professions. However do not be too quick to end the informational interview stage at this point. Keep meeting people at different companies to understand how 'corporate culture' factors into the picture. Just as you bring your own unique personality and perspective to a situation, every company strives to define its own core values and character business.

Finally, understand that every meeting is the equivalent of a first day on the job which means it is your first and only opportunity to make a first impression. Take advantage of the situation by being as professional as possible: dress appropriately, arrive ahead of schedule and be prepared to lead the conversation by asking lots of questions. Take notes and follow-up promptly with a short thank you letter. Email notes are fine, however handwritten notes reflect more effort and stand out better.

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### **Step 6: A Final Perspective:**

Once you have developed your business plan and conducted market research to confirm your beliefs. You are now finally ready to pursue a job opportunity. At this point, it should come as no surprise that the people you most enjoyed meeting in the informational interview stage should be the ones to contact first. Most likely, they also were drawn to you as well. Having already met and hopefully formed a positive impression of you, they will be more inclined to be an advocate in advancing your resume to key decision makers.

Remember, approach every interview like an entrepreneur where you are the one conducting the interview and not vice versa. Think like an entrepreneur building a business and your attitude/mindset will change in terms of understanding what you offer and, in exchange, what companies can offer you. Figure out these questions so that you can make the most of every opportunity. Good luck!

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