

# HOW TO BEAT AN ATS

**Leveraging Keywords and  
Other Pro-Tips to Make it Past  
an Applicant Tracking System**



# What is an ATS?

An applicant tracking system (ATS) is software that employers use to find the most qualified candidates for a role. These systems help streamline the hiring process and remove resumes that do not meet the qualifications.

Applicant tracking systems work by scanning your submitted resume and cover letter to find keywords that match the job posting.

250

The average corporate job gets 250 applications

98%

98% of Fortune 500 companies use applicant tracking systems that scan for keywords.

30%

Only 30% of job applications are read!

# What kind of keywords are they looking for?

Look at the job posting, and use the same keywords in your application in a way that naturally highlights your experience and skills.

Consider looking up similar jobs to get ideas for other terms you can include that may pique the interest of the applicant tracking system and hiring manager.

To determine the most important keywords, make a note of specific software, education, certifications and experiences that a job posting mentions.

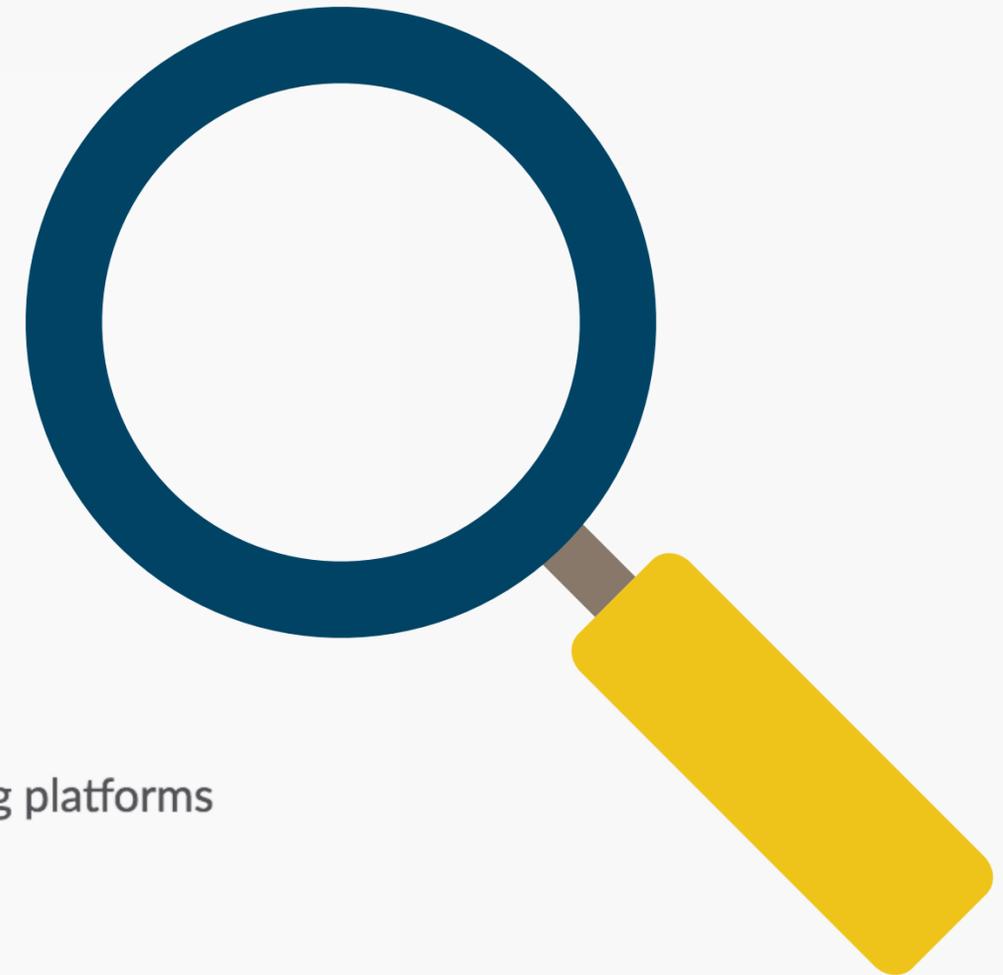
- Experience with Google Analytics and SEO
- Proficiency with Adobe Creative Suite
- Comfortable working with Facebook Ads, Google AdWords, Twitter
- Experience integrating websites with marketing automation tools
- Highly analytical and able to derive meaning from data
- Able to work and thrive in a fast-paced, rapidly changing environment
- Excellent people and management skills to interact with staff, clients, and third parties – a team player!

# Example: twistle

## DIGITAL MEDIA SPECIALIST

### Requirements:

- Bachelor's degree in marketing, digital media or relevant field
- 5+ years of experience in digital media
- Experience in web design and content management systems including Word Press
- Experience with Google Analytics and SEO
- Proficiency with Adobe Creative Suite
- Comfortable working with Facebook Ads, Google AdWords, Twitter Ads and other advertising platforms
- Experience integrating websites with marketing automation tools (Pardot) a plus
- Highly analytical and able to derive meaning from data
- Able to work and thrive in a fast-paced, rapidly changing environment
- Excellent people and management skills to interact with staff, colleagues, clients, cross-functional teams and third parties – a team player!



# Example: twistle

## DIGITAL MEDIA SPECIALIST

### Responsibilities:

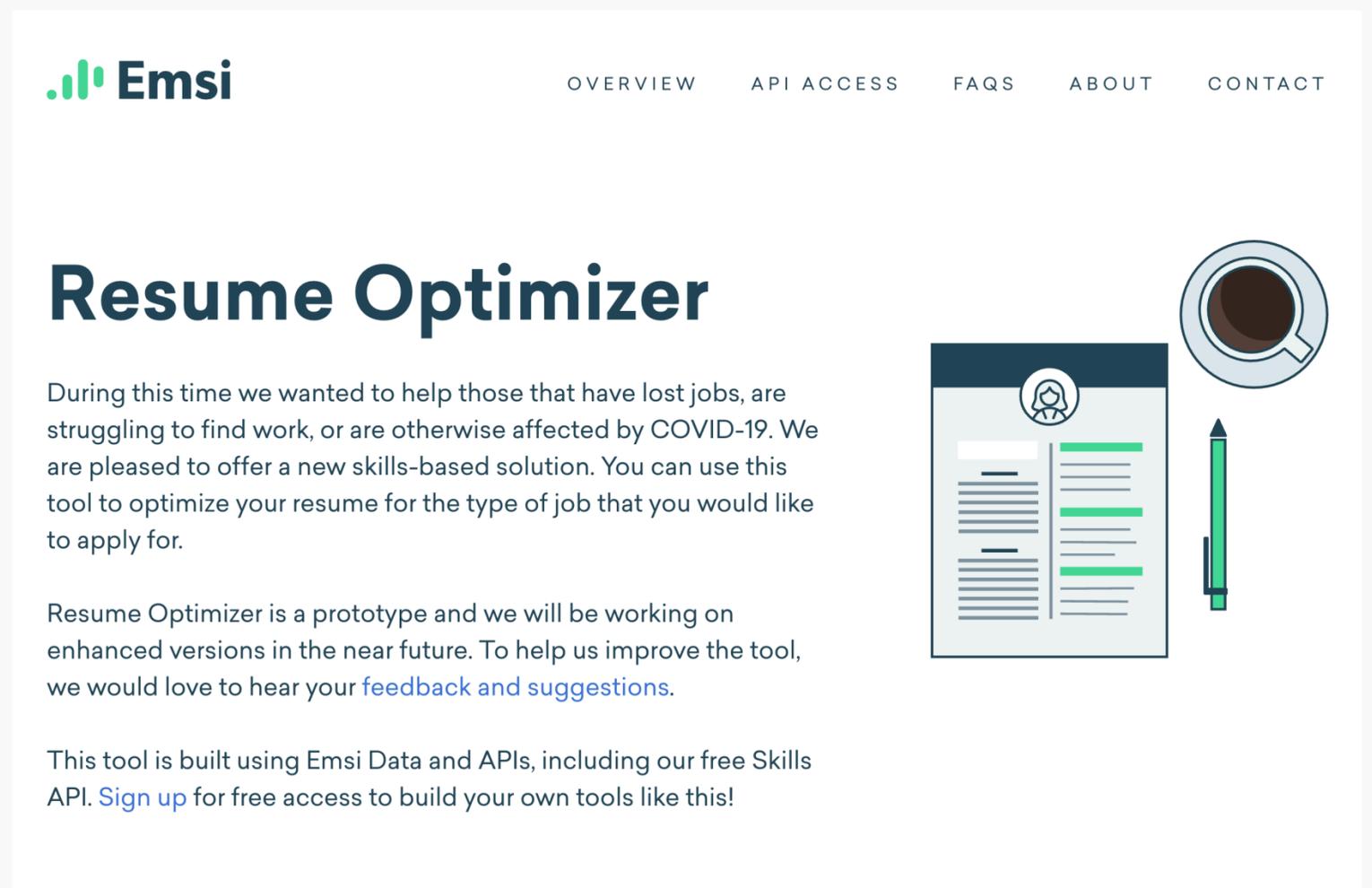
- Develop Twistle's digital media strategy, implement the plan, and optimize our digital presence through analytics and reporting
- Establish Twistle's digital presence as a leader in patient engagement
- Optimize the website visitor journey and collaborate with the marketing team to identify and manage content improvement opportunities
- Develop optimization strategies that increase Twistle's search engine results ranking
- Employ graphic design skills to communicate Twistle's brand across our print and digital footprint
- Maintain a strong online company voice through social media
- Suggest and implement direct marketing methods
- Develop digital media campaigns that may include display, search (Google & Bing) and paid social advertising (future goal)
- Develop and monitor campaign performance and implement optimization strategies
- Liaise with Marketing, Sales and Product Development teams to ensure brand consistency
- Stay current with digital media technologies and the latest trends



# Where can I utilize these keywords?

Applicant Tracking Systems will find keywords throughout your resume. Focus on integrating them in these sections:

- Summary
- Job titles
- Accomplishment statements
- Skills
- Projects



**Emsi** OVERVIEW API ACCESS FAQs ABOUT CONTACT

## Resume Optimizer

During this time we wanted to help those that have lost jobs, are struggling to find work, or are otherwise affected by COVID-19. We are pleased to offer a new skills-based solution. You can use this tool to optimize your resume for the type of job that you would like to apply for.

Resume Optimizer is a prototype and we will be working on enhanced versions in the near future. To help us improve the tool, we would love to hear your [feedback and suggestions](#).

This tool is built using Emsi Data and APIs, including our free Skills API. [Sign up](#) for free access to build your own tools like this!



# Does each resume have to be customized?

Even if two positions you are applying for are very similar, you should tailor your resume to each one. The job descriptions are likely to vary from each other in some way, so use any differences you find to make your resume more specific to each job.

Employers are different as well. Take the time to visit each company's website to get an idea of their values and the business they do. You can then incorporate what you learned into your resume and cover letter in order to stand out.



**TAILORING YOUR RESUME AND COVER LETTER**

In today's highly competitive job market, customizing both your resume and cover letter to each individual position will differentiate you from other applicants and demonstrate that you are the ideal fit for the opportunity. This is often the difference between getting an interview and being passed over.

**250+** MANY OPEN POSITIONS RECEIVE OVER 250 APPLICATIONS

*Why tailor?*  
Hiring managers often rely on software to select the best candidates by scanning for keywords in resumes, cover letters and even LinkedIn profiles. Other employers look for keywords manually. If your materials lack the keywords they're looking for, you may get overlooked.

*Here's how to do it: keywords.*  
Tailoring your resume and cover letter is all about including the right keywords. How do you do that? It's a simple two-step process.

**Step 1**  
**Identify how your background and skills align with the role.**

Take a look at the job description. The keywords that relate to you will be pretty obvious. They will relate to things like:

- Wording used to describe the business and position
- Skills required
- Types of experience the employer is looking for

Pro-Tip:

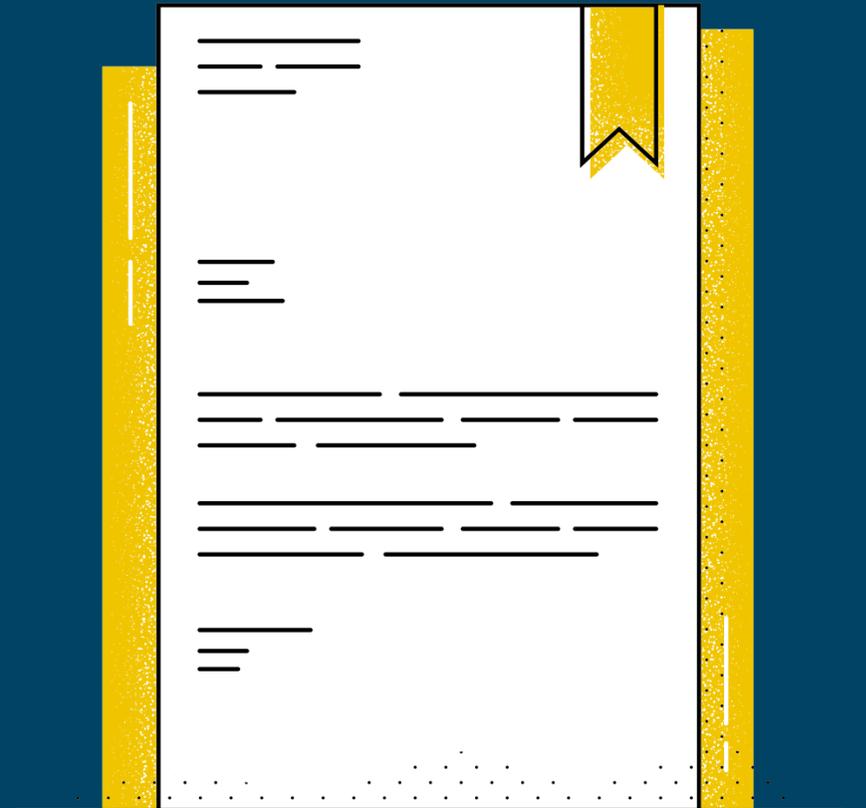
# EMSI RESUME OPTIMIZER

Test your resume by using EMSI's free "Resume Optimizer" tool, a new skills-based prototype that will help people improve their resumes as they apply for new jobs.

This tool mimics an applicant tracking system and will identify both found skills and skill opportunities!



[skills.emsidata.com/resume](https://skills.emsidata.com/resume)



Pro-Tip:

# PROJECTS ON YOUR RESUME

Research projects demonstrate your skills in data analysis, problem-solving, and attention-to-detail.

Volunteer projects are a great way to showcase skills and the social or community issues that are meaningful to you.

Creative projects demonstrate your ability to create design and content relevant to a wide variety of careers.

Technology and design projects showcase your knowledge of software and other tools.

## FORMATTING PROJECTS ON A RESUME



Many of your most valuable skills have been honed in a wide variety of non-job or internship experiences - including volunteer experiences, class assignments, service-learning, personal projects, student involvement, or even just as part of a hobby!

In order to fully capture your skills on a resume, you will want to feature these experiences in your resume in a way that shows their true value. Below are some samples that should help you:

### RESEARCH PROJECTS

Research projects demonstrate your skills in data analysis, problem-solving, and attention-to-detail.

"Alternatives to Incarceration" | policy paper January 2020

- Collected data regarding recidivism rates for incarcerated males and females in European and US state prisons, with a special focus on Belgium.
- Analyzed and compared average prison time - as it related to the rates of repeat offenders.
- Surveyed legal statutes regarding mandatory minimum sentencing.
- Profiled several new initiatives in the US focused on Prisoner Education and drafted summary.

*This is an actual DePaul course offered by Service-Learning.*

Community Health in Pilsen | Active Citizens Spring 2020

- Designed a health awareness survey and collected 200 responses from the Pilsen community.
- Surveyed data from the City of Chicago, collecting demographic and policy information
- Created data visualization that illustrated the disparity between community health awareness and access to medical services

### VOLUNTEER PROJECTS

Volunteer projects are a great way to showcase skills and the social or community issues that are meaningful to you.

Fall 2019 Run-a-thon for Life | Make a Miracle Foundation Fall 2019

- Provided day-of event support for a community fundraiser that had 1,200 participants.
- Collaborated with events committee to create social media posts promoting the event and its five corporate sponsors.
- Designed flyer that was distributed to college campuses and local businesses.

# EXAMPLES

## "Alternatives to Incarceration" | policy paper

January 2020

- Collected data regarding recidivism rates for incarcerated males and females in European and US state prisons, with a special focus on Belgium.
- Analyzed and compared average prison time - as it related to the rates of repeat offenders.
- Surveyed legal statutes regarding mandatory minimum sentencing.
- Profiled several new initiatives in the US focused on Prisoner Education and drafted summary.

## "Staycation" | social media campaign

March 2020

- Created Instagram and TikTok campaign promoting safe social distancing practices for GenZ college students in Chicago.
- Wrote copy and produced video content focused on inspiring followers to post their own shelter-in-place workouts and playlists under the hashtag "staychicago."
- Cultivated 300 followers on Instagram in one month and had 700 retweets of a single post.

## "Otters and Their Habitats" | 90 second animation | Shedd Aquarium

October 2019

- Animated educational video that introduces aquarium visitors to the native habitat of Pacific Sea Otters as well as the dangers climate change poses to their survival.
- Designed script-driven storyboards and edited audio track to align with motion graphics.

# Pro-Tip: RESUME SUMMARY

A resume summary, usually placed at the top of the document, introduces your major qualifications and alignment with the role.

While optional, the resume summary can help establish an immediate claim about your skills and help the reader see your experience in context.

Name Name

Email@gmail.com | 612-555-1212 | LinkedIn: namename

*Cinematographer, videographer, storyboard artist, producer, and editor with experience in feature film, documentary filmmaking, political media, and commercial advertising.*

Summaries highlight the most relevant skills for the job, and often feature a claim about your interests or passions.

*Emerging events and public relations professional with a passion for creating community and engaging diverse audiences in meaningful experiences.*

*Mental health professional passionate about impacting the lives of culturally-diverse communities via compassion and a commitment to high-impact professional development.*

Pro-Tip:

# IMMEDIACY

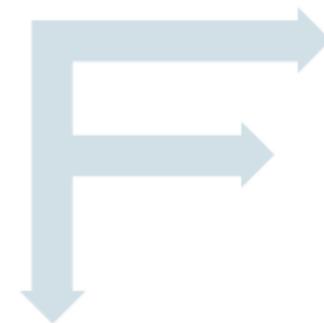
The design of your resume is a big factor in the reader's experience and comprehension.

You can labor over word choice and accomplishments to include, but unless you have considered the design of your resume, you risk the reader skipping over the most important content.



0:06

On average, recruiters spend only **six seconds** reviewing a resume.



People read screens in an **F-shaped pattern** that consists of two horizontal stripes followed by a vertical stripe.

Your goal for the resume is to make it easy for the reader to scan VERY quickly for the most relevant and important experience and skills.

Use formatting— boldface, type scale, strategic use of white space—to make key information easy to find.

### Showcase

Be sure your job title stands out and clearly describes your role.

### White Space

Use white space to create chunks that ease density and help the reader skim vertically.

### Relevant Examples

You can include class projects in your experience section. Format it like a job description.

### Formatting

Use white space and formatting techniques like **bold**, *italics* and columns—make it easy to zero in on specific information for busy readers.

**LAVONN POWELL**  
555-227-9841 | lpowell@email.com | lpowell

**EDUCATION** BA, Philosophy | DePaul University 2020  
Minor in Economics | 3.75 G.P.A.  
Relevant Coursework: Digital Communications, Marketing, Writing for Social Change

**EXPERIENCE** **Data and Design Intern** | Dallas Herald News 2019

- Collaborate with reporters, editors, and photographers to produce products on deadline to help explain and visualize breaking news stories.
- Conceptualize and build stand alone and complementary data visualizations, interactive graphics, and story presentations using HTML, CSS, and JavaScript/JQuery

**Community Health Researcher** | Active Citizens 2018

- Designed a health awareness survey and collected 200 responses from the Pilsen community.
- Surveyed data from the City of Chicago, collecting demographic and policy information
- Created data visualization that illustrated the disparity between community health awareness and access to medical services

**PROJECTS** **Press Release and Media Kit** | Lola LPC. 2018

- Wrote and edited a press release announcing a new infant apparel line directed at millennial parents.
- Produced media kit promoting launch event. Contents included photos, bio of founders, and company profile.

**TECHNOLOGY**

- Google Suite (Forms, Docs, Sheets, Slides)
- Microsoft Office (Outlook, Excel, Word, PowerPoint)
- Adobe Acrobat and Photoshop
- SPSS

**SKILLS**

- Writing/Editing
- Project Management
- Data Visualization
- Research
- Photo Editing
- Presentation
- Transcription
- Web Design

Super Pro-Tip:

# COMMUNICATE DIRECTLY WITH THE HIRING MANAGER

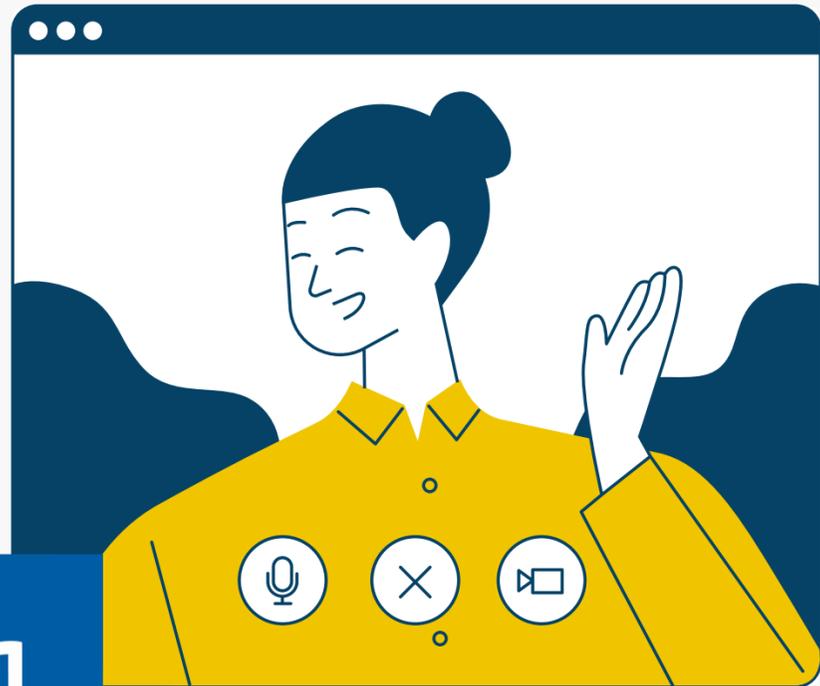
You can bypass the ATS by sending your materials directly to the hiring manager with a brief note expressing your interest in the role.

Sometimes a hiring manager is identified in a job description, but you can also find the correct individual via the company website or LinkedIn. Add a note encouraging them to forward the email if it goes to the wrong person!

*Dear \_\_\_\_,  
My name is Joe Smith  
and I recently  
submitted my  
application for the \_\_\_\_  
role. I have attached  
my resume and cover  
letter for your  
convenience. I am  
particularly interested  
in this role because it  
aligns with my  
background in \_ and  
my skills in \_\_\_\_.*

*Thanks so much for  
your time.*

# WHAT CAN THE CAREER CENTER DO FOR YOU?



- [Drop-In Career Coaching](#) (no appointment necessary!)
- [Virtual Appointments](#) with Career Community Advisors
- [Email Resume Review](#)
- Access a [Career Library](#) of 50+ Handouts and Videos
- Search for opportunities on [Handshake](#), our careers platform
- Network with Alumni on (ASK) or [Alumni Sharing Knowledge](#)

[careercenter.depaul.edu](https://careercenter.depaul.edu)

# CAREER LIBRARY



The DePaul Career Center recently created a library of 50+ handouts and 14 two-minute videos focused on every career readiness topic, ranging from resume basics to exploration to building your brand!

## INFORMATIONAL INTERVIEWS

Informational interviews are a low-pressure, highly productive way to learn about a field, get career advice, build your network and hone your interviewing skills. Reach out! It's easy and fun.

Informational interviews are an opportunity for you to talk with professionals about their career path, profession, organization and industry. These conversations can take place via phone or email, but it's much more fruitful when conducted in person.

Follow these simple steps to get started:

### Step 1

#### LOCATE THE PEOPLE YOU WANT TO MEET

Search for emerging, mid-career and established professionals in roles or organizations that interest you. Recent graduates that are emerging in their careers have first hand knowledge about existing pathways. Mid-level and advanced professionals have large networks and can share their views about how industries are changing.

- Definitely consider targeting DePaul alumni. They are often the most open to speaking with students and recent graduates of their alma mater.
- If you're still in school, DePaul faculty are an excellent place to start—ask your professors if they know of any contacts in your field of interest.
- DePaul's ASK (Alumni Sharing Knowledge) network and LinkedIn are excellent places to find professionals whose pathways align with your passions.
- Don't be afraid to be bold—is there a well-known person in your field of interest whose perspective would be helpful, interesting or inspiring? Reach out to them! You have nothing to lose and much to gain—the worst that could happen is you get a "no."

## GRADUATE SCHOOL 101

In many fields, earning a graduate degree or certificate is a benefit and competitive advantage. In some, it's necessary for advancement.

Getting accepted into your preferred program requires research, differentiation and extreme project management skills. Here are some tips:

### Selecting the right institution and program

Chances are, you'll want to apply to multiple programs to maximize your options. Which are the right ones? There are a number of factors to consider.

- 1 Faculty** Your relationship with faculty will be a huge factor in the educational experience. Learn the names, departmental positions and academic credentials of the professor or professors you'd be working with.
- 2 Resources** Research can require significant out-of-pocket costs. Find out if there are resources available at the institution that can reduce these costs.
- 3 Community/Location** Take a look at the on-campus and off-campus communities. Is the on-campus culture—faculty access, social life, etc.—what you're looking for? Does the local area have the amenities you want and need? Is it in a city or a small college town? Does the program offer online courses? How would these factors contribute to your quality of life?
- 4 Cost/Funding** The tuition and fees will be an obvious consideration, but you should also take into account living expenses, which can vary widely by region. What sort of stipends and funding programs are available? What are the work requirements?
- 5 Career Outcomes** What are the career outcomes for program alumni and how does the program support students and alumni in professional development?

## PERSONAL IDENTITY AND YOUR BRAND

Your identity, whether based on your gender, sexual orientation, ethnicity, culture, faith, or another element of your background, is fundamental to who you are. Deciding when and/or how to integrate your identity into your brand and job search can be a meaningful part of navigating your professional life.

In the Career Center, we often work with students and alumni who ask about the risks and benefits of sharing personal details about their identities. Whether it's a recent alum who is non-binary, or a single mother who returned to school to complete her degree after spending years caring for her children, every individual has the power to shape a specific and compelling authentic professional identity that includes (or does not include) personal information.

While we understand that identities are intersecting and not binary, below are some general tips that we hope are helpful in navigating discussions around career development.

### Connect who you are to what you do.

If your identity or background links to why you have selected a career path or professional interest, you can differentiate yourself from other applicants with a "why statement," which illustrates your personal commitment to that role or career. For example, in a cover letter, you might include a statement like this:

*"As a first generation college student navigating the opaque space of higher education without the insights of parents or a network of college-educated adults, I am passionate about providing support to under-resourced students, helping them succeed academically and thrive socially."*

*"I am particularly interested in this role because I recently returned to college to complete my degree in Health Sciences after providing care for my disabled sister for five years. This experience taught me the value of a holistic approach to caregiving, and I am eager to use these skills to enhance the patient experience at Good Samaritan."*

## DRESS FOR SUCCESS

You never get a second chance to make a first impression. That's why it's important to put careful thought into how you dress for job interviews and meetings with business contacts.

### General Guidelines

Dress codes in the workplace have relaxed considerably in recent years, which can make it tougher, not easier, to decide what to wear. While it's definitely better to over-dress than under-dress, looking too formal for an interview can suggest that you're not a good fit for the culture. That said, here are some general guidelines:

- Clothes should be in good condition, fit correctly, and be clean and lint free
- Wear dress shoes that are comfortable and clean
- Hair should be well groomed
- Fragrance—a light touch is better
- Bring essentials only—a professional bag, briefcase or portfolio
- Cellphone off

### HOW TO RESEARCH EMPLOYER DRESS CODES

If you have an interview or it's your first day at work or at business functions, look for everyday-type images (not dressy corporate events) to get a sense of the culture. Be sure to look for staff in functions similar to yours, as some teams' dress codes vary.

✓ **Check out their social media accounts** Many employers post images of employees at work or at business functions. Look for everyday-type images (not dressy corporate events) to get a sense of the culture. Be sure to look for staff in functions similar to yours, as some teams' dress codes vary.

✓ **Call the hiring manager or HR department** You can ask explicit questions about an employer's dress code. Questions like: "How formal is the dress code?" or "Do most interviewees wear a suit?"

## WORKING REMOTELY: THE BASICS

Working from home is common now, and with the pandemic, it's even more so. The number of remote roles has increased by 173 percent since 2005, and most experts expect this trend to accelerate. This is the future of work.

### Set up your workspace for success.

Whether it's a home office, a commercial co-working space, or a table in a coffee house, your workspace has a lot to do with your effectiveness. Make sure your space:

- Is comfortable and ergonomically sound
- Is quiet and able to accommodate phone conversations or video conferencing without distractions
- Gives you room to move around—cramped quarters can increase fatigue!

### Get the right equipment.

Make sure you have the right tools and technology to do your job well:

- A computer with a camera.
- A reliable internet connection—nothing is more disruptive to a video meeting than a connection that drops.
- Remote-work software
- LinkedIn Learning is an excellent source for technology tutorials and tips, including entire courses, to support remote-work success.

#### SOFTWARE SUGGESTIONS

**Video conferencing/screen sharing:** Zoom, Skype, GoToMeeting, JoinMe or others

**Communication:** Slack or others

**Project Management:** Asana, Trello, Mondays

**Cloud Computing/team sharing:** Basecamp, Google Drive, Microsoft Teams, Box

Check it out here: [go.depaul.edu/careerlibrary](https://go.depaul.edu/careerlibrary)

# CAREER TOOLKIT



These 45 minute workshops offer tactical advice for every stage of your career journey! Anyone who RSVPs on [Handshake](#) will get a recording of the session with supplemental materials!

CAREER TOOLKIT: 

## JOB AND INTERNSHIP SEARCH 101



- Tuesday 10/20 6PM
- Wednesday 12/9 6PM

CAREER TOOLKIT: 

## NETWORKING IN THE AGE OF SOCIAL DISTANCING



- Thursday 10/29 12PM

CAREER TOOLKIT: 

## PROJECT MANAGING YOUR JOB SEARCH



- Wednesday 11/18 6PM

# SKILLS LABS

*THURSDAYS @ 4!*

Join us for our weekly 30 minute skills-based sessions. Anyone who RSVPs on Handshake will get a recording of the session with supplemental materials!

SKILLS LAB



*Designing*  
**HIGH IMPACT  
PRESENTATIONS**



SKILLS LAB



*Intro to...*  
**CREATING  
A WEBSITE**



SKILLS LAB



*Intro to...*  
**SOCIAL  
MEDIA  
BASICS**



SKILLS LAB



*Introduction to*  
**REMOTE  
TECHNOLOGY  
TOOLS**



SKILLS LAB



**NAVIGATING  
KEYWORDS  
AND APPLICANT  
TRACKING  
SYSTEMS**



SKILLS LAB



*Introduction to*  
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MANAGEMENT**



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**SURVEY  
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*Creative*  
**RESUME  
DESIGN**





**Thank You!**

