

Employment Guide

Northwestern Illinois Center for Independent Living

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How to Use this Guide

Centers for Independent Living (CIL's) were started in the late 1970s, to establish a non-residential center to support people with disabilities, live their independent lives. It took a while for this grassroots effort, known as the Independent Living Movement, to find its way into all 50 states and the US Commonwealth; but we are here, and we are a strong service!

Illinois was one of the first adaptors of the Independent Living Movement, in the early 1980's. Northwestern Illinois Center for Independent Living (NICIL) is one of the original five (5) CIL's in Illinois.

Fast forward 35-plus years and today, NICIL, as well as 21 other CIL's, continue to work hard every day to develop programming and services that support our consumers, in the five (5) county-NICIL territory which includes: Carroll, Jo Daviess, Lee, Ogle, and Whiteside Counties. Our time is dedicated to serving all people with disabilities to live their independent lives, as they see fit. It is an honor and a privilege to serve!

Our services are tailored to each individual with whom we work. There are some common barriers which keep individuals from living independently. These barriers (or topics) are referred to in the industry as issue areas. There are nine (9) issue areas:

- Assistive Technology
- Attitudinal Barriers
- Communication
- Education
- Employment
- Healthcare Services
- Housing
- Physical Barriers
- Transportation

All NICIL staff are trained to be subject matter experts in these issue areas. Our team has developed issue-area guides to be available to our consumers, which are user friendly. These guides are designed to provide a basic understanding of the issue area, as well as to give information for self-direction. However, we want to be part of the process of independent living, so please, contact our team for one-on-one (individual) services.

Please use this guide to give you a helping hand in understanding the Employment issue area and use the resources provided as a starting point. When you are ready, know that we are here to support your independent living path.

Check out our website, www.nicil.org for access to all of our issue area guides. Contact the office at 815-625-7860 or via email at frontdesk@nicil.org to request for a copy to be emailed to you. Enjoy!

Introduction

I want a job! We hear that every day from individuals seeking our employment support. First thing we say is, no you don't! If you are looking just for a job, then NICIL is not the place for you. A job is just a temporary. What you want is a career! A career is an occupation that motivates you to be successful by fulfilling you! We know, as we have been in business at NICIL for more than 35 year and have had lots of practice in this area!

The NICIL employment guide is an overall explanation that includes tips and suggestions on finding your new career. We encourage you to think through the process and when you are ready to get to the task of resume writing, call us for an appointment.

The NICIL employment program is called Employment Smarts. We have developed this material based on the needs of employers, best practices, and industry standards. Periodically, we offer workshops to all community members seeking a new career but we are always here for our consumers for one on one services.

The NICIL team gets asked this question all the time: "Will you write my resume for me?" Absolutely, the starting fee for that begins at \$250 and goes up from there! However, we will teach you for free how to prepare a resume, cover letter, portfolio, skills inventory, curriculum vitae, and even visual presentation, along with interview skills training if you want to do this yourself.

How to get started? First things, first! Understand that this will take time and effort if you want to find the right career for you. Read this guide, understand what your need is to be successful, then call us for an appointment. We will be waiting!

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Employment: Just a job or more?

Today's employment workforce is much different than five (5) years ago, even ten years ago. The workforce is competitive, even for entry level positions. Today's workforce is the most educated and privileged sector in US history and even in world history. But what does that mean for you? It means that you need a competitive edge in your employment search. You will need to have a standout resume, cover letter, and interview skills. You need to be prepared to work at finding employment as if it is a career!

Many of us "experienced" career people remember when you could always get a job at the local fast food joint or gas station. Today, the employee's filling those positions that are earning top dollar, are career employees. They have found their niche at that company and it is working for them as well as the company.

What do you need to do to begin the process of finding your career? Know and acknowledge you will have real work to do before finding a career. This mean you will need to prepare a:

- Resume (several versions if you have had multiple industry positions)
- Cover Letter
 - Hard copy
 - Email copy
- Skills Inventory
- Impressive Interview Skills
- Portfolio (optional but recommended)
- Curriculum Vitae (optional but recommended)
- Demonstration presentation (optional but recommended)

These are standards. Other industry may have more specific additions that we can work with you on.

We know you are thinking do I really need all of this stuff to find a job? Actually, you do and here is why: If it was that easy to find a job, wouldn't you already have one and not need NICIL? It is a new workforce in today's competitive market and it will take work if you really want to find the right position for you.

Now let's get down to the work at hand, starting with the understanding the lingo, then moving onto the resume. The upcoming section gives you this information and much more!

Definitions

There are often times that people use language (slang or abbreviations) that may not make any sense to those not familiar with a specific topic. In this section we want to take the time to identify some common terms that will come up in your employment search.

Resume - is a written list of your employment over a specific time period. If you have held multiple type of employment you may need more than one version of your resume to send to industry specific employment opportunities. More in the resume section of this document.

Cover Letter - is an introduction of you/your skills with a specific request for the position you are seeking. You should have at least two types: Hard copy for those resumes you are sending via mail and an Email copy to attach to any emailed resumes. A pro tip: NEVER send in a resume without a cover letter that specifically identifies the position you are applying for. More in the cover letter section of this document.

Skills Inventory - is a listing of all the skills or tasks that you have done. Never heard of it? It is not new! It actually has been a piece of the process that anyone with many years of experience should have. More in the skills inventory section of this document.

Impressive Interview Skills - this is something everyone thinks they can do well but in reality, many do this very poorly. Employer's impression of your abilities to perform work tasks is based on the impress left in the interview. A pro tip: PRACTICE-PRACTICE-PRACTICE! Be ready and prepared for your upcoming interview. More in the interview section of this document.

Portfolio - is a professional looking binder that showcases your career highlights. Think of it as a professional scrapbook! Even if you haven't considered career highlights, you will be amazed at your expertise once you begin the Portfolio process! More in the Portfolio section of this document.

Curriculum Vitae (CV) - is every detail of every position you have held. This sounds a bit overwhelming but is very beneficial for interviews. This is the full package of you! This is not sent as a resume but may be sent or brought with you when you are interviewing. More in the Curriculum Vitae section of this document.

Demonstration Presentation - is a brief demonstration on a skill or passion that can be used to showcase your talents to present in public. This is becoming more common with position that require public presentations or sales force. Don't wait to the last minute to prepare for this! More in the Demonstration Presentation section of this document.

Video Interview - one of the newer versions of presentation or interview skills. It is important that you know how to do a video interview as more and more employers are using it to cut down travel expenses in the interview process. Think of this as Face Time on a professional level! Dressing for success will be a key part of this! More in the Video Interview section of this document.

These are only a few of the many different definitions that you will encounter in your employment search. Take the time to be prepared! It will be worth every minute!

Resume

A resume, by definition, is a brief snapshot of your employment over a specific period of time. Many experts believe that your resume should only capture the last 10 years of your employment, while others believe it should be every year of employment. Which group of expertise is right? Actually, both are, but it depends on your work history!

Let's clarify! If you have worked continually at one employer for many years, then all your past employment **prior** should be included if it shows skill development and personal growth. If you have had a lot of positions over a short period of time (also known as job jumping-see below), be sure to include all employment but showcase skills.

What is in a resume?

This question is a challenge depending on what social media, resource, or expertise you consult. After many years of experience in human resources, the NICIL leadership prefer to see in a resume:

- All contact information
- All professional employment for at least 10 years with the following:
 - Employer name
 - Position held
 - Employment length (month and year only)
 - Top 3-5 responsibilities or tasks
- All education
- All professional associations (no political or religious)
- Any volunteer work (similar to professional employment in information and style)

This is the very basic information. In some cases, the employer may want specific information included in the resume. In cases like that you will want to add the specifics in your resume and save that version as well to add to your portfolio.

Our friends at The Muse (www.themuse.com) suggest the following 20 basic resume writing rules that'll put you ahead of the competition:

1. Keep it to one page
2. Avoid spelling and/or grammar errors (punctuation too!)
3. Watch your tenses
4. Avoid first person pronouns
5. Send your resume as a PDF
6. Label your resume file correctly
7. Format in a logical structure
8. Make sure it is easy to read
9. Keep it organized and visually appealing
10. Keep it consistent
11. Include context
12. Quantify as much as possible
13. Name drop (and title drop) like you've never done before

14. Don't include references
15. Use your judgement when it comes to creativity
16. Don't list everything you've ever done
17. Think about the person reading your resume
18. Think about what makes you different
19. Think about the specific job you're applying to
20. Think of this as a storytelling document

We encourage you to read the entire article and take Ms. Porowski's advice, which has many insightful tips and suggestions. Additional suggestions can be found on the web. We recommended looking for resources and advice from individuals who have expertise in the industry that you are applying for. Just like people are all different, our resumes need to shine and stand out compared to other candidates!

Multiple versions of resumes

Depending on your work history, you may need several versions of your resume that highlight the different type of experiences or job industries you have worked in. Since a resume is only a snapshot of time and limited information you may need this.

Here is an example:

Jane has had over 20 years' experience in the food business. During her work history she has held many positions within each restaurant. These include being a wait staff member, prep and line cook, kitchen manager, inventory supply clerk, and dining room manager. In addition, Jane spent many years while in high school and college doing back room support, including bus person, dishwasher, food prep and general maintenance duties. Jane has three (3) different resumes based on her experiences:

- Food management resume
- Operational management resume
- Wait staff and prep cook

Jane uses the resume and cover letter that best suites the position that she is applying for. Jane keeps track of which resume and cover letter sent through her Employment Search log (See "Other Items" section).

We discuss this at length in our workshops and in our one on one session. Be prepared, don't miss an opportunity to apply for your next career!

References

It was once believed that your resume must list at least three (3) references. These could be professional or personal references. Today employment law has changed dramatically and references are no longer part of the resume itself. This does not mean that you should be prepared to leave a list of three (3) to five (5) professional references if the employer requests this. More on this in the reference section in "Other Items" section of this document.

Styles of Resume

The internet is flooded with resume templates, some of which are downloadable. We are always cautious about downloading anything that is not from a stable, reliable resources so choose very carefully! That been said, you do not need a template to download for a resume. NICIL will provide you a Resume Worksheet available at our office or in one of our classes. This worksheet prompts you for specific information that will be needed to complete your resume.

When working with NICIL, we can also provide you with a variety of examples of common and widely accepted resume styles. From there, we will show you how to build your resume using the Resume Worksheet and one of the resume styles. It really is much easier than you think! The NICIL team will help you develop you resume or multiple resumes.

Job Jumping or Gap Employment

Let's discuss job jumping (multiple jobs over short periods of time) also known as gap employment. There are many reasons that job jumping happens. For many of us it may be disability related with periods of time were we simply cannot work due to advancements of our disability or symptoms. Other times it may be periods of unemployment due to transitioning to other parts of the country, child or elderly parent care, termination from employment, layoffs and the list goes on.

One way to not get a position is to ignore this question when asked in an interview. Be prepared to answer any job jumping with short, yet clear and concise, information. Be honest, do not apologize for the reason. The interviewer is looking for confidence in your future that you are seeking employment with them with your attendance in the position will be long term.

This is probably one of the most difficult parts of not only the resume but also in interviewing. When working with the NICIL team members if this is your situation, it is important to mention so that the NICIL team can take the time to explore language that will help you cover this topic in an interview.

Proofreading and Reviewing

The very first time you develop a resume, complete the task in one session, then walk away! That is correct, finish the task of the resume writing, then take a break (at least one hour, one day is better), then return and read it from top to bottom. Ensure not only spelling, grammar, and punctuation is correct but that it is accurate. Here is a short list of items to review:

- Employer name, including legal name if they use a DBA (fake business name)
- Dates of employment are correct
- Title of position is the recognized title name for the company
- Task or duties is accurate and that you can give examples of these in an interview
- Have employers complete contact information, not necessary to include in the resume, but be ready to provide in interview if asked

Wrap-Up

Resume may seem like an old fashion process for applying for a position, but remember this: The hiring process must be fair and accessible to all potential applicants. This is the law set forth by the Equal Employment Opportunities Commission (EEOC). What this means is that the same process is made available to all people who may apply for the position. Resumes and cover letters are a recognized as fair and accessible job search process. Any person can produce a resume, hand written, typed, and electronic, etc. All people in the US have access to a community-based resource where they can obtain materials on how to write a resume and get assistance to do so.

Understand that one's personal opinion on resumes and cover letters are not relevant to the employment search process. The resume is obtainable, accessible, and fair to all potential applicants. There are many community resources available. This list includes but is not limited to:

- Community Action Agencies
- Library
- Mayor's Office or other municipality offices
- Township offices
- Social Service agencies
- Department of Employment Securities
- Community Colleges
- Disability Service agency

NICIL is here to help and one of those community resources! NICIL offers classes and one on one services for your employment search!

Cover Letter

Cover letters, are they really still used? Actually, they are for multiple reasons. The main reason is identifying you and the position you are seeking. It is like getting a party invitation with no name or address. A weak cover letter tells the reader right off the bat, you won't put in any effort. Read the rest of this section for more proof that a cover letter is important.

A cover letter is really an introduction to you and your work history. If a company requests a cover letter, be sure that you do so! Remember an employer may be requesting items for the application to gauge whether or not a candidate can follow simple instructions as it is an indicator of performance.

Our friends at Pongo Blog, a website that offers employment tips and support, offered the following tips in their article. *6 Reasons You Won't Get Hired Without a Cover Letter:*

1. It tells the employer who you are and why they want you
2. It showcases your writing ability
3. It lets you highlight your strengths

4. It shows that you're serious about the opportunity
5. It makes up for a resume that can't stand alone
6. It sets up the follow-up

We agree! When a resume or application does not come with a cover letter, chances are it is going into the NO pile at the first glance.

Employers may have several positions open at once. Ensure that your cover letter and resume get recognized in the reviewing process, but specifically addressing the desired position in the cover letter.

If you are going to write a cover letter (and we encourage you to do so) then please take time and effort to make it outstanding! You are up against a competitive market. Our friends at Monster.com have also pointed out some clear points in their article *Tricky Cover Letter Mistakes to Avoid*:

1. Overusing "I" statements
2. Using a weak opening
3. Omitting your top selling points
4. Making it too long (1 page only!)
5. Repeating your resume word for word
6. Being vague
7. Forgetting to customize
8. Ending on a passive note
9. Being ruse
10. Forgetting to sign the letter

One thing the author notes in the beginning of the article says it all "*Nix the things (mistakes in cover letters) and make sure your first impression isn't the equivalent of a limp handshake.*" Exactly! No cover letter is like a limp handshake.

Wrap-up

Take your time and develop a cover letter template that can be customized to the position you want. Once done, you will be happy you did dedicate that time. Your resume now has an introduction.

Final note – keep a copy of your resume and cover letter readily available. Multiple copies maybe necessary so that you can refer back to both pieces should you receive a phone interview.

Not sure how to write a cover letter, NICIL can assist you with this via a one on one appointment or during a community employment class.

Skills Inventory

A skills inventory is not anything new to employment searching. If you have ever had to apply for unemployment in Illinois you will recall that this is one piece that you had to complete in order to receive your unemployment benefits.

How is a skills inventory different than a resume or a curriculum vitae? Good question! A resume is a snapshot with only a few (3-10) bullet points of job assignments, it does not list skills. A curriculum vitae is a very detailed and longer version of a resume (8-10 pages) of every job assignment accomplished at the position. These two (2) are very different and separate documents that each have a place in the employee portfolio. The skills inventory is about skills you have been able to build on throughout your career.

If you have never completed one, then now is a great time to start. Why would you need one you ask? To give you a competitive edge over your competition. Here are some reasons why you will want to consider developing this:

- Gap employment may be over looked by balance high skill inventory
- Allows you to supply an employer with proficiency levels already obtained
- It is idea for anyone with long term employment to show growth
- Idea for more experienced employment seekers
- It is a confidence boaster!
- Another storytelling tool

NICIL team members have been using this tool for many years. Yes, we have had people not interested in completing, always a choice. But before you consider saying no think about this: You are competing for a position with a company and 15 other candidates are equal to you in education, experience, and accomplishments, but you are the only one with a skills inventory list. Now you are a clearly above the competition!

There are many templates available online, but NICIL encourages you to do your own and we have a template for you ourselves! Here is a sample of the NICIL worksheet:

Office and Physical Skills

- Answer telephones More than 5 years
- Typing speed More than 60 words per minute
- Keystrokes per Minute 100 - 200
- Pounds able to Lift 20 - 40
- Hours Able to Stand or Walk More than 4 hours but less than 6 hours

There are many categories and this could be customized to fit your skill set in the industries that you have worked in. List your skills and see for yourself all that you have accomplished!

Wrap-up

Skills Inventory is another great tool for your new employment search. Update the skill inventory when you learn new skills. This list can also showcase skills leader in volunteer work or from skills learned at secondary education. It is so worth the effort!

If you need assistance writing a skills inventory, contact NICIL for more information.

Impressive Interview Skills

Everyone tells us that they have impressive interview skills, but do they really? Let's start with the first step, receiving the call from a potential employer.

Phone Interviews

Phone interviews are a way for employers to do a quick interview with potential candidates before the further commitment to resources in a formal interview. It is not uncommon for a potential employer to narrow down their pool of equally qualified candidates from a high number to a manageable number for further interviews. Your first impression starts as soon as that call rings to your phone.

If you are not willing or able to take a live call from an unknown number, then let it go to voicemail. Make sure your voicemail is professional and, in your voice,, not a dog barking or a small child. Save that recording from when you are not searching for a career. Return voice messages from potential employers within 24 hours or the next business day unless otherwise instructed. This is an acceptable practice and expected by a potential employer.

Practice your return reply as well. From your message you should have the person's name and phone number. When calling back ask directly for that individual even if you think it is the direct line or you believe it is the individual. Here are some other tips:

- Be in an area where you can talk privately, background noise can magnify quickly and your professional future can be judged by this
- Have paper and pen to take notes. Take good notes in order to use to summarize with the caller at the end
- If it is not clear what the next steps are in the interview process, ask!
- Be prepared to answer any questions related to your resume and cover letter (keep a copy with you for this reason)
- Know your schedule if an opportunity for another interview is offered, you will be able to say yes then
- Thank the caller for their time

Over the years, communication efforts have diminished. We use text abbreviations instead of full words, we use slang instead of correct language. Be very careful when you call back for interviews. These are not friends but professionals calling you as a professional.

Face to Face Interviews

Face to face interviews may not be the traditional process any longer. With tele-conferencing, video conference, time, and money consideration, interviewing is different today and you will be expected to know and understand the process regardless of the communication method.

We can't repeat this enough: Practice, Practice, and Practice! Know the questions most commonly used in the interview process. Employers by law have to ask the same questions to all candidates for that position. Here are some tips to be prepared:

- Study your resume!
- Be able to answer with specific examples of your skills or duties without breaking confidentiality of your current/past employer
- Speak with authority but not narcissism
- Now is not the time to answer with sarcasm or cute responses
- Be professional at all times
- Arrive early (at least 10 minutes)
- Turn off your cellphone or better yet leave in the car/home
- Remember your manners
- Practice your handshake, firm but not overbearing
- Make good eye contact
- Arrive with questions that are important to you
- Do not ask about salary/wages or time off – you are not offered a position you are only interviewing this is not negotiation time
- Be honest in your answers, information will be checked
- If the next steps in the interview process is not stated, ask!
- Thank each person for their time
- Send thank you notes to all involved in the interview

If the interview is via video or Face Time, here are tips and suggestions:

- Set your background to be professional
- Keep children, guests, and pets away from the interview area
- Have a copy of your resume and cover letter
- Dress professionally!
- Keep music and other background sounds low or off
- Turn off your cell phone
- Check timers to ensure that they do not disturb the interview
- Ensure good lighting
- Ensure that your connection is stable
- If needed charged electronics
- Practice!
- All other tips for interviewing also need to be incorporated

If you interviewing via panel, here are tips and suggestions:

- Greet each person
- If possible write down all names for thank you letters
- Panel interviews are the same as one on one, answer honest and directly to the person asking the question
- All other tips for interviewing also need to be incorporated

Multiple interviews

It is not uncommon in today's competitive market place to have multiple interviews as company filter through qualified candidates. You will need to be as prepared for a second, third, or more interviews as diligently as you did for the first one! Here are some tips or suggestions:

- If asked to bring samples of your work, do so
- Be strategic in answering
- Have a new set of questions
- Bring additional resumes as a professional courtesy
- Don't assume that the first interviewer did not talk to the second interviewers, they did. They may be asking the same or very similar questions to see if the answer is consistent. It is ok to write down interview questions
- Do not get an attitude if you are repeating answers multiple times, it may be consistency they are seeking or seeking to see your attitude

Interviews can be draining on all parties involved, but continue with professionalism and an attitude of gratitude!

Next Steps

Most employers will tell you the next steps in the interview process. This does not guarantee you will be selected to advance in the process. If you are unsure next steps, it is acceptable to ask professionally about this. It is not acceptable to demand a reply or an offer.

Wrap-up

Most employers who have been interviewing for a long time will agree that it is an expensive and time-consuming activity. Keep in mind it is necessary to make sure that the chosen candidate is the right selection for the job. As employers we want the right person to be with us for a long time!

If you are interested in learning more about interviewing, or participating in mock interviews, contact NICIL for an appointment!

Attitude for Gratitude

In today's society there is often an attitude for entitlement. This means as an individual I think that I am owed something, be it a job offer, inside information, guarantees, etc. Sorry, but employment is not an entitlement. There is no employer that owes you an explanation on why you didn't get a position. In fact, it is against the law for an employer to share any information to the candidate about their standing in the competition or any information about the competitors.

Having this understanding actually takes the pressure off you! When you send or email a resume, cover letter, or any other part of the application process, remember that it is a process! It will take time and you may not hear immediately a reply. When you do, show appreciate for the contact and follow through with passion. It will show in the

interviews. No one is looking to hire a new staff person who appears to already be sullen and unappreciative. Get excited about the process!

Thank You Letters and Follow up

Yes, we have heard it many times, thank you letters are old school; no one wants them, and no one wants to send them. Wrong on every point! It is not old school to thank someone for their time and effort in a process that is recognized to be long and stressful. Most of the people you interview with will have thanked you for your time and effort, a thank you letter is the final part on your end!

A handwritten thank you note to each member of the interview process is ideal. It tells the receiver that you appreciated their time and you are making a personal effort to thank them. This will be a good step to take and may place you higher up in the competitive rankings.

On to follow up! What is the proper follow up process? A good question! The first clue is what was told to you in the interview process. For example, if the interviewer states: “we are finishing interviews this week and making our decision next week”, that is a clear note that at least two (2) weeks are needed before an expected decision. But, before you schedule a call back, remember holidays can cause delays, life can cause delays.

It is acceptable to contact the interviewer and ask politely if a decision has been made about filling the position. If no, then ask if you could call again in a week to check in. If they reply back no, we will call you, then leave it at that. Do not become disruptive of their business, it will not be a good reflection on you.

Texting in general is not considered an acceptable practice unless you were told specifically that you may. Email is acceptable. Remember that email is still considered a formal process. Here are some tips:

- Use formal and professional language
- Use salutation and closings
- Use full sentences
- Check grammar, spelling, and punctuation
- Ask for a check back time/date
- Offer to supply any new or additional information
- Thank them for their time

The employer or interview does not owe you a response, so be careful in how often you email (or call) and be respectful of time.

Portfolio

A portfolio is designed to showcase tangible proof of your professional accomplishments. The content of your portfolio may differ depending on each industry expectations. For example, if you are a writer, your portfolio would have samples of

published works. If you are a grant writer, your portfolio would have award letters and samples of your grants (do not break confidentiality!)

Our friends at Careeraddict.com share with us some great points! For a physical portfolio, select a professional binder that is durable and will be large enough to hold all the necessary sections for your samples. Use high quality paper with sheet protectors. Consider multiple copies so that a copy can be left with the interview team. This could get expensive but necessary.

Electronic portfolios are a newer vehicle to showcase your professional work. It is unlimited for space, no purchase required, and can be sent to potential employers to be shared by all the interviewing team. A couple of points of caution: Ensure that it is high quality and saved to an electronic media type that all companies will have. An example would be to save all information to PDF as it is a standard format that anyone can access for free. Be creative but professional!

Finally, our friends at Careeraddicts.com share their thoughts on what should be contained in a portfolio. They suggest:

- Resumes (include multiple resumes if you have them)
- Cover letters
- Job Skills Inventory
- Curriculum Vitae
- Personal Statement
- Certifications of professional memberships or qualification
- Licenses
- Work Samples
- Educational Transcripts
- Emails or letters of compliments from clients and customers
- Reference from previous employers
- Any additional employment related documentation such as professional writing, art work, or sales reports

These are a few suggestions but there may be other expectations depending on the specific industry. We can also recommend additional information for you to include in your portfolio after we have a chance to review your resume with you.

Curriculum Vitae

The Curriculum Vitae (CV) was a long-detailed resume used primarily in academia. It allowed the professor or teacher to list all classes they have presented over their career, as well as other details about the classroom. Today the CV is often used for long term career employee or someone who has achieved many accomplishments in their field but many not have tangible proof of these accomplishment. For example, a trainer who has over 5,000 training hours completed a list of all their training curriculums would be in their CV.

Individuals without a long work history or who have not had many different duties in their career may still want to consider developing a CV as it can then showcase all the different duties held during employment.

CV and resumes differ and are not interchangeable. Resumes, as discussed prior, are covering only a few duties specific to reflecting the last 10 years of employment. CV cover your entire work history. CV also allow volunteer work to be counted where resumes discourage volunteer work. Depending on the industry you are applying for, as well as the location of your career, a CV may also be an expectation of the application process.

If you are living and working in NW Illinois and the employer wants a CV as part of the application process, chances are it will be specified in the instructions. If you are living here in NW Illinois but your job is telecommuting to an organization in New York City, a CV may be a standard. It will be up to you to research and determine if it is needed!

A CV may be a new concept for you. The NICIL team can assist you in the preparation of a CV or any other items in preparing for your employment search!

Demonstration Presentation

Demonstration presentation are not new! In the past they had been used primarily in teaching, sales/marketing, and recruiting. Now a days, it is becoming more common for individuals to complete a demonstration presentation as part of the application / interview process. This is especially true in organizations that rely on staff to outreach to the public or stakeholders.

NICIL is an example of this change that includes demonstration presentation with all positions. One reason is that NICIL is a public organization covering five (5) counties. Every NICIL team member is responsible for representing NICIL at events, trainings, public speaking, or even talking to legislators!

Understand that 85% of adults do not feel comfortable with their public speaking capability. However, comfortable or not, it is often an expected assignment that employers require you to complete. If a Demonstration Presentation is part of the interview process, then the employer should give you instructions on their expectations for the demonstration.

Other Items

There are additional items that may be requested of you depending on the specific job industry that you are applying for. As an example, if you were going to be writing blogs for an employer's social media account, they may want to see examples of your style of writing. In this case you want to deliver professional materials that reflect your style, personality, and process. Be very careful to select professional examples.

Applications

Employers may ask for a candidate to complete applications either online or in person as part of the interview process. Yes, they know it is a repeat of the same information in your resume! Remember that the hiring process is a process that has to be fair, accessible, and equitable to all candidates. The application is one of the most recognized methods for the hiring process. Fill it out legibly and ensure that the information is actual the same as your resume. It will be reviewed. Two different sets of information may take you out to the YES pile and directly into the NO pile.

References and Reference Checks

References should be mentioned in your resume but not sent with your resume unless specifically asked to send with your resume. These then should be a separate document that is attached or included.

Important note: Illinois employers can only report the following information to anyone seeking an employment reference:

- Position title
- Time employed
- Major tasks or job duties

Anything else given by an Illinois employer is or can be considered illegal and prejudice information. Those calling should know Illinois law and not ask other questions.

We encourage you to have a Reference list of three (3) to five (5) professional references developed as its own document. We encourage you to contact these individuals and ensure that they are willing and able (per their company policy) to give you a professional reference. There is nothing more damaging than for a potential employer to call someone on a reference list who has no recall of the person! It happens more often than you think. Take the time in advance to be prepared!

Employer Contact information

NICIL suggests that you prepare a separate document with all your current as well as past employer contact information. This should include:

- Company legal name
- Company DBA (if applicable)
- Contact address and phone number
- Contact person, such as HR if needed for reference check
- Direct supervisor and contract information

References cannot be checked until an employment offer is extended. Reference checks are specific under Illinois law.

Testing

An employer does have the right to conduct testing of any type as long as it can be proven relevant to the position or the contract. You have the right to ask questions about the testing to understand and prepare in advance. Think through your approach to the questions you ask about the testing. The employer does not owe you and

explanation for the need for the test. It only has to be fair, accessible, equitable to all candidates and relevant to the position or the contract.

You also have the right to refuse testing. Understand that refusal of testing will most likely remove you from the candidate list. Think carefully before refusing.

Wage Negotiate

Wage negotiate is tricky! Ask for too much and you will price yourself out of a job. Ask for too little and you may resent the employment offer. First thing first: know how much you are willing to work for. If you need \$2,500 per month (\$30,000 per year-gross) and the employment offer is only \$2,000 per month you need to negotiate up to the amount you need.

Next, find the range that employers are willing to pay for this position. This information could be in the job description or other materials that are part of the application process. If this information is not listed, it's okay to ask, but not in the first interview!

Your experience, years in the industry, and level of education can contribute to your wage level, but do your homework! There are many websites that can tell you the expected pay range for a position. Search for these and have an idea of the expected wage.

Wage negotiating is not a hostile takeover! Be professionals, think through your questions, and be prepared to give a professional response. Finally, keep your emotions out of the conversation. No one knows your financial need, but a wage negotiation is about the position. Don't get mad, instead make a reasonable counter! Similar to an interview process, you should practice wage negotiation as well.

Employment Search Log

An Employment Search Log is exactly what it sounds like. It is a tool that can assist you in keeping track of what companies you have applied with and when. An employment search log can also help you keep track of when you submitted your resume, cover letter, or application, what day you should call back to enquire about the position, as well as if you were able to speak with someone in the organization.

You can develop your own Log or NICIL will be happy to provide you one that we use. This become a great tool/checklist to prevent frustrations and duplicate mailings.

Top Job Search Websites

The internet can be a great resource in your search for employment, if you use it wisely! When establishing top search sites for employment, be mindful of ones that are not familiar or accepted in the industry you are applying for. Any website that requires you to enter payment information, you may want to reconsider and think carefully before providing! There are websites that require a fee to use but also sites that you can search for job openings free of charge.

NICIL does not recommend any specific resource or website. The list below are ones that others have recommended or that we have had experience in using. These are:

- Robert Half (has salary guides as well)
- CareerBuilder
- Indeed
- Job.com
- Ladders
- LinkedIn
- Glassdoor
- Monster
- SimplyHired
- Google for Jobs
- Dice
- ZipRecruiters

Industry specific websites for your field may also be standard, those listed here are general employment websites.

Head Hunters/Recruiters

This another popular question! Should I hire a head hunter (old term) or recruiter? Our first question is why do you want to do this? There are some recruiters that a free or paid by membership in some organizations while other charge a percentage of annual salary which could be \$3,000 to \$60,000! At the end of the day the choice is yours as to whether you want to hire a head hunter. If you do, please be aware of your responsibilities in searching for employment and what the recruiter could ask from you.

Wrap up

There is no guarantee for any employment search! Unless you have a proven history with a recruiter, proceed cautiously! You can do this! We are here to help!

Self-Assessment for Employment Search

During the time spent working with the NICIL, team our consumers come to know us better as well as themselves. Self-assessments are part of what we do as we work together. Employment searches are no different. We have provided some questions for you to conduct an assessment about why you want a position with a company. We encourage everyone to use this process before you interview.

I am applying for: _____

With (Company name): _____

What are the skills or duties they are wanted performed with this position? _____

Do I have all of this skills or abilities to perform these duties? _____

Will the hours proposed for this position work for my needs or health concerns? _____

What do I know about this company? _____

What about this company intrigues me to want to work for this company? _____

Are there accommodations that I will need for this position? _____

Are there any concerns I have about working for this company? _____

Do I know anyone that works at this company that could give me any insight into working for this company? _____

What interview questions will I want to ask? _____

Use additional paper as needed

Tips and Suggestions

There are many tips and suggestions that the NICIL team can share through our years of experience here, years of experience in other positions, and as subject matter expertise. We have seen it all, heard it all, and could write a book! Actually, we are in the process of writing a book on Human Resource Practices for not for profit agencies!

Here are our best tips and suggestions!

Resumes

- Clean up your contact information!
 - Find a professional email address, one that professionally identifies you
 - Avoid nonprofessional email address: (yep these are real!)
 - Hotmamawantsu2
 - Catlady210
 - Hateyou2
 - Make sure your voicemail is professional and it identifies who you are
 - Avoid nonprofessional voice mail: (yep again real!)
 - Hi, you have reached me, leave a message I might call you back but probably not
 - You know what to do at the tone
 - 815-555-1412
- Employer Tip – If you aren't professional we aren't leaving a message
- Have an impressive resume
 - 6-10 seconds, that is all the time given by employers to review your resume. Not impressive, yours goes to the NO pile
 - Use conventional resume layouts and concepts
 - Stick to a standard font. Using multiple fonts is too hard to read
 - Unconventional layout - have to search for information
 - Unconventional paper – too hard to see information
 - Scented paper – just no, this is employment not dating

Interviewing

- If a potential employer leaves you a message regarding your resume, call back! Don't leave them hanging. You do not like that as a candidate, think about it from the other side. Acceptable practice is to return contact within 24 hours of the message or the next business day, unless otherwise instructed
- Arrive at least 10 minutes prior, we won't wait for you
- Be nice to everyone, all our employees are important to us, they should be important to you. Mind your manners, these folks may be part of the decision-making team and you might not know it!
- Be prepared! Don't tell an interview you don't know your weakness
- Leave your personal items at home, including you phone
- Interviews are formal, regardless of the environment or the interviewers, you must remain professional and mind your manners
- Leave your children at home

NICIL Executive Director Notes:

As the NICIL Executive Director since 2013, I have had the opportunity to interview hundreds of people for NICIL positions. In my past work experience I interviewed thousands of people for positions. Here are my suggestions:

- Follow the advice of expertise like NICIL, make yourself outstanding!
- Make the effort to learn about the company you are interviewing with! Everyone has a website with basic information, if a candidate can't even tell me about what is on our website or what we do, do we want them working for us? Where is the effort to understand NICIL?
- Practice, practice, practice! Practice your interview skills, we can tell when you haven't practice or tried to polish your skills
- Dress for success! Don't dress as if you are going to a sporting event, make an effort!
- We don't owe you a job, we are seeking candidates who want to work for NICIL and have a passion, show us that is you!

Many years ago, I had the honor of presenting at a job conference with a panel of local employers for college students. One gentleman owned several McDonald's franchise and made this statement (paraphrasing)

Everyone says go work at McDonald's they aren't picky about who they hire and it will be an easy first job. If that is what you think of McDonald's, don't bother to apply, we don't want you! We want people who want to work, who want to serve our customers, who want a career not a job. A job won't last forever, but a career will.

After all these years, I remember look on the audience faces when that reality hit them. We at NICIL feel that same way. Don't think that a NICIL position (or any job) is going to be easy. No work is easy, but if you are passionate about your work, it won't be work, it will be an honor to serve.

In my many years of interviewing, I have seen just about everything, all of these examples actually took place:

- Answering the cellphone and/or texting during an interview (no!)
- Bring children to an interview (never!)
- Wear inappropriate clothing to an interview including:
 - Swimming suit
 - Flip flops
 - Shorts
 - Sweatpants
 - Pajama pants
- Not bathing or using personal grooming techniques
- Shoes with a broken heel
- Under the influence of alcohol
- T-shirts with inappropriate sayings
- Bringing a parent to an interview

There are many personal opinions on what a person should wear, how they should behave, or how interviews are "too formal". Opinions are just that, someone else

property. As an employer not only am I concerned about how this candidate will impact our consumers, but how will this person represent NICIL?

Yes, interviews are very telling on how a person will be on the job. Not everyone can be “on their best behavior” the entire interview at some point their true colors shine through.

Last note: I once interviewed someone for a supervisor position at NICIL. This person said, “I applied at NICIL because I figure I could easily get the job and I was expecting it to be a poorly run organization. I was really surprised and impressed by how professional this really is. I hope you pick me for this job.” Do you think this person was invited to join the NICIL team?

Make an effort to impress! If you aren’t worth the time and effort why would we be interested?

What do Employers Really Want?

We get this question a lot! What is an employer really looking at with these resumes, applications, and cover letters? We look at all documentation that is sent in as it helps with our consideration. Here are some things that you should know about employers hiring processes:

- All hiring process have to be in a policy
- All interviewing questions have to be the same for every candidate interviewing for that position
- Interview questions may be different for different positions as long as each question is relevant to position
- We spend a lot of time and money making sure that the process is fair, accessible, and equal for all people who may apply for the position
- We don’t care if you think it is unnecessary to ask for items in the application process we ask for these items because:
 - They are part of our contracts
 - We are ethically bound
 - It is law
 - It is our policy
 - It is fair, accessible, and equitable for all people
- We have done this many times before so we do know what we are doing
- We are not greedy trying to make a buck off our employees. Employee expenses are one of the top three (3) expenses of a business. The wrong person working for us is wasted money that belongs to our stakeholders. We don’t like wasting their money

Often time candidates believe rumors, gossip, social media and other wasted efforts that people now choose to believe in. Employers are legally bound to have a published policy on their hiring practices and stick to it each and every time that hiring happens. Before your next interview look at this process from the other side of the table.

Professionally, a business owner or manager has been through the hiring process many times and has seen just about everything! However, due to the employment laws we can rarely, if ever share, some background into the hiring process. We also don't share our frustrations with candidates. This document is a training document for you to understand the interview hiring process. Here are a few things that employers wish that candidate really know about the hiring process that we can't share with you face to face:

- This business took us years and a lot of effort to get where we are today. Honor that in your thoughts and comments during interviews or tours
- Don't accept an interview if you are truly not interested in working for that company. Not only are you wasting our time but also are money
- We know if you have been dismissive or rude to anyone of our staff during your visit with us. Be polite and professional with everyone you come in contact with
- If you arrive even one minute late without calling it is disrespectful
- Turn your cellphone off, better yet leave it at home
- Be prepared for our interview:
 - Have extra resumes as a professional courtesy
 - Make eye contact with all people present
 - Be polite and professional to everyone
 - Have questions for us in the interview
 - Know about our company, know a lot about us
 - Share professional stories, but do not break and confidentiality
- Do not answer us with cute voices or sarcastic replies. This is not a sitcom. It is a real-life professional interview, please treat it as such
- Don't ask me about money in the first interview or for time off. We will provide that information to you as you progress through the interview process. When you ask about money and time off, I have to think you are only interested in what benefits you, not a gauge to see if you want to work for us because you believe in what we do. When you ask you tell me you only are here for a paycheck
- Everyone who is part of the interview is important to us and you don't know the role they play in our organization. Make no assumptions on who is who and how much you should talk with them as everyone is valued
- Do not assume we are not educated or do not know our business. We are asking you questions we already know the answer to. We are asking to see if you know the answer
- We want people to have a positive experience as part of the team but also when are working with consumers. Do not take our position, if offered, just for the paycheck. Take it because you see the same value and passion we do for our company. Share that passion and value
- We are not the right company for everyone. If you do not think you can be happy with our company, then don't frustrate yourself or us by joining us then leaving
- Yes, we read all the latest information and trends about all generations. We know experts say that young employees won't stay forever and will move on. If that is the case, at least wait until you have time in with us before you start searching. Make sure your searching is on your time, not ours
- Remember everyone gains experience when they work at it

- We do not owe you a job or an explanation about why you didn't get the position. By law we cannot share this information or how you ranked in comparison with other candidates so please don't ask
- Know appropriate social norms. It is not our job to teach that in an interview
- Hats do not belong in an interview. Remove them upon entering the building
- We recognize that the interview process is not fun, but we have to be fair, accessible, and equal to everyone. This is not entertainment, it is employment
- Thank us for our time for the interview. We will thank you for coming and it is nice to hear it back
- Send us a thank you note, hand written, if you can. It shows us that you want to make a connected effort to our organization.
- Send a thank you note to everyone who interviewed as all of us are making the decision if you will join our team
- Save texting for your friends, not for professional feedback

Did you know that the training for a new employee costs an average of \$40,000? That is a lot of money and effort for a company to invest in an employee. Find your passion and seek employment in a field that you can be excited to go to every day, then make a difference!

Resources

20 Basic Resume Writing Rules That'll Put You Ahead of the Competition, Jody Porowski, at www.themuse.com

6 Reasons You Won't Get Hired Without a Cover Letter, writer unknown, at <https://www.pongoresume.com/blogPosts/144/6-reasons-you-won-t-get-hired-without-a-cover-letter.cfm>

Tricky Cover Letter Mistakes to Avoid, by Kim Isaacs at <https://www.monster.com/career-advice/article/cover-letter-mistakes-0417>

How to Organize Your Portfolio for Your job Interview, by Soteris Phoraris, January 30, 2017 at: <https://www.careeraddict.com/organize-your-portfolio-for-your-job-interview>

Conclusion

We hope that this guide has given insight into how to find how to develop an outstanding resume, cover letter, skills inventory, and impressive interview skills. It is our intent to assist in helping you find a position that will make you happy as well as help you make a difference in your communities. As stated in the beginning, a job is temporary but a career is an experience for a lifetime. Live passionately in your work life and you will enjoy every day!

We have had individual say to us, why do I have to go to all this trouble for just a job. The minimum wages in Illinois will increase over the next several years to \$15.00 per

hour. Many businesses will be looking at all positions carefully as these costs impact all aspects of their business. They do not want anyone who just wants a job, they want candidates who are excited to be working for their business. If you won't take the time to go through this process, why would a business want you over the hundreds of other candidates? Aren't you worth the effort?

The NICIL team is ready to help you with choosing your independent life in any way we can. Our services for one on one sessions are free. Workshops, classes, and developing a resume for you do have a fee and we would be happy to share our pricing schedule with you. Being independent is just that your way, your choice! We want to be part of that process! Call us for your appointment, we will be waiting!

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