

# The employment process: how to improve your chances of getting a job

In June 2002, the ASTC held a half day workshop on the employment process, and provided participants with some insider's tips on how to improve their chances of getting a job.

by Irene Paradisis

I was asked to talk at the workshop, providing the employers' perspective, and in this article, you'll find some tips on how to prepare for a job within the technical communication industry, as well as how to follow through after the interview process.

We can break the process of applying for a job or position to:

- Things to consider before you apply for a job.
- What to do before the interview.
- At the interview.
- After the interview.

## Things to consider before you apply for a job

- Make sure you understand what the role involves. If it's possible, speak to a representative from the company. Some job adverts will generally point you to a company representative, possibly from the Human Resources department. This type of information is generally advertised. Take advantage of this, it may save you (and the company) time.
- Prepare your CV – make sure all of your details are correct and up to date. Try to get someone else to look at it and get their opinion. This will have a huge impact on how the employer will perceive you.
- Use the Internet as a resource for:
  - Company information.
  - Information about the department/group.
  - Samples of documents or other tools you might be involved with if you get the job.

## Before you apply:

- **KISS** – Keep It Simple! Don't add too much detail in your CV. Long CVs can be time consuming to go through. If you think adding details from 20 years ago will help you out – think again! If you DO intend to add lots of detail, add it to your last two or three job descriptions.
- Have referees available:
  - Make sure they agree to do this, and that their contact details are correct. There's nothing worse than someone who is unprepared to handle questions relating to your work experience and history.
  - Make sure they know what you've done in the past, and things they could discuss on your behalf.

## Before the interview

- Present well – first impressions count, so make sure you give it your best shot.
- Be on time – very important! If you can't make it on time, call the company or person you are meeting and let them know.
- Be prepared – know your CV inside out, and bring it with you. Is there anything else you need to bring?
- Samples of work are always the best way to show off what you know.

- Bring samples whether or not you're asked to do so.
- Turn off mobile phones, alarms, organizers/PDAs and so on.

### **At the interview**

- Try to relax – most employers are not out to get you. Try to look enthusiastic about the interview – people that give off negative vibes in an interview often get it back!
- Answer the questions! Don't talk about friends, pets and other non-related facts – unless asked.
- Be direct and precise with your answers. This may mean that you'll have to have practice questions prepared before the interview (that's why we're here – right?)
- Show that you're an all-rounder.
- Think of scenarios before the interview that you could bring along with you. Rehearse these to the nth detail – and know what you want to say.

### **Exercises**

- What are your 5 most hated questions in an interview? Why?
- Answer those 5 questions now!
- What are the most popular interview questions? Any you can think of?
- Where do you see yourself in 2, 5, 10 years' time?
- What are your weaknesses?
- Best and worst achievements, managers...why?
- Others?

### **Interview questions...**

- What are some questions you might be asked that you could prepare for? This is the one that makes or breaks an interview for me.....  
 “Describe the documentation process, and how you fit in to that process? Why is each step important?”.....  
 You'd be surprised at the answers.....

### **Answering questions**

- Know what you want to say.
- Keep it simple.
- Have some order.
- Ask for pen and paper for these types of questions, if you have to – map it out!

### **Sample work...**

I always ask people to bring in samples – make sure you know your samples and that you can explain or answer questions about them. Know what you contributed – was it the entire manual, or just one paragraph hidden somewhere? DON'T lie – you'll just get caught out.

### **At the end of the interview...**

- ASK QUESTIONS! Almost anything goes!
- Tools, technology, workspace, work hours
- Advancement, benefits and HR related issues
- Try to be a bit different.
- If possible, do some research on the company prior to the interview, and know what you want to ask. Come prepared – showing a list of questions is not necessarily a bad thing!

## **Money.....**

- This is one of the more difficult questions....
  - If you have an agent, chances are they would have done the research for you.
  - Try to ascertain this before you go to the interview – again, no point wasting time.
- Example – No less than \$85,000 for a \$45,000 job.
- Know how much you're worth.
  - Speak to agencies and your peers about this.
  - How much experience do you have?
  - What knowledge do you really have that you could use to sell yourself?

## **After the interview**

- Get feedback from the Agent.
- If you don't have an Agent, the company will contact you with either a phone call or letter to let you know you were unsuccessful – Find out why?
- If it's down to two or three candidates, try to find out what they have that you don't have??