



THE JOB HUNT

By Jay Packard

The last five months of my life came to an end last week as my search for a position in golf course management ended in success. While the time for celebration and planning has arrived, I feel obligated to pass on some of what I have learned from my job hunt. Keep in mind that the methods and styles I describe are not the only ways to proceed; after all I got a lot more rejections than offers!

After spending the last four summers on golf courses and other time in the classroom, my goal was to find a position as an assistant golf course superintendent. I knew I could find a job at any golf course, but finding that first "title" turned out to be a very educational search. My job hunt taught me a lot about resumes, cover letters, interviewing, and the golf course industry.

The beginning of my active pursuit of a career came with a class devoted to resumes, interviews, and public communication. The class was mildly successful at the last two; however, the resume building aspect was deplorable. The resume I completed in the class, which was acceptable to the professor, was laughable. The highly decorated "GRASS ROOTS" editor called the whole thing "underwhelming."

So for about the first two months of my searching I spent hours revising that document. One example of how poor that resume was is demonstrated by the section on relevant class work that I included. A resume should emphasize your strengths. Coming out of college, my strengths are not extensive pesticide application, engine work, or time as a crew leader. They are my education, my leadership potential, my work ethic, and my ability to learn. To emphasize my education, I had listed only four classes but after revision I included 15 classes.

Another part of my resume was work experience. In my search for a golf course position, I included my year and a half term as a salad maker for the Memorial Union on the UW-

Madison campus. Now I must admit that I did have a gift for egg salad. However that really doesn't serve any meaningful purpose to a golf course superintendent (unless he likes egg salad). This was wasted space.

A possible reference could have come from the position, but since I had a handfull of student supervisors it would have been weak at best.

What this section should have included was the place of work, the length of employment, and a handfull of my experiences there. Extraordinary duties or skills developed should also be included. From my four summers, I included about 14 different duties or skills developed between the two courses.

The final part of my resume was activities and awards. This part remained the most consistent throughout the revision process. A simple list of all my clubs and the leadership positions I held in those clubs proved valuable. The end of the section included my scholarships, and how many times I made the Dean's Honor List (twice). Later in the job hunt, after I had a couple of interviewers ask my hobbies, I included them on my resume as well.

Writing cover letters is another skill you'll not specifically learn in college. In the beginning of my search I used them to introduce myself, and thank the prospective employer for his time. While both of the points are part of the letter, I gradually began to get much more out of my letter. In less than 20 lines, I was able to call attention to myself as well as highlight my strengths. Using the cover letter to emphasize certain sections of your resume can be very effective.

The low point in my resume/cover letter writing adventure was sending a cover letter with a word missing from a sentence. I did not get any response from that effort.

When I sent out my resumes and letters, I used 9"x12" envelopes. A flat sheet of paper is much easier to look at than one with two folds. The enve-

lope itself had a typed address and I added two Elvis Presley stamps for style. Since I was trying to distinguish myself from other applicants, using the stamp of the King and thick ivory colored paper were the ways I tried to be noticed.

The final and most important part of the job hunt is the interview. Over Thanksgiving my parents took me to a suit shop in Milwaukee to buy the "interview suit." A tailored, navy blue business suit with cordovan shoes, white shirt, and a power tie—all for one month's rent. This suit was the symbolic end of my college days.

From Thanksgiving until the WTA Winter Conference, the job market was non-existent. Past years had always provided me with openings during this period. But not in my year to find a job. At the WTA conference, I hit the beat by letting everyone know I was in the market. Fortunately, I did get one lead for an assistant's position. A phone call yielded an interview and I thought "hey, I'm on my way." The interview went well except that the superintendent was emphasizing a lot of duties that are definitely not my strengths. I still felt I had a chance.

Over the next few weeks, the national referral service brought me a whole host of openings, as I am sure all of you closet subscribers can attest. I would average three cover letter/resume mailings per week. Most of these openings fell in the transition belt, and did not show any interest in me or my ivory colored paper.

The third week in February brought both good and bad news; a rejection from interview number one and another in-state opening. This opening was for a second assistant. Being number two really did not excite me, but at this point I was seriously concerned about finding anything. In early March I was interviewed with the business suit and power tie in full force.

This superintendent was well prepared with a list of 20 questions cover-

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ing most aspects of golf course management. These questions exposed most of my weaknesses and the interview quickly fell into more of a lecture. My mouth was going dry between questions, as the interviewer expounded his ideas on golf, landscaping, the position, and me.

I came away from this meeting without much self-confidence or hope for finding a position. Little did I know, this experience was one of the best things that happened to me during my job hunt. While the interview was complete in giving me my weaknesses, it also gave me a lot of insight into the

industry and the positions I was applying for. So while memories of the interview are less than pleasing, the ideas that it generated helped me.

Two weeks later, I was scheduled for another interview. This time the golf course was in the flatlands of Illinois. An assistant's position was open and the superintendent was interested in talking to a Wisconsin graduate. Armed with my previous interview experiences, the business suit and power tie, I went to the interview. This time I was prepared for the questions, and my answers reflected it. The fact that he and I hit it off may have helped a little, too. Following the interview the

job was offered, and two days later I accepted. My job hunt was over.

What I have learned from this is going to help me forever. Had I learned it earlier, maybe it would not have taken as long to find my position. Hopefully this literary work will help someone else find their position. If not, no big deal; they will have to learn it themselves.

Special thanks for all their help over the last six months go to; Roanne Barnes, Steven Schmidt, Wayne Kusow, Monroe S. Miller, Wayne Otto, Mom, Dad and everyone else. 🙏

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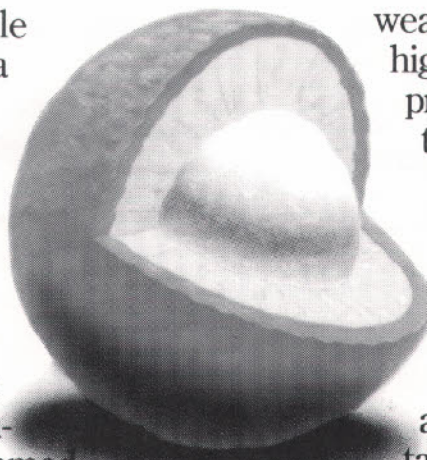
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