



keys
to unlocking the job market

Evaluate your abilities *Analyze your personality*

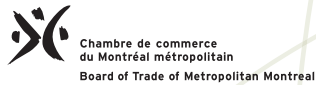
8 *keys to finding employment
in the field of your choice*



A student handbook

The Board of Trade of Metropolitan Montreal believes that, to create a prosperous and competitive metropolis, we must inspire students to strive for excellence by encouraging them to stay in school while helping young people to integrate the job market.

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380 St. Antoine Street West,
suite 6000
Montréal, Quebec H2Y 3X7
Phone: (514) 871-4000
Fax: (514) 871-1255
E-mail: info@ccmm.qc.ca

www.btmm.qc.ca

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Learn to know yourself

What is your dream job? Firefighter? Secretary? Carpenter? Lawyer? Teacher? Public relations officer? What kinds of jobs will be available to you when you finish your education? Will you have a choice? These are all very good questions!

Here is a guide to help you navigate the obstacle course between finishing school and starting your first job – whether it be temporary or permanent. One thing is certain: you already have the skills you need to do a good job! This will become clear to you as you play the assessment game presented to you here. It will help you to learn more about your own skills and abilities and, above all, the type of work that interests you most.

Whether you're applying for a job in an office or a fast-food restaurant, the same rule applies: employers are looking for competent workers. And competence can be learned.

identify the type of activity that suits you best so you can prepare for it;

develop a plan to build on your strengths and correct your weaknesses;

be aware of the needs of the marketplace
(or your chosen field of activity).

First of all ...

... as with any serious undertaking, finding a job means identifying what you have to offer and what the market is looking for. In this "keys to unlocking the job market" game presented to you by the Board of Trade of Metropolitan Montreal, employment experts offer you a tool for assessing your abilities that can help you land your next job.

Let's get started!

First, you must take the time to study, absorb, and fully understand the ideas presented to you in this guide. They will help you not only in your approach to your studies but also in preparing your entry into the job market.

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Game 1

Who am I?

The objective of this game is to **create the most accurate possible portrait of your personality**. To help you in this process, don't hesitate to ask the help of any relatives, friends, or other adults you think will give you clear, objective, positive feedback. The idea is to create a foundation for analyzing your interests, your abilities, and your aspirations.

From the following adjectives,

1. Quickly tick off the ones that describe you best.
2. Then choose your top ten characteristics and circle them in green.
3. Then, from these ten, pick your five best qualities and circle them in red.

***Analytical:**
someone who likes to analyze, considering individual parts rather than looking at them as a whole (see synthetic).

***Empathetic:**
someone who can identify with other people and feel what they feel.

***Synthetic:** the opposite of analytical – someone who combines the parts or elements of an idea to form a coherent, comprehensive whole.

<input type="checkbox"/> Agreeable	<input type="checkbox"/> Discreet	<input type="checkbox"/> Hard-working	<input type="checkbox"/> Punctual
<input type="checkbox"/> Ambitious	<input type="checkbox"/> Dynamic	<input type="checkbox"/> Honest	<input type="checkbox"/> Reliable
<input type="checkbox"/> Analytical*	<input type="checkbox"/> Efficient	<input type="checkbox"/> Industrious	<input type="checkbox"/> Resourceful
<input type="checkbox"/> Attentive	<input type="checkbox"/> Empathetic*	<input type="checkbox"/> Likeable	<input type="checkbox"/> Responsible
<input type="checkbox"/> Clever	<input type="checkbox"/> Energetic	<input type="checkbox"/> Methodical	<input type="checkbox"/> Self-sufficient
<input type="checkbox"/> Competitive	<input type="checkbox"/> Enthusiastic	<input type="checkbox"/> Optimistic	<input type="checkbox"/> Serious
<input type="checkbox"/> Conscientious	<input type="checkbox"/> Exacting	<input type="checkbox"/> Patient	<input type="checkbox"/> Sociable
<input type="checkbox"/> Creative	<input type="checkbox"/> Flexible	<input type="checkbox"/> Persevering	<input type="checkbox"/> Synthetic*
<input type="checkbox"/> Determined	<input type="checkbox"/> Frank	<input type="checkbox"/> Positive	<input type="checkbox"/> Tolerant
<input type="checkbox"/> Disciplined	<input type="checkbox"/> Generous	<input type="checkbox"/> Practical	<input type="checkbox"/> Well-balanced

Feel free to add to this list if necessary.

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Game 2

What are my strengths?

Your goal, in this game, is to make a short list of your biggest strengths based on the list of core competencies. You will also identify your biggest weaknesses so you can work on correcting them.

Don't be too hard on yourself.
Identifying your strengths will give you a head start on your personal development.

In the section "Learn about the work environment," pages 10-18, **we explain the key personality traits an employer will use to see if you are suited to a particular job or not.** Carefully reading the description of each one of these core competencies will help you identify your strengths in terms of the job market.

Determine where you fit within each of the core competencies summarized below. For each one, check the description that fits you best. To better understand the meaning of each core competency, read pages 10 – 18. Write down your results under the headings "MY STRONG POINTS" and "MY WEAK POINTS" on page 8.

Willingness to learn:

- I am intellectually curious (everything interests me)
- I am curious about what makes others tick
- I like to delve deeply into subjects
- I like to delve deeply into systems
- I like to study
- I like new things
- I have a good memory
- I like to do research

Ability to communicate:

- I like talking to people
- I can explain my point of view
- I can convey my ideas
- I can listen
- I like writing

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... Game 2

What are my strengths?

Never forget that your abilities are developing, and you will have an entire lifetime to help them grow! The important thing is to keep working to improve them and to listen to the opinions of those close to you as well as professionals you trust.

Accountability:

- I'm self-confident
- I like being in charge
- I respect deadlines
- I like working under pressure
- I trust other people easily
- I like being given responsibility
- I speak easily about my difficulties
- I am able to assess my own performance

Adaptability:

- I face my problems head on
- I like change
- I like new challenges
- I am open to the suggestions of others
- I am open to learning new ways of working
- I adapt easily to new situations

Initiative and perseverance:

- I like finding solutions
- I make decisions easily
- I like innovating
- I like finding original solutions
- I don't discourage easily
- I keep trying until I succeed
- I learn quickly

Analytical thinking:

- I am logical
- I am intuitive
- I like checking my intuitions
- I like planning
- I like organizing

... Game 2

What are my strengths?**Teamwork and co-operation:**

- I like sharing my ideas
- I like helping others
- I like leading groups
- I like supporting others
- I know how to listen
- I have no prejudices

Customer service orientation:

- I like serving customers
- I think it is important to satisfy customers
- I call customers back to make sure their problem has been solved
- I like solving customers' problems
- I like communicating with customers
- I like selling

To complete the exercise and describe your personality more fully, select the phrases from the following lists that describe you best. These descriptions will be useful to you when writing your resume.

My tastes:

- ___ I like intellectual work
- ___ I am skilful with my hands ___ I like creating and inventing
- ___ I like being active, traveling ___ I like being settled
- ___ I like being useful, helping others
- ___ I am as logical as a computer
- ___ I like creating Web sites or programs

Other clues:

- ___ I like negotiating prices
- ___ I am skilful with my hands
- ___ I like mechanics ___ I like sports
- ___ I like building ___ I like drawing
- ___ I like inventing things

List other activities if applicable:

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... Game 2

What are my strengths?

My preferences:

- Working alone
- Working inside
- Working for a small company (2-20)
- Working for a medium company (20 - 150)
- Working for a very large company
- Working for a public service (a municipality or government)
- Working for a not-for-profit organization (devoted to a cause)
- Being my own boss
- Working in groups
- Working outdoors

MY STRONG POINTS

1 3 5 7
2 4 6 8

MY WEAK POINTS

1 3 5 7
2 4 6 8

The final step

After reviewing the answers to the questions in the **"Who am I?"** section, (pages 4-8), you should be able to give a more accurate description of your personality.

How will you use this information?

During an interview, it will help you to speak more confidently.
Knowing yourself better, you will be more sure of yourself.

Knowing the outstanding features of your personality will make it easier for you to write your resume and fill out a job application. Your analysis of your personality will be useful in preparing a more personal and effective document.

Game 3

VOX POP

This exercise will help you see how well you meet the criteria of others.

Students and employers participated in our game by answering the following question: *What are the five top qualities of a good employee?* Each employer answered in terms of their own type of company.

Circle or underline the qualities mentioned by **the students and employers** that you think are essential.

The following is a summary of the major qualities suggested by:

- Ms. Manon Blondin, Communications consultant • Mr. Michel Daigle, Human potential development consultant, Communic.aide Michel Daigle • Mr. François Laurin, Financial consultant
- Ms. Chantal Bouvier, vice-president, Analysis and Communications, Board of Trade of Metropolitan Montreal
 - Mr. Robert Guay, director, Subscription development, Compensation fund, FTQ • Mr. Raymond A. Beaulieu, vice-president, Human resources, ABB • Mr. Marc André Morel, speaker, Morel Leadership Inc. • Mr. Pierre J. Cyr, president, Le Clan Panneton • Ms. Johanne V. Cantin, assistant director, Employee Donations Program, Bell Canada • Ms. Guylaine Couture, president, Alternative GC Inc. • Mr. Érik Moisan, consultant, Investment and management, Scotia Capitals.

Honesty, a positive attitude, good communication skills, the ability to handle stress, competence, motivation, the desire to learn, openness to change, a team spirit, perseverance, leadership, a desire to improve, a sense of ethics, a sense of responsibility, reliability, punctuality, resourcefulness, vitality, loyalty, initiative, courtesy, participation in the work environment, a customer-service orientation, concern for a job well done, devotion to one's work, diplomacy, respect for others, the ability to accept criticism, decisiveness, maturity.

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... VOX POP

A few hundred students in their fourth and fifth years of high school were also kind enough to answer our question: What are the top five qualities of a good employee? Their answers are worth a second look.

Four major qualities received the unanimous vote of the students. **These were:**

- Be punctual
- Be responsible/serious
- Be respectful towards colleagues and yourself
- Be competent/intelligent/educated

Then, in order of popularity:

- | | | |
|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Be a hardworker/devoted to your work | <input type="checkbox"/> Be patient | <input type="checkbox"/> Accept the consequences of your actions |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Be self-sufficient/resourceful | <input type="checkbox"/> Be friendly | <input type="checkbox"/> Respect deadlines |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Be a fast learner/adaptable | <input type="checkbox"/> Be honest | <input type="checkbox"/> Be able to plan your work |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Communicate well | <input type="checkbox"/> Be disciplined | <input type="checkbox"/> Be respectful to your employer |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Be creative/innovative | <input type="checkbox"/> Be loyal | <input type="checkbox"/> Not know the meaning of the word "impossible" |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Be committed to continuous improvement | <input type="checkbox"/> Be a team player | <input type="checkbox"/> Be able to set goals |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Be motivated/enthusiastic | <input type="checkbox"/> Give your all | <input type="checkbox"/> Know how to do your job |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Love your work/be passionate about your trade or profession | | <input type="checkbox"/> Be well informed about your market |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Be a good organizer/know how to organize yourself/be a leader | | <input type="checkbox"/> Do more than is asked of you |

Be persevering, energetic, polite, flexible, attentive, realistic, open-minded, calm, efficient, practical, stable, kind, helpful, pleasant, cheerful, clean, available, regular.

Learn about the work environment

THE EIGHT CORE COMPETENCIES EMPLOYERS VALUE MOST

These days, employers are interested in more than just technical skills. Other qualities have also become essential.

Mastery of a second language (in the context of globalization, knowledge of a third language is also becoming an important asset)

The ability to efficiently use new information and communication technologies.

Know-how, communication skills, a positive attitude, the ability to work in a team, and adaptability are all components of an assessment grid used by more and more employers.

Based on recent research in human resources management, the Board of Trade of Metropolitan Montreal conducted a survey that led to the identification of eight core competencies deemed essential by companies. These eight competencies form the cornerstone of a personality meeting the expectations of employers. They will be of great help to you in setting yourself apart from other candidates in a market where personal qualities are as important as technical and vocational skills.

Ability to communicate

This means...

- **making sure** that others really understand the message
- **deferring judgement** on what someone is saying and focusing more on finding out additional information
- **recognizing** when someone's non-verbal behaviour (e.g. eye contact and body posture) does not match what they are saying
- **not hesitating** to speak in order to share a point of view
- **preparing** written communications and oral presentations
- **understanding** a customer or co-worker enough to predict and prepare for their reactions

Ability to communicate

refers to the efficient interaction with other people and groups. The individual shows an ability to express himself/herself clearly and in an articulate way, structures his/her ideas properly, adapts his/her vocabulary and the message to the audience.

This **ability to communicate** includes the ability to listen, to make sure that the other person understand and to react precisely and appropriately when interacting with other people or groups. This competency includes respecting the opinions of others, even when they differ.

Rather than...

- assuming that if a customer or co-worker has something to say they will say it
- finding a solution for someone else's problem
- accepting what is said at face value without considering non-verbal clues
- responding only to what a customer or co-worker is telling or ignoring the feelings behind the words
- giving a presentation without being prepared
- not being prepared for possible reactions and not being able to deal with them effectively

Benefits

- Better relationships with your customers, co-workers and partners
- Better understanding of stated and unstated concerns
- Increased ability to adapt your communication to your audience
- Increased ability to influence your partners and/or customers and to get their collaboration
- Higher level of credibility and trust from your peers, superiors and customers
- Development and strengthening of your network of contacts
- Increased effectiveness

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Willingness to learn ● ● ● ● ● ● ● ●

Willingness to learn is knowing one's strengths and one's personal and professional development needs. It means being open to constantly-changing environments and taking action improving the performance and contributions to the organization. This competency includes an openness and a willingness to look for learning opportunities. It also implies the presence of intellectual curiosity in order to broaden and enrich the skills and fields of expertise.

This means...

- **knowing** where one should improve
- **trying** to know how and why a procedure needs to be done a specific way
- **questioning** and understanding what a customer or co-worker requires
- **being** uncomfortable with errors in data, taking steps to resolve them and learning more on a subject
- **researching** information in a specific field of expertise
- **personally** investigating problems to understand what went wrong
- **being curious** about the evolution of the industry, competition and products

Rather than...

- only stating the correct procedure or only giving the steps to solve a specific problem
- doing what is asked without understanding the customer's or co-worker's needs
- continuing with an assignment based on suspicious information without investigating further
- creating marketing plans based on superficial knowledge about the market
- assuming if the customer needs any additional information, they will ask questions
- being satisfied with what you know right now

Benefits

- Increased ability to find solutions for your customers' needs
- Better sales results
- Recognition of your expertise from your customers, co-workers and superiors
- Increased customer satisfaction
- Increased autonomy
- Increased effectiveness in building business proposals
- Better positioning of your offer with regard to competition
- Personal satisfaction in being recognized as an expert

Initiative and perseverance

This means...

- **seizing** a business opportunity that no one else has recognized
- **resolving** potential crises before they happen
- **suggesting** courses of action that others can take to improve profitability and service
- **volunteering** information or pointing out potential problems about work, even if not directly involved
- **identifying** things that should be done that one's supervisor/team may be unaware of, and bringing it to their attention
- **obtaining** information concerning the reasons for a problem and addressing it better or finding an alternative solution

Initiative and perseverance refer to an individual who acts and does things instead of simply thinking about what should be done. An individual with initiative works with enthusiasm and energy, acts without waiting for others, and does not hesitate to get involved when necessary. Perseverance expresses a strong willingness to get results and not giving up in the face of obstacles or problems.

Rather than...

- reacting to competitors' only after business has decreased
- waiting until customers call
- not offering ideas when you feel that things should be done differently
- keeping to yourself even if others are heading in the wrong direction
- performing exactly what supervisor/team has requested even when you foresee problems
- giving up when a problem occurs and justifying it by saying you accomplished your part as requested

Benefits

- Better sales and operation results
- Increased autonomy
- Increased satisfaction of clients and superiors
- More time for activities that generate opportunities
- Increased professionalism
- Increased trust from your peers, superiors and clients
- Greater personal satisfaction in reaching goals in spite of obstacles

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Analytical thinking ● ● ● ● ● ● ● ●

Analytical thinking is the ability to understand a situation by breaking it into its components and to recognize major or underlying issues in complex situations. It refers to the ability to organize information in a systematic way, to compare the various aspects of a problem or a situation and to identify causal relationships (If...then...) to solve a problem, to adapt oneself, to take action or to make a decision according to pre-established criteria and objectives.

This means...

- **thinking** about the causes which led to it, when a problem occurs
- **thinking** ahead regarding the outcome of an action
- **thinking** through the steps of a new initiative or process before taking action
- **classifying** customers by industry, size, geography, etc. and considering the needs of each segment

Rather than...

- explaining or thinking about problems in a vague and general way
- doing work as it comes without thinking about how it might relate to deadlines or other work
- launching immediately into a new project, developing a plan, and dealing with problems "on the fly"
- trying to come up with a strategy based on intuition instead of reliable data

Benefits

- Improved quality of your decisions
- Increased ability to make well-supported recommendations
- Increased ability to innovate
- Increased ability to develop an action plan, to understand strategic issues and to provide for alternative solutions and contingency plans
- Higher level of credibility

Accountability

Accountability

is the willingness to feel personally responsible for the proper execution of tasks, assignments or projects.

A responsible individual cares about reaching goals and meeting deadlines. They take on the results of their work. They show initiative and ask for support when needed in order to better reach their goals, and show flexibility in readily adapting to a constantly-changing environment. The responsible individual knows how to make decisions that are profitable for the organization without being afraid of putting aside their personal goals.

This means...

- **assuming responsibility** so that an assignment is done within the time frame and objectives established
- **managing** priorities and developing a work plan to fulfill the commitments made
- **delegating** with judgement
- **sincerely believing** that others have potential
- **openly communicating** problems or obstacles encountered

Rather than...

- blaming the system and others when the job is not done
- accepting any job without assessing and negotiating deadlines
- getting rid of fastidious tasks by passing them on to co-workers
- putting everything on one co-worker because you think they are the only one that can do the job right
- being evasive about time and result requirements

Benefits

- Increased motivation for your team
- Better use of the time of your team
- Better team spirit
- Improved results in a shorter time frame
- Better use of the potential in your team
- Less pressure
- Higher level of credibility

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Adaptability ● ● ● ● ● ● ● ●

Adaptability is the ability to adapt to and work effectively with a variety of situations, individuals or groups that may have differing methods or interests. This competency refers to the ability to understand and appreciate different or opposing views and to adapt one's approach accordingly. An individual who demonstrates the ability to adapt, perceives and reacts positively to change and accepts it easily in his/her organization or responsibilities.

This means...

- **changing** work plans when urgent problems arise even though the changes may involve extra work
- **working** effectively with supervisor/team even though one prefers to do things differently
- **having** an open mind to new and different ways of thinking and working
- **showing** a willingness to work in a dynamic and changing environment

Rather than...

- ignoring problems and sticking to the original work plan
- disliking what the supervisor/team says and not doing the work because you prefer to do it differently
- rejecting new ideas or methods
- resisting and criticizing any change that might have an impact on the work

Benefits

- Improved relations with colleagues
- Improved quality of your work
- Recognized as a innovative and creative person
- Increased progress on both professional and personal levels

Customer service orientation

Customer service orientation refers to the desire to help or offer quality services or products to internal or external customers. The main concern of an individual dealing with customer service is the customer: identifying the customer's needs, expectations and priorities. This competency refers to the concern to bring added value to any action in order to meet or even exceed the customer's expectations. The individual is rigorous and honest in his/her relationship with customers and makes sure that problems are solved quickly.

This means...

- **using** all knowledge and abilities to determine what would be best for the customer
- **following up** to ensure that commitments made to the customer are kept
- **taking** responsibility to resolve a customer's problem or address their needs
- **asking** the customers questions in order to better understand their needs

Rather than...

- only doing what will be fastest or easiest
- assuming everything has been done because you delegated the job
- washing your hands of a customer's problem by passing it to someone else
- only following the usual processes or procedures

Benefits

- Increased effectiveness
- Higher level of credibility
- Better relationships with your customers
- Better positioning in your market
- Maintaining your customers
- Increased ability to find new customers
- Development and reliability of your network of contacts

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Teamwork and co-operation



Teamwork and co-operation is based on the desire to work as part of a team. This refers to commitment, the understanding and the respect of each role and contribution. A team worker, capable of co-operation, knows how to win the trust of others and encourages participation and the sharing of knowledge. This individual is equally concerned about the job at hand and the relationships between people.

This means...

- **seeking** out the skills, ideas and viewpoints of other team members
- **readily sharing** experiences and knowledge that can contribute to achieving the team's objectives
- **keeping** others informed and up-to-date about any relevant or useful information
- **supporting** and encouraging other team members when they make a contribution
- **demonstrating** respect for team members by speaking of them in positive terms

Rather than...

- choosing to work alone in order to finish the job instead of seeking the assistance of others
- withholding information from the team
- attending team meetings without contributing
- engaging in win-lose competition with other members of the team
- expressing negative expectations and opinions of team members

Benefits

- Better relationships with your co-workers and partners
- Increased effectiveness for you and your team
- Better team spirit and an improved climate within your group
- Less competition among people
- Better circulation of information

Evaluation guide

This questionnaire was designed to help employers evaluate the core competencies of job applicants. A few questions are listed for each of the eight competencies. Read them carefully. You might have to answer them during an interview. You could also use these questions to help you prepare for an interview by writing short answers or finding the answers to the questions among the eight core competencies outlined on pages 10-18.

Ability to communicate

- 1.1 Can you describe a situation where you had to solve a communication problem with a co-worker? With your immediate supervisor? With one of your employees? How did you do it?
- 1.2 How do you let a co-worker know what you like about them? What you do not like?
- 1.3 If you had to speak briefly about how to establish effective communications, what would be your main ideas?

Analytical thinking

- 2.1 Can you describe the most difficult problem you had to solve in your present or past job? What did you do? What was the outcome?
- 2.2 Describe the steps you take to analyze a complex situation or to solve a problem.
- 2.3 Describe the most difficult decision you had to make. What were the issues? How did you reach a solution.

Willingness to learn

- 3.1 What did you do in the last 2 – 3 years to keep your professional skills up-to-date? To learn new ones?
- 3.2 What important skills did you learn in the past five years that can benefit a new employer?
- 3.3 Who had the strongest influence on your personal learning style? Speak about this person. What did they show you?

Initiative and perseverance

- 4.1 In one of your former jobs speak about the most challenging project you had to lead the implemented change. What were the obstacles? How did you overcome them? Was the change successful? Was the change permanent or temporary?
- 4.2 Describe a situation where one of your suggestions was successfully implemented. Speak about the kind of initiative you showed in your last job.
- 4.3 Ideas or suggestions we consider to be very good are sometimes rejected by our supervisors or co-workers. What do you do then? How do you manage to get others to reconsider their initially unfavourable evaluation?

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... Evaluation guide

Accountability

- 5.1 What are the most important principles or values that guide your professional life? Have these values changed over the years?
- 5.2 Describe a work experience when you had to fight in order to defend an opinion or a decision that you believed to be fair even if most of your co-workers thought the opposite.
- 5.3 How do you react when you realize that the person who asked you to do a job is not satisfied with it? How do you react when someone asks you with valid reason to improve your work or your behaviour?

Adaptability

- 6.1 How would you qualify your level of openness to change? How did your ability to adapt to new situations evolve over the last few years? What is the most difficult change you had to go through at work? How did you manage to resist the temptation to go back to your old habits?
- 6.2 According to you, what is the best attitude to adopt towards people who are opposed to change? Towards people who denigrate the validity of a change initiative?
- 6.3 Your supervisor tells you that they plan to make changes that will have an impact on your job. What comes to your mind first? What questions would you like to ask him/her? How will you manage to put your ideas forward?

Customer service orientation

- 7.1. Speak about your personal understanding of teamwork. What makes it work? What makes it fail? What does the supervisor have to do to promote teamwork? Do employees have a role to play?
- 7.2 What can we do to make sure our co-workers feel like helping us? To increase their trust in our professional skills?
- 7.3 Speak about the kind of relationships you like to establish with your co-workers. Are you more of a "lone wolf" or do you look for opportunities to interact with others? Are you considered a team player? Why?

Teamwork and co-operation

- 8.1 Have you ever started a small "business", even when you were very young? How did you develop your business? What did you learn about customer relationships? How did you increase your customers? What did you do to retain them?
- 8.2 What do you do to make sure that the people who use your services, both inside and outside the organization, are satisfied?
- 8.3 We all make mistakes in our relationships with customers. Speak about one of your mistakes. What lessons did you learn from it? How do you avoid making other mistakes with your customers?

Learn how to take the necessary steps

Preparation

will help you realize, for example, that you won't do well in sales if you hate the telephone or the mere thought of talking to a stranger makes you panic!

To find a job and navigate the labyrinth of study choices that will help you reach your goal, it is important to review your skills and aptitudes on a regular basis. There's nothing like doing such an exercise with a guide (like this one), some paper, a pencil, and a computer.

Taking a realistic look at yourself is the best way to make smart choices in life. Remember the proverb – "A stitch in time saves nine." Before setting out on a long and costly course of studies, it's worth spending a few hours thinking about your choice without being swayed by passing fancies, the attraction of "hot" careers, or the opinions of friends.

When talking about successful individuals, we often say they are "in their element." The secret to personal fulfilment is thus the ability to identify those "job elements" that will most likely suit you best.

Preparing to find a job is an excellent way to enhance your chances of getting it.

Take action

1. The first contact

The first contact is often decisive. We say someone "made a good impression" when speaking of an applicant who presented themselves well.

Take the initiative

In one of the following situations:

- You saw an ad in a newspaper (or elsewhere) and are not sure who to contact.
- You know the person you need to contact.
- You were recommended by someone to a contact person.
- You have consulted several employment Web sites.

For example:

Emploi-Québec: 1 888 367-5647 www.emploi.quebec.net
 Ministère de l'Éducation: www.meq.gouv.qc.ca
 Réseau des Carrefours jeunesse-emploi: www.cjereseau.org
 Other sites: www.monster.ca, www.jobboom.com, www.monemploi.com.
 The multiservice room at the regional LEC (Local employment center) also provides access to information and documentation.

keys
to unlocking the job market

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... The first contact

Determine the actions to be taken:

The only time you must forward your resume without any other action is when the job offer does not indicate the name of the person or company placing the ad. If the offer gives only a description of the position and the type of company offering it, it is very important to:

- carefully read all the information and requirements outlined in the offer;
- follow instructions to the letter;
- try to be clear, concise, and original in your presentation to attract attention, but without going overboard.

If you make contact by telephone or via the Internet, you will want to know:

- if the job is available (is there a description of the duties and responsibilities you can consult?);
- if you can submit your resume, even if there are no job openings at the moment;
- if you can obtain information about the company (by Internet or from a folder or brochure);
- if you can send your job application to a specific person to ensure it arrives in the right place at the right time;
- if you can make an appointment for a job interview.

Remember!

Making contact and following up is not harassment!

If you are able to make an appointment, it is important to write down the exact name and title of the person you are to meet, as well as the date, time, and place of the interview. Of course it is important to be on time.

When you introduce yourself over the telephone, be direct and polite:

- Hello, my name is...
- I have training in...
- I have experience in...
- I would like to meet you to...
- If yes, what time and date would be convenient for you? At what address?
- If no, may I send you my resume?
- Thank you for your time.
- Goodbye.

2. The second contact

From a distance

Important:

If there is a deadline for submitting your application, make sure you respect it – otherwise you could be eliminated before you begin!

If you must forward your resume before an interview, make sure it is correctly addressed and sent to the right person. Your resume should be accompanied by a short cover letter that is direct and adapted to the job offer. It will include:

- The purpose of the letter (for example: I would like to apply for the position of packer)
- A brief description of your qualifications to fill the position (core competencies and technical skills)
- A request for an interview
- A polite form of address
- A list of enclosures if applicable

If you must send your application by e-mail, make sure that the attachments (resume, cover letter, etc.) are easy to open and read, avoiding complicated layouts and large graphics that take too long to download.

In person

An interview is an assessment tool to determine whether or not to hire an applicant.

When you present yourself in person:

- Be neat and well-groomed, but natural
- Smile and express yourself clearly
- Use restrained gestures
- Give a firm, warm handshake
- Be enthusiastic and interested
- Have ready a personal file that may contain:
 - a copy of your resume
 - a list of references
 - one or more letters of recommendation
 - your transcripts, diplomas, or certificates of merit

Set yourself the following objectives:

- Convince the interviewer that you are the best candidate (review your core competencies)
- Show that you are interested in the company (you have read the brochure and visited the Web site)
- Show that you are available and ready to learn everything necessary to do the job and adapt to the company
- Show that your brief work experience will be useful.

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... The second contact

Whether in person or in writing, use action words to show you are a person of action!

- Accomplish • achieve • acquire • act
- allocate • begin • build • check • communicate • coordinate • create
- cultivate • design • discover • distribute • direct • encourage • engage
- evaluate • execute • explain • express • facilitate • formulate • gather • guide
- harmonize • highlight • identify • illustrate • imagine • improve • increase • inform
- invent • maintain • manage • master • maximize • measure • mobilize • motivate
- negotiate • obtain • organize • orient • perceive • perform • personalize • persuade
- plan • predict • present • produce • progress • promote • propose • provide • question
- reach • receive • research • recruit • refer • resolve • send
- specify • stimulate • strengthen • succeed • suggest • test
- train • translate • transform • undertake
- win • work • write.

You demonstrate a winning attitude when you:

Important:
Courtesy goes a long way. Be sure to thank everyone who has helped you obtain the interview (secretaries, friends, and anyone who could influence the decision of the person who is doing the hiring.)

- Are relaxed (you prepared the night before)
- Arrive ten minutes early so you have the time to appear calm and relaxed
- Dress soberly; feel good about yourself
- Introduce yourself confidently: shake hands firmly but not too vigorously
- Assert yourself: explain your point of view, your needs, and your feelings, taking into account the situation (everything you know about the job opening)
- Are positive, rather than submissive, bossy, or aggressive
- Communicate calmly, clearly, and at the right time
- Are honest
- Avoid exaggeration
- Do not criticize others
- Do not hesitate to ask for clarifications or explanations
- Take the time to think before answering and are not uncomfortable with silences
- Do not interrupt
- Answer questions concisely and directly
- Have with you a copy of your resume (or personal file)
- At the end of the interview, ask about salary if the interviewer has not yet mentioned it. It is always better to let them bring it up first. (When they do, it is an indication they are interested in hiring you.) When you discuss pay, ask about the company's compensation policy and pay scale associated with the position you are applying for.
- Thank the interviewer and repeat your interest in the position.

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How to make a good impression:

- Your smile eases communication.
- Your warm, firm handshake shows your enthusiasm.
- Your attentive manner and your questions show your interest.
- Your personal problems are left outside the door.
- Your careful listening allows you to understand questions and think before answering.
- Your polite, calm attitude shows your openness.
- Your courtesy, without smoking or chewing gum, shows your good manners.
- Your natural way of speaking makes you seem less nervous.
- You make a good impression without being intimidated, because you know what you are talking about and show that you are interested in the job and the company.

Whatever the result, evaluate the meeting:

Make a note of results and comments to prepare for the next interview.

- Did you attain your goals? • Were you sufficiently prepared?
- Were you relaxed? • Did you communicate well? • Did you listen well?
- Were you honest? • Did you answer questions directly?
- Did you ask the right questions about the company?
- Did the interviewer seem interested? Did he or she take notes? Did he or she offer any advice or make any comments?

To stay at the top of the list:

- Send a thank-you letter immediately following the interview.
- If you are not sure you want the job now that you know more about it, ask for a little time to think about it. If you decide not to accept an offer, take the time to explain your decision and to thank the employer.
- If you do not receive an answer soon, telephone the employer to ask if a decision has been made.
- If you are not chosen, ask for a short telephone conversation to learn the reasons for the employer's decision. It could be helpful to learn the strengths and weaknesses of the interview and your approach.

conclusion

In hiring employees to meet the challenges of the new economy, companies must now place as much importance on personal qualities as on academic and technical training. Knowing your potential and cultivating it will be a major asset not only in obtaining a job, but also in advancing your career.

This little guide does not contain all the answers, but each time you fill out a job application or prepare for an interview, it will help you to ask yourself the right questions.

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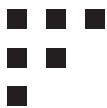
Board of Trade of Metropolitan Montreal

keys to unlocking the job market

The Board of Trade of Metropolitan Montreal believes that,
to create a prosperous and competitive metropolis,
we must inspire students to strive for excellence by encouraging them to stay in school
while helping young people to integrate the job market.



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