

Getting 'THE EDGE' to grab that Apprenticeship

A Self-marketing kit for potential apprentices

This document is designed to help you stand out from the crowd and give you the edge to grab that apprenticeship!

It can be a highly competitive process to gain an apprenticeships (and traineeships) as there are often more people looking for apprenticeships than there are jobs available.

However, it is not uncommon for employers to “make” an opening for someone they believe has the right attitude, motivation and entry skills.

Employers are not just looking for any apprentice, they are looking for the person they believe will be the best person for their company.

This document will help you convince employers that the right person is you!

The information in this guide is based on what employers have told us they consider when they are looking for an apprentice.

It contains information on:

RESEARCHING

What am I interested in and what type of apprenticeship do I want?

Research your chosen industry and companies.

GETTING PREPARED

What are employers looking for?

What can I do to increase my chances of success?

Getting your resume and cover letter right

JOBSEARCHING

Tips and hints to find that job

Ten top ways to an apprenticeship

CLOSING THE DEAL

The Interview - 12 steps that work time and time again

Formalising the apprenticeship - who can help?

SUMMARY OF KEY POINTS TO GIVE YOU THE EDGE

RESEARCHING

What am I interested in and what type of apprenticeship do I want?

- ▶ Know what you are interested in and what you want to do. You will make a very positive impression with any employer if you show them you are interested, enthusiastic and have done your research.
- ▶ If you don't know what you want to do, you need to do some research to identify some options and narrow your choices so you can confidently show an employer you're keen. If you tell an employer you'll do "any" apprenticeship, they may worry that you'll have no passion or commitment for their job.
- ▶ View the career bulls-eye charts and try the 'my future' quiz at www.myfuture.edu.au to help you identify careers that match your interests and log on to www.aapathways.com.au for great information and descriptions on over 3,300 Apprenticeships and Traineeships.
- ▶ Look into school-based opportunities at www.det.nsw.edu.au/vetinschools. Vocational Education and Training (VET) in school and school-based apprenticeships can lead to nationally recognised qualifications, give you an opportunity to experience the work and can really increase your chances of landing an apprenticeship.

Research your chosen industry and companies

- ▶ Research your chosen industry and companies – you will gain insight into the types of opportunities, who to approach, what employers want and you will come across as motivated, enthusiastic and knowledgeable
- ▶ Talk to your career advisor, family and friends about possible career choices – can they suggest good industries, good jobs and good companies that may be right for you?
- ▶ Hit the internet and try searching company websites for more information including company history, job descriptions, application dates and training and career opportunities for staff.

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PREPARATION

What are employers looking for?

- ▶ Employers are increasingly looking for preferred qualities well above the minimal job candidate requirements. E.g. Year 12 not Year 10, with VET experience even though the advertisement didn't say it was needed.
- ▶ Employers will want to see good school reports as evidence of a mature attitude, core skills and reliable attendance. Your school attendance and behaviour counts! If in doubt about what particular industries prefer in applicants, go and talk to some employers and ask them what they are looking for in an ideal apprentice.

What can I do to increase my chances of success?

- ▶ Apply for work experience/placements – they provide great opportunities to learn whether you like the industry/job and showcase you to employers.
- ▶ Get the jump on the competition - start your job searching while you are still at school. Many positions are secured well before Christmas, ready to start in the New Year. Check websites of major employers 9-12 months in advance of apprenticeship intake.

Getting your resume and cover letter right

- ▶ Have a resume that attracts the attention of employers because it's neatly typed, and highlights your skills and experience. A good resume gets you an interview.
- ▶ Customise your resume for the different jobs you are applying for. Just make sure you use the right one!
- ▶ There are a number of resources available to help you write a 'winning resume', check out the following link to make your resume stand out and grab the attention of an employer.
- ▶ Cover letter – 'the new battle ground' the cover letter is very important as many people applying for the job won't bother. A cover letter or email provides you with the opportunity to showcase your talents, enthusiasm and motivation and stand out from the crowd by selling yourself and pre-answering the employer's *silent doubts* - How will you get to work? Are you keen to do the training?
- ▶ For further information and advice on writing a cover letter, including an example, go to 'Selling Yourself'

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JOBSEARCHING

Tips and hints to find that job

- ▶ There are a number of different ways to find an apprenticeship, and some are more successful than others, we list 'ten top ways to an apprenticeship' below.
- ▶ Have a plan, don't just apply for the one job and hope, use multiple approaches from 'ten top ways to an apprenticeship'.
- ▶ Do not just rely on newspaper and internet advertising – these job seeking methods are often the most popular and therefore the most competitive. Recruiters use a rule of thumb that 70% of jobs are never advertised, so be prepared to go out and find that job!
- ▶ Be persistent, enthusiastic and confident – don't give up when you first face rejection. Be prepared that not every business has an opportunity for you, but keep trying and you will increase your chance of success!
- ▶ Revisit every employer every few weeks if you have to - your enthusiasm and drive will make a positive impression. If they don't have a job, ask them if they know any other businesses that may be hiring?
- ▶ Ask if the employer will keep a copy of your resume for future job openings or to hand out to other business owners?
- ▶ Remember first impressions matter - make sure you look and act in a professional manner and have a well organised resume, cover letter and portfolio.
- ▶ Have spare photocopies of everything to hand out at interviews and when door knocking.

Ten top ways to an apprenticeship

We have listed 10 successful strategies for searching for that apprenticeship. It is important to remember that to give yourself the greatest chance of success, you need to apply for multiple positions and use as many of the techniques listed below at the same time.

Doorknocking, business to business. Still one of the most successful methods of obtaining an apprenticeship. Many employers contemplate hiring an apprentice long before they advertise it publicly. If you door knock enough businesses you are bound to be in the right place at the right time sooner or later. You get the jump on everyone else, and employers will respect your effort! Always offer a copy of your resume with a cover letter and always ask if they know anyone hiring. Just keep doorknocking because it works eventually!

Tell all your local contacts, family, friends, and neighbours. Many apprenticeships are still filled through networking and word of mouth, remember 70% of jobs are never advertised. Be sure to be vocal in advertising your goals, tell **everyone** you know that you are looking for an apprenticeship – you never know who may have a link with your potential new employer! Try Facebook, phoning distant relatives and making a poster with tear off tags to display at trade suppliers and friend's workplaces.

Pre-apprenticeship courses can cut months or even a year off your apprenticeship and many have employers lining up to offer graduates a job. Also known as Access, PreVoc or Taster courses. Try searching the internet, asking teachers or careers advisers, notice boards at TAFE, Industry groups web sites and local training groups.

Experience while in school – employers love applicants that have some real skills and experience, options include School-Based Apprenticeships, Vocational Education and Training (VET) in school, T-VET courses and work experience. Talk to your teachers or career adviser. Work hard and show initiative while on work experience and make sure you ask for a reference.

Job websites (jobsearch.gov.au; seek.com.au; mycareer.com.au; careerone.com.au) **and newspaper advertisements** – this technique is the most common and therefore the most competitive. Despite the large number of people who rely on this method, only around 20% of jobs are found this way. Ensure you always send a selling cover letter/email with your application to boost your chances of impressing the employer that you'd be a good candidate to interview.

Group Training Organisations (GTOs) are a very large employer of apprentices across all industries. GTOs employ apprentices and host them out to 'host' employers and provide strong levels of mentoring and support. Simply google "Group Training" and apply to as many groups as possible.

Mailing and Emailing out resumes and telephone cold-calling from the yellow pages. This technique tends to be more successful in specific industries, such as the construction trades where visiting an office is difficult. Ensure you include an enthusiastic cover letter or practice your opening lines so you sound more confident and keen when you phone. It may take some time but if you keep at it eventually someone will say yes. Try asking for school organised and insured work experience, possibly scheduled through your holidays as a softer way to impress the boss.

Major employer websites – make sure you log on well in advance to check their application dates, many close 6-9 months before the apprenticeship commences. Big employers such as the large electricity generators and distributors, engineering and construction firms and the supermarkets all employ hundreds of apprentices every year. And don't forget the Defence Force - it's not for everyone, but the Army, Air Force and Navy offer fantastic opportunities and high salaries, www.defencejobs.gov.au

Careers Markets – are held in many locations throughout the country and give you a unique opportunity to meet dozens of employers in one day!

Job Services Australia (JSA) and **Disability Employment Services (DES)** members can assist – check www.jobsearch.gov.au for details of the providers closest to you.

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CLOSING THE DEAL

The Interview—10 steps that work time and time again by Dr John Taccori

1. Research the industry & company before attending an interview – show you are interested and knowledgeable.
2. Dress well and conservatively.
3. Be on time for the interview (up to half of first time applicants don't turn up, so you are half way there already).
4. Don't bring a friend to the interview. Not even to wait outside.
5. Have three relevant questions ready for the interviewer.
6. Maintain good eye contact and give a firm hand shake.
7. Show enthusiasm, knowledge of the industry and a willingness to learn.
8. Take time to answer the questions.
9. After the interview send a thank-you text/email.
10. Be patient, but if you have not heard back from the employer, ring a day or two after you expected to hear from them to remind them how keen you are.

Formalising the apprenticeship—who can help?

- ▶ Apprenticeships and Traineeships are a legal form of employment and training and must be signed up officially to count. This step should be completed before attempting to enrol in your formal training.
- ▶ If the employer is thinking about taking you on, but seems unsure about the process, training or government incentives available, then you may like to suggest a chat with an Australian Apprenticeship Centre www.australianapprenticeships.gov.au to show them how easy and beneficial it is to hire you as an apprentice.
- ▶ To formalise the apprenticeship your employer must approach an Australian Apprenticeship Centre who will provide advice and assistance and organise the paperwork to finalise your apprenticeship. They provide a free service and will also help the employer claim Government incentives that may be available. You may also be eligible for things like free tools.
- ▶ You could even be proactive and print some pages out from the apprenticeship centre web site and hand them out with your resume to show what a great deal you are!
- ▶ Remember the more of these strategies you put into play and the more jobs you apply for, the more you increase your chances of securing an apprenticeship.

SUMMARY OF KEY POINTS TO GIVE YOU THE EDGE

- ▶ Know what you are interested in and what you want to do.
- ▶ Apply for work experience/placements – they provide great opportunities to get a ‘taste’ of the work and showcase you to employers.
- ▶ Practice phone and interview techniques – have a parent or friend ask mock questions so you are prepared and comfortable with your responses.
- ▶ Have a resume and cover letter that attracts the attention of employers because it’s neatly typed, and highlights your skills and experience. A good resume gets you an interview, a good cover letter helps your resume stand out from the crowd!
- ▶ To give yourself the greatest chance of success, apply for multiple positions and use a variety of approaches from ‘ten top ways to an apprenticeship’
- ▶ Be persistent, enthusiastic and confident – don’t give up when you first face rejection. Be prepared that not every business has an opportunity for you, but keep trying and you will increase your chance of success!
- ▶ Revisit every employer every few weeks if you have to. Ask them who do they know that’s hiring? Ask if they will keep a copy of your resume to hand out to other business owners?
- ▶ Remember first impressions matter - make sure you look and act in a professional manner and have a well organised resume, cover letter and portfolio.
- ▶ Have spare photocopies of everything to hand out at interviews or if door knocking.
- ▶ Before an interview, think about questions you may wish to ask the employer and jot them down as everyone gets nervous in interviews to some extent! Asking questions at the end make you stand out as the keen one!
- ▶ But just like football or dancing, interviews get better with repeated practice.
- ▶ Be on time for interviews – do a *dry run a few days* beforehand to ensure you can truly find the place. *“Hi, I have an interview here tomorrow and just wanted to be sure I coming to the right place?”*
- ▶ Arrive 10 minutes early ready to take it seriously.
- ▶ Turn off your mobile phone until after you have exited the building!

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