

Hints for Job Hunting

Student & Young Professional Support Committee

We all know that finding your first job or a new job is a challenging and often frustrating experience. Are you at the start of your career as a recent graduate or considering a career change? Would you like to brush up your interviewing skills? The Student & Young Professional Support Committee of AEG surveyed practicing environmental and engineering geologists for suggestions to help students and young professionals find that first or new job. The following is a list of suggestions from AEG geologists with experience that ranges from more than 40 years of practice to those who only recently started working and who are still looking to start their geological careers.

Researching and Recruiting:

- Join a geological organization and attend their meetings. It is common knowledge that one of the best ways to find a job is by networking. Practicing geologists attend professional meetings, such as AEG's chapter meetings and its annual meeting, and these professionals often know if their company or other companies are searching for potential hires. In addition, representatives of service companies such as drillers, laboratories, and other contractors also attend these meetings to meet potential clients, and they often have knowledge of which companies are hiring and of contacts at that company.
- Attend hiring events and career fairs, and join listservs of applicable groups.
- Reach out to the hiring team or program of companies that interest you and develop a professional relationship with them to stay on their radar.
- Join the alumni association of the university you attended and get to know alumni from your school's geology department. You have an instant connection with these geology alumni. Universities have learned this benefit and many have developed mentoring programs that link their alumni with students and recent graduates.
- Consider the public sector. State governments hire geologists for regulatory agencies, the state department of transportation, and the geological survey. The federal government has similar needs at the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, and U.S. Department of Transportation. In addition to existing vacancies, governments are well aware that many of their employees are approaching retirement and will soon need to be replaced. A benefit -- once you are working for the government, you will have many opportunities to transfer to other departments and agencies without losing your seniority. For example, check out www.usajobs.gov/Search/ExploreOpportunities/?/Series=1350.
- Join LinkedIn if you haven't already and review the profiles of other geologists while you prepare your profile, even if you're still a student. Keep your profile up to date.
- If you are a student, become involved in your department's geology club or AEG student chapter and ideally become an officer of the organization. Start a geology club if your

school doesn't have one and show these activities on your resume. These actions show initiative, and employers love to hire people with self-initiative.

- If you are not a student, become (or stay) active in your local/state geological organization(s), and again, get involved in management of the organization to show that skill, and secondarily, to network with other geologists.

Resume and Cover Letter:

- Remember that people who review your resume often look at dozens of them. You need to figure a way to make your resume stand out from the others. How can you make it different? One example: Take the ASBOG® Fundamentals of Geology (FG) exam. Once you pass it, you can add G.I.T. (Geologist-in-Training) after your name on the top of the resume. In some states, college students can take the FG exam after completing a certain number of credit hours. Showing yourself as a G.I.T. differentiates you from many of the other resumes and tells the reader you are serious about becoming a professional geologist. It could also give you something you have in common with the interviewer. Details are at www.asbog.org.
- If you are not submitting your resume on-line, you will need a cover letter. Keep it to one paragraph and highlight a feature(s) of yourself that you think makes you unique to the dozens of other applicants. Sometimes the reader may not even look at your resume if your cover letter is meh.
- Keep your resume and cover letter relevant to each specific job application. Ideally, keep your resume to one page, but if you have significant experience, it can go to two pages. To keep it shorter, you don't have to include references; a potential employer will ask for these later if they are considering you as a hire.
- Once you have work or internship experience, place it at the top of your resume before education to place it front and center.
- Less is more, but highlight qualifications on which you can elaborate during the interview.

Interviewing:

- Dress to impress, not just for the job title. While it's unlikely that you'll wear a suit to work in the office, wearing one (or something distinctive) for an interview will attract attention, and that is good.
- Prepare for questions based on the job description, gaps in your resume and cover letter, and behavioral questions/personality types. It only helps you to tell the interviewer how much you enjoy working outdoors, a common place to start for entry-level geologists.
- Prepare questions for the interview panel to showcase interest in the job and company. You *must* research the company with which you are interviewing; prepare a few questions about the company based on that research. This shows the interviewer you are truly interested in the company.

- Remember that you are interviewing an employer as much as the employer is interviewing you. You may find out in the interview that this is not the place you want to work. It's better to find that out before you start working there.
- Thank them for the opportunity to interview and follow up within 48 hours with a thank you note or email. Sadly, it seems that nowadays many potential employers *do not* notify those interviewed that they are not being considered for a job. But keep in mind that most employers have openings regularly. Even if you are not considered initially, don't be afraid to recontact the person with whom you interviewed after six months to let them know you are still available.

Overall:

- Do not undersell yourself during your job search. Stay positive; you will find a job, and in today's market, that's just about guaranteed.
- At entry level, employers are looking less at the skills and more at the character of a potential employee.
- Seek mentorship from those who have a desirable career and learn how they got there. Professional and alumni associations are ideal places to find a mentor.
- Keep your goals in mind, pay your dues, and you will find success is just around the corner.