Interviewing Potential Employers and Clients

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Getting Interviews

• Be as specific as possible about what job or assignment you’re looking for (scientific, medical, or marketing writer; document types in freelancing)
• Build and cultivate a professional network comprising contacts you like and respect (that is, people you would want to work for or with)
• Research target companies, institutions, clients (e.g., LinkedIn, Glassdoor, etc.)
• Contact potential employers or clients directly
• Beware of predatory companies and assignments

Getting Ready for and Going to Interviews

• Preparing for interviews
  o In-house: read about company, institution, department, learn what they do and about leadership, contact previous and current employees
  o Freelance: read about clients, ask colleagues about their reputation
  o Prepare a list of at least five references with their contact information (ask these persons in advance if they are willing to give a positive reference before providing their information)
    ▪ Most companies will only require three, but others require more
    ▪ Some companies require a list of references after the initial phone interview, but before the in-person interview
• The interview
Present yourself professionally (demeanor/body language, dress, punctuality)

- Leverage experience and showcase writing/editing skills when answering questions
- Be prepared for different interview types
  - Initial phone conversation may be with an HR specialist or administrators who may not know particulars about the job; therefore, prepare answers understandable for lay audiences and highlight how your experience ties into the items listed in the job posting
  - In-person interview may be a panel interview
  - Interview may be via Skype (or other video conferencing method)—tidy the background and surroundings. Have proper lighting, and have necessary documents at hand

- Asking questions during the interview
  - Questions convey your interest in the position; come to the interview with prepared questions to ask
  - Are there promotion opportunities?
  - Is professional development encouraged and/or supported (e.g., courses, conferences, etc.)? If yes, have the interviewer elaborate on how the company supports professional development (e.g., financially, PTO, etc.)
  - In-house: ask the interviewer to clarify anything unclear to you in the job description and to elaborate on “other tasks as assigned” if listed
  - Freelance: determine who will manage projects, including their submission (internal or external), and what the deadlines are.

Creating Portfolios

- Include selection of writing samples (e.g., articles, grants, stories)
- Add a reference list for those writing samples that were not included full-length in the portfolio. It is helpful to include the corresponding summary or abstract related to the document (if applicable)
- Document what your role was in each of your writing samples, especially in regards to journal articles (e.g., writer (original draft), reviewer and editor, conceptualization, investigation). Some positions may be looking for a writer with experience in project development and/or data analysis
- Include other essential documents (e.g., resume, reference letters, certificates, transcripts)
- Organize according to what employer or client is looking for (follow job description)
- Make it look professional (i.e., manageable size, loose-leaf binders, sheet protectors)
- Target portfolios to the client/employer, project type, therapeutic area, etc.
- Offer to provide an electronic portfolio, if that’s preferred. (If providing a thumb drive, avoid flashy colors or personal pictures)
• Beware of confidential documents.
  o Be prepared to mention references, as needed, if documents cannot be provided
  o Publicly available abstracts and narratives may work in lieu of entire grant proposals.

Following-up after an Interview
• Write a thank you note (email or letter)
• Check in

Setting Priorities
• Growing within the job (e.g., challenges, professional development, promotion opportunities)
• Life-work balance (e.g., commute, work hours, stress levels)
• Compensation
• Benefits (e.g., retirement, healthcare, PTO)

Resources
How to negotiate salary: https://www.themuse.com/advice/how-to-negotiate-salary-37-tips-you-need-to-know