TIPS FOR GETTING THE RIGHT IT JOB

This cheat sheet presents practical tips for finding and getting the right job in Information Technology.

Preparing Yourself in Advance

Understand what jobs you want to pursue in the short term and as part of your long-term career.

Determine what skill and experience will help you get the jobs you desire.

Devise and begin executing the plan to obtain the relevant education, training, and certifications.

Obtain the skills and experience through personal and work projects. Balance depth with breadth.

Be careful not to become complacent in a job that makes you too comfortable.

Build an online persona that's both appropriate for you and desirable by potential employers.

Craft several elevator pitches to briefly explain who you are and what jobs might interest you.

Treat yourself as a multifaceted company when managing your career.

Social Networking as Part of Your Career

Build professional relationships with people before you start asking them for job search favors.

Consider how you might help others along their career path and offer assistance when appropriate.

Ask for advice, feedback, and guidance of the professionals whom you respect.

Seek informational interviews when learning about a potential company or a job you might pursue later.

Don't take for granted the help and advice that people in your professional network offer.

Keep the members of your social network regularly apprised of your career progress.

Finding the IT Position Worth Pursuing

Understand what characteristics make you stand out from your competition. What makes you an expert?

Look for job postings on companies' websites and on dedicated job websites. (That's a given.)

Establish a relationship with a few recruiters in your industry and make sure they understand you.

Allow potential employers to find you even when you aren't looking for your job, so serendipity can occur.

Consider whether you'll need to move to the locations that have the job openings you seek.

Explore multiple single social circles when looking a job: friends, former colleagues, college friends, etc.

Participate in events attended by the people within the industries or companies where you want to work.

Network within the companies you want to join to find positions that might not be officially advertised.

Consider whether you'll accept a less attractive job to break into the field, industry, or company you desire.

Find a way to contact the hiring manager directly in addition to applying through the official channel.

Crafting and Polishing Your Resume

Review resumes of similarly skilled people to understand your job options and competition.

Understand the job requirements of the position beyond what's in the official description.

Customize your resume to match the specific requirements of the position you're pursuing.

Make sure that every bullet point in your resume answers the question "So What?"

Don't rely on your resume as the primary way of getting the job for which you're applying.

Be truthful and brief in the text of your resume.

Describe both technical as well as "soft" skills (communications, sales. etc.) in your resume.

Handling the Interview for an IT Job

Research the organization and the position you're pursuing. How are they different from others?

Research the people who will interview you, so you can better engage them during the conversation.

Find out the dress code for the interview. When in doubt, it's usually safer to overdress.

Be ready to ask a few insightful, nonobvious questions during the interview.

Treat the interview as a conversation, not a one-sided Q&A session.

Use the interview as a chance to explore the culture of the company where you might end up working.

Send a thank-you note after the interview, referring to the specific topics discussed in the interview.

Negotiating the Compensation Package

Understand what salary you can expect by looking at survey findings, job postings, peer discussions, etc.

Be prepared to answer the potential employer's questions about your current compensation.

Consider all aspects of the compensation package, including salary, bonus, benefits, training, perks, etc.

Understand which aspects of the compensation package the employer can actually negotiate.

Understand your alternatives to a negotiated agreement (BATNA) to know when to say "no."

Stay engaged with the hiring manager throughout the negotiations process, which might span weeks.

Remember to show that you're excited about the new job and that you also value your self-worth.

Research and practices influence techniques that might add to your negotiating power of confidence.

Career Tips for Information Security

Lesley Carhart's Starting an InfoSec Career advice.

Brian Krebs' series of interviews on breaking into the information security industry

Hal Pomeranz' advice on getting started in information security or any other career

Lenny Zeltser on recruiting infosec professionals