

Have you ever wondered what it will be like to enter the healthcare profession? My intent will be to provide you with information that will assist you in seeking a position, applying for the position and hopefully securing the position. As a prospective job applicant it can be a very insecure feeling to know that your future depends on securing a job that will provide you with a personal satisfaction and an adequate income.

Although my experience has been as a manager in the Health Information Management field I believe there are general “rules” that are followed by all managers seeking to fill a position. Whether I was filling a clerical or a professional position, the basic requirements were the same.

At first it is difficult to choose from a wide variety of applications, but I learned to look for certain characteristics that set the application and resume apart. Receiving 30-50 applications for a single position was often the case and it had to be brought down to a manageable number. Selecting the appropriate application for interview was difficult! However, it was quite easy to eliminate certain ones from the pile. Any applications that weren't neatly written, had misspellings, scribbling marks, written in pencil or not complete were immediately returned to Human Resources with a note explaining why they were being sent back. This criteria of elimination usually left 10-15 applications which I continued to evaluate.

I was able to focus on the content of the application and the accompanying resume. Since this is the first type of communication with the applicant it is important to continue to look for accuracy and neatness, since the positions for which I hired were very detailed. Attaching a post-it-note to each resume with comments helped me to further distinguish between candidates with prior experience and those who were seeking an initial position. My philosophy is that experience is not always the best predictor of success! In addition I looked to see how long the candidates were in previous positions. Were there three (3) jobs in the past six months? Did the candidate stay in a position long enough to truly understand the job? It often takes 6-9 months to learn a position fully

and to be successful in completing all tasks that are included in the job! I wanted someone who would give the position a chance and who could learn the skills necessary to complete the tasks.

Selecting 5-7 applications for a personal interview is a very tedious process. I considered that those chosen had already made a good first impression. Now I needed to meet each one and form the “second opinion” by scheduling an interview. The phone call also provided me with additional information regarding the candidate. Did the candidate answer courteously? Was the conversation pleasant? Did the candidate understand the job qualifications and could an interview be scheduled within several days? A positive and upbeat quality to the phone call frequently influenced my final decision when it came to deciding between one or two equally qualified candidates.

The interview process is always a fear-provoking time for both interviewer and interviewee. Punctuality is of the utmost importance! Be early, give yourself enough time to settle down and not have to run into the building. Take a few deep breathes before entering the office and be as confident as possible, extend the hand for a firm handshake and acknowledgement that you are “glad to have the opportunity to interview”. The interviewer’s responsibility should also be to make the candidate feel comfortable at the beginning of the interview. The first **visual impression** is so important! Is the candidate clean and dressed appropriately? You should “dress up” for the interview. It doesn’t have to be and shouldn’t be “party clothes” but nicely ironed pants/slacks, shirts/blouses, clean shoes. You’ll lose the job with jeans, sweat or tee shirt and gym shoes! Take a good look at yourself at home and be sure you are clean and neat from top to bottom.

The first questions are usually fairly easy and generally relate to your background. Answer the questions in complete sentences. Always verbally respond, not just a shake or nod of the head. Use “YES” and “NO”. Practice those two words and avoid slang responses. If you don’t understand a question, courteously ask to have it repeated. If a question confuses you, do not make up an answer. Admit that you don’t know, but would like to learn the answer. The interviewer will be

judging you on every aspect of your behavior during this time. Are you making eye-contact? Are you slouching in the chair? Do you show the professionalism necessary for the position? I found I was more interested in the candidate's behavior than I was in the depth of their answers. Taking notes will be part of the interviewer's procedure, but don't let this make you feel uncomfortable. They are just writing the impressions you are providing! When the interviewer asks you if you have any questions, don't be afraid to ask, but keep them focused on the actual job!

Immediately after your interview, send a brief, professional note stating that you enjoyed the interview and continue to be interested in the position.

When the interviews are complete, it is time for the manager to choose the best candidate and make an offer. Usually this process that takes a week to complete. If I receive a follow-up letter from a candidate, it will continue to enhance the opinion of the individual. Often discussion with another manager facilitates and confirms the choice of applicant. A phone offer is usually made and those same qualities of courtesy, communication and professionalism should be evident when accepting the position.

On your first day of a new job continue to dress as you did at the interview, unless you have discussed dress code with the manager. All the same characteristics that you demonstrated during your initial interview should continue to be evident. Be prompt, keep a positive attitude and learn to express your pleasure in your new position. Your success in the workforce will be determined by your attitude and effort from the time you write the application to your first day on the job.