

How to Have Them at 'Hello': Job Tips for New Grads

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by Beth Hjort, RHIA, CHP

How can you ensure your resume and interview attract the most attention for a coveted HIM position? Susan Parker, MEd, RHIA, helped students and recent graduates to discover some secrets to job-hunting success in “How to Have Them at ‘Hello.’” Parker, president of Seagate Consultants and a member of the AHIMA Board of Directors, offered students helpful tips on projecting their best on paper and during interviews.

She warned her listeners not to automatically believe some common misconceptions about job hunting, such as “it’s all about who you know” and “the most experience gets the job.” The truth is, “whoever makes the best impression gets the job,” she said.

Building a Better Resume

A number of good practices will help a resume bubble to the top of the pile, Parker said. A good resume should make a reviewer want to meet a candidate. In other words, “make it pop,” Parker said.

She advised job seekers to learn about the organization with the job opening. A well-informed applicant can tailor the resume to the organization and the job in question. At the same time, she cautioned students to retain the multiskilled perspective of the HIM profession within resume content.

A resume is not an autobiographical sketch, Parker reminded her listeners. Nor is it a place to show off a vocabulary or lengthy narratives. It is a way to market HIM credentials, a quick way to match skill sets to job requirements, and a way for job hunters to market themselves.

Lack of experience—a common problem for new graduates—doesn’t have to be a showstopper, Parker said. Unproven skills can be showcased through appropriate packaging. Highlighting challenging projects, accomplishments, and educational experience can offset a lack of experience.

Making It Pop

And how to begin a resume? “Lead with your strength,” Parker said. New graduates who already have job-related experience may want to position the “Experience” heading at the top of their resume. For most new graduates, “Education” is the most appropriate first section.

Use of language is also important, Parker said. Resumes should use words that jump off the page—“action words” that convince a reviewer that the person behind the resume is one of strength and action. Examples can be found online at the career development and job search site www.JobWeb.com, Parker said.

Surviving the Interview

A wise candidate will rehearse for a job interview, Parker noted. Different kinds of interviews require different preparations. Phone interviews may not require professional attire, but they do require careful preparation of surroundings. Children should be with a sitter; pets should not be within hearing distance; and telephone and doorbell distractions should be minimized, Parker said.

For one-on-one interviews, candidates should dress appropriately, arrive on time, and behave in a professional manner. (Eyebrow and nose piercings should be camouflaged, she added.)

Getting Real

Parker armed listeners with the top 10 interview questions used to reveal important information about a candidate, such as “What are your long-term and short-term plans?” She alerted them to be ready to ask questions of their own, to be ready to share past successes, and to always “be real—warm and genuine,” Parker said.

Finally, Parker said, an overwhelmingly important guiding principle is integrity. Honest representation, she said, is critical in job seeking: “Never underestimate honesty.”

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