



Seminar on

Job Application

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Outline

- **Self assessment**
- **Job hunting strategies**
- **Application documents**
- **Interview preparation**

Self Assessment

or

Preparing your mind for the job search

- Self-assessment provides invaluable information to facilitate career decisions and to prepare you to market your background.
- Identification of your values, experience, skills, accomplishments, interests, and goals.
- You need to know what you want from a job and what you have to offer prospective employers.
- The clearer the vision of what you seek, the closer you are to finding it.
- Do not expect anyone else to see how great you are if you do not believe in yourself.

Personal data file – Personal profile – Job profiles

Personal data file

- Name, address, date of birth, nationality, minority status, marital status, children
- Education: secondary school, dates, qualification
- Professional qualification, training courses
- Employment record: employer, dates, jobtitle, key tasks and responsibilities, skills
- Work experiences, career history
- Memberships of associations
- Soft skills (social competence, communication skills, languages, technology skills, ...)
- References
- Pastimes (hobbies, leisure pursuits, voluntary work, ...)

Who am I and what do I want

- I am good at – I am bad at

- I like – I hate

⇒ personal profile

- match with certain job descriptions or career profiles

Personal profile

One basic truth about job hunting:

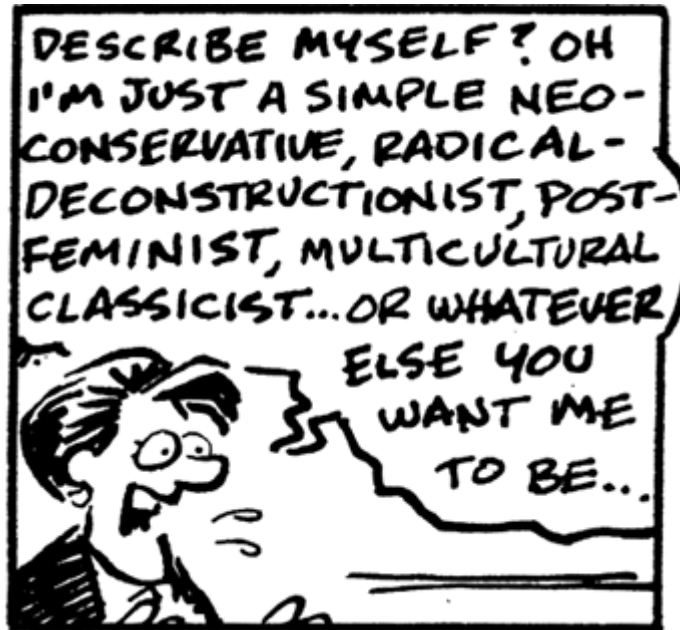
It begins with you and what you want out of your life, your agenda, your dreams.

- Identify your competences and skills, but also your weaknesses
- Identify your interests, wishes and goals
- Determine your level of proficiency
- List your credentials

- **Competences:** what you know as a result of education or training
physics, special field, numerical methods, data analysis, ...
- **Skills:** what you do with what you know or application of knowledge,
e.g. select, interpret, store and place information in a larger context,
evaluation, advising, decision making
- **Transferable Skills:** imagination, creativity, managing, trouble-shooting,
multi-tasking, problem solving, interpersonal skills
- **Interests:** What does motivate me most? What attracts me?
- Describe yourself, do not judge.
Find examples out of your (professional) life.
- Be honest.
- Review: Ask colleagues, friends, family

Weaknesses

Do not run behind what is usually thought of being an important skill for professional life if it is not yours.



Examples: communicative / indiscreet, team oriented / dependent on others

Think of positive aspects of a „weakness“ of you. Consider situations where this is advantageous.

Job descriptions

- Research and explore career options: learn from lists, job descriptions, ...
- Find matches between your identified skills, interests and values and the demands of career fields and organisations
- Profession – career field
- Physics: basic research, applied research, software development, education, science writing, consulting, ...
e.g. www.physicstoday.org/jobs, www.aip.org/tip/profiles.html,
(industrial physicist profiles), ...
- Mirror method:
Who's job would I most like to have? (2nd, 3rd)
Why? What attracts me? List as many things as possible.
Talk to that person or people in the same or similar position.
- Take a test. Hundreds available, e.g. www.careerplanner.com, ...
Just one test may be misleading.
- Be realistic.

Working environment, ...

- **Working environment:**

indoors / outdoors, static / mobile, solitary / in a group,
in the front line / behind the scenes, with your peer group /
with a mixed age range, working with people / animals /
products / money

- **Level of work:**

junior / qualified / supervisory /
junior – middle – senior management / professional,
status, title (administrative assistant: clerk – committee administrator,
finance officer: book keeper – financial advisor)

- **Job security**

- **Finances:**

minimum salary I can afford / salary I want, list of expenditure, lifestyle

- **Location:**

local (limited opportunities) – commuting (cost, time, car, public transport,
daily/weekend) – relocation (independent, family)

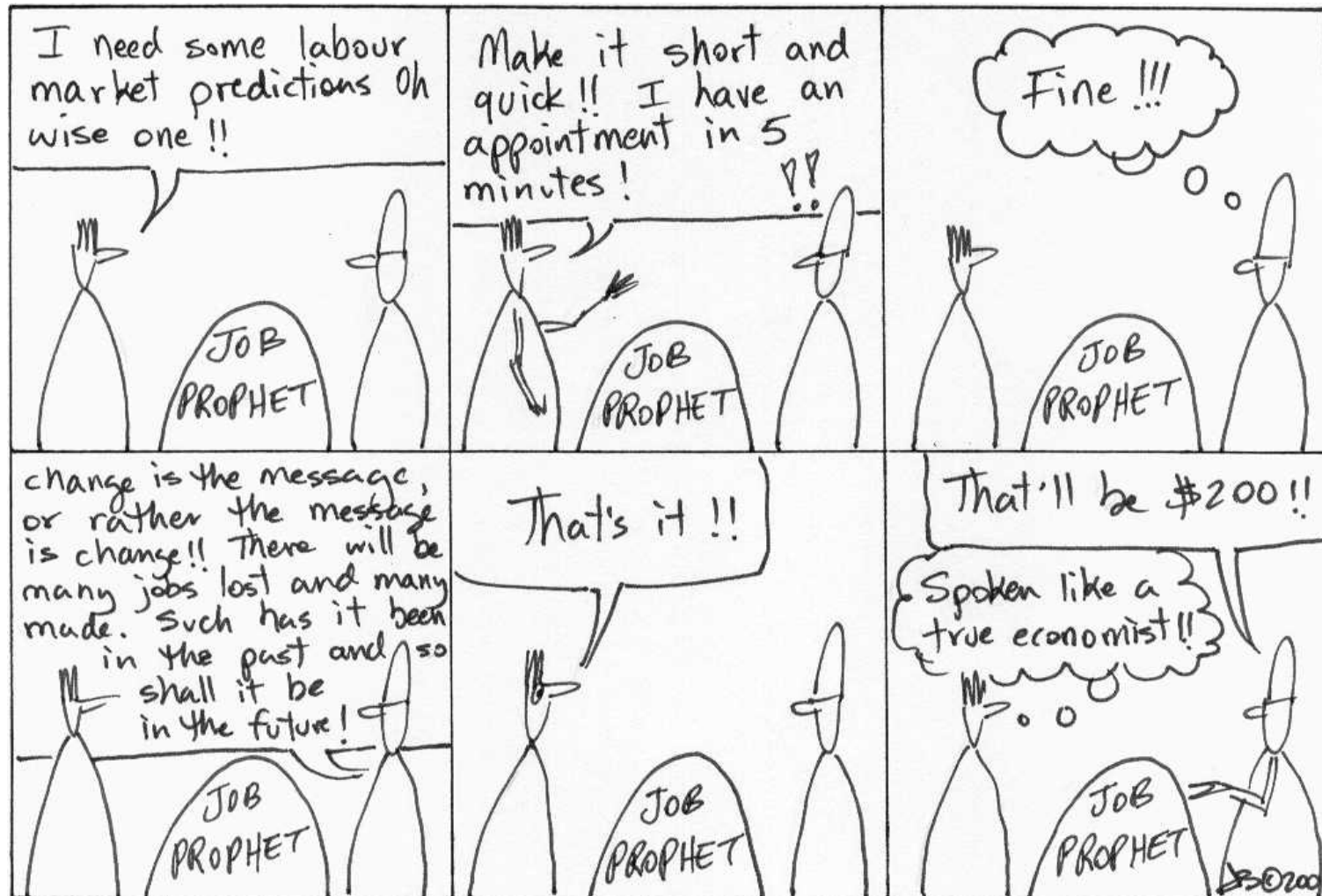
Most important credentials in academic job application

- PhD in hand
- Deep roots in your field of research
- Good publication record
- Teaching experience / presentation skills
- Recognition of your work (citations, invited reviews, honours, successful grant proposals)
- Evidence of connectedness (SOC, panels, ...)
- Administrative abilities (service in committees, organisation of conferences, academic advising, ...)
- Collegiality („lunch test“)
- Firm plans for future research in a field of long-term perspective

Skills needed in industry jobs

- Wide spectrum of knowledge
- „Shallow roots“ in many fields of research
- Applied research
- Problem solving skills
- Leadership and management skills
- Communication and team working skills
- Organisation and market knowledge
- Initiative
- Adaptability
- Ability to work with milestones / meet deadlines
- Ability to stay focussed

Job Hunting Strategies



I can not tell you how you will find your job – there is no golden rule.

There are bad and ugly ways and there are good ways of job hunting.

Only about 20% of the jobs get advertised. The majority of jobs is in the hidden job market.

The majority of job seekers apply for the advertised positions, therefore making it very competitive.

The hidden job market:

- positions listed internally
- positions that are filled by hiring someone that knows someone.

The classical ways of job hunting

Search for job openings in the internet,
classified ads in newspapers,
professional journals, ...

Networking

Connection matters

- Make a list of people and let them know that you are looking for employment opportunities
- Talk to friends, relatives, work contacts
- Work contacts: professors, former employers, colleagues, professional organisations, people in the information business, alumni, ...
- Contact by phone: offer a personal introduction, identify your purpose for seeking an appointment, arrange a mutually convenient time
- Contact by letter (and resume): introduce yourself, specify the reason why you are approaching them, let them know that you would like to be notified should any employment opportunity arise in the near future, ask for confidentially
- In case of decline: thank them for their time and ask if they know 2 or 3 people that you could contact

Attend conferences and career fairs

Present poster, give talks, talk to speakers, ..., get known

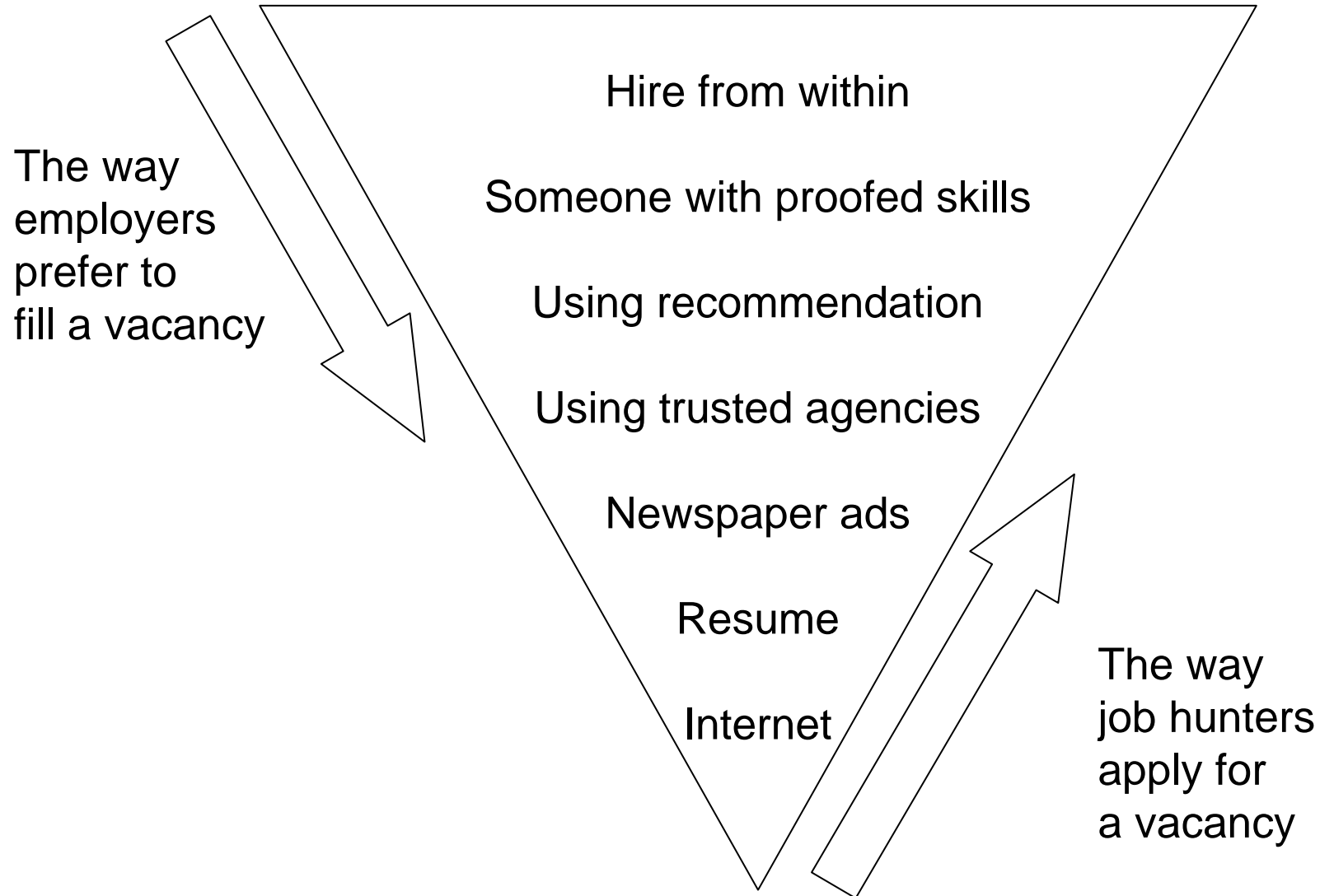
Research on small and medium sized enterprises ...

- Search the internet
- Contact the desired regions's chamber of industry and commerce
- Yellow pages
- ...

... and contact them directly

Employment agencies

The other side



Job hunting can be very frustrating

No
No
No
No
No No

The worst outcome of your job hunt is not that you do not find a job, but that you loose your self-esteem.

Statistics can help to overcome the rejection shock:

No
No
No
No
No Yes

Every job hunter has a handicap

I am just graduating.

I graduated too long ago.

I have never worked in industry.

I have only worked in industry.

I have a gap in my CV.

I was too long in one place.

I have been in a big institute.

I have been in a small institute.

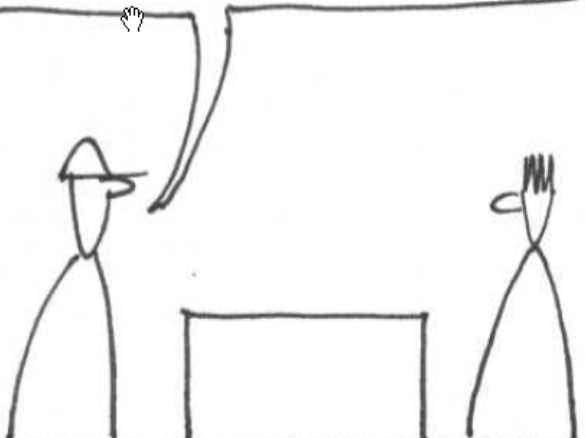
I have not been abroad.

I am a foreigner.

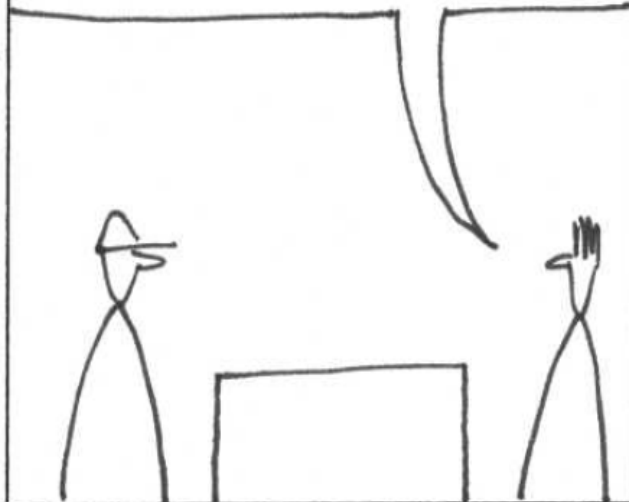
I come from another planet.

It does not matter what skills you don't have as long as the skills you have match the ones that are needed.

Guess what?
I have my very
own online resume!



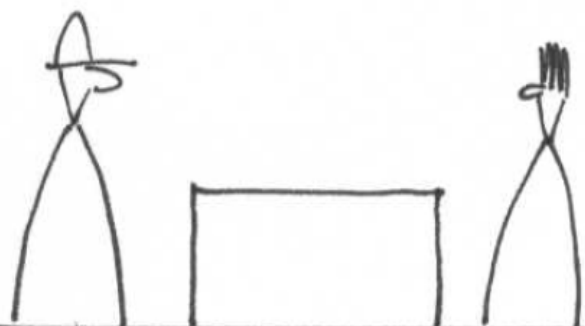
That's wonderful!!
I'm happy for you!



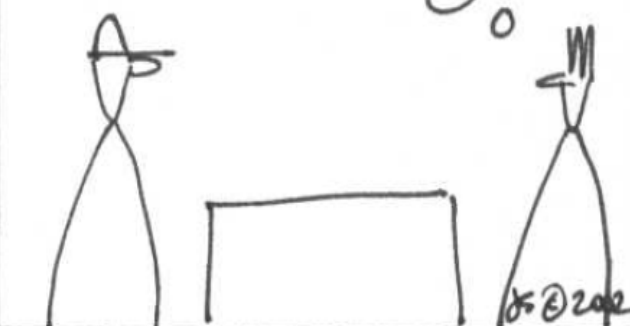
Yeah, I'm looking
for a job as a
frontline salesperson!



Dammit!!!
It's been six months
and I've only had
four hits to my
webpage! I'm never
going to find work!



That's the most
intelligent thing
he's said all
week!!



The ugly ...

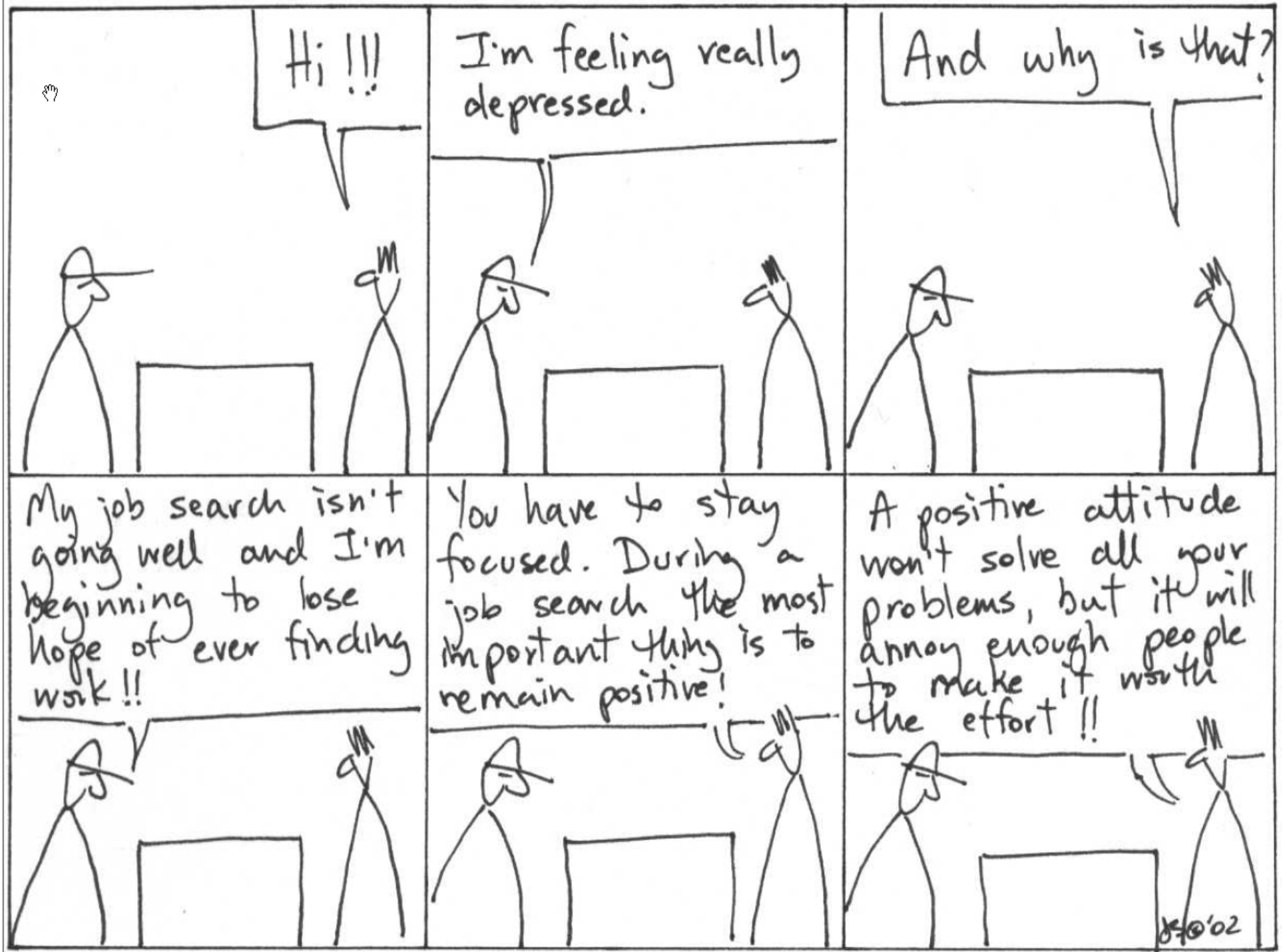
The good ...

... ways of job hunting

- Applying through the internet
- Mailing out resumes at random
- Posting your resume
- Going to search firms
- Answering local newspaper ads
- Talk to people
- Networking
- Spread the word
- Conferences, career fairs
- Knocking at doors
- Call people by phone
- Use more than one method

Some tips for job hunting

- If you want a job, go out and hunt for it – no one owes you a job.
- The more you try, the more likely it is that you find your job.
- Be flexible, successful job hunting requires willingness to change the tactics.
- Talk to successful job hunters and learn what they did.
- Tell everyone that you are looking and what you are looking for.
- Find support (colleagues, friends, family, ...)
- Be prepared that it takes longer than expected.
- Keep going until you find a job. Continue searching until the day you sign the contract.
- Do not stop if you had a bad experience. Go right ahead.



Online job sites for scientists

<http://jobs.uni-hd.de>

<http://www.jobrobot.de>

<http://www.job-world.de>

<http://www.cesar.de>

<http://www.stellenboersen.de>

<http://www.stellenanzeigen.de>

<http://zeit.academics.de>

<http://www.newscientistjobs.com>

<http://www.nature.com/naturejobs>

<http://sciencecareers.sciencemag.org>

<http://www.post-docs.com>

<http://www.jobs-in-europe.net>

<http://www.jobs.ac.uk>

<http://www.telejob.ch>

<http://www.sciencejobs.ch>

<http://careerone.com.au>

<http://jobs.phds.org>

<http://members.aas.org/JobReg/>

[Jobregister.cfm](#)

<http://physicsweb.org/jobs>

<http://www.aps.org>

<http://www.physicstoday.org/jobs>

Job search resources

<http://www.job-hunt.org>
<http://www.careerbuilder.com>
<http://www.rileyguide.com>
<http://www.jobhuntersbible.com>
<http://www.cvtips.com>
<http://jobstar.org>
<http://www.jobweb.com>
<http://www.udel.edu/CSC/guide.html>
<http://www.phds.org>
...

Job record file

For every application keep record of

- the job advertisement
- any documents relating to the job or the organisation
- all sent application documents
- all correspondence
- all relevant notes

Progress sheet (for all applications, e.g. in form of a table)

You do need some of the documents at a later date, e.g. for the interview.

Receiving the same file three-times is very annoying and says a lot about how careful you work.

Application Documents


Your application documents are a first sample of how you work.

Application is advertising yourself.

Present the chocolate side of you and leave a good impression.

Demonstrate professionalism. Use business writing style.

Cover letter

Curriculum
vitae 
(often with
portrait photo)

„3rd page“:
e.g.
Summary of
past research,
plans for
future research

List of
publications,
teaching
experience

Reference
letters

Certificates

Formalities

Various folders for application documents on market (e.g. www.bewerbungsmappen.de).

Use white paper, single paged, 90 g/m².

Use same fonts and paper for cover letter and CV.

Clear copies, no transparent files.

Stiff white envelope, typed address sticker.

Regular shipping (correct postage, no express letter, no recorded delivery within Germany).

Cover Letter

Purpose: Get the employer to read your CV and to invite you for an interview

Writing style

- Take the time to research each employer's organisation and personalise each letter. Indicating that you know something about the company shows that you are careful and interested in the employer.
- Analyse your reader by considering his/her requirements and needs.
- Put yourself in the reader's situation to better understand his needs.
- Plan your letter accordingly, placing the most important items first, supported by facts.

- Write your letter demonstrating how your background, training, work experience and abilities can meet those needs.
- Persuade the reader that you are a good match for the position and that he/she should interview you,
- Remember that you are responsible for explicitly communicating your value to the employer.
- Back up general statements with specific facts or examples.
- Highlight one or two of your most significant accomplishments or abilities to show you are an above average candidate.
- Do not overstate your experience or skills. Stick to the facts and tell the truth by emphasising your strengths.
- Structure your letter logically. Remember it is your responsibility to organise the information for the reader.

- Be brief. Try to stay within 1 page, at most 1.5 pages. Demonstrate that you understand the value of the readers time.
- Use a polite, formal style that strikes a balance between confidence in yourself and respect for the employer. Be clear, objective and persuasive rather than simply descriptive.
- Be positive in tone, content and expectations.
- Use active voice and powerful action verbs.
- Avoid jargon, cliches, and phrases.
- Professional letter layout, margins, balanced paragraphs, black fonts on white paper
- Signature with blue or black ink, no ballpen
- Triple check orthography, esp. employer's organisation and name

Don'ts

- No cover letter at all.
- Standard letter with address field in different font, on a sticker, or even hand written.
- Cover email with address as fifth cc.
- Standard letter without reference to position.
- Dear Sir or Madam, enclosed please find my application documents.
Sincerely, A. N. Applicant
- Letter containing essentially only list of appendices.
- Careless or sketchy letter written in a hurry with lots of typos.

Layout

Your name, address, telephone, email (only private, never business)

Correct employer's address

Reference

Date

Dear Mr./Mrs. Name,

Creative first sentence

Clearly structured main part

Closing sentence

Sincerely,

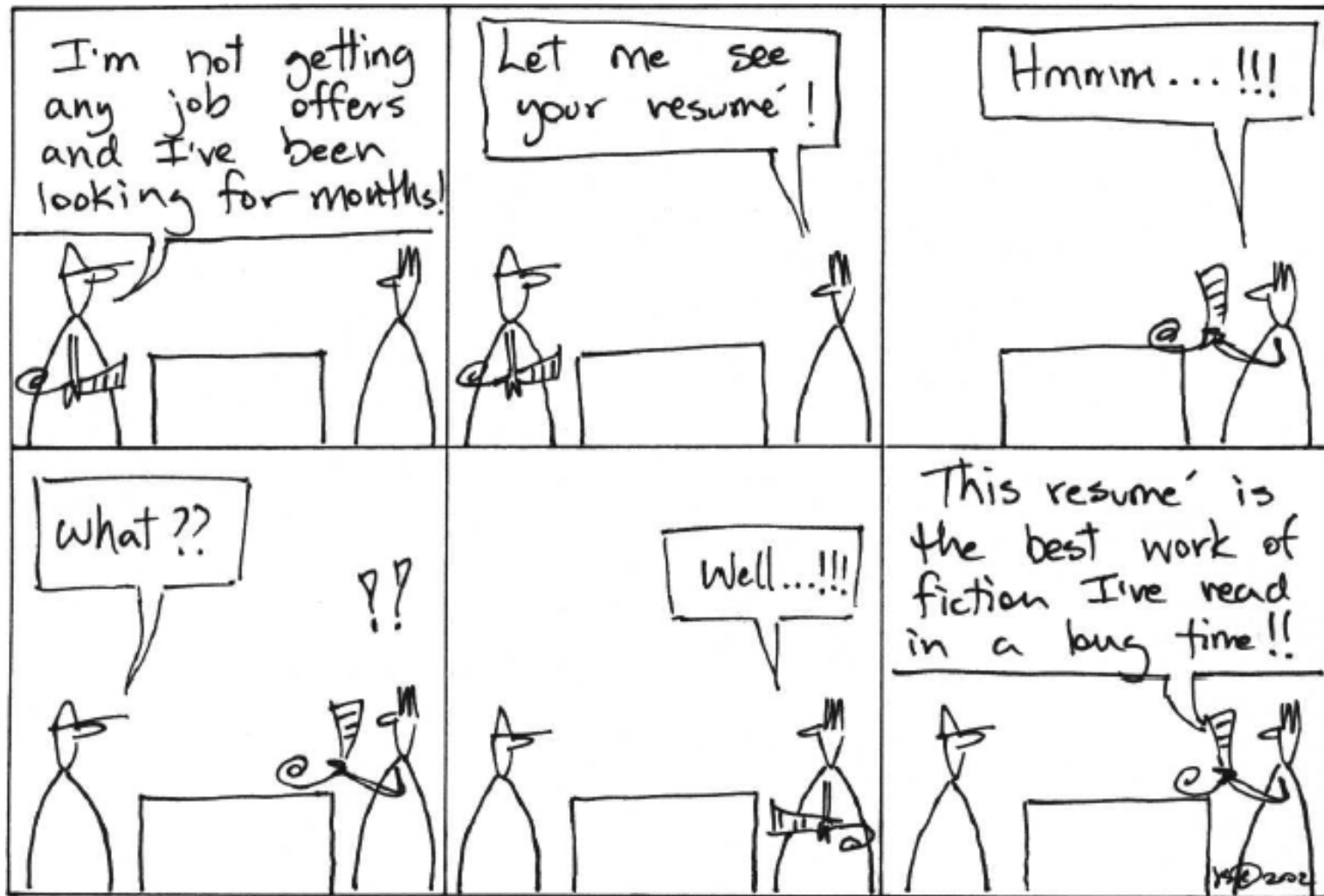
Signature

Typed Name

Academic job cover letter

- your basic field
- summary of past research
- plans for future research
- teaching experience and interests
- what you can do for the particular institution you are applying for

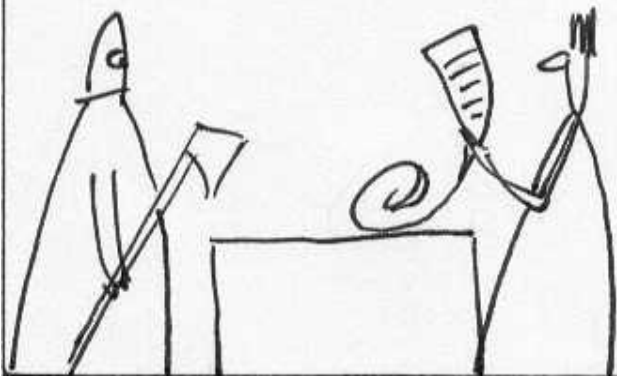
Curriculum Vitae



CV / Resume

- A CV/resume should be a concise summary of the high points of your education, work experience and other qualifications relevant to your audience's needs and your employment interests.
- It is not a complete history of your life.
- Customize the high points to your specific application.
- A CV is the part of the application documents where you should find yourself best represented. It needs to show your personality.
- You are unique. I would not use a standardised CV (e.g. EU CV form), except when explicitly asked for.
- Everything said for cover letters also applies here.

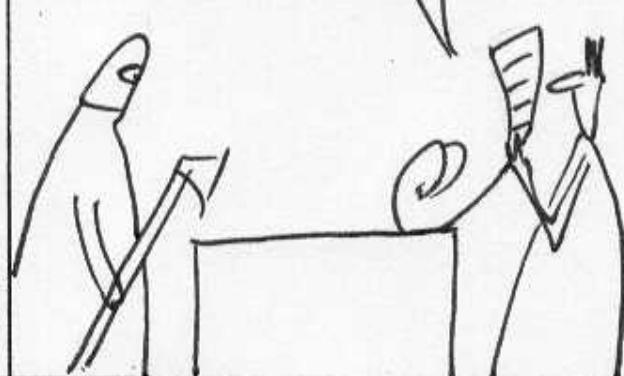
Hacker, your resume is far too long!



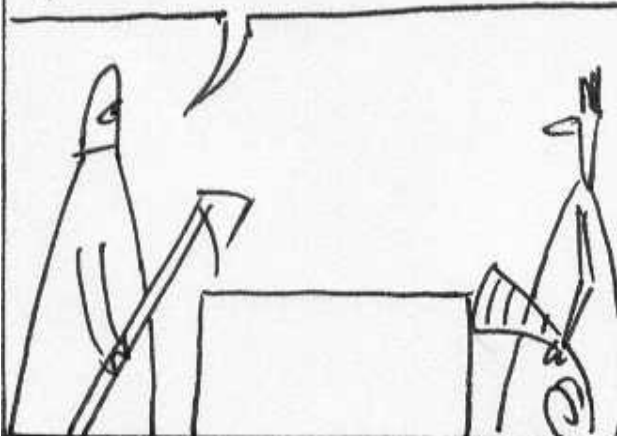
What employers are looking for today is a simple one page resume!



Not a 12 page list of all the famous people you've executed!

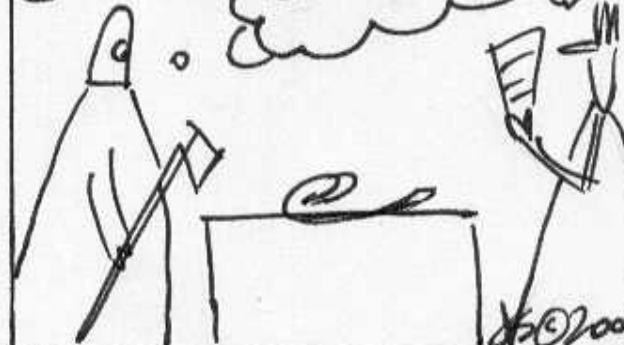


But it looks perfect!!! I've never had any problems before!



Voila!!! The one page resume...

What is this? A career advisory or an editing department?



©2001

Style and format

- Proofread to eliminate all spelling, typographical and grammatical errors
- Font style and size, sufficient margins and white space between sections
- Well designed and balanced, visually appealing, inviting to read
- Do not overdo boldface, italics, underlining
- Easy to read with most important information eye-catching
- Concise, 1 – 2 pages, bulleted lists
- Avoid repeating words or phrases. Leave out unnecessary words.
- Do not use the first person „I“.
- Avoid self-flattening terms such as „highly skilled“, „outstanding“, „excellent“. Describe your accomplishments effectively and let readers decide for themselves that you are well qualified.
- Be honest and accurate, but not overly modest.

Main building blocks

Personal data

Objective

Education

Employment

Experiences and skills

Scientific interests

Voluntary work, hobbies

Professional memberships

References

Example

Employment

Company

Position

Dates

- Description of responsibility
- Skills, action
- Achievements

Employment

Dates

Company

Position

- Description of responsibility
- ...

English CV

- title „Curriculum Vitae“ or „Resume“
- in industry: short, 1-2 pages / in academics: often several pages
- most recent dates first
- no date, no signature, no photo, no date of birth

German CV

- title „Lebenslauf“
- application photo (except when stated otherwise)
- date of birth (except when stated otherwise)
- usually 1, maximum 2 pages
- relatively strict format
- chronologically ordered, dates with month and year
- no whole sentences, keywords but still descriptive
- date, signature

French CV

- no title, but your name
- usually 1-2 pages
- most recent dates first
- no date, no signature, no photo

Application photo

In Germany and many European countries a professional application photo is usually required. However, some companies explicitly do not want to see an application photo.

In USA and UK usually no photo.

Check what is usual in the country you are applying.

Size 4.5 x 6 cm, no pass photo, portrait, recent, professional photographer.

Professionally dressed, decent make-up and jewelry.

Friendly smile right into the camera.

In paper version application, use a paper photo. Write your name on the back and glue it onto your CV or the cover page. You can also print the photo on your CV, especially in online versions.

Additional page(s)

Academic application:

Summary of past research, plans for future research

Industry jobs:

My motivation, what is important for me, ...

Keep it short and to the point.

List of publication

Teaching experience

Reference letters

Certificates

Online Application

- Easy search, specialised job sites, home pages, newspaper – however overwhelming offers, many out-dated job postings
- Find out if online application welcome (info@...) – find out which documents wished (all documents, only CV, application form)
- Same care like classical application
- Cover letter as plain email text, special character problem
- Attachments (#, format, size)
- Private email address (serious name), subject line, cc
- Online application forms (not only keywords, descriptive additional info)
- Homepage (only info relevant for application, clearly laid out, not too many clicks, no fancy applications)

Interview

- Congratulation, you made it on top of dozens of other competitors
- From your application papers, you are considered as qualified.
- Now your personality is asked: team work, communication skills
motivation, enthusiasm, dedication, curiosity, flexibility, sympathy

Preparation, self-presentation, interview structure, typical questions,
questions by applicant, informal talks

Preparation

- Well-groomed appearance, formal dress, timeliness, stress-free travel, car
- Take with you: complete copy of application documents, papers, ...
- Research on organisation/company, its objectives, its products, its customers
- Be prepared to introduce yourself: 1-2 min, 3-5 min, 10 min
- Which of your skills are valuable to them, always use examples which demonstrate a specific skill
- Who are your interview partner:
head of personal – motivation
technical specialist – qualification
manager, owner – flexibility, effectiveness

Interview structure

- Warm-up: greeting, thank for invitation, small talk as ice breaker
- Information exchange:
 - self presentation of applicant
 - in academic jobs: seminar talk
 - questions regarding qualification and personality
 - short presentation of organisation and working conditions
- Wrap-up:
 - questions by applicant
 - follow-up procedure
 - thank the interviewers for their time

Self-Presentation

Presentation of current job – Relationship to new job – Professional formation

Don'ts

- phrases like „creative“, „flexible“, „motivated“ without examples or evidence
- negative formulations
- showing no profile
- overconfidence, arrogance

Dos

- identify technical demands
- show activity
- describe individual skills
- examples of personal skills
- describe, do not value
- use key words

Attitude

Employers will notice the minute you walk in

- if you are open-minded or absorbed with yourself
- if you are energetic or unmotivated
- if you are communicative or not
- if you are persistent or not

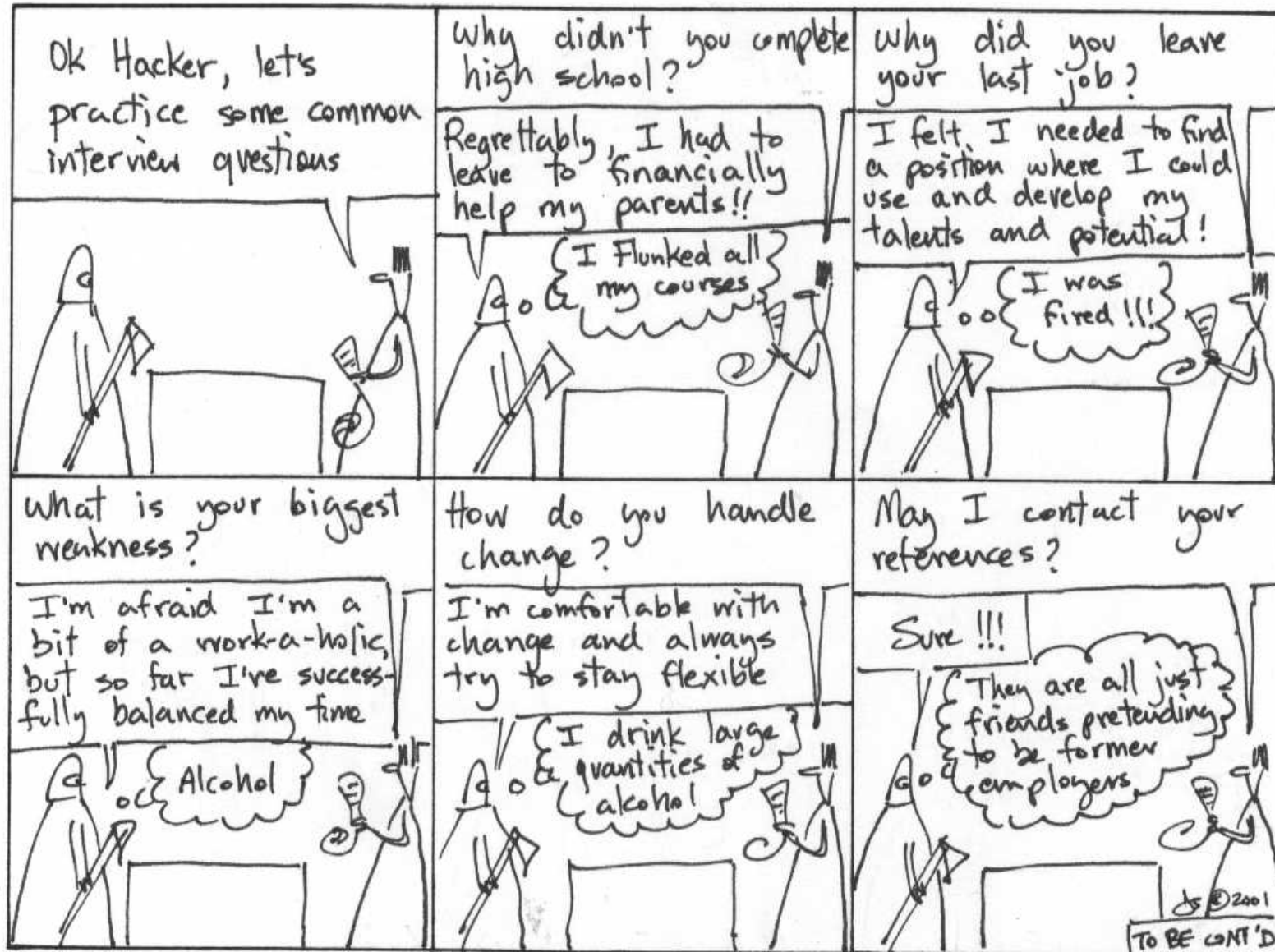
and many things more.

Your attitude can be your greatest weakness, but also your greatest power.

Modest supplicant → self-confident personality

Don't be shy. Don't be arrogant.
Try to relax and be yourself.
Smile and show professionalism.

Typical questions



Typical questions

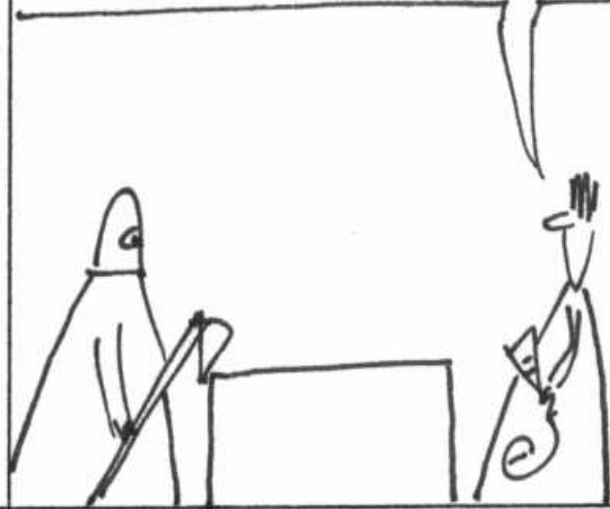
Motivation and efficiency, career, social background, competence and qualification

- Why have you applied? Why do you want to work here?
- Tell us more about you. Characterize yourself.
- Where do you see yourself in 5 years?
- Why should we choose you? What makes you perfect for this position?
- What have you to offer? How would you handle this job?
- What are your strengths and what are your weaknesses?
- What was your greatest accomplishment?

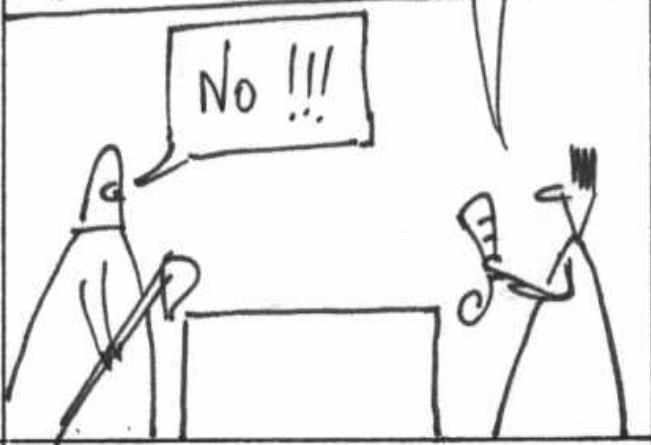
These interview questions are really hard!!!



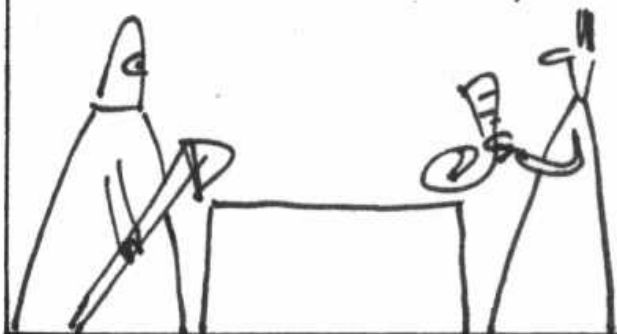
Let's look at some odd interview questions



Have you ever been arrested or gone to jail?



Why not?



hmmm...!!!



I guess because I never got caught!!

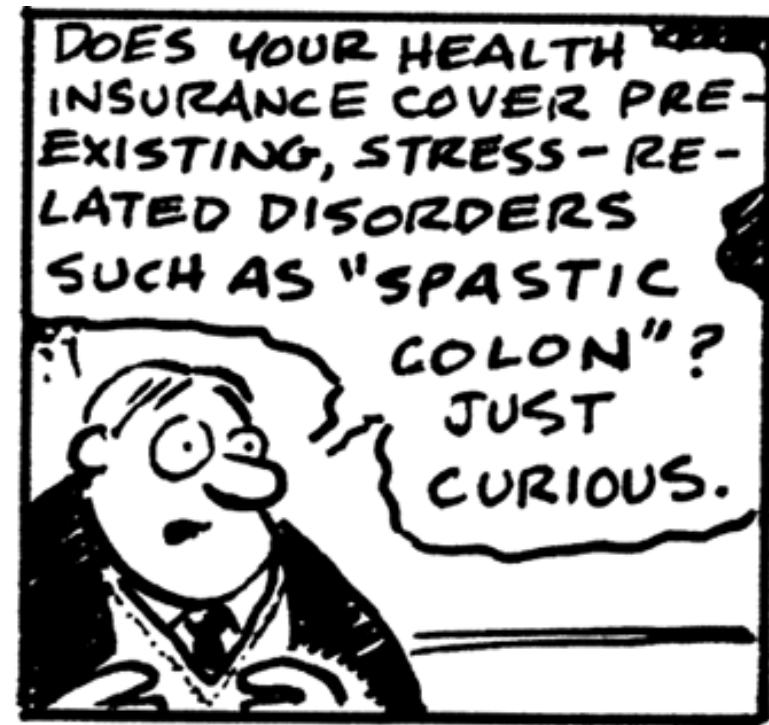


More typical questions

- Why do you want to change your position?
- What salary do you expect?
- What does your partner think about your professional plans?
- How will you handle the separation?
- What do you feel about this interview?
- ...

Questions by applicant

- Usually offered towards end of interview. If not, ask yourself.
- With your questions you demonstrate your interest and motivation.
- Therefore most important: Have some questions prepared.



- Do not begin with to ask after benefits like private use of business car, vacation days, ...
- Do not ask trivial questions or questions already touched or answered during the interview.
- Area of responsibility and competence, colleagues, global salary, ...
- Is an initial training phase planned? Who is my contact person?
- Who is the direct superior and what is his/her position within the institution?
- With whom / with which department would I work together?
- Do you have a complete job description for this post?
- What are the proportions of the various responsibilities?
- Is this a new position? If not: How long has the predecessor worked on this position?
- Does an organigram of the institution exist?

Informal talks, lunch, institution tour

- There is never a time when you are not interviewed.
- Exercise good manners.
- Display collegiality.
- Be interested, ask questions.
- Watch your possible future colleagues and ask yourself whether you want to work with them.

Following Up

- Be persistent: follow up the status of your application
show your continuous enthusiasm and interest
reapply on another occasion
- Analyse your success rate
- Revise tactics, try a new strategy
- Broaden your horizon, gain additional skills
- Reconsider your expectations

Literature

R.N. Bolles, What color is your parachute? Ten Speed Press 2004

R.F. Wilson, Executive job search handbook, Career Press 2003

J. Johnstone, Job application handbook, 6th edn, How To Books 2004

A. Jackson, K. Geckeis, How to prepare your curriculum vitae,
VGM Career Books 2003

J. Hesse, H.C. Schrader, Das Hesse-Schrader Bewerbungshandbuch,
Eichborn 2000

C. Püttjer, U. Schnierda, Das große Bewerbungshandbuch,
Campus 2005

J. S. Rigden, Landing your first job, A guide for physics students, Springer 2002

M.M. Heiberger, J. Miller Vick, The academic job search handbook, 3rd edn, U Penn Press 2001

C. Robbins-Roth, Alternative careers in science, Academic Press 1993

K. Kreeger, Guide to nontraditional careers in science, Tayler & Francis 1999

P.J.Feibelman, A PhD is not enough: a guide to survive in science, Perseus Books 1993

Acknowledgement: Seminar notes on „Job-hunting“ by Ralf Petri (IMPRS Cologne) are greatly acknowledged.