



# Initiating Contact With an Employer

Making a positive first impression is obviously crucial to your job search success, and showing initiative should be a powerful component in your job search strategy. Our *Interviewing Ready References* (G1 – G8) may be helpful to you as you prepare for showcasing your initiative during interviews. But what about other initial contacts? Some of the same guidelines apply, however the following tips may increase your understanding of how to put your best foot forward in other preliminary contacts.

## Develop a Mission Statement

- ♦ Write down your strengths and weaknesses.
- ♦ Identify potential career and personal goals.
- ♦ Speculate what you would want in an employee if you were hiring someone.
- ♦ Read over these written thoughts and form a personal mission statement. This statement will envelop concepts of your strengths and how you can build a career benefiting an organization and may be used to guide all correspondence and conversations you have with potential employers. For example, if your statement involves “using your powerful strategic communications and writing skills to benefit a public relations agency or department as they strive to meet the needs of their demanding clients or overall organization,” then you will want to include that statement in your cover letter and elaborate on it within the body of your letter. You’ll also want to be able to paraphrase that statement when you introduce yourself to employers at career fairs or in interviews. Having this clear understanding of your strengths and goals will allow you to weed out dead time and get straight to the point. Impressive, confident interactions are sure to follow.

## Create a Portfolio

While having a mission statement will help guide your conversation and give your first impression focus, specific examples and tangible items will definitely place you ahead of your competitors. “Show-and-tell” may be helpful in building your confidence in your qualifications and in making an outstanding first impression by showing initiative. Some “show-and-tell” items suggestions include:

- ♦ Articles you’ve gathered which are related to the job and/or company of your dreams
- ♦ Papers or assignments from important, relevant classes
- ♦ Photographs or video clips of you involved in activities related to your career or position
- ♦ Newsletters, flyers or brochures that you helped create for campus organizations or activities
- ♦ Articles you have written for the campus newspaper or other publications
- ♦ Photographs or video clips you have taken
- ♦ Lesson plans, worksheets, quizzes, exams, and/or laboratory activities you’ve developed
- ♦ Thank you notes from individuals impacted by the activities, projects or

events that you have coordinated or participated in

- ◆ Letters of recommendation
- ◆ Any other materials that support your interest in or qualifications for a particular position or career

The Constructing a Portfolio Ready Reference (E10) will provide you with additional suggestions for organizing your personal “show-and-tell” items. Also, your career development coordinator and professors can provide you with valuable insight about relevant information to include.

### **Get Started!**

Resolve to get started. After you’ve thought about your goals and you have a clear idea of what skills and abilities you’re selling, and after you’ve put together some “show-and-tell” items, you’ve got to start. Initiating contact with an employer can be difficult. In the popular career search book, *Major In Success*, Patrick Combs identifies the Five Big Job Search Fears:

- ◆ Fear of failure
- ◆ Fear of what other people think
- ◆ Fear of not having the right experience
- ◆ Fear of not making enough money
- ◆ Fear of competition

One statement you could use to convince yourselves to not dwell upon these fears and to jump into the job search with both feet is a statement attributed to the Wright brothers, aviation pioneers, “So many times people end up so fixated on doing things right, that they end up doing nothing at all.” Don’t make that mistake. Get started.

- ◆ **Identify employers.** Search for prospective employers on the Web, through your personal network, or by using the wide variety of resources available through CASNR Career Services and OSU Career Services. See the Learning about Job

Opportunities Ready Reference (I4) for more resources to use in identifying employers.

- ◆ **Research those organizations.** The Doing Your Research ready references (H1 – H4) will provide you with some great company research tips.
- ◆ **Initiate contact.** Write a letter, send an email or call the employers you have identified. Begin to open the channels of communication in each organization, and find a personal contact within that organization who can give you the information you’re seeking. Ask for an informational interview and express an interest in gaining experience with their organization.
- ◆ **Follow-up.** Each time you speak with someone, gain information from someone, etc., write them a letter or send them an email to thank them for their time and assistance. Be specific about what information you found useful and about what you think you have to offer the industry now that you have a greater understanding of the issues their industry is facing.