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## CAREER ZONE

### Calling

Speaking to people on the telephone is unavoidable and desirable in the job-search process. How you come across on the phone is extremely important, as the only thing the person at the receiving end gets to base an impression of you on is what he/she hears.

Oral communication can be broken down into two factors — what you say and how you say it. Being well-spoken means not only clearly conveying the message but also saying it in a manner that builds rapport and convinces the listener about your sincerity. Before you call someone, think about what it is you want to say and how to best say it. Jot down the points you would like to get across and practice your message.



### Formal and Informal Networking

We cannot over emphasize the importance of getting out and talking with people in your chosen industry to find out what it entails and how to position yourself as a candidate. And, when you meet with people, take care to make a positive, lasting impression with your appearance and communication. This means researching the industry and organization, preparing relevant questions, and dressing in a manner that's appropriate for the profession. It also means using active listening skills and making it clear to each individual you speak with that you sincerely appreciate their support and the information they're offering.



Even when in doubt that someone can advance your search, you're practising presenting yourself the way you'd like to be remembered and, you never know – networking works in mysterious ways.

### Thank You Notes

On the written front, everyone who assists you deserves the courtesy of a thank you note. This can be done via email or, if more appropriate, via snail mail. As with any written communication, don't make it sound like a standard thank you note. It's fine to develop a template to use when you want to thank people but be sure to personalize each in some way with a reference to when you met and the information that was imparted.



### Letters and Emails

Other communication you'll be required to compose includes letters of introduction, cover letters, and follow up notes when applying to jobs. Again, it makes sense to develop a framework to follow every time you connect with someone but be sure to incorporate something specific that personalizes your message to the individual you're addressing.



### Guidelines for Written Communication

When developing your letters and emails, here are some key factors to keep in mind:

- Address every piece of communication to a person. Avoid, wherever possible, using a generic heading like "To Whom it May Concern".
- Tailor it to the organization and the type of work you're targeting.
- Incorporate at the beginning a compelling reason why the recipient should keep on reading.
- No communication needs to be wordy—make it concise and, in the case of a cover letter, don't go beyond a page.
- Typos, grammatical and spelling mistakes are inexcusable. Get someone else to review your work to ensure it is error free.
- Have others give you feedback on the quality of each of your written templates.
- When responding to an ad, double-check to ensure you've referenced all major requirements.
- Make it clear what you have to offer that differentiates you from the competition – your brand.
- Reread everything to ensure you're satisfied with the key messages and that you're conveying a positive impression.

### Be Sure to Follow Up

Our clients often ask us why some people fail to respond to their communication in a timely manner and what if anything they can do about it. Most people are honourable and their intention is to get back to you but invariably a more pressing priority presents itself and your interests get pushed to the back burner. The best idea is to give your contact several business days and then take a pro-active stance and get in touch again.

Remember always to reinforce your brand with self-assurance and not to lose your cool even if you're feeling frustrated. Doing this will serve to convey your sincere interest in connecting, signal your determination, and separate you from the competition. 

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