



Best practices when applying for a job

By Jessica Salerno, OSCPAs senior content manager

When you're ready to start job hunting, resist the urge to flood the inbox of every person you know with your resume.

"It has to be the best fit for the candidate and the best fit for the company they're going to," said Kathy Petrucci, CPA, tax shareholder at Schneider Downs. "We want to be happy and we want them to be happy."

Petrucci and Roy Lydic, CPA, audit shareholder, both from Schneider Downs, have more than 30 years of interviewing experience combined and have seen their fair share of impressive and not-so-impressive candidates. That's why they both urged job hunters to carefully consider what they want out of their next position before they start applying. Check sites such as the OSCPAs Career Center to see a range of open positions to get an idea of what's available in the profession.

"Give a lot of good, solid thought to the type of work and culture that you'd thrive in," Lydic said.

Thinking carefully about the next step in your career might seem obvious, but it's a best practice that can help ensure

you're being purposeful about your career trajectory, as opposed to jumping into a position only to realize months later it's clearly not the right fit.

Firms like Schneider Downs are always looking for top-notch talent, which means securing your ideal position is possible if you're prepared. Make the job application process easier by following these tips to ensure you're setting yourself up for success.

Put non-accounting experience on your resume.

You can emphasize accounting-related experience, especially technical, but employers want to see well-rounded candidates, Petrucci said.

Consider your non-accounting related skills that interviewers would value. You might not have the technical knowledge of another candidate, but your experience interacting with different groups of people or leadership roles offers insight into your skill set that employers wouldn't know unless they asked you.

For recent college grads, past history working in retail or the service industry

is helpful for employers to see, along with college athletics. Lydic said this experience means you understand what it's like in the real world.

"Technical knowledge will come with time," he said. "What's very important to us is someone who can be part of a team, emotionally reliable, good at supervising others and has empathy and soft skills. These are attributes that are critically important to success in this business."

Do your research ahead of time.

Research extends to the company itself along with anyone who will interview you. Having an understanding of the company, its history and where it appears to be headed in the future, is crucial.

"Candidates should prepare to ask questions about growth and evolution of the company over time," Lydic said.

This base knowledge will show that you are interested in contributing to the company's overall success, not simply looking for what you can get out of the position. If you know who you'll be

interviewing with, you can research the individual and his or her accomplishments.

“If it’s feasible, go on LinkedIn and research the person interviewing you,” he said. “I’m always impressed when someone asks about my career path.”

If you don’t know who’s going to interview you, check out the website to see what information is available on shareholders.

Be aware of your online presence.

In today’s business environment, you never know the extent to which your interviewer might research you online. Regardless, there’s no excuse to leave anything inappropriate related to your name on the internet.

Even if you set up an account years ago and haven’t looked at it since, now is the time to log back in and ensure it’s appropriate. You might discover some

immature information that doesn’t reflect the person you are or the values you hold today.

“Do not set yourself up for failure; that’s the bottom line,” Petrucci said. “Go look at your social profile page and see what it says about you.”

Prepare to give examples of what you’ve done.

“At the experienced level, we get a lot of people saying ‘I’ve prepared a certain amount of tax returns and reviews,’ and we expect that,” she said. “But what is really helpful is specific things they’ve done.”

She cited examples of discussing experiences with mergers and acquisitions, specific consulting experience and IRS audits as helpful information that will give the interviewer a stronger sense of your experience and the potential you could have at the company.

If you don’t have any niche experience, Petrucci suggested volunteering for roles that are challenging and out of your comfort zone to gain an understanding of other areas.

Stay on your best behavior at all times.

If the initial interview goes well, you might be asked back for a longer interview with other members of the team. This could mean a tour of the office and even going out to lunch with staff. Although this is set up to put you at ease and give you a better idea of what the working environment would be like, never forget you’re still being judged.

“You’re really judging someone the whole time you’re seeing them,” Petrucci said. “We do ask our staff how the candidates did, because our staff is evaluating the candidates, too. The full day is an interview, not just the sit-down portion.”



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