

Student Recruitment Tips for Success

Each year, employers under the CPA Pre-Approved Program Route (PPR) and the Experience Verification Route (EVR) post articling positions on job boards, screen candidates, hold interviews and make job offers to post-secondary students looking to complete their CPA Practical Experience Requirements (PER).

Here are some helpful tips to make sure you leave a lasting impression on potential employers as you begin your journey to become a Chartered Professional Accountant.

TURN YOUR RESUME INTO A MASTERPIECE

1. Keep it simple! Your resume should be no more than two pages.
2. Use a standard font like Times New Roman, Arial or Calibri.
3. Use bold text to highlight headings, job titles and companies.
4. Don't format your resume with tables, borders or page-width underlining. This formatting can interfere with applicant tracking systems.
5. Don't start with an objective, rather, start with a Profile Statement that highlights your background, specialties and experience and shows what you can offer to an organization. Follow this with a Key Skills section tailored to the position for which you are applying.
6. Mention awards and academic projects under your Education Section.
7. Highlight the results, accomplishments and skills you developed at each position you list under Work Experience. Each bullet should start with an action verb, should be no more than two lines and a maximum of five to six bullets per position.
8. Don't forget to include information about your volunteer work, club/community involvement and participation on sports teams.
9. Don't waste space by including your references – these are expected at the interview stage.
10. Tailor your resume to the position and proofread it before you submit.

THE IMPORTANCE OF NETWORKING

1. Build your network before you graduate – the connections you make as student can be useful when you are looking for a job!
2. Use your family friends as resources – they have years of experience and will most likely share their expertise with you.
3. Get an internship – employers often hire full-time employees from their internship pool.
4. Make sure your online reputation is professional.
5. Attend information sessions, career fairs and other networking events held by your post-secondary institution.
6. Expand your network beyond campus – get involved with sports clubs or leagues, community organizations, professional organizations or volunteer opportunities.
7. Manage your conversations with the 80/20 rule – try to listen 80% of the time and speak about 20% of the time.
8. Don't forget to follow up – you won't have a connection without communication!

USING LINKEDIN TO DEVELOP AND MAINTAIN YOUR NETWORK

1. Create a comprehensive profile and include a professional-looking photo.
2. Create a custom headline that lists skills and industries and not your current job title and organization.
3. Communicate what sets you apart from other candidates in your summary.
4. Highlight key accountabilities from your current job and basic details from past positions (title, employer, dates).
5. Showcase your skills – make sure to also include skills you've used outside of work such as involvement in volunteer work, sports groups and community clubs.
6. Give endorsements to your connections as this is a great way to encourage others to endorse you for your skills.
7. Get recommendations from bosses, colleagues and clients — this will add credibility to your profile. Offer to recommend others in return.
8. Join and participate in groups: ask questions, contribute answers, like interesting posts, and share helpful articles. This is a great way to advertise yourself and build relationships within your field.

HOW TO MAKE A GREAT IMPRESSION AT A CAREER FAIR

1. Craft your 30-second elevator speech that communicates who you are, what you're looking for and how you can benefit a company or organization.
2. Research the companies that are attending and make your "A" list (companies you must meet) and "B" list (nice-to-meet list, time permitting).
3. Prepare tailored questions for each employer you plan to visit.
4. Create a professional email address for your job search and make personal business cards to hand out.
5. Wear business attire – if possible leave bulky coats, boots and back packs in your car or locker.
6. Arrive early to avoid waiting in long lines to speak with your preferred employers.
7. Be confident! Give a firm handshake, make eye contact and introduce yourself with your first and last name. Smile, be polite and engage in relevant conversation.
8. Have realistic expectations – your goal should be to develop your network and gain information, not walk away with a job.
9. Don't monopolize a recruiter's time. If the booths are busy, limit yourself to two questions and let the recruiter decide on the talking time. If there's no line-up feel free to chat at a greater length.
10. Remember, career fairs are about getting connected, so network with other attendees waiting in line. There is value in connecting with everyone, not just potential employers.

WANT TO SHINE IN YOUR INTERVIEW? HERE'S HOW.

Prepare

1. Take a look at the job posting to see what skills and experience the company is looking for. Think of examples of how you have developed those skills – choose examples from school, volunteering, or extra-curricular activities.
2. Research the company and look up your interviewer on LinkedIn.
3. Craft your 30-second elevator speech that communicates who you are, what you're looking for and how you can benefit a company or organization.
4. Prepare leading questions to ask the interviewer – this will help you evaluate whether the company or position is a good fit for you.

Practice

1. Have a friend or family member ask you typical questions or practice in front of a mirror – it is important to verbalize your answers.
2. The most common type of question asked by a recruiter is the Behavioural Descriptive Interview (BDI) question. These questions touch on how you handled situations in the past, which is a good predictor of how you will handle similar situations in the future. BDI questions go beyond whether you can do the job. They focus on assessing whether you will do the job well.
3. BDI's commonly start with: Tell me about a time when... Give an example of ... Describe a specific problem when...
4. The most effective way to answer a BDI question is with the "STAR" method:
 - Situation: Describe the situation – What was the occasion? Who was involved?
 - Task: Talk about the task you had to perform. What needed to be fixed or improved? What was the problem or opportunity?
 - Action: Explain what specific action(s) you took, not what the group or other individuals did. How did you solve the problem? What techniques or skills did you use?
 - Result: Finish with what the end result was. What affect did your solution have on the situation? How was the organization impacted?
5. Use examples during an interview that are unique to you. Many applicants will have an accounting degree, and most have also worked on group projects with members who didn't pull their weight.

Perform

1. Dress professionally and arrive for the interview at least 10 minutes early.
2. Smile and be courteous to everyone you meet, as you never know who is part of the final decision-making process of who to hire.
3. At the end of the interview, make sure to thank the interviewers and restate that you are interested in the position, if that is the case.
4. After your interview, follow up with a thank-you note.