

PHY1600

How to Increase your Success in the Job Market

Pekka K. Sinervo, FRSC

Department of Physics



Did anyone ever tell you how to prepare for a job search and interview?

Probably not likely!

Seems important, especially since most of us need employment after degree



We do what we see others doing, especially those that are successful

We typically will do what we see colleagues doing, especially those that are successful

What's on Paper

- DO YOUR RESEARCH!
- Then fine-tune resumé or CV
- Cover letter for an application
- References

How You Present

- Dress and behaviour
- Your “job talk”
- Interviews with committees and decision-makers

https://www.vitae.ac.uk/researcher-careers/pursuing-an-academic-career/applying-for-academic-jobs/academic-job-interviews#advance_preparation



Your Resumé or CV is first used both to identify unusually qualified candidates.

- So be sensitive to what is being advertised:
 - Respond to the advertisement/job posting
 - Make clear your qualifications that best fit
 - Avoid disqualifying yourself

A few things to think about:

- What level of personal detail?
- How far back do you go?
 - Be consistent and defensible
- How much is tailored to the job?

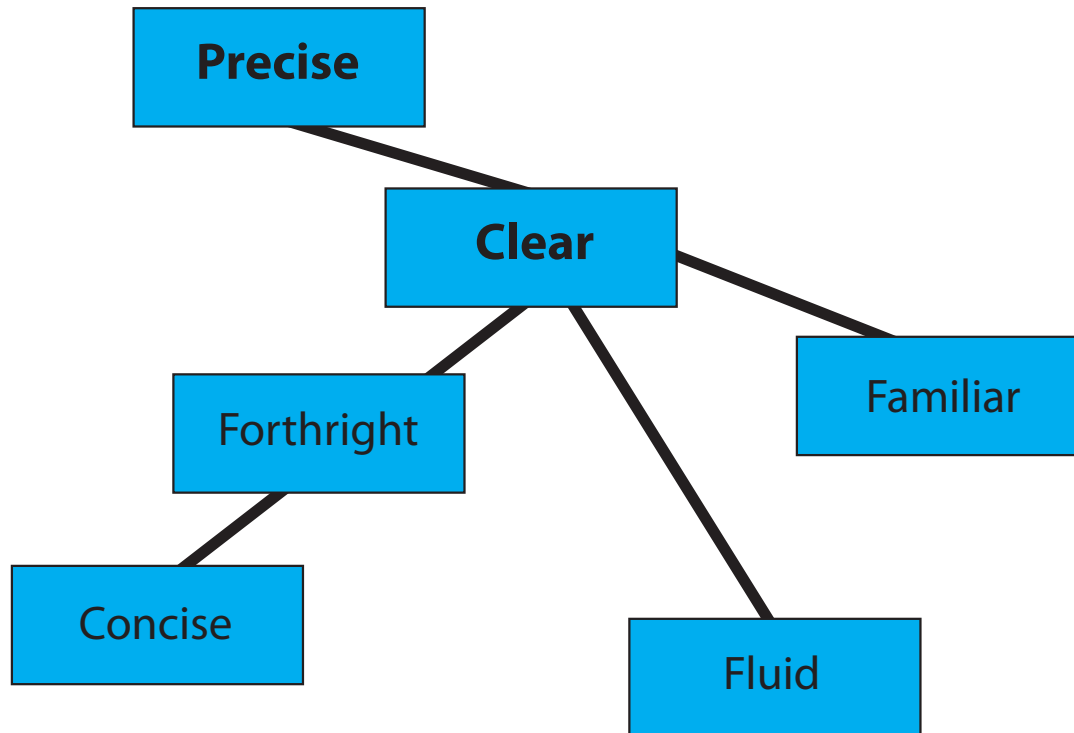


Your cover letter provides you the opportunity to make your case that you are uniquely qualified.

- Be clear and concise, as with your other writing
 - Work to keep it to one page
 - Make it attractive
 - Make it a pleasure to read
- Your writing will be used to assess the quality of your thinking



Remember the goals for scientific writing? These are same for cover letters:



Taken from Fig. 1-1, Pg 12, *The Craft of Scientific Writing*



A letter I wrote when I applied for SVP at CIFAR:

NOTE:

Talked about the place I wanted to work at.

Talked about my own qualifications as a teacher and researcher.

Talked about my qualities as an administrator.

Summarized how I approach problems

I'm writing to formally apply for the position of Senior Vice-President, Research at the Canadian Institute for Advanced Research. I believe I am well qualified for this position based on my qualifications and experience.

I first wish to position my interest in terms of my perception of CIFAR, and my background as a researcher and an administrator.

In my own words, CIFAR is a unique organization, having developed over the last 25 years as a proponent and significant agent of change in the research landscape of Canada. It has identified key questions using a grass-roots process, successfully leveraged the resources of the corporate, government and university base in the country, and demanded excellence.

I've had numerous roles over the 18 years that I have been a Canadian academic. I came back to Canada because I believed I could advance knowledge in my own area – particle physics – and to participate in the education and training of some of the brightest young people. As a professor at UofT, my collaborators and I discovered the top quark in 1995, and have produced over 400 refereed publications. My own intellectual contributions have been recognized in a variety of ways, as a Fellow of the Royal Society and the American Physical Society.

Over the last 11 years, I have been increasingly drawn into leadership and administrative roles within and outside the University. Perhaps my greatest strengths have been in bringing people together to collaborate on hard problems, whether it has been the development of 2M lines of software, search for new particles and forces, create a clear vision and direction for one of the largest academic units in North America, or create a unified national effort in astronomy and astrophysics.

The guiding principle in what I have chosen to do has been to make a difference and leave behind an effort or institution strengthened by my contributions. And I have realized that this really only happens when people are able to come together in an organization that has a clear direction, understands and recognizes roles, and is properly resourced.

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You've been invited to an interview. Think about first, second and last impressions.

- You have one chance to make a first impression
 - Homework really matters at this point
 - Get an understanding of the organization
 - Review who you would be working with, what they do
 - Understand what would be expected of you
 - Think about attire and presentation
 - Jeans are NOT a good choice
 - Wildly over-dressing is not either
 - Recommendation: be the better-dressed person in the room
 - Identify the top three things you bring as a candidate
 - Work those into your conversation



The “infamous” job talk requires real preparation

- Get as much information as reasonable from your contact of the context
 - Who will be the audience? What is the right scope? Length?
 - Hard to make a talk that is too long



Defining and managing scope critical. People really remember when a candidate has gone overtime.

- First thing to do is know the audience and time constraints
- Then define the talk that you think has the right scope
- A talk that presents you
- Practice, and then iterate
- Have a strategy for skipping material

This takes time!

Leave sufficient preparation time

Some personal “rules of thumb”

- Start 2-3 weeks in advance
- I do about 2 minutes per slide, given how I prepare and speak to slides
- Have detailed material in “Back-Up”

Develop your own “rules of thumb”



The interview is the best opportunity to present yourself, but now in a different context.

- Usually structured in a series of questions
- Listen to the question, but also think about what the interviewer might be getting at
 - Details on qualifications – what was your doctorate all about?
 - Where is your research taking you now?
 - How would you fit into our group?
 - What has been the most difficult problem you had to solve?
- Often involves people across the organization
- Often involves meals
 - Many consider these to be where “fit” is really determined



Finally, identify questions you may have, as you can expect to have an chance (often brief) to ask them.

- Be concise
- Make them questions that you clearly cannot get from some other source, e.g.
 - What is the timeline for decision-making?
 - Professional development opportunities?
- Someone may ask you what your compensation expectations are.
 - Be prepared! The right answer is not “whatever”...



Follow-up on interview should be done carefully.

- A thank you note (or email) may be sufficient
- Pestering messages about timeframe don't help
 - If you have a deadline because of other offers, let them know as soon as possible
 - Don't try to use it as leverage!
- Be prepared to accept a “No” gracefully
 - But also think about what you would be asking for if it is a “Yes, let's talk.”

