Job Search Ethics & Protocol

- Do NOT give into the temptation of carelessly completing an application. Do NOT make statements on an application like “see attached résumé.” Never leave spaces blank.

- Apply for a job only if you have some realistic level of interest.

- Absolute honesty on your résumé is imperative. Don’t overstate or understate. Don’t downplay your skills because you haven’t been featured in Business Week.

- Request permission to use a person as a reference. Be prepared to explain to your reference what your job search plans are. Provide the reference with examples of qualities you possess. Offer a copy of your résumé. When interviewing, have your list of references on hand.

- Don’t take advantage of an expense account when traveling for job interviews.

- Show up for your interview. If you are visiting a person’s place of work, make sure your appearance, including mode of dress, is appropriate for that environment. You are not a student going to class. Consider yourself a professional trying to make a positive impression. How you present yourself is a partial reflection on the person with whom you are meeting.

- Be a bit early for your appointment. Be mindful of the other person’s time. Come in prepared with questions & knowledge of the business.

- Ask “How would you like to be addressed?” Be on the safe side; few people are offended by “Mister” or “Ms.” Be courteous to everyone you meet.

- Everything you say must be true. On the other hand, you don’t need to say everything.

- You may be asked to say something about another student or applicant. Speak only of your abilities & strengths. It is acceptable for an interviewer to ask you about other interviews, job offers & salary offers. You are not under an obligation to give a direct answer.

- Be aware of illegal inquires. Employers may not ask, “How much alcohol do you drink?” “Have you ever been treated for mental health problems?” “What prescription drugs do you currently take?”

- Thank you! Thank you! Thank you! Thank-you notes are a MUST in the job search process. They may be handwritten or typed. Address them to the person with whom you had the interview.

- Be aware of drug screening requirements.

- Call to inquire about your status in the employer’s hiring process. If a specific time has been communicated, wait until that time has passed before contacting the employer.
Let the employer be the first to mention salary. End it early if you are not interested. Let the employer know you are not interested in pursuing employment.

When offered the job, ask for time to think it over & ask for a formal offer letter.

You may receive one or more job offers you decide to reject. You should convey your decision to reject a job offer orally & in writing. The considerations here are speed & certainty of delivery. Call the person who signed your offer letter. Write a brief letter, also. Do both in a timely manner.

Only accept a job if you are really interested.  Don’t settle.  Once you accept a job offer, formally remove yourself from all other job searches.  DO NOT continue looking.

Basic Job Offer Guidelines:

- It is ethical to receive more than one job offer.
- It is ethical to negotiate in good faith for better terms.
- It is NOT ethical to accept a job offer while continuing your search for another job or waiting for another company to offer you a better position.

Excuses job seekers offer for unethical behavior:

- Not enough time to decide.
- I need to protect myself.
- People do it all the time.

Scenario One:
Steve wakes up one morning with a headache. It is raining, & Steve has an exam later in the day. Steve is scheduled for an interview with Certainco at 10 a.m. A bit conflicted, Steve looks in the mirror & engages his conscience in dialogue. Assuming you have the role of Steve’s ethical conscience, how would you respond to Steve’s arguments for blowing off the interview:

I don’t really want the job anyway; I would be wasting the interviewer’s time if I showed up.
The economy is booming; jobs are chasing people. If someone really wants to interview with Certainco, I am sure they can get an interview.
My first priority is to be a student, & I need the time to study for my exam.
The college is more concerned with its reputation than with good old Steve. Besides, I have been paying Career Services Office salaries with my tuition for four years; what reason do the professionals in that office have to complain?
People miss appointments all the time. It’s no big deal.

Scenario Two:
David has mixed emotions. He has been invited to three on-site visits. He is happy about two of them & concerned about the third.
“Schlockco just isn’t for me,” he said. “The more I think about it, neither the firm nor the industry is for me. I convinced them on the on-campus interview I really want the job, so I don’t want to feel like a liar now. And, I’d love to visit San Diego. What should I do?”
The Career Services Director told David he had raised an important issue & students struggle with the same question every year. Only he can decide whether to go, & the Career Services Director gave him guidelines for deciding whether to decline an on-site interview.
If you are 100% sure, positively & absolutely, that there is no way you would accept a job from the firm, don’t go.
Remove needless concerns. At his initial interview, David told the firm he wanted the job. In the context of that interview, David was telling the truth. Now he has a different perspective. At this stage of the process, it is not unethical for him to change his mind & tell the company he no longer wishes to pursue this opportunity.

Scenario Three:
John accepted an offer to enter an investment banking program with a firm that interested him; it was not his first choice. A month later, his first choice employer offered him a position.