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1. What do you look for in a resume?

To me, a professional resume must start with the basics: a clean layout, an easy-to-read (but not boring) font* and no grammatical or typographical errors. As for content, I am looking for someone who has pursued education and employment opportunities; they need not be the most exclusive universities or the most glamorous workplaces, but the applicant should present them well. For example, I recently read a resume from someone who had been a waitress; she described her responsibilities as “providing customers with a delightful dining experience.” That caught my eye! – and made me interested to meet her. I’m also a strong believer in volunteering, and I appreciate when individuals list those experiences on their resume.

* A couple of great font choices: Candara, Trebuchet, Lucida Sans, Cambria. Avoid anything cutesy like Comic Sans or Papyrus. Times New Roman and Arial are both “fine,” but boring.

2. What classes do you recommend for students interested in your field? What skills are important to develop? (writing, fiscal analysis, public speaking, etc.)

It’s difficult for me to recommend specific health- or policy-related classes, because I came into the field without that particular academic background. However, any classes that involve research, writing and oral presenting would be beneficial. In the public policy field, relationship skills are also critical; developing relationships with other stakeholders (from both your side of the argument and the opposing side) can be vital to both short- and long-term success.

3. What keeps you motivated in your job day-to-day?

I am motivated by the idea that I can help play a role in making the health care delivery system work better for CT residents. That might be through helping the health centers perform better, providing input on public policy issues or helping to spread the word about beneficial programming.

On a separate note, having a variety of tasks and days that all look different from each other is also motivating. There is no chance of becoming complacent!

4. Do you work in a constantly changing field and how does that affect your job?

Yes! The health policy field is constantly changing, which means I must stay on top of news all the time. In fact, checking news sites for stories on public policy, politics and health care is a critical piece of my job; knowing how all the pieces fit together informs my strategies moving forward. I love that there are always new studies to read, new legislation to examine and new players in the health care field!

5. What was your career and educational path to your current position?

I originally intended to become a professor of psychology and was in a PhD program at UConn. After I had obtained my Master's degree and was finished with my classes towards my PhD, I decided I needed a break from school "for a while." I looked in the newspaper (an actual paper, not online!) and replied to a job ad at the Senate Democrats Office at the State Capitol, for a research analyst position. I had very little concept of what the job was, and I have no idea how or why I was chosen for an interview, given the many resumes that were submitted from people with political and/or policy experience. However, between the time the interview was scheduled, and the time the interview occurred, I studied up on health care policy, and I landed the job. My research experience was easily transferrable, and I was able to learn the legislative process quickly.

After a terrific nine years at Senate Dems (1999-2007), working on health care and human services policy development, I decided I would like to move into advocacy. I became the Legislative Director at the nonpartisan Commission on Aging, a small state agency dedicated to public policy concerning older adults. I stayed in that position for a little over four years, before being offered my current job at the Community Health Center Association of CT last February.

6. What risks did you take?

I'm not a risk-taker by nature. I try to be pretty sure of something before I jump into it. Actually, "jump" is probably an exaggeration...

7. What terms and acronyms do people need to know?

Where to start? There are so many acronyms and they change frequently. The important thing as a speaker is to not assume your audience knows the acronyms – and as a listener, to never feel embarrassed to ask someone to clarify. If the setting is not such that you can ask, write down your question, and, when the opportunity arises, either google it or ask a colleague or mentor.

8. What sources of info do you check regularly?

For online news sites: CT Mirror, CT NewsJunkie, Hartford Courant, New Haven Independent, CT Capitol Report, Hartford Business Journal, Kaiser Health News, Governing, CT Health Notes Blog.

On Twitter, I follow some of those same sites, plus: AP, NPR, all of CT's Congressional delegation, Governor Malloy and many other health- or human services-related twitter accounts (e.g., Access Health CT, CT Health Foundation, CT Nonprofits).

During the legislative session, it's important to check the CT General Assembly site every day and read the new bills, the Bulletin and check the daily calendar.

9. What's your best advice to students? What to do and what not to worry about

Find a mentor! Whether formalized or not, having a mentor can make all the difference in your career success. I have been so fortunate to have had both academic and career

mentors, who have helped guide me, instructed me patiently, but – most importantly – believed in me. Most people are willing to take on such a role, and, in fact, will feel honored to do so. Take advantage, and then pay it forward when you can.