

OFFICE OF CAREER SERVICES

# ROARING INTO YOUR FUTURE

PHASE 5: NETWORKING



A CAREER PLANNING WORKBOOK  
FOR GOVERNORS STATE JAGUARS  
EXPLORATION, DISCOVERY, EXPERIENCE, PRESENTATION



# YOUR HUNTING GROUNDS

## – THE IMPORTANCE OF NETWORKING

Alright Jaguars, huddle up! Time for another essential lesson in our career jungle survival guide: Networking! Now, I know what you're thinking – "Networking? Sounds boring!" But trust me, this ain't your grandma's stuffy cocktail party. Think of it more like building your own jungle alliance – a crew of fellow jaguars who can help you hunt down those dream opportunities.

### **Networking: It's Not Just for Wallflowers**

Let's be real, Jaguars, networking can be intimidating. But here's the thing: it's not about being the loudest or most extroverted animal in the room. It's about building genuine connections with people who can help you achieve your goals, and who you can help in return.

### **Why Networking is Your Secret Weapon:**

- **Hidden Opportunities:** Many job openings are never even advertised! They're filled through word-of-mouth and personal connections. Networking gives you access to these hidden gems.
- **Insider Knowledge:** Talking to people in your field gives you a behind-the-scenes look at different careers and companies. You'll learn things you can't find in a job posting or company website.
- **Career Advice & Support:** Experienced professionals can offer invaluable advice, mentorship, and support as you navigate your career journey.
- **Building Confidence:** Networking helps you build confidence in your abilities and expand your comfort zone.

### **Where to Network: Your Hunting Grounds**

- **Career Fairs & Industry Events:** These are like bustling watering holes where employers and job seekers gather. Come prepared with your elevator pitch and resume!
- **Professional Associations:** Join organizations related to your field. They often host events, workshops, and online forums where you can connect with other professionals.
- **Alumni Networks:** Your GSU alumni network is a powerful resource. Reach out to alumni who work in fields that interest you and ask for informational interviews or career advice.
- **Online Communities:** LinkedIn, Twitter, and other social media platforms can be great for connecting with people in your industry and staying up-to-date on industry trends.

- **Volunteer Opportunities:** Volunteering for a cause you care about is a great way to meet like-minded people and build your network while giving back to the community.

## **JUNGLE JOURNAL: MAPPING YOUR NETWORK**

Before you start networking, take some time to reflect on your current connections and potential contacts in your Jungle Journal. Here's what to consider:

- **Existing Network:** List the people you already know who could be valuable contacts in your career journey (e.g., professors, classmates, family, friends, previous supervisors).
- **Target Contacts:** Identify specific individuals or companies you'd like to connect with (e.g., professionals working in your field of interest, alumni from GSU, recruiters at companies you admire).
- **Networking Goals:** What do you hope to achieve through networking? (e.g., Gain industry insights, learn about job openings, find a mentor, build your confidence)

### **Jungle Trek: Building Your Jungle Alliance**

1. **Reach Out and Connect:** Contact people from your list and initiate conversations. This could be through email, LinkedIn, or attending networking events.
2. **Craft Your Elevator Pitch:** Prepare a concise introduction that highlights your skills, experience, and career goals.
3. **Be Authentic and Approachable:** Be yourself! People are more likely to connect with you if you're genuine and enthusiastic.
4. **Ask Questions and Listen:** Show your interest by asking thoughtful questions and actively listening to their responses.
5. **Offer Help:** Networking is a two-way street. Look for ways to help others, whether it's sharing a job lead or offering advice.
6. **Follow Up:** After meeting someone new, send a thank-you email or LinkedIn message. This reinforces the connection and keeps you on their radar.

### **Finding Networking Opportunities: Follow the Scent**

- **GSU Career Services:** Your career center is a treasure trove of networking opportunities. They often host events, workshops, and panels where you can connect with employers and alumni.
- **Online Event Listings:** Check out websites like Eventbrite or Meetup to find networking events in your area.
- **Industry Publications:** Read industry newsletters and blogs to stay informed about upcoming events and conferences.
- **Your Network:** Ask your friends, family, professors, and colleagues if they know of any networking opportunities.

### **How to Network Effectively: Your Jungle Etiquette**

- **Be Prepared:** Do your research, practice your elevator pitch, and bring plenty of business cards.
- **Be Confident:** Believe in yourself and your abilities. Your confidence will be contagious!
- **Be Authentic:** Don't try to be someone you're not. People will appreciate your genuineness.
- **Be Helpful:** Look for ways to add value to your connections.
- **Be Persistent:** Networking takes time and effort. Don't get discouraged if you don't see results immediately. Keep at it, and you'll eventually reap the rewards.

### **Professional Branding: Your Jungle Reputation**

Your personal brand is like your reputation in the jungle. It's what people think of when they hear your name. Make sure your brand is positive, professional, and consistent across all your online and offline interactions.

**Jax's Pro Tips for Networking Success:** Remember, Jaguars, networking is a journey, not a destination. It's about building relationships that can last a lifetime and open doors to incredible opportunities. So, go out there and start making some new friends in the jungle!



# SHARPEN YOUR CLAWS

## – JOBS FOR JAGUARS POWERED BY HANDSHAKE

Alright Jaguars, sharpen your claws! Get ready to explore the GSU Career Jungle's exclusive hunting ground: Jobs for Jaguars Powered by Handshake. This ain't your average job board – it's your one-stop shop for internships, jobs, career advice, and connecting with employers who are eager to hire GSU talent.

### **Jobs for Jaguars Powered by Handshake: Your Career Launchpad**

Think of Handshake as your personalized career concierge, curating a selection of opportunities tailored to your interests and skills. It's like having a team of expert trackers guiding you through the jungle, leading you straight to the juiciest prey (aka awesome jobs and internships).

### **Why Handshake is Your Secret Weapon:**

- **Exclusive Opportunities:** Handshake features postings specifically targeted at GSU students and alumni. This means less competition and a higher chance of getting noticed by employers.
- **Personalized Recommendations:** Based on your profile and interests, Handshake suggests jobs and internships that are a good fit for you. It's like having a personal shopper for your career!
- **Career Resources:** Handshake offers a wealth of resources to help you navigate the job search process, including resume and cover letter templates, interview tips, and virtual career fairs.
- **Networking Opportunities:** Connect with other GSU students and alumni, share experiences, and learn from each other's successes.

### **Building Your Handshake Profile: Your Digital Pawprint**

Creating a strong Handshake profile is like leaving your mark in the digital jungle. It's your chance to showcase your skills, experiences, and interests to potential employers.

### **Handshake Optimization Checklist:**

- ✓ **Complete Your Profile:** Fill out all sections, including your education, work experience, skills, interests, and career goals.
- ✓ **Upload Your Resume:** Make sure your resume is up-to-date and tailored to the types of jobs you're seeking.
- ✓ **Set Your Preferences:** Indicate your preferred job types, industries, and locations.
- ✓ **Follow Employers:** Follow companies you're interested in to get notified of new job postings and events.
- ✓ **Attend Virtual Events:** Participate in virtual career fairs, workshops, and information sessions to connect

with employers and learn about different career paths.

### **Hunting for Opportunities: Your Handshake Safari**

Handshake makes it easy to find the right opportunities for you. Here's how to search for jobs and internships:

1. **Use Filters:** Filter your search by job type, industry, location, and other criteria to narrow down your results.
2. **Keyword Search:** Use keywords related to your skills or desired job titles.
3. **Saved Searches:** Save your search criteria to get notified when new jobs matching your preferences are posted.

### **Connecting with Employers: Roar Your Way to Success**

Handshake isn't just a job board – it's a platform for building relationships with employers. Here's how to make the most of it:

1. **Attend Virtual Events:** Participate in virtual career fairs and information sessions to meet recruiters and learn about company culture.
2. **Message Employers:** Reach out directly to recruiters to express your interest in their company or ask questions about specific job postings.
3. **Schedule Interviews:** Use Handshake to schedule interviews with employers directly through the platform.

### **Cool Handshake Features & Resources:**

- **Q&A:** Ask questions about specific companies or industries and get answers from other students, alumni, and career experts.
- **Groups:** Join groups based on your interests or major to connect with other students and share resources.
- **Career Resources:** Handshake offers a variety of career resources, including resume and cover letter templates, interview tips, and salary negotiation advice.

### **Jungle Journal: Roaming Through the Digital Jungle**

While you're prowling around on Handshake, use your Jungle Journal to track your progress:

- **New Connections:** Jot down the names and titles of new connections you make, along with any interesting information you learn about them.
  
- **Job Leads:** Keep a running list of job postings that interest you, noting the company, position, and any relevant details.
  
- **Networking Events:** Record any virtual or in-person networking events you attend, including key takeaways and action items.

### **Jungle Trek: Building Your Handshake Lair**

Now that you've got the basics down, let's take your Handshake game to the next level:

1. **Optimize Your Profile:** Make sure your profile is 100% complete and highlights your most relevant skills and experiences. Use keywords that recruiters in your field are likely to search for.
2. **Join GSU's Alumni Group:** Connect with fellow Jaguars and tap into their vast network of knowledge and experience.
3. **Participate in Discussions:** Join groups related to your field and participate in discussions. This is a great way to showcase your expertise and build relationships with other professionals.
4. **Attend Events:** Sign up for virtual career fairs, workshops, and info sessions to connect with employers and learn about potential opportunities.
5. **Stay Active:** Regularly update your profile, apply for jobs, and engage with the Handshake community.

### **Paws Up For More Resources!**

Don't forget to explore the additional student employment resources available at GSU's website for even more support on your career journey: <https://www.govst.edu/employment-resources/>

Remember, Jaguars, Handshake is your gateway to the professional jungle. Use it wisely, and you'll be well on your way to finding your dream career!



# THE VIRTUAL WATERING HOLE

## — PROFESSIONAL NETWORKING ONLINE

Alright Jaguars, sharpen your digital claws! It's time to conquer the online jungle of professional networking with LinkedIn. This ain't your average social media platform – it's your digital resume, your personal brand, and your gateway to a world of career opportunities.

### **LinkedIn: Your Virtual Watering Hole**

Think of LinkedIn as the watering hole where professionals gather to share ideas, build relationships, and discover new opportunities. It's your chance to connect with industry leaders, recruiters, alumni, and potential mentors.

### **Why LinkedIn Matters:**

- **Professional Showcase:** Your LinkedIn profile is your online resume, but it's so much more than that. It's a platform to showcase your skills, experiences, and interests in a dynamic and engaging way.
- **Networking Powerhouse:** LinkedIn allows you to connect with people you wouldn't otherwise meet. It's a goldmine for building relationships that can lead to job opportunities, informational interviews, and career advice.
- **Job Search Central:** Many companies use LinkedIn to post job openings and find qualified candidates. You can also use it to research companies, follow industry leaders, and stay up-to-date on trends.

### **Building Your LinkedIn Profile: Your Digital Den**

Creating a strong LinkedIn profile is like building a cozy den in the digital jungle. It should be inviting, informative, and showcase your unique personality and skills.

#### **1. Profile Picture:**

- o Choose a professional headshot that makes a positive first impression.
- o Avoid selfies, group photos, or anything too casual.

#### **2. Headline:**

- o Don't just list your job title. Craft a compelling headline that highlights your skills and goals.
- o Example: "Aspiring Marketing Professional | GSU Jaguar | Passionate about Storytelling"

### 3. About Section:

- o This is your chance to tell your story. Highlight your most relevant skills, experiences, and accomplishments.
- o Use keywords that recruiters in your field are likely to search for.

### 4. Experience:

- o List your work experience, internships, and volunteer roles.
- o Use strong action verbs to describe your accomplishments and the impact you made.

### 5. Education:

- o Include your degree, major, school, and any relevant coursework or awards.
- o Consider adding a link to your school's LinkedIn page.

### 6. Skills & Endorsements:

- o List your most relevant skills and ask your connections to endorse them.
- o This helps validate your abilities and makes your profile more visible to recruiters.

### 7. Recommendations:

- o Request recommendations from professors, supervisors, or mentors who can speak to your strengths and work ethic.

### LinkedIn Optimization Checklist:

- √ Complete all sections of your profile.
- √ Use a professional profile picture and headline.
- √ Craft a compelling "About" section that tells your story.
- √ Highlight your most relevant skills and experiences.
- √ Use keywords throughout your profile.
- √ Connect with classmates, alumni, and professionals in your field.
- √ Join relevant groups and participate in discussions.
- √ Share articles and posts that showcase your expertise.
- √ Regularly update your profile with new experiences and accomplishments.

### Finding Your Pride: Connecting with the Right People

Okay, Jaguars, your profile is polished and ready to roar. Now, let's talk about how to use LinkedIn to connect with the right people and unlock hidden opportunities:

1. **Alumni Tool:** This is like finding your fellow Jaguars in the vast jungle! Use the "Alumni" tool to connect with GSU graduates working in your field of interest. They can offer valuable insights, advice, and even potential job leads.
2. **Search Bar:** Don't be afraid to use the search bar to find people with specific job titles, companies, or skills. You can also search for groups and hashtags related to your interests.
3. **"People You May Know" Feature:** LinkedIn's algorithm suggests potential connections based on your profile, network, and interests. This can be a great way to discover people you might not have thought of otherwise.
4. **Groups:** Join groups related to your industry or career interests. This is a great way to participate in discussions, ask questions, and connect with other professionals.

### Jax's Pro Tips:

- **Personalize Your Connection Requests:** When sending a connection request, include a brief message explaining why you'd like to connect. Mention a common interest, shared connection, or something you admire about their work.
- **Engage with Others' Content:** Like, comment, and share posts from your network. This shows you're an active member of the community and can spark conversations.

### Hunting for Opportunities: Uncovering Hidden Gems

LinkedIn isn't just about networking – it's also a powerful job search tool. Here's how to find those hidden gems:

1. **Job Board:** LinkedIn has a robust job board where you can search for openings, filter by location, industry, and job type, and even set up job alerts to be notified of new postings.
2. **Company Pages:** Follow companies you're interested in to see their latest updates, job postings, and company culture insights.
3. **LinkedIn Easy Apply:** This feature allows you to apply for jobs with just a few clicks, using your LinkedIn profile as your application.

### Cool LinkedIn Features & Resources for Job Seekers:

- **LinkedIn Learning:** Access thousands of online courses to learn new skills and boost your resume.
- **Salary Insights:** Research salary ranges for different roles and locations.

- **Interview Prep:** Prepare for interviews by practicing your answers to common questions.
- **Career Advice Articles:** Get expert tips and advice on everything from resume writing to networking.

### **Jungle Journal: Roaming Through the Digital Jungle**

While you're prowling around on LinkedIn, use your Jungle Journal to track your progress:

- **New Connections:** Jot down the names and titles of new connections you make, along with any interesting information you learn about them.
- **Job Leads:** Keep a running list of job postings that interest you, noting the company, position, and any relevant details.
- **Networking Events:** Record any virtual or in-person networking events you attend, including key takeaways and action items.

### **Jungle Trek: Building Your LinkedIn Lair**

Now that you've got the basics down, let's take your LinkedIn game to the next level:

1. **Optimize Your Profile:** Make sure your profile is 100% complete and highlights your most relevant skills and experiences. Use keywords that recruiters in your field are likely to search for.
2. **Join GSU's Alumni Group:** Connect with fellow Jaguars and tap into their vast network of knowledge and experience.
3. **Participate in Discussions:** Join groups related to your field and participate in discussions. This is a great way to showcase your expertise and build relationships with other professionals.
4. **Share Your Insights:** Publish articles or posts on LinkedIn to share your knowledge and build your thought leadership.
5. **Stay Active:** Regularly update your status, share relevant articles, and engage with your network. The more active you are, the more visible you'll be to potential employers.

Remember, Jaguars, LinkedIn is your digital playground for career success. By leveraging its features and building a strong network, you'll be well on your way to finding your dream job and making your mark in the professional jungle!



# YOUR MOMENT TO ROAR

## — SHOWCASE YOUR INTERVIEW SKILLS

Alright Jaguars, it's showtime! You've made it to the heart of the job hunt – the interview. This is your chance to shine, prove your worth, and land that coveted spot in the professional pride.

### **Interviewing: Your Moment to Roar**

Think of the interview as your solo performance on the jungle stage. It's your opportunity to showcase your skills, personality, and passion to a captive audience (aka the hiring manager). But like any great performance, it requires preparation, practice, and a whole lot of confidence.

### **Pre-Interview Prep: Get Your Game Face On**

#### **1. Research the Company:**

- o Know their mission, values, products, and recent news.
- o Dig into their website, social media, and employee reviews.
- o This shows you're genuinely interested and have done your homework.

#### **2. Practice Your Answers:**

- o Review common interview questions (see below for examples)
- o Prepare thoughtful and concise responses that highlight your qualifications and enthusiasm for the role.
- o Use the STAR method (Situation, Task, Action, Result) to structure your answers and showcase your accomplishments.

#### **3. Prepare Your Questions:**

- o Have a list of insightful questions to ask the interviewer. This shows your engagement and curiosity about the company and the position.
- o Examples: "What are the biggest challenges facing your team right now?" or "What opportunities for growth and development are available in this role?"

#### **4. Mock Interview:**

- o Practice makes perfect! Do a mock interview with a friend, family member, or career counselor at GSU Career Services.
- o This will help you get comfortable with the format, identify areas for improvement, and boost your confidence.

## Common Interview Questions & Sample Response:

- **“Tell me about yourself.”**
  - o “I’m a highly motivated and results-oriented Communications student at Governors State University. Throughout my academic career, I’ve developed a strong passion for public relations and have gained valuable experience through internships at local non-profits and managing the social media for my university’s student government association. I’m particularly proud of increasing engagement on the student government’s social media channels by 30% within six months. I’m eager to apply my skills and knowledge to a challenging role like this one at Edelman.”
- **“What are your strengths and weaknesses?”**
  - o (Sample Response - Strengths):
    - “One of my greatest strengths is my ability to communicate effectively with diverse audiences. For example, in my previous role as a Public Relations Intern, I developed and implemented a successful outreach campaign that resulted in increased media coverage and community engagement for the organization.”
  - o (Sample Response - Weaknesses):
    - “I’m always looking for ways to improve, and one area I’m focusing on is time management. To address this, I’m currently using a time-tracking app to monitor my work habits and prioritize tasks more effectively.”
- **“Why are you interested in this position?”**
  - o “I’m drawn to this position because it aligns perfectly with my passion for building relationships and crafting compelling narratives. I’m excited about the opportunity to work on high-impact public relations campaigns that make a difference in the community. I’m also impressed by Edelman’s commitment to social responsibility, which aligns with my own values.”

## Questions to Ask the Employer:

- What are the company’s goals for the next year, and how does this role contribute to those goals?
- Can you describe the company culture and what it’s like to work here?
- What opportunities for professional development and growth are available in this role?
- What are the next steps in the interview process?

## Acing the Interview: Unleash Your Inner Jaguar

- **Be Confident and Enthusiastic:** Show the interviewer your passion for the position and your eagerness to contribute to their team.
- **Make Eye Contact and Smile:** Non-verbal cues are just as important as your words. Show that you’re engaged and approachable.
- **Dress Professionally:** First impressions matter! Dress in business attire that reflects the company culture (refer to the Jungle Dress Code).
- **Listen Actively:** Pay attention to the interviewer’s questions and respond thoughtfully. Avoid interrupting or rambling.
- **Be Authentic:** Let your personality shine through. Don’t try to be someone you’re not.

## Post-Interview Follow-Up: Seal the Deal

- **Send a Thank-You Note:** Within 24 hours, send a personalized thank-you email to the interviewer.
- **Sample Follow-Up Note:**

*Subject: Thank You for the Interview - Marketing Coordinator Position*  
*Dear Ms. Johnson,*

*Thank you for taking the time to interview me today for the Marketing Coordinator position at Acme Corporation. I enjoyed learning more about the role and your company’s innovative approach to marketing.*

*Our conversation further solidified my interest in this position, and I’m confident that my skills in social media management, content creation, and data analysis would be a valuable asset to your team.*

*I’m particularly excited about the opportunity to contribute to the upcoming “Roar for Results” campaign and help drive brand awareness through creative and engaging content.*

*Thank you again for your time and consideration. I look forward to hearing from you soon.*

*Sincerely,*  
*Jax Jaguar*

### Jax's Pro Tips:

- **Get a Good Night's Sleep:** You want to be well-rested and alert for your interview.
- **Arrive Early:** Aim to arrive 10-15 minutes early to give yourself time to relax and compose yourself.
- **Bring Extra Copies of Your Resume:** Just in case the interviewer needs them.
- **Turn Off Your Phone:** Avoid distractions during the interview.
- **Be Yourself:** Let your personality and passion shine through.

Remember, Jaguars, the interview is your chance to roar! With the right preparation and mindset, you'll be well on your way to landing that dream job and making your mark in the professional jungle.



## NAVIGATING THE JUNGLE'S TRICKIEST VINES – YOUR INTERVIEW SURVIVAL TOOL

Alright Jaguars, let's sharpen those interview skills and prepare for those tricky behavioral-based questions!

### **Behavioral-Based Questions: The Jungle's Trickiest Vines**

These questions are like the tangled vines of the jungle – they might seem confusing at first, but with the right approach, you can navigate them with ease. Behavioral-based questions ask you to share specific examples from your past experiences to demonstrate how you've handled certain situations. They're designed to assess your skills, problem-solving abilities, and how you might react in similar scenarios on the job.

### **The STAR Method: Your Interview Survival Tool**

Think of the STAR method as your trusty machete – a tool to cut through the confusion and deliver a clear, concise, and compelling answer. Here's how it works:

- **Situation (S):** Set the scene. Briefly describe the specific situation or task you faced.
- **Task (T):** Explain the goal or objective you were working towards.

- **Action (A):** Describe the specific actions you took to address the situation or achieve the goal. Focus on your individual contributions and use strong action verbs.
- **Result (R):** Share the outcome of your actions. What impact did you have? How did you contribute to the success of the project or team? Quantify your results whenever possible (e.g., “Increased sales by 15%”).

**Example: Tell me about a time you faced a challenge and how you overcame it.**

- **Situation:** “During my internship at XYZ Company, I was tasked with launching a new social media campaign with a tight deadline.”
- **Task:** “My goal was to increase brand awareness and drive traffic to the company website.”
- **Action:** “I developed a comprehensive social media strategy, created engaging content, and implemented targeted advertising campaigns. I also tracked analytics to measure the campaign’s effectiveness and made adjustments as needed.”
- **Result:** “The campaign exceeded our expectations, resulting in a 20% increase in website traffic and a 15% increase in followers across all social media platforms.”

### **Jungle Journal: Practice Your STAR Stories**

Take some time to reflect on your past experiences and identify situations where you demonstrated key skills and qualities that are relevant to the jobs you’re applying for. Practice crafting STAR responses for each situation, so you’ll be ready to shine in your interviews.

#### **Jax’s Pro Tips:**

- **Be Specific:** Avoid vague or general statements. Use concrete examples to illustrate your points.
- **Focus on Your Role:** Emphasize your individual contributions and actions, not what the team or group did as a whole.
- **Highlight Your Skills:** Connect your actions to the specific skills the interviewer is looking for.
- **Quantify Your Results:** Whenever possible, use numbers and metrics to demonstrate the impact you made.
- **Practice, Practice, Practice:** The more you practice using the STAR method, the more natural and confident your responses will become.

By mastering the STAR method, you’ll be equipped to tackle even the most challenging behavioral interview questions and show employers that you’re a jaguar who can get the job done!

## **JAX’S TWO-WAY STREET TIP: INTERVIEWING FOR A JOB ISN’T JUST ABOUT IMPRESSING THEM**

Listen up, Jaguars! Here’s a Jax-sized truth bomb for you: job interviews aren’t just about you trying to impress the employer. They’re a two-way street! Think of it like sizing up a potential hunting partner. You want to make sure they’re a good fit for you too.

### **What Employers Look for in an Ideal Candidate:**

Before we dive into your side of the equation, let’s get inside the mind of the employer. What qualities are they seeking in their ideal candidate? Here’s the scoop, straight from the experts at NACE (National Association of Colleges and Employers).

#### **According to NACE’s 2024 Job Outlook Report**

- **Importance of the Career Readiness Core Competencies**

Employers highly value a range of career readiness competencies in potential candidates. Communication stands out as the most sought-after skill, with an average rating of 4.55 out of 5, indicating it’s almost “extremely important” for new hires.

Teamwork (4.49) and critical thinking (4.48) follow closely behind, highlighting the importance of collaboration and analytical skills in today’s workplace. Professionalism (4.25) and equity & inclusion (4.22) are also highly valued, emphasizing the need for candidates who demonstrate strong interpersonal and ethical capabilities.

While still important, technology (3.98), career & self-development (3.83), and leadership (3.60) are considered slightly less crucial compared to the top-rated skills. However, it’s important to note that all eight competencies are rated above “somewhat important,” indicating that employers value a well-rounded skill set in their new hires.

Overall, this data underscores the significance of a well-rounded skill set for job seekers. While technical expertise is valuable, employers are increasingly seeking individuals who can think critically, collaborate effectively, communicate clearly, and navigate diverse workplace environments with professionalism and inclusivity.

- **Influencing Attributes When Choosing Between Equally Qualified Candidates**

Internship experience is the top factor influencing employers when choosing between equally qualified candidates. In both 2024 and 2022, having completed an internship with the organization had the highest average influence rating (4.4), while having internship experience in the industry was a close second (4.3 in all three years). This emphasizes the significant value employers place on practical experience and industry-specific knowledge.

The importance of a candidate's major has seen a slight increase in influence over the years, rising from 3.7 in 2023 to 3.9 in 2024. However, it remains less influential than internship experience. General work experience consistently holds a moderate influence (3.7), indicating that employers value real-world experience regardless of the specific industry.

Interestingly, the influence of holding a leadership position, involvement in extracurricular activities, and having a high GPA have slightly decreased from 2022 to 2024. This suggests a potential shift in employer priorities, with a greater emphasis on practical experience over academic achievements and extracurricular involvement.

Volunteer work, school attended, foreign language fluency, and study abroad experience consistently have the least influence on employer decisions, indicating that these factors are not major differentiators for equally qualified candidates.

Overall, the data suggests that while a well-rounded background is beneficial, internship experience, particularly with the hiring organization or within their industry, remains the most significant factor influencing employers when choosing between equally qualified candidates.

So, Jaguars, while you're preparing for your interview, keep these core competencies in mind. Show the employer that you're not just a qualified candidate, but a career-ready jaguar who possesses the skills and qualities they value most.

#### **Your Turn to Assess the Fit:**

As you're busy wowing the employer with your impressive skills and jaguar charisma, don't forget to turn the tables and put them in the spotlight. After all, you're not just looking for any old gig in the jungle – you're looking for a place where you can thrive, grow, and make a real impact.

Think of it like this: you're not just a job seeker, you're a discerning jaguar on the prowl for the perfect hunting ground. And just like you wouldn't settle for a meager meal, you shouldn't settle for a job that doesn't align with your values, interests, and career goals.

#### ***So don't forget to ask yourself some key questions:***

- Does this company's mission align with my values?
- Do I believe in what they're doing?
- Does the job description sound like something I'd actually enjoy doing?
- What's the company culture like?
- Would I feel comfortable and supported in this environment?
- What are the opportunities for growth and development?
- Will this job help me reach my career goals?

Remember, Jaguars, you're not just looking for any old watering hole. You're looking for a place where you can thrive, grow, and make your mark on the world. So, don't be afraid to ask tough questions and make sure this opportunity is the right fit for you.

After all, a happy jaguar is a successful jaguar!

#### **Special Jungle Excursion**

Alright Jaguars, before we move on to your post-interview victory dance, let's take a quick detour on a special Jungle Excursion! **It's** important to know your rights and how to handle tricky situations that might pop up during an interview.

#### **Know Your Rights: Roaring Against Discrimination**

Just like every creature in the jungle has a right to be treated fairly, you have rights as a job seeker. The Illinois Department of Human Rights (IDHR) has your back, protecting you from discrimination based on certain characteristics. These are called "protected classes" and include things like race, color, religion, sex, national origin, age, disability, and more. You can find the full list here: <https://dhr.illinois.gov/filing-a-charge/faq-section-ii.html>

### **Illegal Questions: Don't Get Tripped Up!**

Some sneaky interviewers might try to ask questions that are off-limits. It's important to recognize these illegal questions and know how to respond professionally. Here are a few examples:

- **Illegal:** "Are you married? Do you have children?"
  - **Appropriate Response:** "I prefer to focus on my qualifications for the job and how I can contribute to your team."
- **Illegal:** "What is your religious affiliation?"
  - **Appropriate Response:** "My religious beliefs are personal and don't affect my ability to perform this job."
- **Illegal:** "Do you have any disabilities?"
  - **Appropriate Response:** "I am able to perform all the essential functions of this job with or without reasonable accommodation."
- **Illegal:** "Where were you born?"
  - **Appropriate Response:** "I am authorized to work in the United States."

**Jax's Pro Tip:** If you're asked an illegal question, don't panic! Stay calm, professional, and redirect the conversation back to your qualifications for the job. You have the right to refuse to answer any question that you feel is discriminatory or inappropriate.

Remember, Jaguars, knowing your rights empowers you to navigate the interview jungle with confidence. By being prepared and standing up for yourself, you can ensure a fair and equitable interview experience.



# THE BOUNTY OF THE JUNGLE

## – NAVIGATING THE JOB OFFER

Alright Jaguars, you've stalked your prey, aced the interview, and now the moment of truth arrives: the job offer! This is where your instincts and preparation meet to help you make a crucial decision and negotiate your way to a rewarding career move.

### **Job Offers: Navigating the Jungle's Bounty**

Receiving a job offer is like finding a hidden oasis in the jungle – a refreshing reward for your hard work and perseverance. But before you dive in headfirst, take a moment to assess the situation and make sure it's the right watering hole for you.

#### **Evaluating the Offer:**

- **Salary and Benefits:** Is the salary competitive and in line with your expectations? Don't forget to consider benefits like health insurance, paid time off, and retirement contributions.
- **Job Responsibilities:** Do the responsibilities align with your skills, interests, and career goals? Will you be challenged and engaged in your work?
- **Company Culture:** Does the company culture match your values and work style? Will you feel supported and empowered in this environment?
- **Growth Opportunities:** Are there opportunities for professional development and advancement within the company?

### **Negotiating Salary: Your Chance to Roar**

Jaguars, don't be afraid to show your stripes and negotiate for a better package! If you feel the initial offer is low, politely express your concerns and provide evidence of your value.

- **Research:** Know your worth. Research salary ranges for similar positions in your field and location.
- **Be Prepared:** Have a clear idea of what you're hoping to achieve through negotiation.
- **Be Professional:** Maintain a positive and respectful tone throughout the negotiation process.
- **Focus on Your Value:** Highlight your skills, experience, and accomplishments that make you an asset to the company.
- **Be Willing to Compromise:** Negotiation is a two-way street. Be flexible and open to finding a mutually beneficial solution.



## THE BOUNTY THAT IS RIGHT FOR YOU – EVALUATING THE OFFER

Alright Jaguars, you've stalked your prey, aced the interview, and now the moment of truth arrives: the job offer! This is where your instincts and preparation meet to help you make a crucial decision and negotiate your way to a rewarding career move.

### Evaluating the Offer: Is This Oasis Right for You?

Receiving a job offer is like finding a hidden oasis in the jungle – a refreshing reward for your hard work and perseverance. But before you dive in headfirst, take a moment to assess the situation and make sure it's the right watering hole for you. Here's what to consider:

- **Compensation:**
  - o **Salary:** Is the salary competitive and in line with your expectations and research? Remember to consider the cost of living in the location if you're relocating.
  - o **Benefits:** What kind of benefits package is offered? Look for health insurance, retirement plans, paid time off, and any other perks that are important to you.
- **Job Responsibilities:**
  - o **Alignment:** Do the responsibilities align with your skills, interests, and career goals? Will you be challenged and engaged in your work?
  - o **Growth Potential:** Are there opportunities for learning, development, and advancement within the role? Will this job help you reach your long-term career aspirations?
- **Company Culture:**
  - o **Values and Mission:** Does the company's mission and values resonate with you? Do you believe in what they're doing?
  - o **Work Environment:** What's the work environment like? Is it collaborative, fast-paced, or more independent? Will you feel comfortable and supported in this environment?
  - o **Reviews:** Check out employee reviews on sites like Glassdoor to get an insider perspective on the company culture.

- **Location and Commute:**
  - o **Location:** If you're relocating, consider the cost of living, quality of life, and proximity to family and friends.
  - o **Commute:** How long is the commute? Is it feasible for your lifestyle?
- **Other Factors:**
  - o **Work-Life Balance:** Does the company offer flexible hours, remote work options, or other policies that support work-life balance?
  - o **Training and Development:** Does the company invest in employee development? Are there opportunities for training, mentorship, or tuition reimbursement?
  - o **Start Date:** Is the start date feasible for you? Do you need time to relocate or wrap up other commitments?

**Jax's Pro Tip:** Don't be afraid to ask for clarification or additional information if anything in the offer is unclear. It's also okay to request some time to think about the offer before making a decision.

Remember, Jaguars, a job offer is just that – an offer. It's up to you to evaluate it carefully and decide if it's the right move for your career journey. By taking the time to assess the pros and cons, you can make an informed decision and confidently embark on the next chapter of your jungle adventure!

### **Accepting or Declining the Offer: Making Your Choice**

Once you've evaluated the offer and completed any negotiations, it's time to make your decision. Whether you accept or decline, do it gracefully and professionally.

#### **Sample Acceptance Email:**

**Subject:** Accepting Marketing Coordinator Offer – Jax Jaguar

*Dear Ms. Rodriguez,*

*Thank you for offering me the position of Marketing Coordinator at Jungle Media Group. I'm excited about the opportunity to join your team and contribute to the development and execution of innovative marketing campaigns.*

*I'm happy to confirm that I accept this offer with the following terms:*

- *Salary: \$55,000 per year*
- *Start Date: July 15, 2024*
- *Benefits: As outlined in the offer letter*

*I look forward to starting on July 15th and meeting the team in person.*

*Sincerely,*

*Jax Jaguar*

#### **Sample Declination Email:**

**Subject:** Regarding Marketing Coordinator Offer - [Your Name]

*Dear Mr. Patel,*

*Thank you for offering me the position of Social Media Manager at Global Reach Solutions. I appreciate your time and consideration throughout the interview process.*

*After careful consideration, I've decided to decline your offer due to pursuing a different opportunity that more closely aligns with my long-term career goals.*

*I wish you and your team all the best in the future.*

*Sincerely,*

*Jax Jaguar*



# THE BOUNTY THAT HAS BECOME A GIG

## – ONBOARDING AS YOUR INTRODUCTION

Congratulations, Jaguars! You've made it through the jungle of the job search and landed yourself an awesome new gig. But the adventure doesn't end there! Now, it's time to embark on a new chapter: onboarding.

### **Onboarding: Your First Steps into the Professional Pride**

Think of onboarding as your introduction to your new pride. It's a time to learn the ropes, get acquainted with your fellow jaguars, and start making your mark. It's also a critical time for you to make a positive first impression and set yourself up for success.

### **What to Expect During Onboarding:**

- **Welcome Wagon:** You'll likely be greeted by HR or your new manager, who will give you an overview of the company, its culture, and your role.
- **Paperwork Jungle:** Get ready to tackle some paperwork, such as tax forms (W-4: <https://www.irs.gov/forms-pubs/about-form-w-4>), I-9 Employment Eligibility Verification (<https://www.uscis.gov/i-9>), direct deposit authorization, and company policies.
  - o **Jax's Safety Tip:** Be sure to safeguard these documents as they contain sensitive personal information. Keep them in a secure location and avoid sharing them unnecessarily.
- **Meet the Pride:** You'll be introduced to your team members, colleagues, and other key stakeholders.
- **Training Time:** You'll receive training on the company's systems, processes, and procedures. This is your chance to ask questions and learn the ins and outs of your new role.
- **Setting Goals:** You'll work with your manager to establish clear expectations and goals for your first few months on the job.
- **Background Check:** Some employers conduct background checks as part of the onboarding process. This might involve verifying your education and employment history, checking your criminal record, and running a credit check (if relevant to the position).



Well, Jaguars, we've reached the end of our epic journey through the career jungle! Give yourselves a mighty roar – you've earned it!

We've covered a lot of ground together, from uncovering your hidden talents and exploring different paths, to mastering the art of the job hunt and conquering the workplace wilderness. I hope this workbook has equipped you with the skills, knowledge, and confidence you need to tackle any challenge that comes your way.



Remember, Jaguars, your career journey is just beginning. The jungle is vast and full of opportunities waiting to be discovered. Keep exploring, keep learning, and never stop chasing your dreams. And if you ever need a little guidance, just remember – Jax the Jaguar is always here to cheer you on!

Now go out there and make your mark on the world, Jaguars! Show them what GSU pride is all about. And don't forget to ROAR with confidence as you take your rightful place at the top of the food chain!

Until next time, keep it wild and stay fierce, Jaguars!