


HOW TO LAND YOUR FIRST JOB- FROM A TO Z



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WHAT IS RIGHT FOR ME?



- What kind of practice setting makes me:
 - *Feel good about what I am doing*
 - *Feel as if I am making a difference*
 - *Excited about all the possibilities*



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WHAT IS RIGHT FOR ME?

- Know your own needs
 - How much supervision do I need or want?
 - Am I confident & competent enough to work solo?
 - Do I need opportunities to bounce ideas off another OT practitioner?
 - Do I require encouragement or reinforcement in my clinical decision making?



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WHAT IS RIGHT FOR ME?

- Fully explore the practice environment for a “good fit”
 - Does it match my skills?
 - Does it match my interests?
 - Does it stimulate me intellectually?
 - Will I need to “stretch”?

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WHAT IS RIGHT FOR ME?

- How important is the \$\$\$
 - Does \$\$ outweigh other considerations?
 - Is a big sign on bonus worth being in a setting that is not a good “match” for me?
 - Should I keep looking for \$\$ + “fit” ?






KNOW YOUR PERSONAL PRIORITIES

- New adventure vs. comfortable
- Close to home or ready to fly!
- Large department vs. smaller setting
- Work – play balance
- Pay – benefits
 - Time off




WHERE TO LOOK FOR A JOB

- Newspaper classified section
- OT Specific Magazines
 - *OT Practice*
 - *Advance for Occupational Therapists*
- On-Line
 - OTJobLink
 - Monster.com
- Talk to other therapists/networking
- State Association web sites




THIS JOB SOUNDS INTERESTING

- Call for additional information
- Have a list of questions, be concise
 - Location of job
 - Hiring new graduates?
- Fax, send or e-mail resume




COVER LETTER

- Brief
- State your objective
- State your **unique** qualifications for the job
- State a specific reason why you are interested in this particular job
- Use spell/grammar check!

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Resume

- 2 pages max
- Education & degrees earned
- Fieldwork Level I and / or II
 - List any advanced learning experiences or skill set
 - List any specific standardized assessments utilized
- List prior work experience

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Resume

- List **special skills** (e.g. foreign language; ASL)
- List any awards or publications
- List related volunteer experiences
- List any leadership experiences or participation in professional organizations

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SCHEDULING THE INTERVIEW

- Phone Etiquette:
 - Call from a phone that has clear reception
 - Don't call or leave messages from a speaker phone
 - Don't call from a cell phone with background noises
 - Be sure to thank the person for taking the time to talk with you and leave them knowing you are looking forward to the interview.

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BEFORE THE INTERVIEW

- Do your homework – demonstrate you know something about this facility / company / setting
- Brush up on specific interventions relative to the setting
- Brush up on type of clients most likely to be seen in this setting
- Be prepared to discuss any related experiences you have had

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HOW TO PRESENT YOURSELF AT AN INTERVIEW

- Arrive 15 minutes early for the interview.
- You may have an application to fill out.
- Make eye contact.
- Greet the office staff and others warmly.
- Dress professionally, yet be true to your personality.

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HOW TO PRESENT YOURSELF AT AN INTERVIEW

- Do not chew gum or suck on lozenges – can be distracting to interviewer 
- Turn off your cell phone! 
- Be yourself. Remember you are interviewing them too.

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HOW TO PRESENT YOURSELF AT AN INTERVIEW

- SMILE 
- Maintain good posture
- Show your passion for occupational therapy!!
- Articulate why you want this specific job

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HOW TO PRESENT YOURSELF AT AN INTERVIEW

- You need to stand apart from the rest of the interviewees – “*stand out from the herd*”




- Attitude is as important as aptitude

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INTERVIEWS: WHAT I'LL ASK/TELL YOU

- My philosophy and style
- Problem solving/reasoning skills
 - Tell me about a difficult situation....solve problem



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INTERVIEWS: WHAT YOU WILL BE ASKED

- Strengths & areas for improvement
- Special skills
- Your own personal & professional goals



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INTERVIEWS: WHAT YOU WILL BE ASKED

- Learning style/environment for learning
- Interpersonal style: what are your hot buttons?
- What do you do for fun?
- What will you bring to this job?
- Why should I hire you?

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INTERVIEWS: WHAT YOU SHOULD ASK ME

- Meeting with staff/observation time
- What is a typical day?
- Productivity expectations
- How do you deal with fluctuating caseloads/staffing?






MORE QUESTIONS YOU SHOULD ASK

- What is the orientation process?
- What are the company's expectation of an entry level therapist?
- What are the opportunities for career growth





MORE QUESTIONS YOU SHOULD ASK

- Supervision: how often and by whom?
- Is mentoring available?
- Performance review process and raises (ask to see a copy of the performance evaluation form)
- Dress code?
- When will you make your decision?





ASK ABOUT THE PERKS

- Support for continued professional development
 - Learning community with other staff
 - Setting based CE / in-services
 - Is CE funded?
 - When does an employee become eligible?



ASK ABOUT THE PERKS

- Support for AOTA & / or state membership
- Support to take an active role in professional organizations
- Support for Board or Specialty certification
- Support for advancing academic education






ASK ABOUT THE BENEFITS

- Health care
- Retirement plan
 - 401K (matched by company?)
- Vacation – maintain occupational balance!!



ASK ABOUT THE BENEFITS

- Paid time off (sick, holiday, vacation)
- Others (health club subsidy, parking)



Be Observant

- Fully explore the environment for a “good fit”
 - How do practitioners use evidence in their everyday practice?
 - Are interventions you observe occupation based?



THINK ABOUT....


- Confidentiality
- Professional conduct
- Ethics
 - the organizational culture
 - my values



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REFLECTIONS POST INTERVIEW

- Chemistry with supervisor is critical
 - Trust your gut about this
- Did other practitioners appear professional & collegial
- What did client – therapist interactions look like?
- Environment – is there room for some fun!



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FOLLOW UP POST INTERVIEW

- Send a hand written note thanking the employer for the opportunity to interview.
 - Include others who were part of the interview process
- Don't send an e-mail thank-you.
- Don't leave a message on voice mail as a thank-you.

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SPECIAL CONSIDERATIONS: INPATIENT SETTINGS



- Priority is medical management
- OT Role: recommendations for future care
- Comfort level with high tech equipment and chaotic environment
- Flexibility and creativity to deal with interruptions & provide intervention
- High level of “medical” knowledge & interest

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SPECIAL CONSIDERATIONS: SKILLED NURSING FACILITIES

- Rehabilitation vs. maintenance patients
- Productivity issues
- Supervision expectations (OTAs, Aides, you!)
- Groups vs. individual treatment
- Regulatory issues
- Family interactions





SPECIAL CONSIDERATIONS: OUTPATIENT CLINICS

- Hospital-based vs. free-standing clinics
- Role of the business office
 - Visit limits
 - Coding/reimbursement rules
 - Scheduling
 - Precertification/recertification
- Scheduling: cancellations/no-shows
- Documentation time




SPECIAL CONSIDERATIONS: OUTPATIENT CLINICS

- Productivity and intervention models
- Supervision & staff coverage
 - PT and OT are NOT interchangeable!
- ADL/IADL training challenges
- Home programs




SPECIAL CONSIDERATIONS: COMMUNITY BASED SETTINGS

- May need to be an advocate for occupational therapy role
- May have much more interaction with various publics & decision makers
- Practice may be more independent than in a facility
- Team members are likely to be other disciplines





SPECIAL CONSIDERATIONS: COMMUNITY BASED SETTINGS

- Salary and other funding often based on grants which may not be consistent
- May be highly dependent on state/federal policy and legislative initiatives
- Needs assessment and marketing of services/outreach may be important part of the job
- May need to seek supervision and collegial support outside of the job




SPECIAL CONSIDERATIONS: PEDIATRICS

- Work in teams- potential for blurring of roles and sharing of knowledge and expertise
- Consultative model
- Families are also the clients
- Need for differing documentation styles depending on the setting:
 - medically necessary to educationally related to family driven/family friendly outcomes




Special Considerations for Solo Practitioners

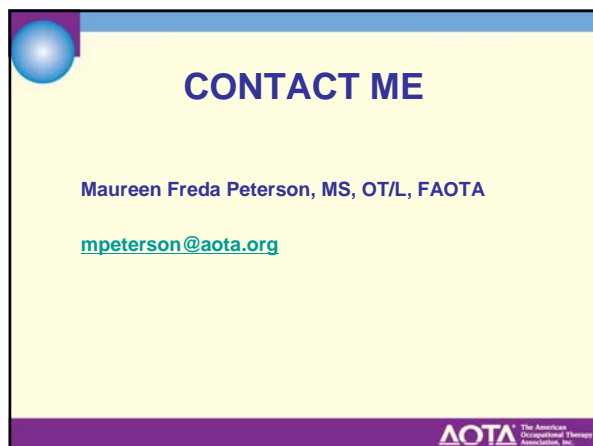
- Use technology to receive mentoring
- Locate your own group of colleagues in the vicinity for discussions
- Utilize AOTA / State resources
- Make use of on line communities
 - OTConnections
 - LinkedIn



At the End of the Day

- You at the beginning of an exciting, rewarding life long career
- Anything is possible
- Occupational Therapy is a proud profession and you are part of it!





CONTACT ME

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