

Advanced Practice Nurse Job Search Success Strategies

UIC College of Nursing, Room 105

Wednesday, March 4, 2009

12:30 - 1:30 p.m.

1. Introduction

- a. Jill Gilliland: President, Melnic Consulting Group, (800) 886-7906.

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- b. Students present were a mix of specialties, including: FNP (4), PNP (7), Adult (1), Geri (2), PMHNP (1). Also 2 experienced NPs.

- c. Powerpoint slides and presentation notes will be posted on GSO website: http://www2.uic.edu/stud_orgs/gso.com/ and Jill's blog: <http://pediatricnurse-practitioners.blogspot.com/> other resources are posted at <http://www.melnic.com/advanced-practice-nursing-pediatric-jobs.php>

2. What do I want to do?

- a. Know yourself—your unique skills, interests and values.
 - i. Talk to people and select clinicals that interest you and match your experience, interests and abilities.
 - ii. Having a focus will help.
- b. What environment do you like?
 - i. In the hospital, in a unit, in a clinic, with a group (among other NPs, with physicians, on your own, with a manager, with a team).
- c. What is rewarding and satisfying to you?
 - i. Tasks, thinking, invasive, long term relationships, intensity of illnesses or acuity, leadership, research, publishing, talks, family-oriented
- d. Where do you want to live? Consider geography.
 - i. City, rural, suburb, flexibility, urban activities, outdoor activities
- e. Consider your lifestyle.
 - i. What are the factors in your personal life that impact your work life?
 - ii. Do you want to live near friends or family, have kids, husband?
- f. Recommendations.
 - i. If you are considering working “on your own” (without other NP colleagues), a hospital/ambulatory care setting may help you hone your clinical skills.
 - ii. As a new grad, look to who you would turn to for questions/concerns.

****See Jill's website, www.melnic.com, for a guide to your career path**

3. Resume

- a. See Powerpoint slide for sample resume.
- b. Also see: <http://www.melnic.com/advanced-practice-nursing-pediatricjobs.php> to download a sample resume.
- c. Build your resume.
 - i. Work as a RN during your schooling to build your resume.
 - ii. Working creates experience that will help secure the job when you graduate.
 - iii. Even if it takes long to get through school, unless you have more than 5 years of RN experience, you need to work to build your resume.
 - iv. Work in a unit that builds skills that translate to where you want to work when you graduate.
 - v. Many companies count RN experience in salary calculations:
 1. Ex. 2 yrs. RN experience = 1 yr. APN experience
- d. Other advice:

- i. Use your job description to describe experience and skills related to your next position.
 - ii. Potential employers will consider your skills, experience and personality.
- e. Why is an Advanced Practice Nurse's resume unique and what should it look like?
 - i. Your resume/CV and cover letter must be well-written and organized.
 - ii. No spelling errors and visually easy to follow.
 - iii. As an Advanced Practice Nurse, your resume is unique and must reflect your experience, skills, and units worked. (or primary care experience).
 - 1. Unit Name, # beds, procedures
 - 2. Different from action works/accomplishments. More skills and experience-based.
- f. Research, presentations, and papers.
 - i. Not essential to do, but include if you have it. If you hope to work at an academic hospital, it is good to build your resume by writing papers and doing research. Work experience first, then research and publications.

Q: Should we include clinical rotation experience?

A: Generally, no. Unless pertinent to desired position.

Q: What is the difference between a resume and C.V. (curriculum vitae)?

A: Basically the same, but C.V. is usually used in academic settings.

Q: How far back should we include jobs/activities?

A: Only include relevant positions (like 20+ yrs. RN), not working as CNA, unless you feel this has added to your RN experience, worked in same type of unit.

4. Telephone interview

- a. Prepare in advance for your interview.
 - i. Listing your strengths, abilities, employment history and personal interactions.
 - ii. List questions that might be asked and verbalize your response.
 - iii. Think through scenarios and how you would respond.
 - iv. Research information about the hospital or clinic, unit and people you will be interviewing with.
 - 1. Research: MDs, RN leaders, units, procedures.
- b. See sheet <http://www.melnic.com/advanced-practice-nursing-pediatricjobs.php>.
- c. Keep your questions brief, unless you are unsure about your potential employer. You have already done your research about them.

Q: How common are telephone interviews?

A. Very common for distant jobs, prior to in-person interviews.

5. In-person interview.

- a. Remember: they want you there! Be confident!
- b. Don't be afraid to take your time when answering questions. Breathe, "I need to think about that for a minute"
- c. Be prepared to answer why you left or were let go from a job, gaps in your employment, and obvious "job hopping."
- d. Show your passion about your career and specialty.
- e. See sheet <http://www.melnic.com/advanced-practice-nursing-pediatricjobs.php>.

6. Strategy for success

- a. When developing your job search strategy, do your homework on the best way to contact your target employers.
- b. Take advantage of all resources available to gather information: career fairs, Internet job boards, hospital web sites, local web sites and job postings (www.simplyhired.com).
- c. List all possible hospitals you are interested in, use Goggle maps.
- d. Ask yourself, “Who do I know at this institution?” Networking!
- e. Go to each of the hospital web sites to search jobs.
- f. If they have a keyword box, type “Nurse Practitioner” and/or “Advanced Practice Nurse.”
- g. Use www.simplyhired.com or www.indeed.com - sign up for emails about open positions.
- h. Organize your search process with Job Tabs <http://www.jobtabs.com/> (\$49 one-time fee).
- i. Save search locations, resume, contacts, jobs.
 - i. You may need to expand your geographical boundaries if your job search does not produce results in the Chicagoland area.

7. Staying ahead of the game in this economic state.

- a. Learn how to evaluate jobs, be prepared and negotiate in tough economic times.
 - i. War story: A PNP accepted a job, quit her job, then was told by the new hospital that they cannot give her a job.
 - ii. Before you quit your job, ask if there is anything that could negate the offer.
 - iii. Ask staff about turnover and layoffs.
 - iv. Look for new equipment, environment.
 - v. Make sure you feel confident that physicians are good business people.
 1. Get a clear description of your benefits.
 - vi. Remember that the hospitals and clinics that are hiring are in the best economic condition.
 - vii. If you require a specific geographic area, you might consider working as an RN to work your way into a situation.

8. Salaries

- a. Depend on cost of living.
- b. See averages by geographical area:
<http://www.melnic.com/pediatricnurse-practitioner-salary.php>.

Q: Is there a big difference in salary between hospitals and private groups?

A: Hospitals may offer bonuses, paid relocation costs, annual increases. There is not a big initial difference in pay among hospital, clinic, MD groups.

9. Why should I use a recruiter?

- a. They do the work for you; we don't pay, hospitals pay.
- b. You have a full-time job.
- c. They have relationships with hospital hiring authority.
- d. They can negotiate an offer.
- e. They can talk you through the process.
- f. You cannot lose with the **right recruiter**.
- g. It's free.

10. Negotiation.

- a. What is your best alternative? What are your other options?
 - i. BATNA – best alternative to a negotiated agreement.
 - ii. Have several job offers to give you an edge in negotiating.
- b. Negotiating up.
 - i. If potential employer asks you for your desired salary, you can ask them: “Please tell me what you are thinking as far as salary.”
 - ii. On application: “desired salary” – leave blank or respond “N/A.”
 - iii. Example: Start at \$75k, 2% increase/yr, in 7 yrs \$5,600 less than someone who starts at \$80k. Do your best to start at a higher salary!
 - iv. Hourly: \$34.50/hr, negotiating up to \$34.97/hr. amounts to much more annually. It feels easier to negotiate a higher hourly salary than a higher annual salary although the end result is the same.
 1. Example: A .50 cent increase an hour equals a \$1,040 increase annually, and a \$1 increase an hour equals a \$2,080 increase annually for 40-hour work week jobs.

Q&A Discussion.

Q: When should I start my job search?

A: Allow 5-6 months. If you graduate in May, start in January; graduate in December, start in July. You may also start looking after you take your boards. You can take your time, especially if you don't have that much experience yet. Keep working! You will want to have at least 2 yrs. of RN experience.

Q: Have you heard of anyone starting work as an APN- license pending?

A: None in Illinois.

(Other discussion amongst group members): You will typically receive your license one month after boards. You'll need to follow the steps before taking exam – UIC to send transcripts to certifying body (up to 4-6 wks.), then credentialing, then you will have the approval to take the test.

Many grads have said if you graduate in May, expect to take boards in August.

Q: How should we shop for/evaluate recruiters?

A: Ask “How do you do things?” “If I was to find a job on my own, would you still help?” Good recruiters should demonstrate integrity.

Q: Have you found that there has been a lack of NP jobs?

A: [Peds] Nationally, no. In the Midwest (Chicago, also Michigan), yes. But you can still be selective; just keep working as an RN until you find what is best for you.