

**Chapter 12**  
**Building a Successful**  
**Career in the Industry**

## Case Study *Moving On*

**S**am, the kitchen manager, is moving to a different state and has asked Linda, his mentor, to help him position himself for a distributor position. He needs to prepare his résumé, cover letter, and portfolio. Linda is happy to help Sam, whom she considers very talented and hard working.

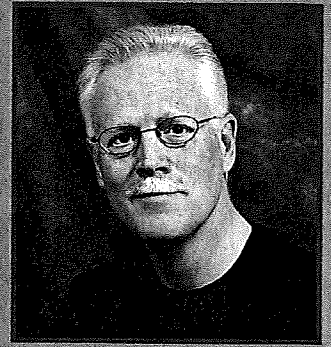
With Linda's help, Sam has scheduled a job interview. He now needs to practice the interview. Linda offers to help Sam practice for his interview and plans to review follow-up steps with him as well.

As you read this chapter, think about the following questions:

1. What would Sam have to think about in terms of positioning himself for a different role? What assets should he emphasize?
2. What should Sam do to prepare for the interview?
3. What should Sam do to follow up with the interviewer?

## Ron Yudd

### President/Points of Profit, Inc. Founder: LeadershipCares



“A recipe is just a guide.” —Jacque Pepin

I grew up in the restaurant business, working in Washington, D.C.-area restaurants during high school and college. I worked my way up from busser to area director, holding a variety of both back- and front-of-the-house positions, including kitchen manager, general manager, and training director.

After receiving a B.A. in English literature, I decided to remain in the restaurant industry. Simply put, I have a passion for food and serving others. And this career gave me a chance to be creative every day and to work with other creative people. It really provides more opportunities than any other industry I know.

*As part of his extensive background, Ron held the position of Director of Food Service for the U.S. Senate in Washington, D.C. He served in the Senate for more than 21 years. His guests, associates, and employees still refer to Ron as “The Senator of Service.” The Senate Restaurant serves more than 10,000 meals per day in ten restaurants. Fifty percent of the eight million dollars in annual sales is generated by special events and catering. Ron supervised more than 200 associates in the daily mission of delivering the highest quality food with a passion for personalized service.*

Preparing food for others is the most honorable thing you can do. It is really a measure of how much you care for others. Prepping, cooking, and serving a meal is the ultimate gift you can give. After all, cooking at its most elemental level is all about giving yourself and sharing your gifts and talents with others.

So, if you want to enter this industry, dream big and always reach back to help others who are coming up behind you.

“Once you have mastered a technique, you barely have to look at a recipe again.”  
—Julia Child

### About Your Career

Building a successful career in the restaurant and foodservice industry requires following a simple recipe. Combine hard work and personal determination with a willingness to learn new things, and you can achieve anything you want in this business. Work hard at whatever you are doing, have the willpower to stay the course no matter how hard things get, and try to learn something new every day!

Always keep in mind as you start out that the really successful people in the industry are those who—early in their careers—stepped forward when their chef asked for volunteers. They were always willing to try new things. They constantly stay in a learning mode—exploring new techniques and working hard to get better at their craft each and every day!

Last, but not least, never forget the importance of passion. Love what you are doing. Others will see your passion and want to hire you or better yet—work for you!

#### 12.1 Starting a Career in Foodservice

- Skills needed for a successful career
- The job search
- Preparing a résumé, portfolio, and cover letter

#### 12.2 Completing Applications Effectively

- Job applications
- College applications
- Scholarships

#### 12.3 The Job Interview

- Preparing for the job interview
- The interview
- Follow up after the interview

#### 12.4 Advancing in a Career

- Health and wellness
- Stress and time management
- Resigning from a job
- Staying educated and involved

#### 12.5 Careers in the Industry

- Entry-level jobs
- A selection of careers

## SECTION 12.1 STARTING A CAREER IN FOODSERVICE

Those who have had a part-time or summer job might already know the kind of work they enjoy doing. They also know that working helps them develop such essential skills as responsibility, self-confidence, decision making, problem solving, and developing initiative while they earn a paycheck. Readers who haven't had a job yet shouldn't worry. The most important first step toward a good career is taking classes in school that will help build essential skills.

## Study Questions

After studying Section 12.1, you should be able to answer the following questions:

- What are the skills needed by restaurant and foodservice professionals?
  - What does an effective job-search plan include?
  - How do you write a résumé that lists experiences, skills, and achievements?
  - How do you prepare an effective cover letter?
  - What is a portfolio?
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## *Skills Needed for a Successful Career*

It's never too early to begin thinking about a career. A **career** is a profession or work in a particular field, such as foodservice, that individuals choose for themselves. People advance in their careers by mastering the skills needed for their jobs and by showing that they are qualified to take on new responsibilities. Training and experience are important, but employers are also looking for certain skills that students can develop while they are still in school. Training and additional education can help motivated individuals move higher up the career ladder. A **career ladder** is a series of jobs through which people can advance to further their careers, as shown in Figure 12.1. All of these skills become more complex as individuals progress from beginner to intermediate to advanced for each stage:

- **Communication and teamwork:** The ability to communicate effectively is one of the top skills for which employers look. Communication skills include writing, speaking, reading, and listening. Understanding and following directions are also important. Employees, especially in the restaurant and foodservice industry, must be team players, doing their share of the workload. Sometimes, employees do more work if that's what it takes to get the job done.
- **Positive attitude:** Maintaining a positive attitude is a key attribute of any employee. Employers, customers, and coworkers value a person who is enthusiastic and optimistic. The challenge is keeping this attitude even when things are going wrong.

- **Willingness to learn:**

Learning new technology and new ways of doing things is important to career success. Employees who advance are the ones who are willing to learn new skills and techniques and not think that the way they know is the only way to do something. Stay flexible.

- **Technology skills:**

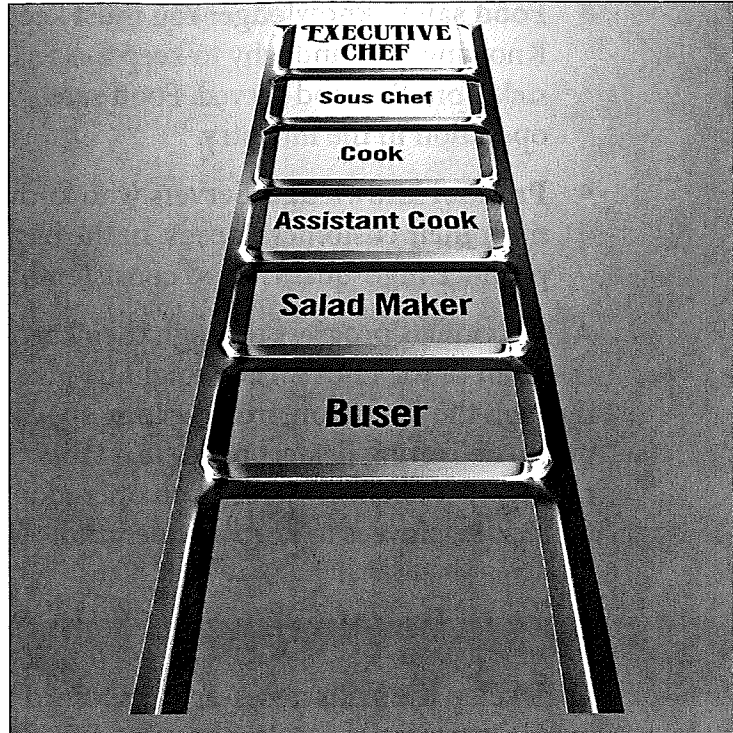
Technology is critical to success. Computer skills are also valuable in the restaurant and foodservice industry. Most jobs today

require some knowledge of computers. For example, in many restaurants, servers place orders on computers; cashiers and counter servers in quick-service operations use computerized cash registers.

- **Math skills:** Math skills are also essential, even though computers may be used. For example, if a customer tells a server to keep 15 percent of the payment as a tip, the server needs to know how to calculate that percentage. **Back-of-the-house** positions use math, too. They count, weigh, and measure items frequently, in addition to calculating yields and converting recipes.

- **Analyzing and problem solving:** Critical thinking and problem solving are also important skills to develop. Employers value employees who can think of fresh solutions to problems.

- **Knife and other equipment skills:** Knowing how to use the basic tools and equipment is essential to working in a kitchen. To progress in a restaurant or foodservice career, broaden the number of techniques and processes performed, which increases versatility.



**Figure 12.1:** A sample career ladder starting with entry-level restaurant and foodservice positions.

- **Food safety knowledge:** You must keep food safe, no matter what happens. Knowing how and why to keep food safe will ensure customers never get sick from the food served. Food safety knowledge is fundamental to every operation in the industry.
- **Product knowledge:** Servers who know details about menu items better meet their customers' needs. In the back of the house, this knowledge helps produce high-quality food consistently.

As individuals progress through their careers, they learn skills from the back to the front of the house. They might be involved in every step of the flow of food through the operation, from writing specifications for what food they want to buy to delivering dessert plates to a table. Successful restaurant and foodservice managers work in all areas of an operation at one time or another. They fill in for sick employees to keep an operation running smoothly.

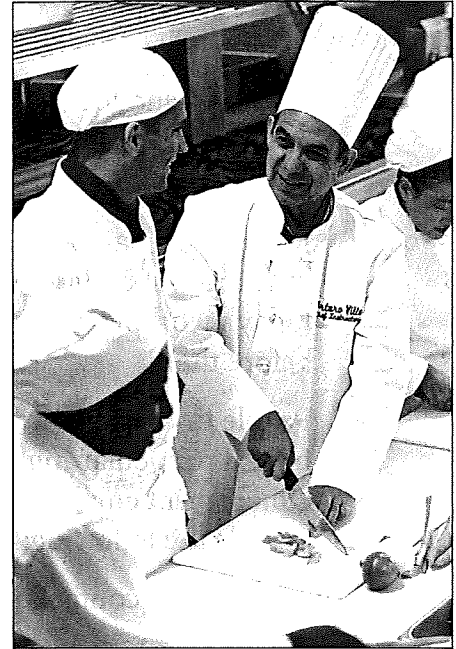
## How to Develop These Skills Now

To develop the skills necessary to succeed in the restaurant and foodservice industry, potential employees should do the following:

- Make a commitment to put forth their best efforts.
- Work part-time in the industry while in school.
- Take on challenges in school and work to learn new skills.
- Be active in school clubs and activities.
- Volunteer time in the community; i.e., help out in a local soup kitchen, nursing home, or food bank.
- Take some time to read and learn on their own.
- If they can use a computer in school, the library, or at home, they should become familiar with basic computer functions and software programs, including word processing, spreadsheets, presentation software, and the Internet.
- Take advantage of every opportunity to improve learning and work habits while still in school and working part-time. The more they practice these habits now, the farther they will be able to advance in their careers.

Consider entering into a relationship with a mentor. A **mentor** is someone who can play the role of a wise adviser. See Figure 12.2. Ideally, this person should have a higher position in the company and be willing to serve in this capacity. A mentor should be available to offer insights, coach, be a sounding board, and provide feedback on career-development plans and progress.

Along with identifying a mentor who can help with professional development, also develop a sound relationship with a supervisor. Upward and lateral communication is very important to professional development.



**Figure 12.2:** A mature chef mentors a new chef.

## Essentials Skills

### *Making the Most of a Mentor*

Developing a relationship with a mentor is one of the most rewarding things someone can do personally or professionally. Identify good candidates and then talk with them about their willingness to serve as a mentor and ways in which they can help in professional growth before making a final selection. Although it's wise to have a single mentor, remember that good advice can come from any direction. Someone who is not a strong mentor candidate may still be a good source of information and assistance.

Here are some ways to work with a mentor:

- ① Make regular appointments with a mentor—and keep them. Continually postponing meetings is unprofessional, and it doesn't help toward career goals.
- ② During meetings, plan to discuss previously agreed-upon topics; be focused on the meeting and be respectful of a mentor's time.
- ③ Be clear about communicating with a mentor when scheduling appointments and discussing career needs. This person is doing a huge favor, so in return make it as easy as possible.
- ④ Be responsible. For recommendation letters for a school, scholarship, or job, don't wait until just before the deadline to ask a mentor. Always present yourself in the best possible light.
- ⑤ Express appreciation to the mentor in a professional way. A thank-you note is always appropriate.

Remember, you and your mentor are embarking upon what could be a life-changing path.



## ***The Job Search***

Students who learn how to find a job now have a head start when they're ready to work full-time. Finding and keeping a job helps develop both personal and career skills.

Job hunting can be exciting and fun. The job market is the ideal place to tell others about abilities, talents, and dreams. As the average age of people in today's workplace grows older, younger people have even more opportunities before them.

People find jobs in a wide variety of ways. Some employers recruit graduates from a particular high school. Many recruit from colleges and universities. Others print employment ads online and in local newspapers. Other sources include the following:

- Personal contacts
- School placement offices
- Employment agencies
- Community agencies
- Internet resources such as online job search engines and banks
- Networking
- Job fairs
- Youth work studies

Search job ads in online job search engines and job banks by keyword, discipline, and location. The sites are usually more current than traditional classified ads, since posters often update them immediately. Most online job sites allow job seekers to post their résumés online for free. Some sites require job seekers to complete an online résumé or questionnaire as well.

Job ads in newspapers are listed alphabetically by job title or job category. For example, a position as a busser may be in an ad under "B" for busser or an ad under "R" for restaurant. Most ads will specify how to apply for the job—in person, by mail, by phone, or by email. Sometimes restaurant and foodservice operations state a designated time for prospective employees to apply in person. Others will request a cover letter with a résumé or a direct telephone call.

Table 12.1 lists the steps for searching for a job.

**Table 12.1: Steps for Searching for a Job**

1.	Decide what characteristics a job should have, including the hours and days desired, as well as job responsibilities. Although finding a job that matches such a list exactly is unlikely, generally knowing the desired job characteristics will help.
2.	Figure out what areas are open to compromise. Are you willing to work part of the weekend? How late is too late to catch a ride? Think about what trade-offs can be made to accept a job.
3.	Gather and organize the information needed for applying. Compile a work history (if possible), including complete contact information for each of your previous employers. Make sure all personal contact information is at hand. Talk with people about being references and review all past training and skills.
4.	Create the documents needed for applying—a résumé, reference list, a customizable cover letter, and a portfolio.
5.	Identify the search methods. Examples include the Internet, newspapers, and friends.
6.	Choose the businesses to contact. Create a list of their addresses and contact information.
7.	Research each business chosen. Knowing as much as possible about the business makes for a better prepared interview and shows an eagerness to work for the business.
8.	Contact the businesses chosen in whatever method they've indicated. If applying in person, be sure to dress professionally and be prepared with all application documents.
9.	When a potential employer makes contact, decide on an interview time. Don't be late! Ask questions during the interview to make sure that the job meets all needs.
10.	After sending a résumé or applying, call the business once a week to ask about open positions and the status of an application (if they haven't initiated a follow-up contact). Keep searching.

## *Preparing a Résumé, Portfolio, and Cover Letter*

Potential employees need the right tools for conducting a job search. The tools needed are a résumé, portfolio, and cover letter. Creating these tools makes applicants feel more confident. They present a clear picture of interests, abilities, and talents to a prospective employer.

### **An Effective Résumé**

A key ingredient in a portfolio is the résumé. A **résumé** (RE-zoo-may) is a written summary of experience, skills, and achievements that relate to the job being sought. A résumé is not a life story. It is like a sales brochure that tells an employer why the applicant is the best person to hire for the job. When looking at a résumé, ask, "If I were the employer, would I hire this person?"