
Guide to Using the On-Site Placement Center

Introduction

This document will provide job seekers using the on-site Placement Center with an overall understanding of how the Placement Center works. The document was written with a new Placement Center user in mind, but due to the changes that have occurred over the years, it should also be helpful for frequent users of the Center. The objective is for job seekers to use the Center in the most efficient and effective manner possible.

Placement Center overview

The on-site Placement Center has been a fixture of the annual SIOP conferences since 1993. Over the years it has evolved from an entirely paper process (bound copies of paper resumes and job descriptions, and supplements of late registrants) to a computerized process. Here are the main components of the Placement Center. Photos of the 2005 facility are included at the end of this document.

- **Web site.** To register for the Center, provide information about yourself, upload your resume, and search for jobs. The web site is organized into a section for Job Seekers and another for Employers. Instructions for using the web site are found in the document *HELP Using the Placement Center Web Site (for Job Seekers)* located on the Job Seeker Home page (www.siop.org/Placement/seeker.asp). The instructions contain screen shots, step-by-step instructions, and troubleshooting tips.
- **Resume.** Your resume can be uploaded into the system at any time after you have registered. It must be a Microsoft Word, which will be converted to Adobe Acrobat, or Adobe Acrobat file and cannot exceed 2 pages. Note that Adobe Acrobat occasionally has problems converting complex graphics, tables, unusual formatting, and non-traditional fonts (e.g., Monotype Corsiva). We recommend that you use simple formatting and graphics and a traditional font (e.g., Arial or Times New Roman) when writing your resume. If you have a problem uploading your resume, try changing the font.
- **Mailboxes.** Mailboxes are one way to communicate to employers and visa versa. Each job seeker and employer has their own mailbox within the Placement Center.
- **On-Site Computer Room.** Computers and printers are provided in the Placement Center so that you can conduct last-minute searches. The room is restricted to employers and job seekers only. The computers are Windows-based with a 3-1/2" floppy disk drive, are hooked up to laser printers (2 computers per printer), and have internet access. The workstations are set up as kiosks, meaning that chairs will not be available.
- **Interview Area.** Space is available for employers to use to conduct interviews. Depending on the space available at the conference hotel, this may be a single room or multiple rooms of tables and chairs. There is a waiting area for candidates. Iced water is available for your convenience.

- **Help Desk.** The Help Desk is staffed by student and Placement Committee volunteers and Convention Bureau employees. The Help Desk can answer technical questions regarding the Placement Center or its web site. The people staffing the Help Desk staff do not set up interviews and are not headhunters. They are the administrative body that supports the Placement Center. Most are volunteers.

Prior to the conference

Before arriving at the conference we recommend that job seekers do the following:

1. Register for the Placement Center early, and upload your resume to the web site. Employers tend to search for candidates prior to the conference. If you want to be noticed, register early! Anonymous job seekers cannot upload their resume or their identity will be compromised and will need to contact employers directly. They will also need to contact the Placement Center during the Conference to receive their mailbox number.
 2. Be sure to test the link to your resume after it has been uploaded to ensure that everything is working properly. If you include complicated graphics, employers may experience problems when opening your resume. We suggest that you keep it simple for online use (bring copies of your complex resume with you and place in employer mailboxes during the Conference). Note that hyperlinks may not be active after your resume has been converted to Adobe Acrobat.
 3. Read the tips for job seekers and *Employer Concerns* documents (found on the Job Seeker home page (www.siop.org/Placement/seeker.asp)) to prepare yourself for the job search process.
 4. If you receive a lot of email or your email address is difficult to access from remote locations, you may want to set up a Yahoo or Hotmail email account (e.g., joe_smith_siop2006@yahoo.com) for Placement Center communications. Not only does this give employers another avenue of communicating with you, these accounts are easy to monitor during the Conference. If you have a cell phone, you may also want to provide employers with your cell phone number in addition to your e-mail address and conference mailbox number.
 5. Conduct a search of jobs to see which ones match your qualifications. Employers will contact you if they are interested in interviewing you. It is appropriate to contact the employer to express interest in their position if your qualifications match their requirements.
 6. Bring electronic and paper copies of your longer resume to the Conference. Although the Center has printing capabilities, printing is limited to 10 job descriptions at a time, and you will not be able to print multiple copies of your resume (use the hotel's Business Center for your copying needs).
 7. Bring stationery, note pads with your name on them, or other writing tablets to leave notes for employers. Stationary with your name on it (and mailbox number) looks much more professional than scrap paper and can be created on your home computer. Envelopes are also a nice touch. If you have a business card, don't forget to bring plenty of them with you to the conference.
-

Entering the Center

Because the Placement Center is restricted to those who have registered for the service, you will be asked to show the registration receipt, which is attached to your conference badge. The receipt also contains your mailbox number. To make it easier for staff members to recognize you as a Center user, the receipt may be highlighted when you first enter the facility. Please show the staff member your receipt each time you enter.

If you do not have your badge, a staff member can verify your registration in our directory. We strongly recommend that you pick up your badge at the conference registration desk before arriving at the Placement Center.

Checking your mailbox

Upon entering the facility, check your mailbox. Employers will leave a note expressing their interest, send an email, and/or contact you by phone. To ensure that you don't miss an important communication from an employer, check your mailbox frequently throughout the conference. Don't lose valuable interviewing time – respond to notes in a timely manner.

When responding to an employer's request for an interview, provide a number of dates and times. Giving them options will help avoid playing "note tag" with employers. Don't forget to write your mailbox number on your note!

If you are interested in a particular position or organization, you should place a resume and note in the employer's mailbox. ***Be sure to include your mailbox number.*** Showing an active interest in a position or organization is viewed positively by employers. Keep in mind that resume screening by employers may result in a short list of candidates that they can interview onsite. One way for employers to narrow this list down to a more manageable number is based on who has shown an active interest in them.

See the "Frequently Asked questions" Section within this document to read other tips about using mailboxes.

Using the computers

The Placement Center computers are restricted to activities pertaining to finding a job. Job candidates can conduct searches, print position descriptions, upload revised resumes from a disk, look at employer web sites, etc. There is a 20-minute limit when lines exist, and printing is limited to 10 job descriptions per use. Help Desk staff will be able to assist you if needed – don't hesitate to ask for help.

Using the interview area

The interview area is one open room with tables and chairs (see photo of the 2005 room). The proximity of the tables is dependent upon the room size. The interview area is a service provided to employers to use if they choose. Some employers conduct interviews at their exhibit booth, hospitality suite, hotel lobby or restaurant, etc. Don't assume that the interview will be held in the Placement Center – always confirm the location of where you will meet.

There is a waiting area for candidates, but confirm with the employer if they will come and find you or if you need to find them. If you fail to make these arrangements in advance, scan the interview room to determine if the employer is present. If they are with another candidate, wait in the waiting area. If they're not with a candidate, approach the employer, and introduce yourself.

During peak times (i.e., Friday afternoons and Saturday), the interview area can be very crowded and loud. The interviewing area is not very private; therefore, if you are concerned about the privacy, ask the employer to interview you at another location (suggest a location but not a personal hotel room). If you are scheduled to interview during these peak times, you may want to practice interviewing in these conditions. For example, have a friend interview you in a noisy restaurant.

Help desk

The Help Desk is staffed by student volunteers, convention bureau staff, and Placement Committee members (also volunteers). They are not part of SIOP's administrative staff and are available to assist with technical issues. Job Seeker tips and other resources are available at www.siop.org/Placement/Seeker.asp

The Help Desk will maintain some commonly used office supplies, such as pens, staplers, paper clips, but don't assume that it will have everything that you need because occasionally, we run out. The hotel Business Center is nearby if you need other materials or services not supplied by the Placement Center.

The Help Desk will also have:

- Copies of all job descriptions and resumes. (The Placement Center staff prints out copies of the job descriptions and resumes from what is submitted online. Because the information is the same, online searches are faster than flipping through these binders.)
- Alphabetical list of job seekers/employers
- List of job seekers/employers by mailbox number

Frequently asked questions

Q: Conference dress gets more casual each day of the conference. Does this mean that I should dress more casually for interviews as the conference progresses?

A: No. Your goal as a job candidate is to make as positive an impression as possible. Dress the part at all times.

Q: I want to contact an employer by leaving a note in their box, but I'm not sure what to say. Any tips?

A: Let the employer know that you are interested in the position/their organization. Why not go two steps further and indicate: (1) why you are interested in the position, and (2) the specific skills/experiences that you would bring to the position. Indicate that you are interested in setting up an interview with them on site, and recommend some possible meeting times should their interest in you be mutual. Of course, be sure to let them know your box number so that they can easily contact you.

Q: Should I put my resume in every employer's box to maximize my chances for an interview?

A: No, save everyone's time and energy by targeting only those jobs that you are truly qualified for and interested in. Remember that all employers have access to your resume online.

Q: Can I put a longer/different version of my resume in an employer's box?

A: Yes, you should feel free to use a different version of your resume on site than you submitted as part of the placement center registration. In fact, this is highly recommended if significant accomplishments have occurred since you submitted your resume (e.g., you just successfully defended your thesis).

In some cases, you might want to expand your resume to a longer length to better detail your skills and experiences. Keep in mind though that a longer resume isn't necessarily a stronger one; what is key is to present your skills and experiences in a way that best differentiates you from others, while striking a balance with resume length – something that time pressed employers will appreciate.

Q: I just checked my mailbox and found a note from an employer indicating an interview time an hour ago. I'd still like to meet with them. What should I do?

A: Leave a note for the employer indicating that you retrieved their note after their proposed meeting time, but would be very interested in meeting with them. Recommend times when you are available to make coordination easier for them, giving a number of options.

Q: I'm really interested in a particular job, but the employer is not on site. There is a note on their box saying not to leave resumes. What should I do?

A: First, follow directions – do not leave your resume in their box. This sounds straightforward, but each year, there are resumes in a box like this. The note means that no one will be retrieving resumes on behalf of the employer. These resumes will be thrown away at the end of the conference by the Placement Center staff. Second, mail your resume to the employer after the conference indicating your interest in the position. Be sure to write a formal cover letter; a note like you might use on site at the conference would not be appropriate here.

Q: Do I need to type notes that I leave in an employer's box or will a handwritten note suffice?

A: What's important is what you say, not whether the note is handwritten or typed. (This, of course, applies to the conference only. While a handwritten cover letter mailed to an employer might make a lasting impression, it's not the type of impression you want to make.) You're at the conference, and everyone knows that access to a computer is limited. Just be sure to print neatly if you write out a note by hand. You won't be contacted in response to a note if the employer can't read it. Also be sure to include your mailbox number on your note/resume to facilitate them contacting you.

Keep in mind though that you can also type up some generic letters to use in employers' boxes before the conference, with spaces to fill in information on site (such as your available interview times should your interest in them be mutual). This will save you time on site, and might create an even more polished impression. You might create a couple of different letters – for example, one for employers who contact you to set up an interview, and one for employers who you contact "cold."

Q: What should I do if I need to leave the conference early?

A: It would be best to write a note to place over your mailbox slot and tape the shut with packaging tape supplied by the Help Desk.

Q: What should I do if I can't come to the conference due to an emergency?

A: You could have a friend check your mailbox, respond to notes, and distribute your resumes for you during the conference. Your friend could also distribute your resumes for you and the Help Desk staff can place a note on your mailbox and tape the opening shut. We can give access to the area to your friend with your written permission and your mailbox number.

Q: What should I do if I find a job before the conference?

A: Congratulations on your success! Please contact the SIOP Administrative Office immediately, let them know of your good fortune and we'll remove your resume from the web site. If you get the job after the conference begins, the Help Desk staff can place a note on your mailbox and tape the opening shut, in addition to removing your resume from the web site.

Q: What happens to the mail in the mailboxes after the conference?

A: All the mailboxes and their contents are thrown out.

Q: Can I have a friend check my mailbox for me during the conference?

A: Since the Placement Center area is restricted to registered job seekers and employers, we cannot allow friends to enter the area. If you leave the conference early, we can give access to the area to your friend with your written permission and your mailbox number.

Other Tips

-
- The Placement Center does **NOT** set up interviews, and it is not a headhunter agency. It is staffed primarily by volunteers who are available to assist you with technical issues. It is your responsibility to contact employers if you are interested in their job postings.
 - Put your mailbox number on **ALL** communications with employers.
 - SIOP is a small organization with many connections between its members, so be honest on your resume. If you're not, chances are you'll be found out.
 - You never know who is a job seeker and who is an employer. Be aware of what you say and how you act not only in the Placement Center but during the Conference.
 - Read the Employer Concerns document on the Job Seeker home page (www.siop.org/Placement/Seeker.asp).
-

**Photos of 2005
Placement Center**

To give you an idea of what the Placement Center generally looks like, here are photos from the 2005 Los Angeles conference, where all of the Placement Center was housed in a single large room. In 2006, the Center will be situated similarly with the mailboxes, computer kiosks, and the candidate waiting area located in a section of the Placement Center that will be separated from the interview area by drapes. Your badge is required for access into room.

2005 Help Desk and Mailboxes. The employer mailboxes to the far left and the job seeker mailboxes are straight ahead. The Help Desk is on the left.



2005 computers. Generally workstations are in clusters of 4 computers and 2 printers. A total of 10 computers and 5 printers were available for use by employers and job seekers. The interview area is behind the curtain.



Photo of the **2005 interview room**. Note that the tables are situated close to each other. There were 30 tables in 2005.

