



## “Johnnysbabymama” in Ripped Jeans — A Good Applicant?

By Michael D. Hayes

**As more jobs are disappearing, applicants need to be competitive when looking for a new position or career. So far in 2008, 760,000 jobs have been cut in the United States, with 159,000 of those disappearing in September alone, according to the US Department of Labor. The unemployment rate, which was at only 4.7% last year, now stands at 6.1%. More than 9.5 million people are currently looking for work.**



Despite the tough job market, Michael Hayes still sees applicants walk into his Phoenix staffing office, Momentum Specialized Staffing, in ripped jeans, dirty shirts, and messy hair. These candidates must first meet the approval of Hayes and his staff before being sent on an interview with a company, and many, not surprisingly, aren't getting a second look. Applicants have just one

shot to make a good impression.

“Finding a job may be tough, but it's not impossible if you use common sense when applying for a job,” Hayes said. “In other words, if you're serious about finding a job or new career, look serious.” What should applicants avoid when applying for a job?

“Do not wear a hat. Take off your sunglasses,” Hayes said. “Don't wear T-shirts with writing on them. Make sure your clothing is clean and free of rips and stains. Ripped jeans are not proper attire for the workplace.” A designer suit and tie, however, are not necessary to impress, according to Hayes.

“A nice pair of slacks with a clean button-down shirt with no wrinkles says, ‘I made an effort and I wanted to look professional.’ Employers want to know you want the job, so dress like you want the job.”

But even those who look nice sometimes lose credibility when they fill out an application. For example, everyone has email today, but an inappropriate email address could derail a person's career plans. “Many people have a personal email address that is not appropriate for a job application,” Hayes said. “Some examples are ‘johnnysbabymama,’ ‘gangsta4life,’ and anything with profanity in it. Set up an email address through a free site like Yahoo or Google, and create a professional email address.” The ultimate faux pas for job seekers is a messy resume that is riddled with spelling errors.

Make sure your resume is on professional paper and not folded or creased, Hayes said. And of course, while the resume itself should be free of errors, any potential correspondence should be perfect as well.

“Fortunately, most email programs have spell checkers, but you *must* turn them on for them to work,” Hayes said. “Nothing is more embarrassing than having a typo in a message to an employer. It could be the kiss of death. You could ruin your credibility with one little typo!”

Many employers request references. References should not be relatives, if at all possible, or the previously mentioned “baby daddy.”

“The ideal reference is a previous employer who knows a candidate's skills and work habits,” Hayes said. “Personal references are good, but these should be work colleagues. A savvy employer is going to see through the ‘best friend’ bragging on his or her buddy.”

So the candidate's resume looks good, he or she has references, and he or she came into the office well-dressed—but that still doesn't mean the candidate will get the job. Some employers request a second interview, often making the request by phone, and many people have music playing instead of a ring tone.

“When a potential employer calls you to schedule an interview, they do not want to hear music talking about drinking at the bars, getting down with the ladies, or rolling like a pimp!” Hayes said. “Set your ring tone to the traditional ring. Your voice mail message should also be changed to something appropriate. Don't say, ‘Yo, I'll holla back at ya!’”

How a person acts during an interview is also important.

“Sit up straight in the interview chair, maintain eye contact, and pay attention to what the person conducting the interview



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is saying to you," Hayes said. "Also, always turn your phone off or to vibrate when you are filling out job applications or interviewing, and never look at or answer your phone in the middle of an interview."

As the job market tightens, potential employers will look for the best. Many companies believe they have retained the top employees and all that is left in the market are mediocre employees, Hayes said. So when there is an opening, many employers don't have high expectations.

"If a candidate is well-dressed, has a clean, error-free resume, and has a good interview, employers will be impressed," Hayes said. "Exceed their expectations in the interview and application process, and you will have a better chance of getting the job."

## About the Author

Michael D. Hayes is a native of Arizona and a graduate of Northern Arizona University and Thunderbird, the American Graduate School of International Management. Michael's professional career began with 14 years in the securities business, advising banks, mutual funds, and individuals on all types of investments. He purchased Momentum Specialized Staffing in 2003 when the company's primary business line was recruiting commercial truck drivers. Michael has transformed the company into a successful full-service staffing provider. Michael is a member of the Executives' Association of Greater Phoenix (EAGP), 100 Club of Arizona, Men's Art Council, and the Arizona Trucking Association.

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