NEXT-GEN
Occupational Therapists:
Strategies For Crushing Your Career Goals!
ALOTA Fall Conference
September 2017

Introduction:

About Me: Brandon Seigel,
- At age 25, became the Vice President of Operations for a “startup” that employed over 250 employees in the finance/tech industry.
- Recognized as a leader in “workforce management” and an “entrepreneur’s best friend.”
- My passion is inspiring and empowering the next generation of clinicians to transcend mediocrity and bring out the best in a team while reaching organization’s strategic goals.
- Joined Every Child Achieves in 2008 to have a higher purpose and make a difference in a family owned service-based organization.
- Frequent Guest Lecturer for OT, PT, SLP programs inclusive of conferences (APTA student conclave, AOTA, CSHA, CPTA, OTAC, etc.)

Current Positions:
- Executive Director with Every Child Achieves, Inc.
- President with Wellness Works Management Partners
- Strategic Consultant for Blue Jay Mobile Health, Inc.
- Wife is an Occupational Therapist.
- Mother-in-law is an Occupational Therapist.
- Brother-in-law is an Occupational Therapist.
- The dog is a licensed service dog.

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Learning Objectives For Part 1: Preparing To Enter The OT Workforce

- A brief update on the current healthcare environment impacting your profession.
- Understanding the current employee marketplace for an Occupational Therapist.
- Identifying tips for career planning as an Occupational Therapist.
- Strategies for a successful career as an Occupational Therapist.
- Strategies for writing an effective resume and cover letter.
- Understanding the art of negotiation and when it is appropriate.
- Tips for crushing your first interview.

Brandon’s Disclaimer:

All of the information that I am presenting today is designed to be recommendations and concepts based on my experience. I am here to help and give some new perspectives that might help you better prepare when entering the OT Workforce.
Vicious Cycle of Declining Payment:

- Declining Payment
- Increased Production
- OT Burnout
- Decreased 1:1 Time with Patients
- Decreased Outcomes & Perceived Value
Current Healthcare Environment:
- Increased demand for services.
- Increased expenses.
- Stagnant or decrease in funding.
- Consolidation.

Increased Healthcare Demand:
Causes for increased demand:
- Aging baby boomer generation.
- The increasing average lifespan.
- 2010 Affordable Care Act (requiring healthcare coverage).
- Environmental factors (i.e. pesticides etc.).

Healthcare Providers Faced With Increased Expenses:
- Labor law changes (1099 regulations, minimum wage increases, etc.).
- Increased cost of living.
- Higher denial rate of healthcare claims.
- Delay in payment from insurance companies.
- ICD-10 (implementation of new diagnosis coding system).
Examples of Technology & Impact On Healthcare Environment:

Discuss Pros & Cons Of Each Item:
- Wearable Devices
- Telehealth Services
- Data Driven Outcomes (Increased Metrics, Funding Tied To Data, Data Driving How We Define Outcomes)
- Access To Charts In Real Time Anywhere (Kaiser Example)
- Additional Examples

Current Healthcare Environment Summary:

- We need legislative help to support your profession and the necessary funding and accountability to the insurance companies.

CALL TO ACTION:
Please Get Involved With AOTA and AOTA and Help Legislate For Your Profession!

Understanding Employment Trends & Statistics For OT's:

It is essential to understand the statistics on your profession to career plan effectively. You obviously know that there is a supply/demand issue but understanding the current employment and compensation trends can be extremely beneficial.
Overall Statistics On Occupational Therapist Profession

- **2016 Median Pay**: $80,910 per year, $39.38 per hour
- **Typical Entry-Level Education**: Master's degree
- **Work Experience in a Related Occupation**: None
- **On-the-job Training**: None
- **Number of Jobs, 2014**: 114,600
- **Job Outlook, 2014-24**: 27% (Much faster than average)
- **Employment Change, 2014-24**: 30,400

Important Information To Keep In Mind Regarding The Job Market:

- Although the “supply and demand” factors are currently shifted in your favor, this can change at any moment. Brandon believes that the market will become more competitive over the next 5 years depending on healthcare reform, federal and state funding, etc.
- FYI: There are six graduate OT programs in Southern California. There are approximately 400 new Occupational Therapists graduating from these programs each year. This does not include Northern CA programs and programs from other states.
- I share this with you because there will come a point when there is a “tipping point” and the job market will become more competitive. Please also keep in mind the number of COTA’s entering the employment market as well as other disciplines that share some similarities in scope of practice depending on your setting.

AOTA 2015 Study:

“What Does the Future of Occupational Therapy Look Like?”

Perceptions of the Occupational Therapy Job Market

- [Graph showing perceptions of the OT job market]

Note: Percentages do not add to 100 due to rounding.
The Bottom Line:

- Research, Prepare, and Strategize for a Successful Career as an Occupational Therapist.
- I find that there are many Occupational Therapists that feel “entitled” because they are an OT and those are the people that will have challenges gaining great employment opportunities.
- Keep in mind that there is a difference between “an opportunity” and a “great opportunity.”

Strategizing for a Successful Career:

In the words of Henry Ford, “Before everything else, getting ready is the secret of success!”

Tips for getting ready: Research, Research, Research!

- Research current factors impacting the setting that you are interested to work in.
- Research every company that you are applying for a job with.
- Research data on salaries, benefits, and training provided for the setting, so your expectations are realistic.
- Research the learning curve of the type of position that you are applying for.
- Research yourself and what you are hoping to achieve professionally in the next five years.
Helpful Resources For Research: The Starting Point!

- AOTA (www.aota.org)
- AOTA (www.aota.org)
- Glass Door (www.glassdoor.com)
- Indeed (www.indeed.com)
- LinkedIn (www.linkedin.org)
- NGOT (www.newgradoccupationaltherapy.com)

Tips For Taking Advantage Of Fieldwork Experience:

- Create Relationships With As Many People Within Company (Managers, Therapists, HR Team, Patients)
- Keep a Journal For Each Fieldwork Experience (Document All Exposure: Diagnoses, Treatment Methods, Assessment Protocols, Patient Outcomes Etc.)
- Focus On Your Productivity (Earn Your Exchange – Hard Work Pays Off, Stand Out!)
- Interview Your Supervisor And Other Clinicians (Strategies to Be A Strong OT From The Start, Common Mistakes, etc.)
- Ask Supervisor About Your Strengths, Weaknesses and Tips For Improvement Before Graduating
- Take Supervisor To Lunch / Acknowledge Your Supervisor
- Ask For Letter Of Recommendations

Strategies For Career Planning As An Occupational Therapist:

- Brainstorm a strategic career plan based on the following concepts:
  - Your current and future lifestyle. (Work/Life Balance)
  - Your clinical passion along with your likes and dislikes. (Define settings that you thrive in)
  - Your clinical strengths and dislikes
  - Your learning style
  - Your 1 year, 3 year and 5 year goals!
Brandon’s Tips For New Grads:
- Walk before you run!
- Research, study, duplicate, execute!
- Invest in your clinical knowledge!
- Pace yourself!
- Effective communication is the secret!
- Love what you do!

Essential Tips For Your Resume:
- The general rule of thumb: highlight your most applicable skills at the top of your resume.
- A resume should look professional. A simple design goes a long way! (no pink paper, no flashy designs, etc.).
- Customize your resume to the position that you are applying for.
- A resume’s purpose is to communicate your most relevant skill sets. A resume is a black and white communication of qualifications as it relates to the job that you are applying for.

Hiring Manager’s Are Looking For The Following When Evaluating Clinicians:
- Relevant Exposure (New Grads) – What exposure to diagnoses, treatment outcomes, treatment techniques, assessment tools, production, etc.
- Relevant Work Experience – What previous work experience relates to this position (Clinical Aide, Dev. Intervention, etc.)
- Retention, Retention, Retention! (How long were you at your previous employer)
- What separates you from other clinicians? (clinical certifications, awards, published research, philanthropy related to the field of therapy, etc.)
Top 5 Most Common Mistakes On New Grad Clinician’s Resumes:
- Clinicians think that a resume must be 1 page
- Clinicians write a generic “objective statement.”
- Clinicians highlight the wrong information through structure of resume
- Clinicians don’t include details on clinical rotations
- Clinicians don’t understand that a “new grad” resume structure is different than experienced clinician’s resume structure

Two Common Formats For Resumes:
- **Chronological:** This kind of resume is based on past experiences. It typically has fewer headings and lists experience in a reverse chronological order.
- **Functional:** This format consists of headings (related skills & expertise, professional experience, etc.). I prefer a functional resume format for “new grads.”

Additional Tips: (My Personal Preferences)
- Font Type: Use Times New Roman, Calibri, Verdana, Arial or another plain font throughout the resume.
- Font Size: 10-12 pt. for the primary body of resume with your name in 16-18 pt. format.
- Layout: Margins 0.5 to 0.9

Additional Common New Grad Clinician Resume Questions
- Should I include my grade point average on my resume?
- This is my 2nd career, how do I document that? (previous experience in banking, pharmaceutical sales, flight attendant, etc.)
- What previous work experience is considered relevant?
- Where do I document the presentations I did at AOTA or published papers?
- Should my resume differ in format depending on the position that I am applying for?
- Should references be included on my resume?
Brandon's Viewpoint On Resumes:

- Your resume starts as a blank canvas and will develop over time into a masterpiece illustrating your professional journey.
- It is a visual communication and expression of your experience and exposure.
- You must prioritize your communication. The most relevant information is at the top of the resume.

Different Categories That You May Use On Your Resume:

- Education
- Licensure And Certification
- Fieldwork Experience
- Relevant Work Experience
- Professional Development
- Relevant Volunteer Involvement
- Research Experience

Resume Disclaimer:

- The following resumes have been altered to protect the identity of the candidates. The majority of content is real information.
- The purpose of sharing these resumes is to give feedback and perspectives for you to keep in mind when composing your resumes.
- Please be aware that all of the following advice is truly recommendations, and there is no “black and white” way of crafting resumes; therefore, this is truly my advice based on 12+ years of hiring employees.
This is a resume that was posted on "Indeed". I removed the name of the recent graduate to be respectful but this resume will not get you hired.

LET'S DISCUSS
There is no detail in her work experience. This resume is truly just a work history. My recommendation is to include more detail.

I find that both her "objective" and "professional skills" are very generic. She has almost too much content and could prioritize her words. Focus on areas that differentiate you in terms of "skillsets" that you established through the fieldwork.

Her work experience is not relevant. A "Bakery Assistant" position is not relevant therefore it truly should not be on her clinical resume.
Pick One: I find that “professional summary” and “summary of qualifications” overlap and ultimately it is essential that you utilize this section only if you have info that will help you stand out.

Since this candidate was a “new grad,” I would have preferred if she had her “degree” highlighted above her fieldwork but I do find many candidates highlight where they went to school at the bottom of the resume.

This candidate put all of their education, training and volunteering under one section. I personally find it is more effective when education and volunteer experience is separated.

Please note: Everything that is detailed in this section is relevant.

Recommendations:
• Header includes address or better design to header
• Have all your dates align with the same indent
• Include the months in your fieldwork experience (July-September 2015)
Recommendations:

- Try to keep all bullets, tables, or other items on the same page.
I like the “Honors” info being formatted in this resume. This resume does a great job of illustrating this clinician’s clinical experience and skillsets.
The header is different but suits the job of the most of your audience.

I would like to see the related experience details in the externship at PCDA, see the difference between leadership and the experience.

Related Experience:
(organized in chronological order)

The level of detail that is included in "Related Experience" provides me insight on this candidate's experience, clinical interests and helps her standout.

Now it is Your Turn: Let's Evaluate This Resume
OT New Graduate Resume

Now It is Your Turn: Let's Evaluate This Resume

RESUME TRANSFORMATION

put it to the TEST
Purpose Of A Cover Letter:

- Cover letters are essential to a hiring manager in the people business because they allow the hiring manager to see your general or succinct work skills and give the hiring manager a glimpse into what attracts you to the position.
- Cover letters should be personalized to each company. Please note that "cookie-cutter" cover letters are pointless; therefore, personalize everything!
- Communication is one of the most important things that I look at when hiring new clinicians.

Brandon’s Cover Letter Preferences:

- Cover letter should be personally addressed to the direct hiring manager.
- Cover letter should highlight that you have knowledge of the company and the position.
- Cover letter should express 2-3 qualifications that make you the right fit to qualify for the position and your reason for why you are the right fit.
- Cover letter should share a little bit about you and your passion for why you came into this field.
- Cover letter should always ask for the opportunity to meet and discuss your qualifications and the position in more detail.

SAMPLE BODY OF A COVER LETTER

Dear Mr./Ms. [Name],

I am writing to express my interest in [position] with [company]. My background in [field] has prepared me for this opportunity, and I believe my skills and experience make me a strong candidate for the role.

[Body of the cover letter discussing qualifications, experience, and why the applicant is a good fit for the position.]

Thank you for considering my application. I look forward to the opportunity to discuss my qualifications further.

Sincerely,

[Your Name]
Understanding Compensation
And Keys For Negotiation

Benefit Packages May Include:
- Salary or Hourly Compensation
- Medical Benefits
- Dental Benefits
- Vision Benefits
- Vacation
- Sick
- Holidays
- 401(k)
- Continuing Education
- FMLA Benefits
- Work Culture
What Is Negotiable?
- Salary - possible
- “Sign On Bonus” – possible
- Medical Benefits – non-negotiable
- Vacation / Sick – non-negotiable
- Continuing Education – possible
- Incentive Programs – possible
- Loan Forgiveness – possible
- Flexible Hours – possible
- Other Benefits?

Keys To Negotiation Of Your Compensation:
- Strategize your priorities:
  - Compensation, Benefits, Mentorship, Clinical Setting, Continuing Education, etc.
- Research, research, research (Survey real life Occupational Therapists)
- Understand the company’s fiscal situation (funding source, etc.)
- Make your value proposition!

Important Qualities For Occupational Therapists:
According to the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, it is essential that Occupational Therapists have the following important qualities:
- Communication Skills
- Compassion
- Flexibility
- Interpersonal Skills
- Patience
- Writing Skills
- Ethics (Brandon’s addition)

Data Source: [http://www.bls.gov/oes/current/oes291122.htm](http://www.bls.gov/oes/current/oes291122.htm)
Preparing For The Interview Process:

Understanding Hiring Managers:

Generally speaking, there are two types of hiring managers in today's healthcare environment:

- "Number's Business" Hiring Manager
- "People Person Business" Hiring Manager

Communication Does Matter:

Some of my sample questions I email to potential candidates before scheduling an interview:

- Are you seeking positions as a W-2 employee? I noticed that you are currently operating as an Independent Contractor and find it very different than W-2 employment.
- Are you looking for part-time or full-time employment?
- How many billable treatment visits per week are you seeking?
- What attracted you to this position?
- Are you currently working for any other early intervention providers?
- Are you open interested in making an 18-month commitment to an employer if offered the position?
- What cities are you interested in covering?
- What is your desired compensation?
- What is your availability for a phone interview next week?
- What electronic medical record systems have you utilized previously?
Communication Does Matter: 
Take Time With Your Email Communication!
Example Of Real Life Poor Email Response

both w/ and 1099 I do.
yes to all.
employing and about as opposed to just sitting behind a desk.
yes, LT fine.
familiar withelligent, sees, windows 10 etc.
can phone interview this week.
are you an SLP also?

Now Check This Response Out:

1) I was attracted to this position because I have a great deal of experience with the 0-3 population and throughout all my volunteer, work, and fieldwork/clinical experiences. My favorite part of each placement has been coaching and providing education to caregivers. I was drawn to OT after being the nanny to a family with an infant with developmental delays who ended up being diagnosed with autism, and her in-home therapists really resonated with me in terms of their collaboration with the family/caregivers and client-centered vision for her progress. In terms of professional goals I am very interested in the NICU and special needs arena and have a passion for in-home therapy (as a PA) as I really enjoy working with infants and feeding and swallowing. I am presenting at a national neonatal therapy conference in April on caregiver education for preterm and medically fragile infants, and hope to continue to be involved in the presenting/conference realm in the coming years. My main immediate goal is to develop a strong clinical foundation in a setting such as early intervention and remain in that position for several years prior to furthering professional development.

2) My clinical fieldwork experiences were at Rancho Los Amigos (inpatient and outpatient rehab) and in a NICU and an intensive rehab. I have extensive experience working with families and their needs which I am excited to bring to the field of OT. I greatly enjoyed both of my clinical experiences, but found myself frustrated when discharging clients home where I knew they were going to need a great deal of continued support. In-home therapy is where I feel like as therapists we can provide the greatest “real world” support to our clients.

3) I have more experience with infants under the age of 12 months than any other population. My NICU fieldwork was an intensive experience where I worked with premature and medically fragile infants (and referred almost all of these infants to early intervention in home services!) I have been a nanny for several families and understand the “real life” challenges, routines, and development that happens in a baby’s first 12 months from the perspective of the whole family.

4) As I mentioned above, whatever job I start as a new graduate, I hope to stay in for at least 2-3 years to gain a strong clinical foundation in that particular setting. I recognize that I will be developing my clinical skills throughout my first year and want to capitalize on that learning by remaining in a relatively consistent position.
Stand Out: Make an Everlasting Impression!

- Dress to impress (please do not show up in scrubs).
- Shake hands and look people in the eye.
- Send a thank you note to anyone that you meet (handwritten letters make a huge impression).
- Communicate clearly with passion to show your interest in the company and the position. Respond in a timely manner.
- Express your professional goals so that a company knows what you are trying to accomplish and how the position aligns with your goals.

The Secret Sauce: Bring A Clinical Portfolio To Your Interview

- Do your homework about the program/facility:
  - Who owns it?
  - What type of clients do they serve?
  - Have they been in the news lately?
  - What kind of programs do they have and are there any specialty programs?
  - What are they best known for and are there any centers of excellence?
  - What is their payment structure and who is their primary funder?
- Arrive at least 10 to 15 minutes early for your appointment. Make sure you have directions to the organization and allow time for traffic.
- Come to the interview alone. Do not bring a family member or significant other to the interview.
- Dress professionally and somewhat conservatively, but be true to your personality.
- Be polite to everyone you encounter. Acknowledge everyone with a smile and a greeting.
- Do not chew gum.
- Turn off your cell phone.
- Bring a pen to complete paperwork.
- Bring extra copies of your resume in a folder.

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AOTA Tips On Interviewing
Continued:

- Have a list of questions prepared to ask the interviewer(s):
  - Workload/caseload
  - Supervision
  - Team members
  - Performance review process
  - Continuing education opportunities
  - Professional Association duties
  - Clinical ladder and opportunities for advancement
  - Opportunity to work with students
  - In-services offered
  - Mentorship opportunities
  - Opportunities to work with other team members
- Do not ask about salary in the first interview. Be prepared to give a salary range if asked.
- Be yourself. Remember, you are interviewing them too.

AOTA Common Interview Questions

- Tell me about your fieldwork experiences. What were the settings, what types of clients did you serve, what were the assignments you had, and what did a typical day look like towards the end of your rotations? What kind of caseload or workload were you carrying at the end of the rotations?
- What type of feedback did you receive from your supervisors about your documentation?
- What interests you most about our program/facility? What interests you most about the position?
- What are your strengths or special skills that you will bring to this position? In what areas will you need support and further learning?
- What type of supervision fits your personal style the best?
- Do you have a professional development plan? Where do you see yourself in 5 years?
- What type of volunteer organizations do you participate in?
- Have you sat for the NBCOT exam?
- Tell me about a situation during your fieldwork where you felt most proud to be an occupational therapy practitioner.
- Tell me why you went into occupational therapy.
- Tell me your definition of occupational therapy.
- Tell me about a situation where you needed to advocate for occupational therapy. What did you say?
- What do you see as your greatest weakness? How do you compensate for this?
- Do you have any questions?

Brandon’s Conclusion For Part 1:

- We have lots of factors influencing our industry and job market.
- It is essential to go the extra mile in doing proper research, preparation and make an everlasting impression!
- We are in the “people business”, therefore, we must communicate, connect and create a better tomorrow together! This is truly the Therapist X Factor!
References:

Labor Statistics, Critical Skills Needs/Resources & Facts:


Generational Identity and Statistics:
(Survey study completed and compiled by The Center for Generational Kinetics LLC and Ultimate Software 2015)

UXC Professional Solutions, 2015: www.uxcps.com.au

References Continued:


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