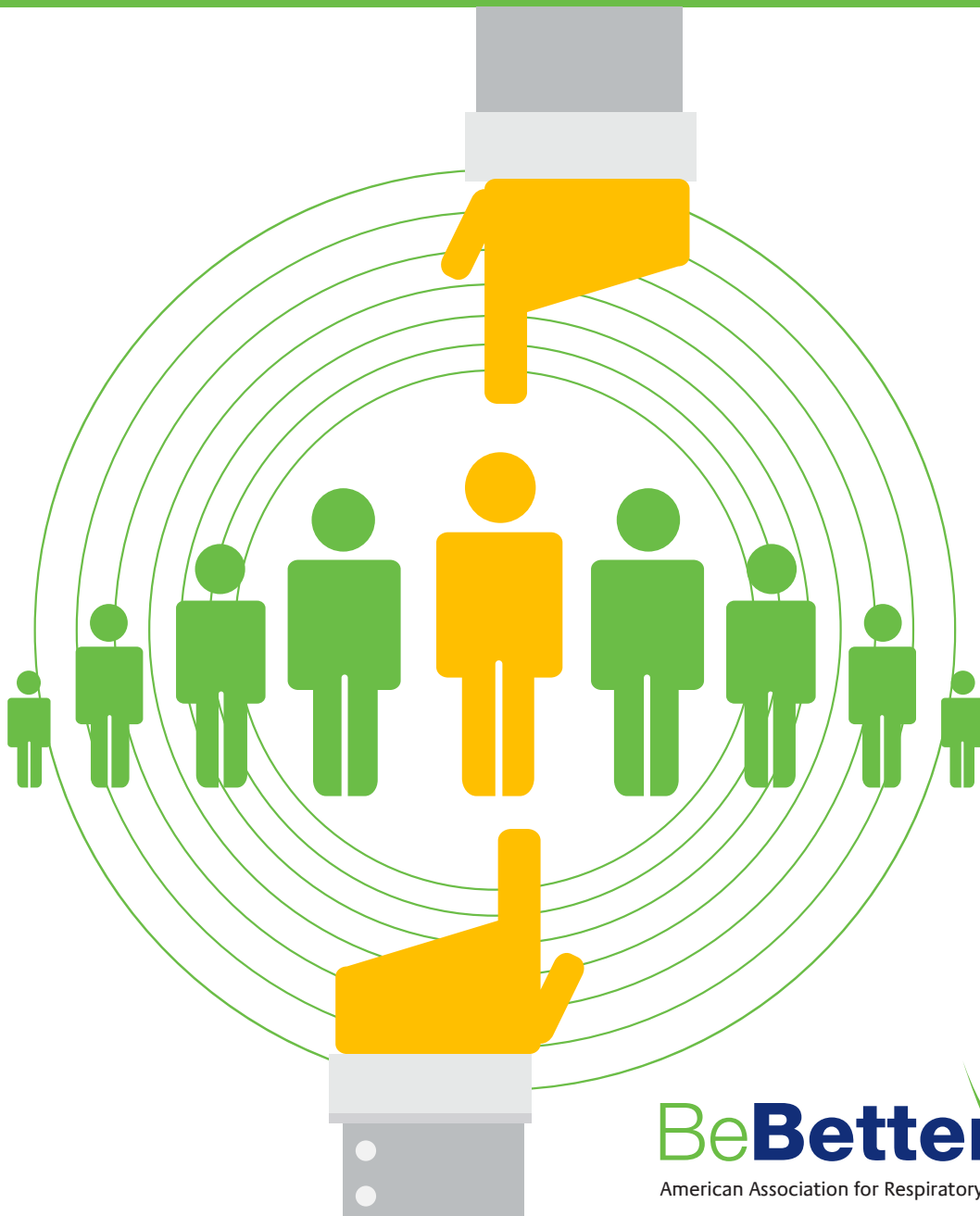


# Career Kit

# 8 Ways

to Make Sure You Get the Job





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# 8 Ways

to Make Sure You Get the Job

We've all heard the stories. Respiratory care departments with 50 applicants for one opening. Managers with 100 or more resumes sitting in a file cabinet in their offices. Job candidates who can't even get through on the phone to see if a manager received their application.

That's the brave new world of respiratory care hiring in many parts of the country, and if you're looking for a job in this more competitive environment, you may be wondering if there is really anything you can do to make yourself stand out from the crowd.

Here are eight suggestions from the AARC that might make a difference –



# 1. Build a technology-savvy resume

In our technology driven world, the first task when it comes to getting your resume to a hiring manager may be getting past so-called “robotic resume readers.” Big organizations like the health care systems that own many hospitals today are using this type of software more and more often to cull through resumes and look for keywords that match the job description. If yours doesn’t, it won’t make to the hiring manager’s desk.

The solution: acquire and read the job description. The more keywords you have that match up to the job description, the more likely your resume will be to move on up to human scrutiny.

But you have to be careful how you use those keywords too. Just copying and pasting the job description into your resume may seem like an easy way to get around these robotic readers, and you might very well make the electronic cut. But the real human at the end of the chain will certainly notice that you just spit back what was posted in the original ad.

Once you get past the robotic resume reader, it’s tempting to think it will be smooth sailing from here on out. Not so. A 2012 study that used sophisticated eye tracking technology to determine where – and for how long – the eyeballs of recruiters landed while reviewing resumes of job candidates found most spent no more than six seconds on any one resume before moving on the next.

While that’s certainly a discouraging statistic to anyone who has spent hours coming up with a resume, that doesn’t mean your resume can’t still get the job done. The first order of business is to understand what caught their eye.

According to the survey, here’s what they looked at the most –

Name  
Current title/company  
Previous title/company  
Previous position, start and end dates  
Current position, start and end dates  
Education



Clearly, you want to maximize the effectiveness of your resume in these areas. Here's how –

Make sure the items noted above stand out on the page. The less time the recruiter has to spend looking for them, the more time she'll have for other aspects of your resume, like a short but well-phrased statement on your overall career goals.

Keep the important stuff at the top of the page. Again, you want the recruiter to quickly see what he most wants to see, and having it on the top half of the page ensures that will happen.

Keep your visual layout simple and clean and use a plain font and 11 point type or larger. Avoid large blocks of text (which can't possibly be read in six seconds) and add in plenty of white space to help the recruiter's eye move more smoothly over the page.

After you put your resume together, test it out on trusted colleagues to see what jumps off the page for them in six seconds or less. If they didn't see what you wanted them to see, chances are the recruiter won't either.

Six seconds certainly doesn't seem like a lot of time to make a decision on who to call in for an interview and who to cast aside, but the reality is that busy RT managers often don't have more than six seconds to devote to the task. Following these simple tips could help ensure your resume ends up on the "let's get these folks in here" pile.

## 2. Get on LinkedIn . . . and get linked in to the AARC

Billed as the world's largest professional network (some 364 million strong), LinkedIn is a free service that offers users the chance to build a professional identity online, connect with colleagues all over the world, discover professional opportunities, and learn from their peers.

if you have a LinkedIn page (and you should!) include it on your resume. It's a great way to expand on the 1-2 page resume you'll be submitting. Just make sure your page is up-to-date and includes the kind of information you want to share with the hiring manager.

Also make sure you have a short URL for your page so the manager will be willing to type it in if she isn't viewing your resume on her computer screen. To do this, simply go to your page, click on "Profile" and then "View profile as" and choose "Manage public profile settings." On that page, look for "Your public profile URL" to make a short URL that will take people to your page.

LinkedIn also gives companies and associations like the AARC a chance to set up their own pages, and the Association has done just that.

**Our page** on LinkedIn features regular updates on Association activities, products and services available to help you build your career, and a discussion forum where any day of the week, any hour of the day you'll find respiratory therapists talking about issues important to the profession.



Just like on Facebook you can “like,” “comment,” and “share,” and putting yourself out there will help everyone else in the group get to know who you are and what you stand for -- all of which can lead to more opportunities to network directly with respiratory managers across the country who are in hiring positions in their organizations.

The nice thing about LinkedIn is that inquiring about job opportunities isn't frowned upon either, as it might be on Facebook (“Why is that guy talking about jobs here?”) or even the AARC discussion lists (“Aren't we here to share information about patient care?”).

On LinkedIn, people are actively looking for new employment opportunities all the time, so if you want or need a new job, no one is going to think you stepped out of line by inquiring about what's out there! And with more than 1800 followers right now and more coming on board every day, the AARC LinkedIn page has plenty of folks to tap into.

So if you have yet to join the 364 million folks who are already on this networking site do it today. If you're already there but aren't following the AARC, do that too – our 1800+ followers represent your best bet for networking about professional opportunities in respiratory care.





### 3. Manage your social media

Social media has invaded all of our lives, but when it comes to conducting a job search, these networking sites can be like a double-edged sword. While you can certainly connect to a lot more people on social media than you could ever reach in real life, the opportunity to do yourself more harm than good abounds as well.

Here are a few good ways to use social media to further your career – and a few bad things you’ll want to avoid:

#### THE GOOD

**Facebook:** Since most people use Facebook to share their personal life, it probably isn’t the best place to be looking for a job. But it is a place employers will go to check out job candidates, so it would be a good idea to set up separate accounts for your personal and professional lives, and then be sure your personal account is kept private. Posts on your professional account should be just that – professional. Use it as a place to connect to other RTs and RT-related groups (like the **AARC**), then share only information related to the profession or health care in general.



**Twitter:** Setting up separate personal and professional Twitter accounts is a good idea too. Then use your professional account to follow hospitals or other organizations you would like to know more about. Increasingly, employers are posting job openings on Twitter, and sometimes their followers are the first to get the word. You can also sell yourself by including your professional experience and skills in your bio, and you can establish yourself as an expert in the field by tweeting news about evidence based studies and other relevant information.



**AARConnect:** If you are an AARC member, you have direct access to more than 50,000



of your fellow members through our professional networking site. Make the most of it by completing your profile and uploading a photo. “AC” has many discussion groups you can join as well, which will help you get to know people in specific areas of the profession. While the Specialty Section groups require an extra fee, Roundtables are open to any AARC member at no extra charge. You can also use the “Directory” tab to find members in your city or state or even at a specific hospital, and then message these individuals directly to ask questions about their facility or inquire about job openings.

## THE BAD

**Clean it up:** Even if you separate your personal and professional Facebook pages, you can still run into trouble when it comes to maintaining a professional image if your Facebook friends tag you in photos you’d rather not share professionally. So be sure to “untag” yourself in pictures you don’t really want potential employers to see. Cleaning up your personal page couldn’t hurt either, especially if any of your Facebook friends work at the facility where you are applying – or know someone who does. In the interconnected world we live in today, it only takes one friend to re-post something on your page to spread it to the world.

**Keep your temper in check:** It may be tempting to sound off about a professional issue or even a former employer or colleague during your interactions on social media, because you see a lot of that kind of thing going on when you read the posts of others. Don’t do it. Employers are looking for positive, can-do people and any hint of negativity will turn them off.

**r u hiring?:** Not only should you watch *what* you say on social media, you should also watch *how* you say it. Keep all your posts professional and proofread what you’ve written before you post to make sure you have used complete sentences and proper grammar, and everything is spelled correctly.

## 4. Be ready for behavioral interviewing questions

If it's been a while since you last interviewed for a job, you're probably hearing about something kind of scary called "behavioral interviewing" wherein the interviewer puts the interviewee on the spot with some pretty tricky questions.

What you're hearing is true. These kinds of questions are growing in popularity among employers, who look at them as the best way to find out how someone will perform on the job. The reason why they are considered valuable is because they ask about things the candidate has done in the past. According to the official theory, "The most accurate predictor of future performance is past performance in a similar situation."

What kind of questions can you expect? Most behavioral interviewing questions begin with phrases like:

Tell me about a time when . . .  
Describe a situation in which . . .  
Give me an example of . . .

For respiratory therapists these questions can range from anything from "Tell me about a time when you had to provide a treatment to a difficult patient" to "Give me an example of how you worked on a team to improve patient care." They all have one thing in common, though – they simply ask you to tell a story about what you did, why you did it, and what the outcome was.

Preparing for these types of questions can be a challenge, but there are some concrete steps you can take to get ready:

Go through the job description before the interview and to see what responsibilities will be expected of you. Think of times when you faced responsibilities like these in your previous job or jobs and how you dealt with each of them. If you haven't held this type of position before (for example, this is your first time to apply for a managerial position), consider other times when you were faced with similar responsibilities (whether at another type of job, at school, through a volunteer group, or even at home) and how you handled them.

Write your answers down, focusing on the problem, the actions you took to deal with it, and how things turned out in the end. Include enough detail for the interviewer to get a good picture of the situation, but don't go overboard – you should be able to complete your entire story in a couple of minutes or so.

Practice your answers out loud. The more you practice, the easier it will be to rattle off these stories when the questions are asked.

It is also important to note that your stories don't have to be an exact match for the question that is actually asked. For example, if you have a great story prepared about treating a difficult patient, but the question you get is something like, "Describe a situation when you used an effective method to assure adherence to physicians' orders," you can spin your story to fit. (Because surely whatever you did with that difficult patient ended up with him or her receiving treatment according to physicians' orders!)

The key is to have 4-5 great stories prepared that you can tweak on the fly to cover almost any question that might come your way.



## 5. Acing the phone interview

With more applications coming in for every open position, these days many RT managers are scheduling brief telephone interviews with likely candidates to wean the list down to a manageable number to bring in for face-to-face interviews.

Sometimes these initial interviews are conducted by the hiring manager herself, while in other cases, the manager delegates the task to HR. Either way, chances are good your first interview will be not face-to-face, but phone-to-phone.

Here are some tips for acing a phone interview –

**Be on time:** You wouldn't want to be late for a face-to-face interview, and you don't want to be late for a phone interview either. If your call is scheduled for 3 p.m., have phone in hand by 2:45.

**Keep it quiet:** With that cell in your purse or pocket you can make calls from anywhere, but a phone interview is best conducted in a quiet place where there won't be any interruptions. Don't do it at work, don't do it at your son's soccer game, and don't do it while driving either.

**Disable call waiting:** Again, you don't want any interruptions.

**Ditch the speakerphone:** The person on the other end of the line can tell when you've put him on speaker, and his first thought will be, "What else is this guy doing right now?" Give him your undivided attention by going old school, with phone to ear.

**First impressions count:** When you answer the phone, be professional but friendly and be sure to thank the interviewer for taking the time to talk to you about the position. Quickly state your interest in the job and why you're excited about the opportunity to work at the facility.





**Do your homework:** While it's easy to think the phone interview isn't as important as the face-to-face, prepare for it as if you'll be walking into someone's office rather than chatting on the phone. Go to the hospital website to learn more about the facility, read their recent press releases to see what's new, and look the department manager and other key staff up on LinkedIn to get a feel for their experience and background in the profession.

**Be ready for anything:** Most phone interviews only last about 20-30 minutes, so have some short answers prepared to the kinds of questions you believe you will be asked. But for each of those answers, have some additional points on your list too, in case the interviewer asks you to be more specific, or elaborate on your initial answer. It's always better to have more information than you'll need than not enough, because some phone interviews (especially if they decide they like you for the job) can run much longer than average.

**Set the stage for step two:** As the interview winds down, once again thank the interviewer for her time and let her know you are ready, willing, and able to come in to the department and learn more about the position. Follow up with a thank-you note restating the key points you covered in the interview and reaffirming your interest in the position.

## 6. Making a great first impression

Back in the late 1980s Head & Shoulders shampoo made a big splash with an ad campaign that centered around the tag line, “You never get a second chance to make a first impression.”

The shampoo is still on store shelves and the tag line is just as relevant today as it ever was. According to psychologists, we only have about 7-15 seconds before strangers form an opinion of us, so making the most of our initial meeting with anyone is vital to our future relations with that person.

When the person you’re meeting is a potential employer, that means you’ll want to prepare ahead of time to ensure you put your best foot forward. These tips can help:

**Watch what you wear:** Since first impressions are formed so quickly, appearance has to be at the top of your list. Most respiratory care managers can tell you stories about job candidates who marched into their offices dressed as if they were going out for a run, or getting ready to clean out their garages, or even worse, heading out for a night on the town. They’ll also tell you those folks had short interviews, because the first impression they left with their attire was all the manager needed to see to know he didn’t want to hire them. So dress appropriately. A nicely pressed button up shirt and slacks for guys, or a conservative dress, skirt and blouse, or slacks and blouse for girls will do the trick. Ladies, leave the six inch heels at home too. Flats or modest heels are more in line with getting the job.



**Mind your manners:** Shortly after your prospective employer first lays eyes on you, she is going to observe your body language and hear you speak. Approach the manager with a nice smile, offer your hand for a hearty handshake, and then state your pleasure in making her acquaintance. The key is to exude an aura of confidence and project a positive image that will let the employer know you are someone who can work well with other people and is certain of his ability to do a good job.

**Every interaction counts:** Don't forget that everyone you meet during the time you spend in the hospital will be making first impressions about you too, so adopt that aura of confidence and positive image before you even walk in the door and maintain it throughout the visit. You don't want the staff therapists who may be walking by to notice you fidgeting in your chair while you await your interview, see you snacking on a candy bar because you skipped lunch, or watch as you stare nervously into space. Any insecure or negative behavior they witness is bound to be shared with coworkers and will ultimately get back to the hiring manager. The same is true for any staff members you may be introduced to during the interview process. Each new encounter will result in a first impression, and you want them all to be positive.

## 7. The second time around

So, you went on an interview for that new job and now they've called to say they'd like you to come in again for a second one. After the initial euphoria at being asked back passes, anxiety may set in. After all, you already heard what they had to say, and you asked all of the questions you could think of. What's left to do?

Initial interviews are generally designed to find out if you have the basic experience and skills necessary to do the job and get a sense of your attitude towards work in general. The second interview will go more in-depth, as the hiring manager digs deeper into your personality and background to see whether you would be the best fit. You will most likely be asked to meet with multiple people this time as well – including those who may work with you or under you.

Here are some tips that can help you stand out from the other call-backs on the list:

Begin by reviewing your performance during interview number one. Clearly, you did well, or they wouldn't be asking you back, so think back on the points you made and the points made by the hiring manager. Review your answers to the questions you were asked and consider how you might expand upon them if the same questions come your way again.

Stick with the dress code you established for yourself the first time around – even if the hiring manager was in jeans and a polo shirt. It is always best to look your best, and dressing nicely shows the manager you value the opportunity to interview for the position.

Prepare to sell your soft skills, like being a team player, taking the initiative, and going the extra mile for the department and the hospital. The hiring manager has already determined that you have the skills to do the job; now he or she is looking at whether you, among the other candidates asked back for a second interview, are the right person for the job.

If you didn't meet your immediate supervisor during the first interview, you will likely spend some time with him or her during this one. This person will have more specific questions about your experience and background and will also be able to fill you in on the details of the job. Prepare to share more detailed aspects of your experience and ask more detailed questions about the job description. If you were given a written job description, make sure you know it backwards and forwards.

Second interviews often include a few moments with the hiring manager's boss too. These higher level executives will be less interested in your experience and skills and more interested in gaining a sense of your overall attitude and demeanor. Be professional, courteous, and enthusiastic.

If the position will require you to supervise others in the department, you may be asked to meet with a few of them as well, and their opinions could weigh heavily in the final hiring decision. Or, you may be asked to meet with a few staff members on your own level. In either case, these folks will be looking at how well you would fit in with them and their co-workers, so show them you can be a team player.

The second interview might include a tour of the department and/or key areas of the hospital. Greet everyone you meet with a smile and handshake, and show a genuine interest in them and what they are showing you.

If you decide this is the job for you, make sure everyone you talk to knows it. Show your enthusiasm for joining the team and let them know you are excited about pitching in and working hard to help the department deliver quality care for patients and meet its organizational goals.

## 8. Negotiating the salary

The final step in any job search is the negotiation of salary. If you're an RT just out of school, no problem – they'll tell you what they are willing to pay and that will be that. But if you are a therapist with a wealth of experience, some sort of negotiation will likely be in order. While salary negotiation is certainly more of an art than a science, according to experts in the area there are some concrete steps you can take to make sure you are paid what you're worth. Consider the following –

**Understand the job:** Before you can truly determine what you should be paid, you need to know what your job responsibilities will entail. Anything that goes above and beyond the standard job description ought to be worth additional dollars.

**Do your homework:** Go into the salary negotiation with solid information on what other RTs at your level are making in your area. Salary information for many positions can easily be found on websites like salary.com, payscale.com, indeed.com, careeronestop.org, glassdoor.com, and jobsearchintelligence.com. But the most accurate information is in the AARC's Human Resources Survey. You may want to check that before making your final negotiations.



**Perform a personal SWOT analysis:** Make a list of your individual strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats and use that list to make your case for a higher salary. For example, if you implemented best practices that resulted in significant cost savings at your last hospital, that could make you worth more at the next.

**Know what you want:** After you gather information about salaries in your area and have a good handle on what might make you worth more than average, set a salary range you'd be willing to accept in your new job.

**And what you don't:** Go into the negotiation with a firm idea of your "walk away" number and be prepared to explain why you can't accept anything under that amount to the hiring manager. If you do decide to walk away, do it gracefully. You don't want to burn any bridges that might come in handy later in your career.

**Rehearse your pitch:** Ask a family member or trusted friend to play the role of the hiring manager in the negotiation process so you can hone your negotiating skills before you head out to discuss your salary requirements for real.

While most employers already have a firm idea of what they will and won't pay for a certain position, most will also try to low ball the initial offer. A good salary negotiator attempts to find a balance between the first number put on the table and the number that will end up with the hiring manager showing her to the door.



The American Association for Respiratory Care represents respiratory therapists across the country and around the world, inspiring them to be better professionals for their careers, their patients, and their professional and personal lives.



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