Job Searching

How to get into the small pile?

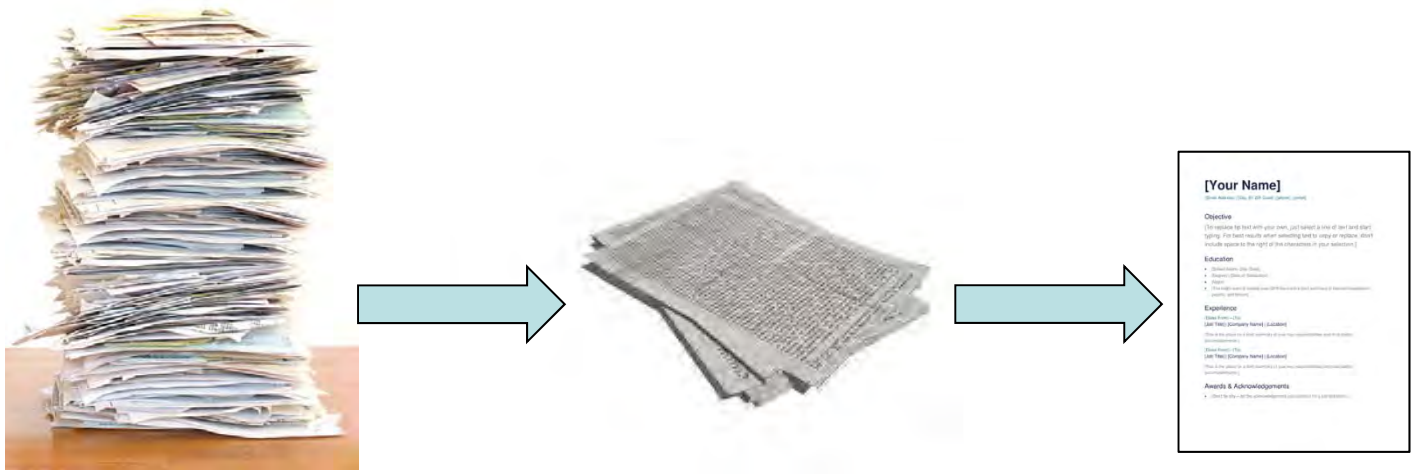
1. What to do ahead of time
2. Networking
3. The Resume
4. The Cover Letter
5. The Interview

D.R. Novog

Professor, McMaster University

THE SMALL PILE

- Employment searches have become extremely competitive.
  - 100s of application for a single opening.
  - About 5 to 10 typically selected for interviews (10:1 ratio).
    - How to get into the small pile
  - ~1 out of 5-10 selected for an offer – an even SMALLER pile.
  - **It IS a competition**, others are preparing….



Don't lose site of the end goal, why are you here?

Things to do NOW

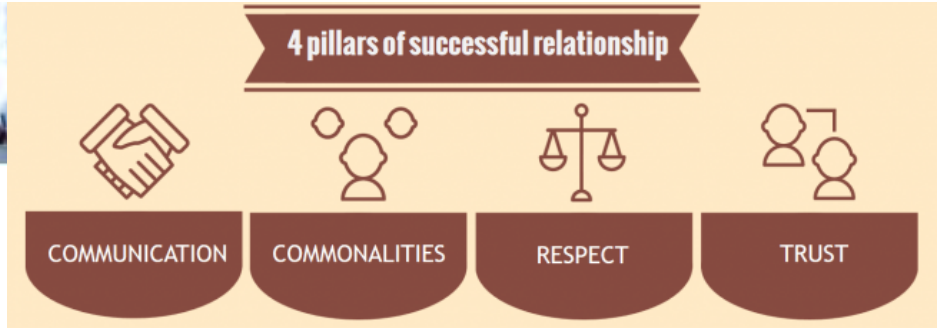
- Attend job search seminars ☺ and workshops.
- Draft professional resume and cover letter
  - Lots of templates and “advice” on the web
  - For each major resume area – work experience, technical skills, academic record, societal contributions… where do you stack up compared to others in the competition.
    - Identify your strengths/advantages – reinforce them.
      - Are there unique things you have learned or experiences that a majority of applicants will not have.
    - Identify your weaknesses/gaps
      - Plan how you can fill some of the holes.
  - Continuously develop and rework your resumes
- Start a binder where you will keep all of your notes, applications, resumes, interview self-assessments…., keep updating and marking it up.
- Practice interviews with your peer group
- NETWORK.

The Social Network
YOUR NETWORK = PEOPLE + CONECTIONS

- People
  - Family, neighbors, friends
  - Peers
  - Former employers, teachers, TA
  - Contacts at meetings and conferences/seminars
  - Contractors, team members, supervisors
  - How to grow your network?
- Connections
  - How well do you know them?
  - How can you improve your connection without being annoying?
  - Can part of their network help you?

Great people with great connections!

Connection Building (Relationship Building)



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- ALL successful relationships share common features:
  - Trust - honesty, reliability
  - Respect – For each other, but also for the ideals of each other.
  - Communication – discussion, compromise
  - Commonalities - mutual/common goals, mutual benefits
- Together it works to the benefit of both parties (not necessarily equal).

Using people only for their contribution to your job search will not be successful since the relationship is one-sided.

- *Start-early, identify ways to build successful connections.*
- *Develop the mutual aspects of your relationships.*
- *Relationships need to be continuously fostered.*
- *A strong network can contribute to your job search (and will WANT to)*

NETWORK = People + Connections

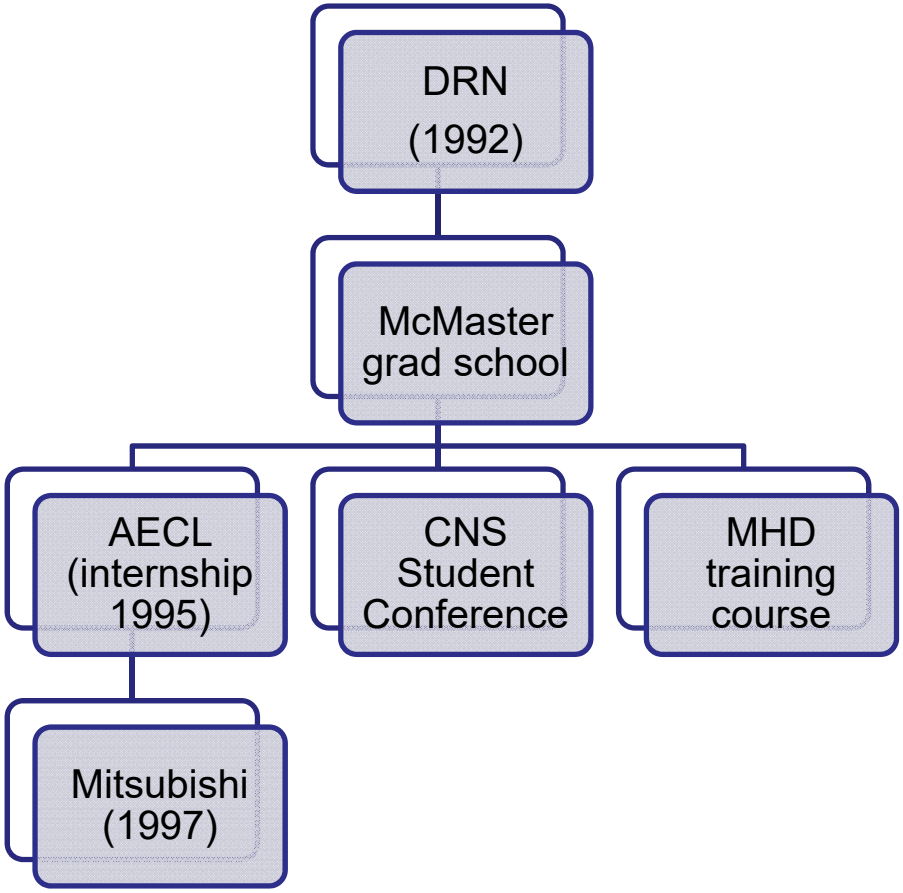
DRN

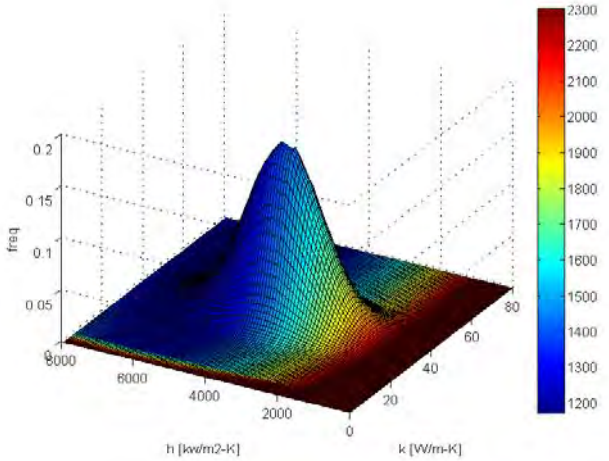
(1992)

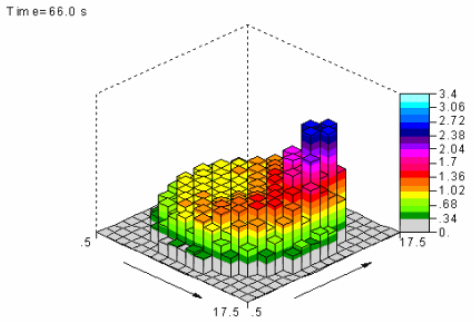
Value of networking

- a personal example.
- I had an engineering degree, little/no experience, ok grades, very small network

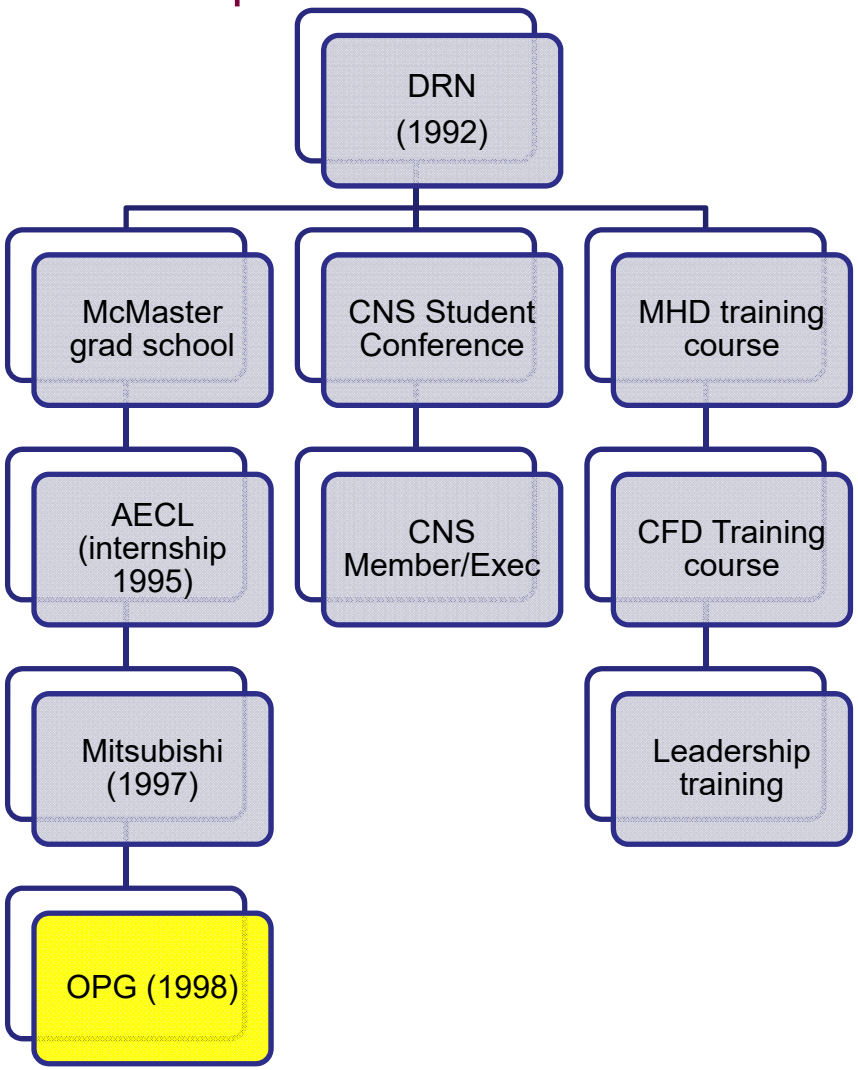
People + Connections







People + Connections



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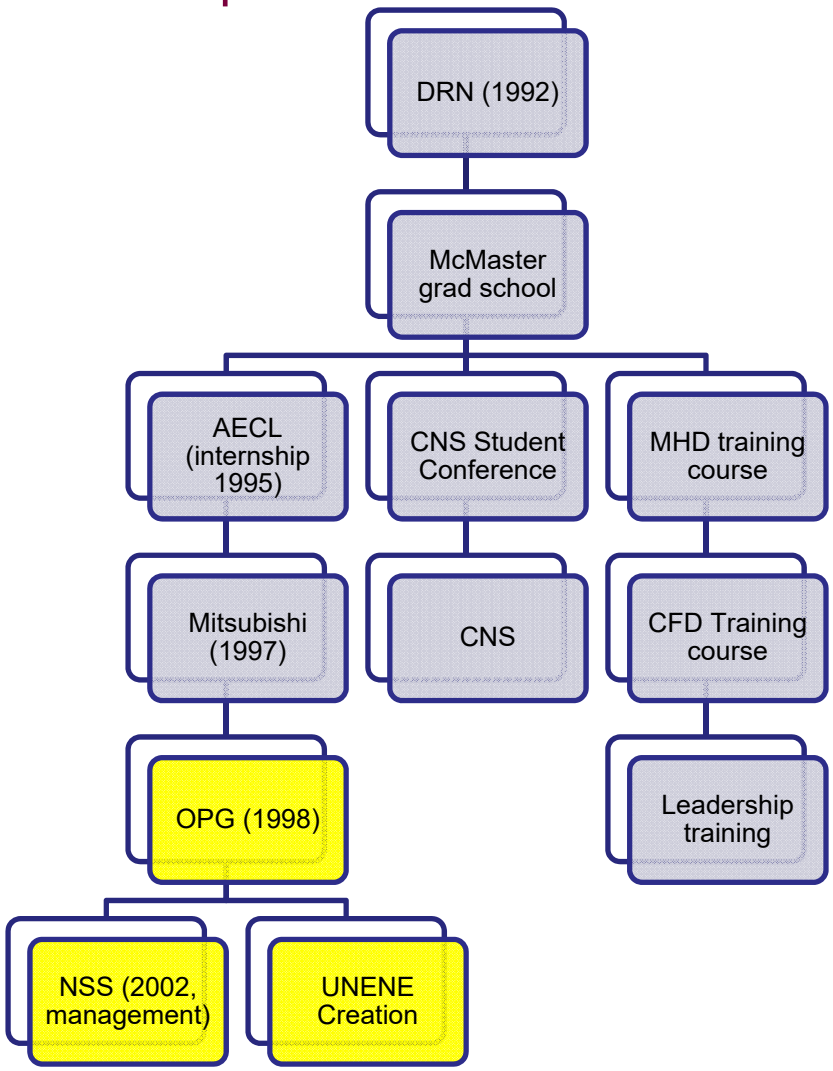
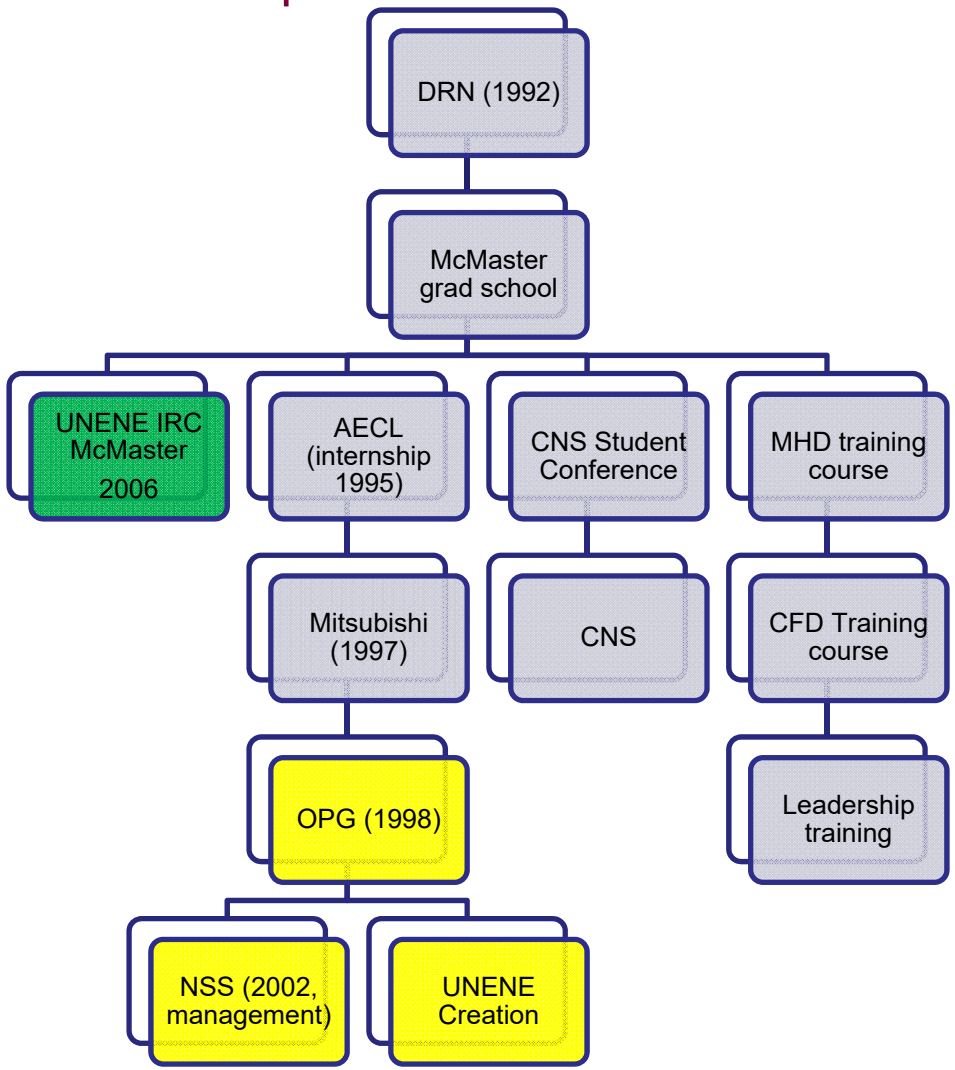


People + Connections



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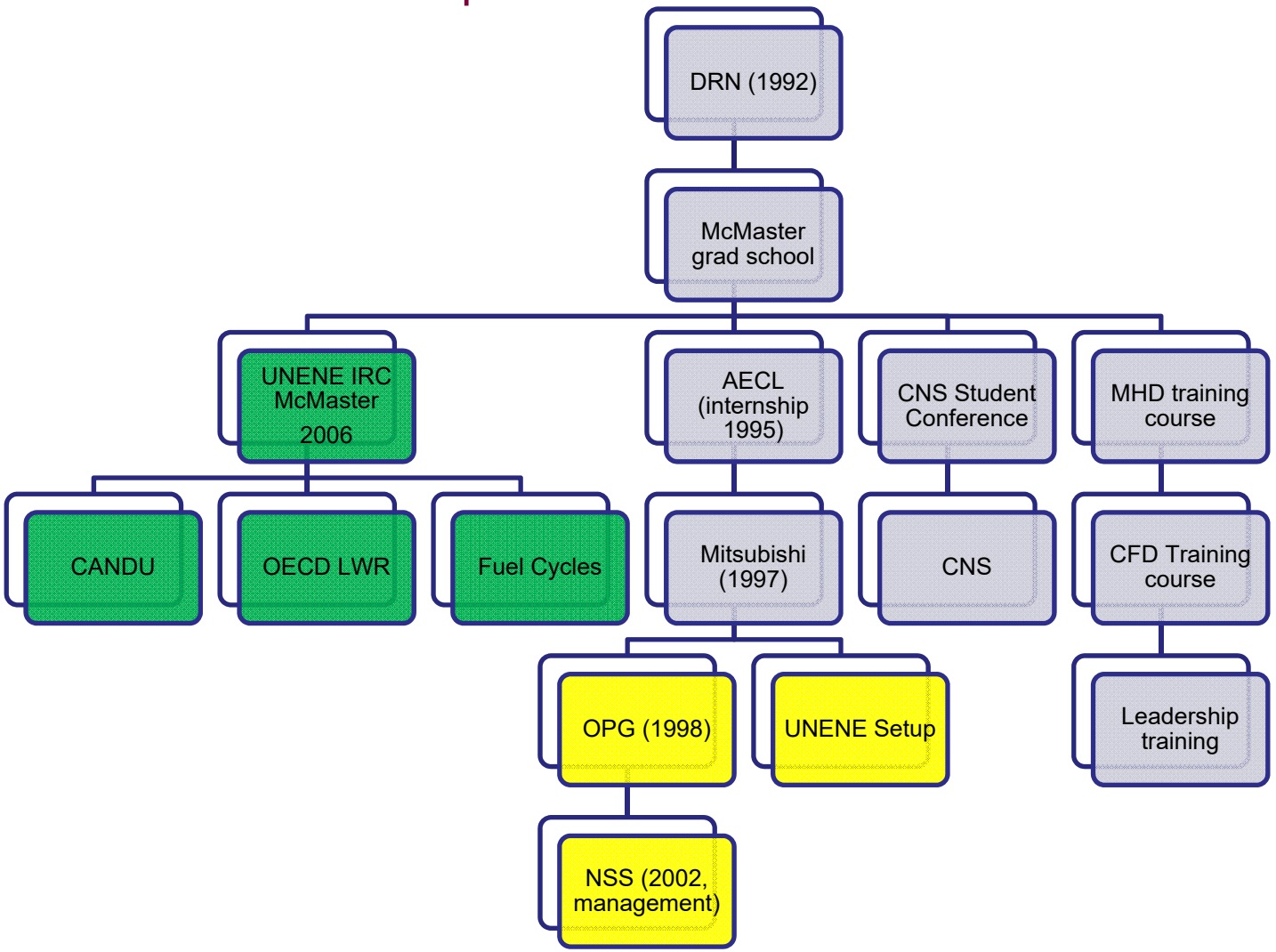
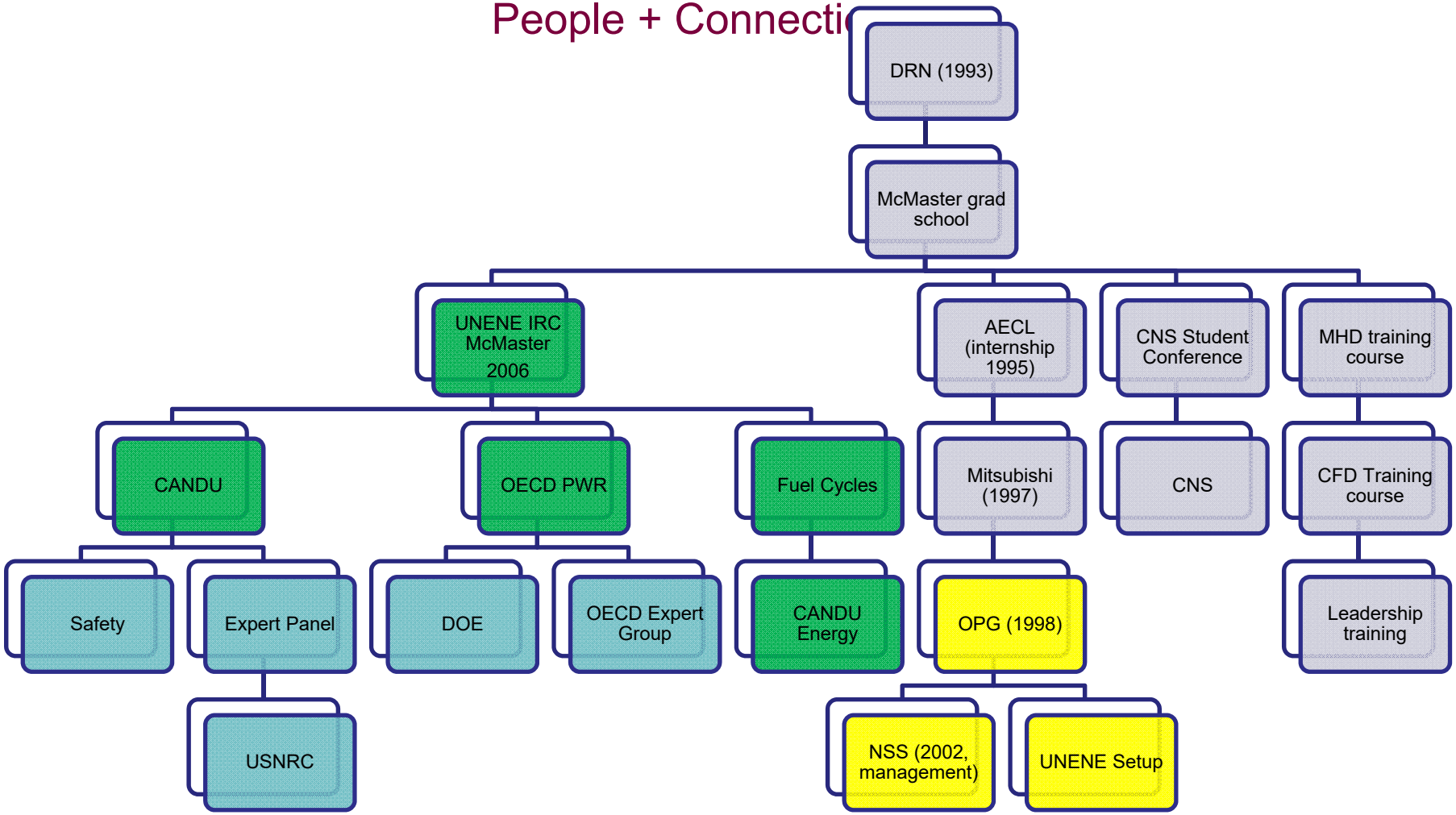


People + Connecti



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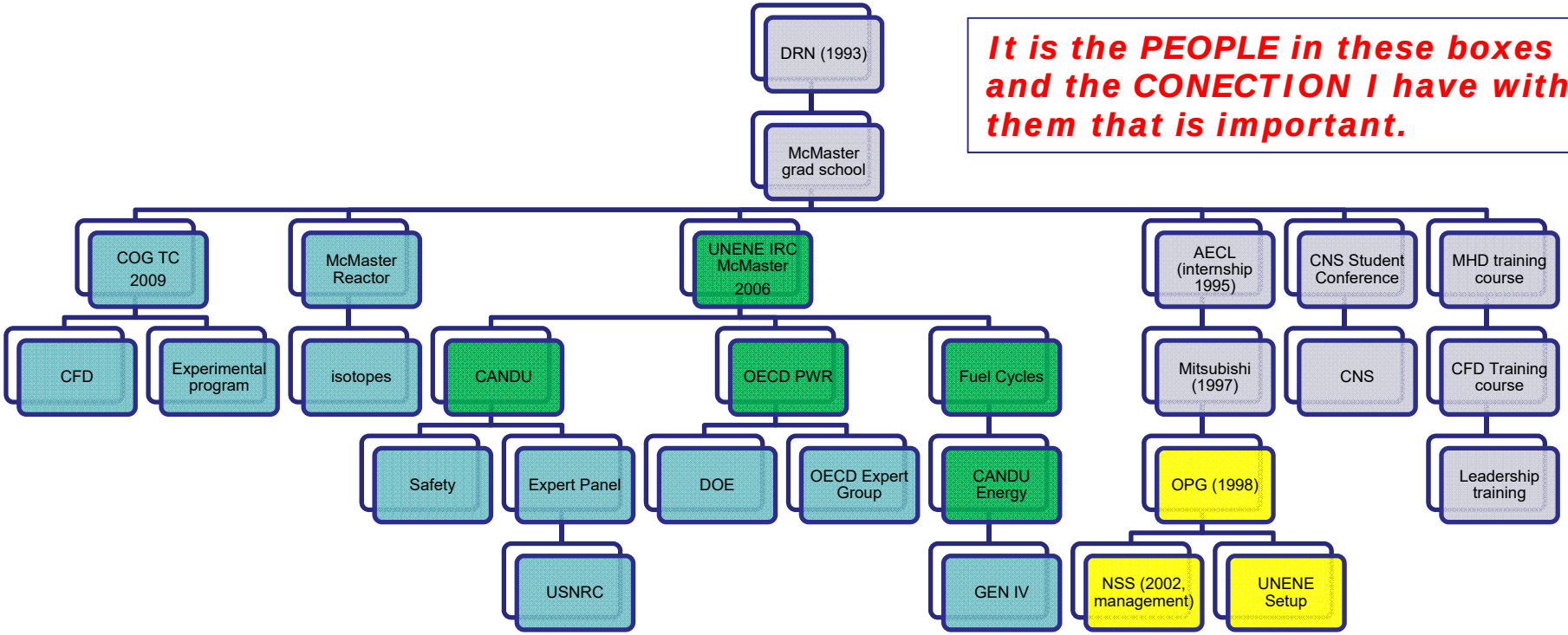


It is the PEOPLE in these boxes and the CONECTION I have with them that is important.

- Grow a network → short term success
- Maintain your network → long term success.

RESUME TIPS

It may be THE most important document you ever write!

- A good resume demands a lot, and continuous, effort.
  - Develop several resumes, have them reviewed by your NETWORK,
    - pick the best from the group as opposed to pick the only one you have.
  - Attend workshops, look at online examples of resumes.
  - Update and re-work your resume several times per year (fresh look, new ideas).
  - Your NETWORK may be able to help you in the development of your written resume.
  - Once the content is OK, use web resources to improve things like computer selection…

- Lots of online tips – some not that useful to a recruiter.
  - E.g., Use "action" words – yes, excessively – no, too many websites focus on wording → content is the key!
    - Many appear to be drafted by "HR", not the front line technical people who will make the decision.
  - Some value in examining computer filtering and how your resume can accommodate technology.
  - Avoid jargon and acronyms (unless you're an insider..)

RESUME TIPS

- **Evidence Based**
  - Highlight experiences - yes, do not give a list of skills without providing evidence.
    - E.g. CFD
    - Formal CFD training in 2000, CFD course in grad school, contributed 100s of hours of CFD application to OPG validation project.
  - Demonstrate going “beyond the call of duty” – again this is a competition.
- **Detail Orientated**
  - Many of you will have unique experiences here at McMaster
    - Some singular experiences in Canada (Eg. EP 4U04 Nuclear Reactor Labs)
    - Solar car, clubs…
  - Give details - Do not assume a company knows EP4U04 Nuclear…. No one knows or cares.
    - 4U04, 4A06
    - Senior Year Experimental Course – Hands on radiation field measurement, radiation shielding calculations using MCNP, neutron moderation in solids and liquids, approach to criticality using doubling time…

RESUME TIPS

- Experience
  - Relevant experience is invaluable
    - Co-op, internship, summer
    - Volunteer
    - Interactions with industry professionals
    - Papers at conferences, participation in events.

- Grades
  - They count
  - But you can stress some examples that you think are the most meaningful to the company.
  - It is not too late, convince me that your 4th year rocked and 2nd year marks become less important.

The Cover Letter

- Ouch, these are hard.
- They MUST be short and impactful
- Custom made for each application

I have made this longer than usual because I have not had time to make it shorter.

– B. Pascal (1657)

- Demonstrate:
  - Evidence based skills and experiences relevant to the position.
  - Excellent writing with a high degree of enthusiasm
  - Relevant / insightful research about the position and or company.
  - Name / Event / Media drop if you have to.

For the 100s of applications, many resumes are simply not read, you MUST have a letter that entices the reviewer to look further.

Cover Letter Example

Dear ,

Please accept this application for the position of Associate Industrial Chair in Nuclear Safety Analysis at McMaster University. The multi-disciplinary academic and research skills identified for this position are well suited to my industrial experience and academic background as outlined in this letter and attached curriculum vitae. UNENE is remarkable in that it provides expertise, research and training over the entire range of CANDU technologies and incorporates universities, industries and students. I would be proud to join UNENE as I believe it is a key foundation for resolving staffing issues in the industry, as well as expanding the role of nuclear in society.

In summary, the skills and attributes highlighted in the attached material demonstrate my qualifications for the Associate Chair position and I am qualified for PEO designation. I would also like to stress my enthusiasm for the position and UNENE in general and I would be happy to develop interactions with McMaster irrespective of the success of this application. Please

The Interview

- Most people are simply unprepared for an interview and they do not do well → uncomfortable for both sides.

- Successful interviewing is a learned skill for most people.
  - Study the good elements / behaviours
    - eye contact, smile, articulation, speed, posture, reading non-verbal cues, never interrupt.
  - Practice with people in your NETWORK (videotape yourself)
  - Attend training sessions and mock interviews
  - Self-assessment (post-mortem).

- Three key stages:
  1. The first-impression
  2. The main interview
  3. The close

Interview – The First Impression

- Show up early (but not too early).
- Present an appropriate appearance
  - Check with your NETWORK if your unsure.
- Bring materials (but dole them out subtly)
  - Sample written work – relevant, technical, good.
  - Copies of resumes
  - Some research on the company/position
  - Some have brought a key company item picked up at a previous event (conference seminar…) but be *subtle*
- Introduce yourself firmly and confidently – smile, articulate, eye contact!
  - Interviewers want to get along and have an open discussion – it should not feel like a question answer session or you are likely doing something wrong.
  - Being nervous is natural – not being able to control it is a problem.
- <u>Show enthusiasm in all aspects – be a "go getter".</u>

The Main Interview

- Almost ALL interviews today are behavioral or situational to some degree – evidence based like your resume.
- PREPARE
  - Develop 3 to 10 “stories” about you where you accomplished something significant, overcame obstacles, had to re-prioritize…
    - Ahead of time - Write these out and practice telling people about them – make the short and interesting – do not ramble-on.
    - Stories should include positive communications/relationships as well as technical behaviours.
    - Develop 2 to 3 relevant company details and work them into your stories somehow.
    - These stories should be on “instant-recall”
- As a behavioral/situational question comes along, mentally go through your rehearsed stories and pick the most appropriate.
  - Pick a relevant story or all is lost!
  - Work in a prop or company detail subtly and not too often.
  - It is OK to re-use a story if it is really focused on a question.

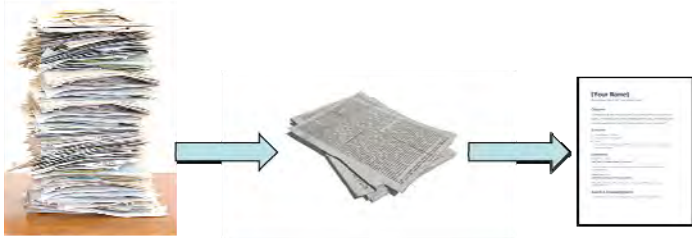
The Main Interview

- Since many questions in interviews are relatively standard you can prepare and rehearse your stories:
  1. Time management / prioritization
  2. Working in a team
  3. Dealing with difficulties (technical or people)
  4. Problem solving
  5. Influencing an outcome
  6. Goal setting self improvement
  7. Strengths vs. area of improvement
- There may be others specific to the job (harder to prepare for).
  - Hopefully one of your stories works.
  - Management, technical….
- After each interview go back to your written stories and self-assess
  - Did this story work, was it received well, what could I change to have it go better next time.
  - WRITE IT DOWN so you can work on it next time.

The Interview – The Close

- The close of the interview will be the final impression that you leave → DON'T SCREW IT UP HERE.
  - Even with perfect first impressions and a main interview you could lose it all with a poor exit – leave on a high-note.
    - High-note = enthusiasm, energy, interest, knowledge….
- Plan and rehearse how you will close out the interview.
  - Questions about the company, info you collected, about the job posting – you MUST have something meaningful here!
  - Do not ask about salary or vacation… unless they raise the topic first.
  - Ask about the timeline for the process (if they haven't provided it yet).
  - Try to work in a couple sentences about YOUR unique and important skills that are relevant (again subtly and in passing).
  - Ask them if they would like to keep any of the material you presented.
  - Smile, thank them for the interview,
- After the interview – re-send your thanks.
  - Self assess and make notes for your binder!
  - Additional follow-up is tricky….
    - Requesting feedback on your interview from the company is often not appropriate– makes people uncomfortable.
    - Time questions are ok provided you have a reason (stated when you ask).

Making it to the small pile ☺



- Making it to the smallest pile may be a 20:1 or 100:1 ratio
  - Reality in the job market.
  - Your competition for the job has some qualifications you do not have.
  - You have some that are unique.
  - Who will get the job?
- *Failure is entirely possible* – life-long learning.
  - Easy to get discouraged – use your NETWORK for support.
  - Come “armed with grit and determination, and grace too.”
- Cover letter, resume and interview are skills, need to continuously improve.
- NETWORK supports all stages – ***grow your network.***
  - People
  - Connections

Your "To-do" list

- Create your job search binder
- Resume
  1. Create a resume
  2. Identify 3 strengths in your experiences/skills which others may not have – revise resume to better highlight these.
  3. Identify 3 weaknesses in your resume which might cause you to be lower in a ranking – develop SMART goals to address these gaps.
  4. Develop 3 different resumes
     - Have each reviewed by at least 10 people in your network at various experience levels within the next 3 months.
  5. In the spring, repeat this entire process.
- Interview
  - Develop and WRITE OUT your experiential stories for 4 or 5 of the questions you might get in an interview.
    - Add them to your binder.
    - Try and either revise or add a new story every month.
  - Practice 1 interview every month with a peer or mentor.
- Network
  - Identify 1 event per month which might generate new PEOPLE for your network.
  - Identify CONECTIONS to strengthen each month, and DO IT.
  - Discuss with people IN your network and come up with NEW ways to grow.