The National Society of Black Engineers (NSBE) Birmingham Professionals Chapter is a 501(c) (3) non-profit association dedicated to the academic and professional success of African American engineering and technical students and professionals.

Our mission is to increase the number of culturally responsible black engineers, who excel academically, succeed professionally and positively impact the community. NSBE-Birmingham fulfills the mission of NSBE by organizing, sponsoring, and attending an array of workshops, community activities, scholarship funding, mentoring, and networking events.

We facilitate the development of strong technical professionals and leaders, encourage minority students to eagerly seek out degrees in Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics related fields, and empower the community with the knowledge and foresight to strengthen the very foundation that enables our community as a whole to achieve greater heights.

CHAPTER OBJECTIVES:

- Stimulate and develop student interest in the various engineering disciplines.
- Encourage and advise minority youth in their pursuit of an engineering career.
- Strive to increase the number of students studying engineering at the undergraduate and graduate levels.
- Encourage members to seek advanced degrees in engineering or related fields and to obtain/maintain professional engineering registrations.
- Promote public awareness of engineering and the opportunities for blacks and other minorities in that profession.
- Function as a representative body on issues and developments that affect the careers of black engineers.
Has your job search only been met with frustration in 2014? Wouldn’t it be great to start the New Year with a new job?

Let’s assume you have all the experience, knowledge and skills necessary for role you seek. You might think that’s all that should be important. But then your applications get ignored, and the answers you do get amount to a pile of rejections. You might ask yourself: “What’s wrong with this system?”

Step back, and use this season to get a better sense of the process in which you are engaged. Try looking at it from the vantage point of human resources screeners and hiring managers. When you forget your own frustrations and focus instead on how to make those of the hiring manager disappear, you'll turn your résumé and your presence into pre-sents that every hiring manager will consume.

Keep in mind that there are a few elements that HR staff and hiring managers regularly have to deal with:

1. Applicants blithely sending in their résumés for jobs for which they aren’t remotely qualified.
2. Applicants bending themselves into pretzels to try to be whatever the hiring manager wants them to be, rather than telling their own story in a compelling fashion. For example, take the person who at one moment describes himself as a self-starter lone-wolf type, and then goes on to talk about how he relishes working as part of a team. Define your narrative and stick to it, and don’t contradict yourself!
3. Almost every candidate claims to have excellent communications skills – and then they demonstrate quite the opposite by making simple spelling and grammatical mistakes.
4. Applicant tracking systems are stuffed with résumés that are slapped together with little care and others using the same standard Word templates that everyone else uses. There are countless résumés that convey lots of data but offer no clear narrative. At the other extreme, hiring managers encounter over-the-top, professionally composed résumés with form and content clearly not those of the candidate himself.
5. Hiring managers cringe when they take the trouble to actually phone screen a potentially good candidate, only to find someone who is “too smart by half.” These are the people who say that something like salary is “negotiable” without giving a more reasonable, if not more revealing, answer.
6. Hiring managers are bored out of their minds when someone talks for five minutes nonstop in response to a simple icebreaker question like, “tell me about yourself.”

With the above factors in mind, here’s what you can do to make yourself a truly valued candidate:

1. Can the canned or over-produced cover letter and résumé. Take pains to make sure each sentence actually conveys information in a compelling, articulate fashion. And avoid the overworked cliches, like, “I was excited to see your opening.”

2. Don’t play games or waste time. Listen carefully for clues to the kind of information that the decision makers need, and respond in a forthright, honest fashion. Yes, they want to get to know you, but they probably don’t care about what you minored in when you were in college in the ‘80s.

3. Do your homework. This is true not only at the interview stage, but even at the beginning. Show that you’ve researched the company and why you want to work there. (Hint: It’s more than a paycheck!) Don’t ask about things you can and should find out for yourself!

Job interviews are anything but casual “get to know you” networking meetings. If you are invited in, you can bet that the HR team, hiring manager and perhaps others have thoroughly evaluated your background. They expect you to research them, the company, their challenges and competition. Failing to do so can be seen as a sign of disrespect and laziness – neither of which are highly valued qualities for potential new hires.

4. Understand and convey your personal brand and value. Don’t just claim you are different and better than your competition. Show how and why this is the case. Demonstrate how you can make a difference and why you find the job interesting.

5. Tell your story – not the story you think someone else wants to hear. This is partly about being authentic, but it’s also about creating a clear narrative that portrays the arc of your career bending toward the opportunity at hand.
MEMBER SPOTLIGHT

This month we are congratulating Brandon Johnson on his recent nuptials.

Please Join Us in Wishing the Couple Well!

FAST FACTS

102.9 Million
Hours of volunteer service are performed in Alabama every year

20.9%
Of volunteer activities are dedicated to mentoring youth in Alabama

MORE NSBE SITES

NSBE National
http://www.nsbe.org
NSBE Region 3
NSBE Montgomery
http://www.nsbe-mae.org
NSBE of North Alabama
http://www.nsbe-northalabamaae.com

Surviving Cold & Flu Season

How can we become an advocate for our own health during cold and flu season?

After minimizing or eliminating behaviors that put you at risk, you can build better habits such as these:

While being proactive about our health cannot guarantee we’ll never get sick, it can reduce the chances!
Pictures from the 2014 Holiday Mixer
Volunteers Needed: 
NSBE Birmingham’s 2015 Martin Luther King Day of Service Project “N Habit Bush Hills”

Day: Monday, January 19, 2015
Time: 10:00 a.m. – 2:00 p.m.
(Lunch will be provided)

Location: TBD (probably Bush Hills Academy or Birmingham-Southern College)
Attire: Casual
Tools: Laptops and tablets are both welcomed and encouraged.

About N Habit Bush Hills
The “N Habit Bush Hills” Project tackles the challenges of a neighborhood faced with overgrown lots, foreclosed homes, and abandoned homes, all of which threaten the overall health of the area.

The end of 2014 completes the first year of project operation. The year’s accomplishments include development of a Community Asset Inventory database for the Bush Hills Community. The database is a complete listing of all 1300+ properties in the Bush Hills Community. Information, such as the county property ID #, vector coordinates, pictures of property, owner’s name, address, telephone, email, disposition of property (i.e. owned, rented, lot, for sale), and occupant’s information, is included. Mailers were sent to the owners of all vacant properties in the neighborhood asking of their intentions for their property (i.e. looking to sell, rent, repair or donate their property).

In 2015, N Habit’s efforts will shift to stimulating and increasing awareness and interest in the Bush Hills neighborhood... its affordability, rich history, and beauty. The project looks to match new homeowners and investors with the 200+ vacant properties identified in 2014. Particularly the organization hopes to attract young professionals to the community.

Day of Service Project
Many opportunities are available for the MLK Day of Service where professionals invest their time in worthy, yet non-technical efforts such as clean-up, painting, food service, etc. Despite having the potential for significant impact, these opportunities are often not in alignment with the primary skill sets or interests of the professional contributor. As such, we seek to provide members of NSBE an opportunity to serve in a manner more central to their areas of expertise and interest.

These opportunities include, but are not limited to the following:

Marketing Strategy Development
- Serve as a focus group to offer feedback on what it would take to identify and recruit young professionals to invest in and/or relocate to the neighborhood.
- Help with identifying “evangelists” and opinion leaders to help promote the neighborhood.
- Help with identifying an advisory Board for N Habit.
- Help with identifying potential new partnerships with other relevant organizations in the Birmingham community that have shared interests with N Habit.

Social Media Strategy
- Technical and aesthetic improvements to the www.nhabitdb.org website.
- Assist with identifying and curating online content related to vacant and abandoned property efforts in other cities that would ultimately be pushed out through N Habit’s social media properties on FB, Twitter, Instagram and Pinterest.

Database Management
- Assist with making sure N Habit’s Excel-based vacant property registry is optimally designed and configured.
- Ensure that existing photos of vacant properties are properly linked to their respective property addresses in the spreadsheet.

Project Management
- Assist with developing effective time, scope and budgetary objectives for 2015.
- Recommend and/or help setup new project management tools (i.e. Basecamp, Microsoft Project, etc).

Vacant Property Identification
- Walk, bike or drive the neighborhood to help identify newly vacant or occupied properties.
- Make recommendations for mobile technologies and apps to assist with ongoing vacant property identification and monitoring such as RunKeeper, Google Maps, Flexbands, smartphones, cloud storage for photos, etc.

Funding Strategy Development
- Several local and regional grant opportunities have been identified. Those with prior grant writing experience may want to assist with developing an outline of a new grant proposal.
Birmingham has opened warming stations to help people looking for a break from the cold weather. The city is seeking donations to help stock these stations.

The warming station at Boutwell Auditorium in Birmingham opens at 6 p.m. each night and closes at 7 a.m. the next morning.

Boutwell is located at 1930 Reverend Abraham Woods, Jr. Blvd.

Donations of bottled water, toiletries, toilet paper, socks, canned goods, chapstick and blankets can be dropped off at Boutwell Auditorium at any time.

Between now and this Friday, Dec. 19, the Alabama Power Service Organization is sponsoring a drive to supply the warming stations.

Also, the city of Fairfield will offer a warming station.

The Fairfield Police Department announced that a warming station will be open from 8 p.m. until 8 a.m. during the stretch of cold weather. The station will be at the Fairfield Municipal Complex, located at 5231 Court B.
Give Us Your Feedback!

What can we do to improve your membership experience?
Please send comments and suggestions to our Programs/Membership Chair at membership@nsbebham.org

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