RECREATION SOLUTIONS GROUP

CAREER NAVIGATION TOOLS FOR OUTDOOR PROFESSIONALS

AUGUST | 2025

What We'll Cover

- Resume Enhancement for Outdoor Rec Professionals
- Online Reputation Building
- Career Tools and Professional Readiness
- Networking and Networking Opportunities
- Recap

Introduction

- Ben Lawhon, MS
- Founder & Principal of Recreation Solutions Group: www.recreationsolutionsgroup.com
- 28 years of experience in outdoor recreation, conservation, and visitor use management
- Experience in both the NGO and private sectors
- Always take the scenic route!

Resume Enhancement for Outdoor Recreation Professionals

Resume Review

In most hiring processes, your resume is the first (and sometimes only) impression employers have of your qualifications before deciding whether to invest time meeting with you

Without passing this critical first filter, even the most qualified candidates won't get the chance to demonstrate their abilities in person

Your Resume

- Your resume is the key to unlocking an interview opportunity
- Industry credibility through certifications and specialized skills
- Demonstrates passion beyond just job requirements
- Highlights transferable skills from diverse outdoor experiences
- Competitive advantage in a passion-driven field

Good Resumes

- Clear and scannable formatting – clean layout with consistent fonts
- Tailored to the specific job – match the job description
- Quantified achievements – specific numbers, percentages, measurable results
- Action-oriented language – strong action words that convey accomplishments and impact
- Error-free – correct spelling, grammar, punctuation
- Appropriate length – typically 1-2 pages is sufficient
- Professional contact information – professional email/LinkedIn profile

Resume Pitfalls

- Too much personal info
- Too many irrelevant jobs
- Embellishment
- Typos and spelling mistakes
- Word documents (with *track changes)*
- Contradictions

Building Your Resume

- Target audience and job requirements – do your research regarding the job, company, agency, etc.
- Highlight quantifiable achievements over job duties
- Include current and relevant content
- Professional formatting – Canva, Fiverr, Upwork
- Use keywords that describe who you are, what you will bring to the job, and alignment with the agency, org, etc.

The Use of AI and Your Resume

- AI provides a quick foundation, not a complete solution
- Customization is essential to avoid appearing generic
- Vague content signals a lack of genuine interest
- AI produces repetitive language patterns

Stacy Smith

Senior Marketing Manager

WORK EXPERIENCE

Resume Worded, London, United Kingdom

Education technology startup with 50+ employees and $100m+ annual revenue

Senior Engineering Manager 01/2022 – Present

- I was building Tableau dashboard using data from Amplitude and Segment to visualize core bussiness KPIs (e.g. Monthly Recurring Revenue), saving 10 hours per week of manual reporting work
- Training and peer-mentoring programs were created by me.
- Redduced signup drop-offs from 65% to 15% and increased user engagement by 40%, through a combination of hypothesis testing, segmentation analysis and machine learning algorithms

Wrong tense

Typo

Typos

Passive voice

Inconsistent punctuation

CONTACT

- London, Unit
- +44 0 77012
- jack.johnson

SKILLS

Marketing:

- Influencer M
- Instagram G
- Google Anal
- Email Marke
- E-Commerce
- Customer Fe

Operations and

- Inventory Ma
- Inventory Co
- Forecasting

EXPERIENCE

Resume Worded, New York, NY

Project Manager

January 2020 - Present

- Propose solution and built team to solve number one cause of customer complaints, and completed project six months ahead of schedule.
- Reduced development costs by 25 perecnt by creating a plan to merge related products into one, more streammlined product.
- oversaw integration of an external technology solution by leading 5 developers and 9 testers from two companies, resulting in an additional $1MM of sales.
- Developed an Excel macro and standardized reporting templates, resulting in it's efficient data collection and a 35% reduction in turnaround time.

Should be past tense

Incorrect spelling

Should be capitalized

Its vs it's

Incorrect spelling

Growth, Remote

Assistant Project Manager

Samantha O'Connell

New York, NY 10001 · (212) 123-4567 · first.m.last@resumeworded.com · linkedin.com/in/username

Experience

2016-Present **Resume Worded & Co.** San Francisco, CA

Senior Project Manager

- Managed cross-functional team of 10 in 3 locations (London, Mumbai and New York), ranging from entry-level analysts to vice presidents, and collaborated with business development, data analysis, operations and marketing
- Launched Miami office with lead Director and recruited and managed new team of 10 employees; grew office revenue by 200% in first nine months (representing 20% of company revenue)
- Reduced development costs by 25 percent by creating a plan to merge related products into one, more streamlined product.
- Oversaw integration of an external technology solution by leading 5 developers and 9 testers from two companies, resulting in an additional $1MM of sales.
- Bullet points should be in format [Action Verb] [Accomplishment] [Metric] (e.g. Developed X to do Y; this resulted in Z% improvement)

2012-2014 **J&J** Beijing, China

Project Manager (2013-2014)

- Led the transition to a paperless practice by implementing an electronic booking system and a faster, safer and more accurate business system; reduced cost of labor by 30% and office overhead by 10%
- Developed an Excel macro and standardized reporting templates, resulting in efficient data collection and a 35% reduction in turnaround time.
- Proposed solution and built team to solve number one cause of customer complaints, and completed project six months ahead of schedule.
- Coached 30 summer interns and launched a mentorship program for new joiners in the Berlin office.
- Bullet points should be in format [Action Verb] [Accomplishment] [Metric] (e.g. Developed X to do Y; this resulted in Z% improvement)
- Bullet points should be in format [Action Verb] [Accomplishment] [Metric] (e.g. Developed X to do Y; this resulted in Z% improvement)

Business Analyst (2012)

- Identified steps to reduce return rates by 10% resulting in an eventual $75k cost savings
- Bullet points should be in format [Action Verb] [Accomplishment] [Metric] (e.g. Developed X to do Y; this resulted in Z% improvement)

2012-2014 **Resume Worded & Co.** San Francisco, CA

Technical Analyst

- Designed, executed, and optimized digital marketing campaign on Google AdWords; led to 20% increase in ROI
- Managed redevelopment of internal tracking system in use by 125 employees, resulting in 20+ new features, reduction of 20% in save/load time and 15% operation time

Education

2014-2016 **Resume Worded Engineering School** New York, NY

Master of Data Science; Minor in Business Analytics

- Awards: Bill & Melinda Gates Fellow (only 5 awarded to class)

2007-2011 **Resume Worded University** San Francisco, CA

Bachelor of Engineering, Major in Computer Science; Minors in Consumer Psychology and Mathematics

Other

- Languages: Spanish (native), Chinese (intermediate)
- Technical Skills: Microsoft Access, SQL, Agile Project Management, Scrum, PRINCE2, MATLAB, Excel
- Certifications: Project Management Professional (PMP) (August 2016), ABC Certification, [other certification required in job description]
- Volunteering: Volunteered 20 hours/month at ABC Foundation (2012-2014)

Resume Recap

- Your Gateway to interview opportunities
- Essential Resume Components – Less is more
- Job-specific Approach – Tailor your resume
- Avoid Resume Killers – You get one chance
- Consider AI as a starting point, not a solution
- Competitive Edge in Outdoor Recreation – Your resume is what makes you stand out

BEN LAWHON

linkedin.com/in/benlawhon
[redacted]
[redacted]
[redacted]

VISITOR USE MANAGEMENT | STRATEGIC NATURAL RESOURCE PROTECTION | CUTTING-EDGE SOLUTIONS | RESEARCH | EFFECTIVE COLLABORATION

Seasoned conservation professional with proven record of success and a deep commitment to environmental protection through research, education, partnership, public/private collaboration, and stewardship of natural resources. Highly skilled in visitor use management, expertise in solving recreation-related problems, and adept at working with federal, state and local land managers, volunteers, private enterprise, and others to provide effective resource protection and sustainable recreation using cutting-edge solutions. Extensive experience in natural resource management, human dimensions of natural resources research, environmental conservation, environmental/outdoor education, agency relations, and strategic partnerships.

MAD SKILLS

VOLUNTEER & BOARD AFFILIATIONS

Recreate Responsibly Coalition
National Steering Committee
2020-Present

St. Vrain Creek Coalition
Advisory Council, Representative
2016-2017

Society for Wilderness Stewardship
Board of Directors, Vice Chair
2007-2011

Appalachian Trail Conservancy
Stewardship Council, At-Large Member
2007-2011

SELECT PUBLICATIONS

William L Rice, B Derrick Taff, Ben Lawhon, Peter Newman (2024). **Anticipated post-pandemic substitution behavior among new outdoor recreationists in the US: Analysis across involvement and activity clusters.** Managing Sport and Leisure 29 (5), 751-770

B Derrick Taff, Ben Lawhon, Stephanie Freeman, Nick Pitas, Peter Newman (2024). **US National Park Service and concession staff perceptions regarding waste management in Yosemite, Grand Teton, and Denali National Parks.** Parks Stewardship Forum 40 (2), 459-481

Timothy J Mateer, Theresa N Melton, Zachary D Miller, Ben Lawhon, Jennifer P Agans, Danielle F Lawson, Kathryn J Brasier, B Derrick Taff (2023). **The potential pro-environmental behavior spillover effects of specialization in environmentally responsible outdoor recreation.** Land 12 (11), 1970

Stephanie Freeman, Brendan Derrick Taff, Ben Lawhon, Jacob A Benfield, Melissa Kreye, Jennifer Newton, Lauren Miller, Peter Newman (2023). **The impact of message framing on wildlife approach during ungulate viewing experiences in the Greater Yellowstone Ecosystem.** Journal of Interpretation Research 28 (1), 7-24

SEE ALL PUBLICATIONS

EDUCATION

HUMAN DIMENSIONS OF NATURAL RESOURCES
MASTERS OF SCIENCE
Colorado State University

NATURAL RESOURCE MANAGEMENT
BACHELORS OF SCIENCE
University of Tennessee

ACCOLADES

CERTIFICATE OF APPRECIATION
United States Department of Interior, National Park Service

EAGLE SCOUT AWARD
Boy Scouts of America

LEVEL III INSTRUCTOR
Leave No Trace

WILDERNESS FIRST RESPONDER

INTERESTS

BACKPACKING
BIRD DOGS
COOKING
FLY FISHING
HIKING
RIVER RAFTING
TELEMARK SKIING
THE SCENIC ROUTE
UPLAND HUNTING
WHITEWATER CANOEING

TIMELINE

BEN LAWHON

linkedin.com/in/benlawhon
[redacted]
[redacted]
[redacted]

PROFESSIONAL EXPERIENCE

FOUNDER AND PRINCIPAL | RECREATION SOLUTIONS GROUP — LYONS, CO

JAN 2022 - PRESENT

- Provide critical guidance for land managers from municipal, to state, to federal explore and better understand recreation patterns, impacts, and implications on the lands they manage.
- Offer tailored, contemporary, and tested solutions to meet the most pressing needs in any type of park or protected area setting.
- Specialize in visitor use management, human dimensions of natural resources, and current best management practices.
- Expertise in assessing and solving visitor use impacts on lands enjoyed for recreation.
- Work with land managers and key stakeholders to ensure a sustainable recreation future for all.

SENIOR DIRECTOR OF RESEARCH AND CONSULTING | LEAVE NO TRACE — BOULDER, CO

JAN 2021 - DEC 2021

- Provided strategic direction for the Leave No Trace research agenda.
- Designed, funded, and executed collaborative empirical research for data-driven solutions.
- Directed and delivered fee-based natural resource consulting services for land managers.
- Developed and delivered innovative solutions for managing recreation and natural resources.

DIRECTOR OF EDUCATION AND RESEARCH | LEAVE NO TRACE — BOULDER, CO

2001 - 2020

- Directed, coordinated and managed all aspects of nationwide education and training efforts in cooperation with over 700 partners, including agencies, NGOs, youth-serving groups, environmental organizations, as well as thousands of volunteer educators.
- Functioned as a liaison between Leave No Trace and federal, state, and municipal land management agencies, the outdoor industry, and the recreating public.
- Guided strategic direction of nationally recognized education programs, training opportunities, and science-based curriculum development.
- Designed, funded, and executed collaborative empirical research for data-driven solutions.
- Led, managed, and inspired diverse teams of office and remote staff.
- Extensive work on domestic and international environmental initiatives with numerous national and global partners.

ASSOC. REGIONAL REPRESENTATIVE - APPALACHIAN TRAIL CONSERVANCY — ASHEVILLE, NC

1997-2001

- Worked directly with volunteer trail clubs, federal and state land management agencies, and partners to coordinate management and protection of the Appalachian National Scenic Trail in Georgia, North Carolina, and Tennessee. Functioned as liaison between Appalachian Trail Conservancy (ATC), agency partners, and volunteers.
- Directed management and protection of over 35 open areas and grassy bald ecosystems along 450 miles of the A.T. Worked closely with federal agency partners to ensure proper stewardship of these sensitive areas for threatened and endangered species protection.
- Functioned as program coordinator for seasonal ridgerunners, caretakers, and an eight-week seasonal trail crew. Facilitated staff training and provided program support and oversight. Assisted with budget development and administration.

LEAD KAYAK / SWIFTWATER RESCUE INSTRUCTOR - LANDMARK LEARNING — CULLOWHEE, NC

1997-2001

MANAGEMENT / SALES - EARTH TRAVERSE OUTFITTERS — KNOXVILLE, TN

1994-1997

BEST BEAR BAG HANGS

SELECT PRESENTATIONS

Leave No Trace Global Summit
Opening Plenary Speaker | Colorado, 2024

Biennial Conference of Science and Management for the Colorado Plateau - National Park Service
Panelist | Arizona, 2022

Wildlife and Recreation Co-existence Public Forum
Panelist | Wyoming, 2021

Starker Lecture Series - Oregon State University
Panelist | Oregon, 2021

Continental Divide Research Conference
Presenter | Colorado, 2020

Northeast Alpine Stewardship Gathering
Keynote | New York, 2019

Outdoor Industry Leadership Summit
Panelist | Colorado, 2019

International Symposium for Society & Resource Management
Presenter | Utah, 2018

Biennial Scientific Conference on the Greater Yellowstone Ecosystem
Presenter | Montana, 2018

River Management Symposium & National Trails System Conference
Presenter | Washington, 2018

George Wright Society, National Conference
Presenter | Virginia, 2017

WRITING SAMPLES, REFERENCES, DUNS No. & PROOF OF INSURANCE **AVAILABLE UPON REQUEST**

Online Reputation Building

Online Reputation

- **Industry-Specific Visibility** – your online presence connects your career story across different positions and locations
- **Network-Dependent Career Growth** – many outdoor rec jobs come from personal connections and referrals
- **Mission-Driven Employer Expectations** – agencies, organizations, and companies often want employees who genuinely care about conservation and recreation
- **Competitive Advantage in a Passionate Field** – it's a competitive job market/field, and your online reputation can help you differentiate yourself as a career professional, not just an outdoor enthusiast

Who You Are Online

- Your online presence creates a digital first impression that reveals your values, communication skills, and professionalism to potential employers
- What you post, share, and engage with online demonstrates whether you're genuinely invested in your field, can communicate effectively, and maintain consistent professional judgment
- In today's digital workplace, your online persona often influences hiring decisions before you even get an interview, making it essential to present yourself as knowledgeable, reliable, and aligned with industry values

Your Online Reputation is Critical

How Often Employers Check: 70% of employers use social networking sites to research job candidates, while 92% of employers use social media to find talent (CareerBuilder Survey, 2023)

Impact on Hiring Decisions: 55% of employers who use social media screenings said they have found content that caused them not to hire a candidate (Inc.com, 2022)

Positive Impact Too: 44% of hiring managers and employers have discovered content on a candidate's social media profile that caused them to hire the person (Inc.com 2020)

No Online Presence Penalty: 21% of hiring decision-makers or 1 in 5 said they are not likely to consider a candidate without a social media presence, and 47% of employers say if they can't find a job candidate online, they are less likely to call that person in for an interview (CareerBuilder Survey, 2023)

What They're Looking For: 67% of them look for information that supports a candidate's qualifications (Harris Career Poll, 2024)

Bottom Line: The vast majority of employers (over 70%) actively check social media profiles, and over half have rejected candidates based on what they found. However, having no online presence can be equally damaging to your chances.

Online Reputation Pitfalls

- Inappropriate content – provocative photos, drugs, alcohol, unprofessional behavior
- Complaining about employers – badmouthing previous companies, coworkers, or revealing confidential information
- No online presence – Having zero social/professional profiles can make employers suspicious and less likely to interview you

Online Reputation Best Practices

- Use a professional profile photo
- Keep personal accounts private
- Create separate professional profiles distinct from personal social media
- Post industry-relevant content – demonstrates your expertise
- Monitor your digital footprint regularly – Google yourself!
- Remove or un-tag inappropriate content – reflect your current image
- Update your professional information on a regular basis
- Engage professionally online
- Showcase achievements and certifications
- Think before posting – always!
- Build a positive online brand – consistently present yourself as knowledgeable, professional, and aligned with the industry's values

Managing Your Online Reputation

- Audit your tagged content regularly
- Use consistent professional usernames
- Engage meaningfully in industry conversations
- Showcase your values through content
- Maintain geographic relevance

Leverage Your Online Reputation

- Showcase your expertise through content sharing
- Network strategically with industry experts and professionals
- Highlight achievements and current projects
- Build credibility through recommendations and endorsements
- Position yourself for passive recruitment
- Demonstrate cultural fit and values alignment
- Engage authentically with industry leaders' content
- Participate in LinkedIn group
- Follow target organizations, agencies, and companies

Social Media – YouTube, Instagram, Facebook, TikTok, Snapchat, etc.

- Personal content can undermine your professional image
- Permanent digital footprint – your social media history can follow you
- Context collapse between audiences – content meant for friends can land poorly with professional acquaintances or colleagues
- Platform culture vs. professional expectations – TikTok and Instagram can encourage over-sharing, which may cross the line
- Privacy settings aren't foolproof – some private accounts can still be seen
- Platform-specific risks – some social media platforms can preserve a long history of posts, which can surface for unintended professional audiences

Tweet

David Hill

@CoachDavidHill

We dropped a recruit this past week because of his twitter. We were ready to offer him until we saw some of the things he posted.

4/3/13, 7:13 AM

1,480 RETWEETS **204** FAVORITES

Online Reputation Recap

- Up to 90% of employers check online profiles
- Professional consistency across platforms is key
- Content quality matters
- No online presence can actually be a negative
- Leverage professional platforms for networking
- Assume everything is public
- Monitor your online reputation regularly – Google yourself!

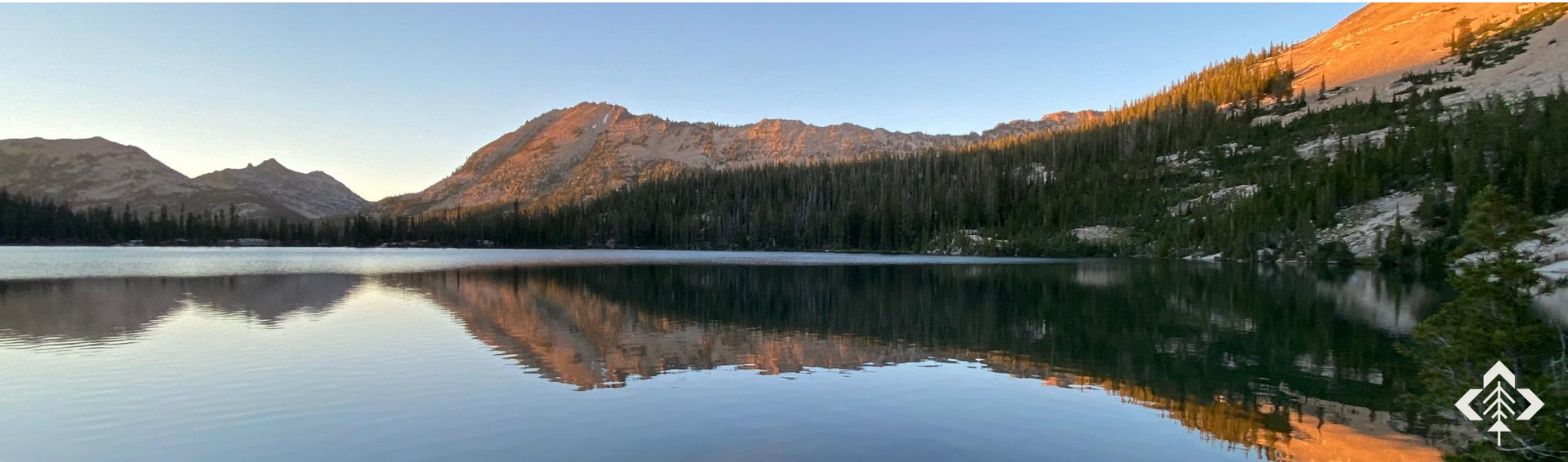
Career Tools & Professional Readiness

Career Tools

- **Industry-Specific Job Boards**: Utilize specialized platforms like www.conservationjobboard.com, www.outdoorindustryjobs.com, and www.nrpa.org/careers-education/careers, that focus exclusively on outdoor recreation positions ranging from seasonal work to executive roles

- **Skills Assessment Tools**: Use platforms like CliftonStrengths, outdoor-specific competency assessments through AEE.org, and 360-degree feedback tools to identify strengths, gaps, and development opportunities in technical and leadership skills

- **Mentorship Matching Services**: Connect with experienced professionals through formal mentorship programs offered by SORP and other entities



Contemporary Tools

- **Social Media Professional Branding**: Develop authentic personal brands on Instagram, YouTube, and TikTok to showcase outdoor expertise, specific training you have, and conservation success stories while maintaining professional credibility through platforms like LinkedIn

- **Mobile Apps for Skill Development**: Access continuous learning through apps like Gaia GPS for navigation skills, AllTrails Pro for route planning, Mountain-Forecast.com for weather analysis, etc.

- **Data Analytics for Programs**: Learn to use program evaluation software such as Qualtrics, Alchemer, or SurveyMonkey to measurement outcomes and demonstrate impact

- **Digital Collaboration Tools**: Master remote work platforms like Zoom, Slack, and project management software such as Trello, ClickUp, and Monday.com that enable virtual program delivery, team coordination, and client communication in hybrid models

Professional Readiness

1. **Continuous Skill Evaluation**: Regularly assess technical outdoor skills, leadership capabilities, and industry knowledge through self-reflection, peer feedback, and formal evaluations to maintain competency standards

2. **Adaptive Learning Mindset**: Cultivate intellectual curiosity and openness to new methodologies, technologies, and industry trends while maintaining core competencies and skills

3. **Cultural Competency Development**: Build skills in inclusive programming, accessibility awareness, and culturally responsive outdoor education/recreation/conservation to serve diverse populations effectively

Preparing for Opportunities

- **Proactive Skill Gap Analysis**: Identify emerging industry needs/core competencies through resources like SORP, NRPA, NWSA, etc., before they become mandatory
- **Strategic Relationship Building**: Cultivate professional relationships through LinkedIn, outdoor recreation groups, tourism associations, online forums, industry events, and professional association websites
- **Thought Leadership Development**: Contribute to industry publications, blogs, social media posts, etc., propose and present sessions at relevant conferences/workshops found on professional association websites, and share expertise through platforms like LinkedIn
- **Transition Readiness**: Maintain updated profiles on LinkedIn, social platforms, and professional society websites to ensure up-to-date information about you and your expertise

Staying Current

- **Industry Publication Subscriptions**: Regularly read publications like Outside Business Journal, Outdoor Industry Association reports, Adventure Travel News, and specialized publications (e.g. peer peer-reviewed journals with open access) to understand market trends and emerging opportunities

- **Conference and Workshop Attendance**: Participate in events like Outdoor Retailer, Adventure Travel World Summit, National Outdoor Recreation Conference (NORC), and regional outdoor education gatherings such as The Association of Outdoor Recreation and Education (AORE)

- **Regulatory Awareness**: Monitor changes in land use policies through NPS.gov, USFS.gov, and state park websites, safety regulations via OSHA.gov, and insurance requirements through resources like Wilderness Risk Management Conference proceedings

- **Research and Best Practice Review**: Follow academic research through the Journal of Outdoor Recreation Education and Leadership, ResearchGate, Google Scholar, and program effectiveness evaluations shared on AEE.org and similar professional platforms

Staying Relevant in the Field

- **Sustainability Leadership**: Develop expertise in environmental stewardship/conservation, climate change adaptation, and sustainable tourism practices as these become increasingly central to outdoor recreation

- **Digital Integration Mastery**: Learn to blend traditional outdoor experiences with technology-enhanced programming, virtual reality training, and digital communication tools for hybrid program delivery

- **Inclusive Programming Expertise**: Build specialized skills in accessibility, cultural competency, and adaptive programming to serve increasingly diverse populations in outdoor recreation

- **Data-Driven Decision Making**: Develop proficiency in program evaluation, outcome measurement, and data analysis to demonstrate impact and secure funding in competitive markets and geographic regions

Readiness Strategies

- **Personal Development Planning**: Create structured professional development plans with specific goals, timelines, and accountability measures that align with career aspirations and industry demands

- **Documentation and Reflection**: Maintain detailed records of experiences, accomplishments, and lessons learned while regularly reflecting on career progress and adjusting strategies based on outcomes

- **Risk Management Planning**: Develop contingency plans for career disruptions, industry changes, and personal circumstances while maintaining flexibility to pivot when opportunities arise

Readiness Pitfalls

- **Overspecialization Risk**: Becoming too narrowly focused on one skill or subject can limit career opportunities and create vulnerability to industry changes or seasonal fluctuations
- **Certification Stagnation**: Allowing certifications to lapse or failing to pursue advanced credentials can result in missed opportunities and reduced credibility in competitive job markets
- **Network Neglect**: Failing to maintain and expand professional relationships leads to isolation from industry trends, job opportunities, and collaborative partnerships essential for career growth
- **Comfort Zone Complacency**: Remaining in familiar roles or environments without seeking growth opportunities can result in skill stagnation and reduced marketability over time
- **Technology Resistance**: Avoiding or dismissing new technologies and digital tools can create significant disadvantages in program delivery, communication, and professional effectiveness

Readiness Best Practices

- **Integrated Learning Approach**: Combine formal education, practical experience, and peer learning to create comprehensive professional development that addresses both technical skills and industry knowledge
- **Proactive Relationship Management**: Systematically build and maintain professional relationships through regular communication, mutual support, and collaborative projects that benefit all parties involved
- **Strategic Career Planning**: Develop a long-term career vision with short-term actionable steps that account for industry trends, personal values, and evolving opportunities in outdoor recreation
- **Value-Driven Decision Making**: Align career choices with personal values and professional ethics while maintaining flexibility to adapt to changing industry demands and opportunities

Career Tools and Professional Readiness Recap

- **Utilize Industry-Specific Resources**: Leverage specialized platforms like LinkedIn, professional certification programs through organizations like SORP and NRPA, and outdoor recreation networking platforms to access targeted career opportunities and development resources

- **Embrace Contemporary Technology**: Master digital tools, including social media, professional branding, mobile apps for skill development, online learning platforms, and data analytics, to stay competitive in the evolving outdoor recreation industry

- **Maintain Continuous Development**: Engage in ongoing professional readiness through regular skill assessment, cross-training across multiple outdoor disciplines, staying current with industry trends, and building strategic relationships to remain adaptable and relevant throughout your career

Networking

Networking in Outdoor Recreation

- Networking in outdoor recreation is the practice of building authentic, mutually beneficial relationships with professionals who share your passion for outdoor experiences, environmental stewardship, and high-quality recreation opportunities
- It involves exchanging industry knowledge, resources, and opportunities while contributing your own expertise to help others succeed in their careers
- Through strategic relationship investment and consistent professional interactions, networking creates a supportive ecosystem where outdoor recreation professionals collaborate, mentor each other, and collectively advance the industry

Networking Best Practices

- **Authenticity Over Agenda**: Approach networking with genuine interest in learning about others' experiences and challenges, rather than immediately focusing on what you can gain, and build trust through authentic curiosity about their work and perspectives

- **Value-First Mindset**: Always consider how you can help others before asking for assistance, whether through sharing resources, making introductions, offering volunteer support, or providing expertise in your areas of strength

- **Consistent Follow-Through**: Maintain relationships through regular, meaningful contact such as sharing relevant articles, checking in on projects, celebrating achievements, and following up on commitments made during conversations

- **Active Listening and Engagement**: Practice deep listening during networking conversations, ask thoughtful follow-up questions, and demonstrate genuine interest in understanding others' perspectives and experiences in outdoor recreation

- **Professional Reciprocity**: Create mutually beneficial relationships by offering introductions, sharing opportunities, providing references, and supporting others' professional goals while building your own network

- **Quality Over Quantity**: Focus on developing meaningful connections with a smaller group of professionals rather than collecting large numbers of superficial contacts, investing time in relationships that align with your values and career interests

Networking Opportunities

- Industry Conferences and Trade Shows
- Professional Association Memberships
- Certification Programs and Training
- Online Communities and Forums
- Volunteer and Service Opportunities
- Alumni Networks and Educational Connections

Networking Tips and Tricks

- **Prepare Your Professional Story**: Develop a concise, engaging narrative about your outdoor recreation background, current role, and career interests that naturally flows in conversation and highlights your unique value proposition

- **Leverage Shared Experiences**: Use common outdoor experiences, challenging situations, or similar program backgrounds as conversation starters and relationship builders, as shared adventures create strong professional bonds

- **Master the Art of Introductions**: Learn to effectively introduce yourself and others, including relevant context about expertise, current projects, and mutual interests that facilitate meaningful connections between professionals

- **Utilize Digital Platforms Strategically**: Maintain professional profiles on LinkedIn, engage thoughtfully on social media, and use these not just for job searching but for connecting with industry professionals

- **Follow Up Within 48 Hours**: Send personalized follow-up messages (preferably handwritten notes) after meeting new contacts, referencing specific conversation points and suggesting concrete ways to stay connected or collaborate

Networking Pitfalls

1. **Transactional Approach**: Treating networking as a one-sided transaction where you only reach out when you need something, rather than investing in genuine relationships that provide mutual value over time

2. **Over-Promising and Under-Delivering**: Making commitments during networking conversations that you cannot fulfill, such as promising introductions, resources, or follow-up actions, that damage your professional reputation

3. **Lack of Industry Knowledge**: Attempting to network without understanding current industry trends, challenges, and opportunities, which can lead to uninformed conversations and missed connection opportunities

4. **Neglecting Existing Relationships**: Focusing solely on meeting new people while failing to maintain and nurture existing professional relationships that could provide ongoing support and opportunities

Networking Examples

- **Conference Connection Strategy**: At the National Outdoor Recreation Conference, approach someone presenting on inclusivity in the outdoors by introducing yourself, sharing a relevant experience from your diversity and inclusion work, asking thoughtful questions about their research and implementation strategies, and following up with additional resources or collaboration ideas for creating more accessible outdoor programs

- **Social Media Engagement**: Comment thoughtfully on LinkedIn posts from outdoor industry leaders, share relevant articles with personalized insights, and engage in meaningful discussions that demonstrate your expertise and professional interests

- **Volunteer Networking**: While volunteering for trail maintenance with a local outdoor organization, connect with other volunteers about their professional backgrounds, share information about your current projects, and explore potential collaboration opportunities

- **Mentorship Relationship Development**: Reach out to an experienced professional whose career path interests you, offer to assist with a project in exchange for informal mentoring, and maintain regular communication about industry trends and career development

Networking Recap

- **Build Authentic Relationships**: Focus on creating genuine, mutually beneficial connections with outdoor recreation professionals through shared experiences, value-first interactions, and consistent follow-through rather than transactional job-seeking approaches

- **Leverage Industry-Specific Opportunities**: Actively participate in outdoor recreation conferences, professional associations like SORP and NRPA, certification programs, online communities, and volunteer opportunities to connect with like-minded professionals across the industry

- **Practice Strategic Engagement**: Develop your professional story, master introductions, maintain quality relationships over quantity, and follow up meaningfully within 48 hours to build a supportive network that advances both your career and the broader outdoor recreation community

Webinar Recap

Webinar Recap: Key Takeaways

- **Your resume is your gateway to opportunities** - It's often the first (and sometimes only) impression employers have, so it must be error-free, tailored to specific jobs, and highlight quantifiable achievements over job duties

- **AI is a starting point, not a solution** - While AI can help with resume foundations, customization is essential to avoid generic content that signals lack of genuine interest

- **Demonstrate passion beyond job requirements** - In the competitive outdoor recreation field, your resume should showcase a genuine commitment to conservation and outdoor experiences, highlighting transferable skills from diverse outdoor activities that differentiate you as a dedicated professional rather than just an outdoor enthusiast

Webinar Recap: Key Takeaways

- **Over 70% of employers actively check social media profiles -** Your online presence can make or break hiring decisions, with 55% of employers rejecting candidates based on social media content, but 44% also hiring because of positive online presence

- **No online presence is also damaging -** 21% of hiring managers won't consider candidates without social media presence, and 47% are less likely to interview candidates they can't find online

- **Separate personal and professional online identities -** Keep personal accounts private while maintaining professional profiles that showcase expertise and align with industry values

Webinar Recap: Key Takeaways

- **Utilize industry-specific resources** - Leverage platforms like LinkedIn, Conservation Job Board, and professional organizations like SORP and NRPA for targeted opportunities and development

- **Embrace contemporary technology strategically** - Master digital tools, including social media branding, mobile apps for skill development, and data analytics to stay competitive in the evolving field

- **Avoid overspecialization and certification stagnation** - Diversify skills across multiple outdoor disciplines and keep certifications current to prevent career vulnerability

Webinar Recap: Key Takeaways

- **Quality relationships over quantity contacts** - Focus on building authentic, mutually beneficial relationships rather than collecting superficial contacts through shared experiences and value-first interactions

- **Follow up within 48 hours with personalized messages** - Reference specific conversation points and suggest concrete ways to stay connected or collaborate after meeting new contacts

- **Leverage industry-specific networking opportunities** - Actively participate in outdoor recreation conferences, professional associations, certification programs, and volunteer opportunities to connect with like-minded professionals

RECREATION
SOLUTIONS
GROUP
QUESTIONS AND DISCUSSION