

## CONDUCTING A SUCCESSFUL JOB SEARCH

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Regardless of the ups and downs of the job market one fact is clear, individuals who thoughtfully prepare for the job search waste less time and land the best jobs. It may surprise you to discover that each job search is unique and that what works for your friend/roommate may not be the answer for you. It is often helpful to think about the job search campaign as a part-time job.

### Getting Started

There are key, shared components to consider, regardless of your major:

- Know your product
- Review your work values
- Identify your interests, personality preferences and skills
- Research your target industry
- Identify what skills add value to jobs you are interested in
- Based on what you learn in your research, strategically plan for your job search

There is no question that the better you know yourself and your target industry, the more successful you will be in landing “the” position. To help clarify your goals, skills and interests, utilize the Focus 2 assessment.

### Items to Consider

- Develop an effective, targeted resume for your job search. Multiple versions of your resume is common and may be a necessary strategy to appropriately market your skills and experiences.
- Create a cover letter for each job to accompany your resume and highlight important skills and experiences that may not be mentioned in your resume.
- Thoroughly prepare for your interviews by conducting research on the organization, preparing questions for the interviewers and following up with “thank you” letters. Take advantage of an in-person mock interview or utilize Interview Stream via the Career Services Canvas page.
- Think about who may already be in your network and take advantage of those who can help.
- Keep track of where and when you applied.

Keep in mind that the job search is a process. The better you prepare and appropriately market yourself, the more successful you will be.

### Thinking like an Employer

Conducting research on an industry, career paths and industry specific employers will provide you with insight into the employers thought process. Switching “hats” allows you to consider how, when and where an employer is likely to advertise a position as well as focus on strategies that an employer would utilize in the hiring process. Remember, as an employer, time is key; filling the vacancy with the best possible individual promptly is the goal.

In most organizations, the first search for candidates is in-house. Next, people look to their network: colleagues, friends and associates, both professional and personal contacts, to broadcast the opening. If the employer still has not found the right individual, then Human Resources (HR) will be contacted. In many instances, employers are required to work with HR from the beginning. HR works with the hiring manager to advertise the position on the company’s web site, online job boards and newspapers.

After the position is advertised, HR will then screen, review and forward resumes of those who meet the job criteria to the hiring manager. The initial goal is to reduce the quantity of applications to a manageable number for the hiring manager. Please keep in mind, because of the high volume of resumes that some companies receive, many organizations opt to have perspective candidates enter/upload resumes into databases. The uploaded resume is then evaluated electronically for keywords to match with the job standards and requirements. When creating your resume, it is always important to include both action verbs for the human reader and industry or skills specific nouns for the scanning technology.

Your goal throughout the job search process is to stand out from the competition. Always remember to continuously update your resume to reflect your skills and experiences.

### Company Research

Conducting research on the company can go a long way toward job search success. Employers typically perceive company research as a good indicator of the candidate's approach to preparation, work ethic and their enthusiasm for the position. At the very least, inspect the company website. Company research can help you decide whether to apply for a position and to prepare for an interview.

It is also helpful to talk with people who work for the employer or have experience in the industry. As you conduct your research, keep in mind the source of the information. Are you reading an internal document designed as a marketing tool or an unbiased piece written by a neutral party? Your research will provide insight which will allow you to both anticipate questions that are likely to be asked in the interview and develop questions that you would like to ask regarding the position and/or company.

### Sources for Leads

The most successful job search campaigns utilize a multifaceted approach. It is a good idea to ask yourself what are the pros and cons of each of the methods you are using. A good rule of thumb is to focus your energies on those methods that put you in personal connection with potential hiring managers. Also, take into consideration what you have learned about the specific hiring methods for your chosen industry or career path.

It can be tempting to spend all your efforts on the Internet or on newspaper listings. After all, these are methods that are convenient and comfortable. However, both of these methods are also convenient for everyone else as well and as a result, your resume will be one of many which are quickly reviewed to see if you warrant consideration. Informational interviews, networking, participation in conferences/professional meetings and/or internships are all great ways to make connections which can result in your resume being placed in a smaller pile of known candidates. In some cases, through your contacts, you may actually hear about openings before the position is even advertised.

### Networking

One of the best, and often least understood components, of a successful job search strategy is networking. Through networking, you can establish an ever-expanding list of contacts in a specific career field or industry and expand pathways that channel information, recommendations and potential prospects. Here are some guidelines about the process to keep in mind:

- Networking is sharing information and developing trust. Your contacts will not share job leads or new contacts if they do not trust you or your intentions. Also, you are expected to offer information, recommendations, and leads to others.
- Networking is somewhat of a formal activity. It is designed, structured, and has a particular intent.
- Networking is a method to create a unified list of individuals to whom you revisit over and over throughout your career. Contacts are created, nurtured and sustained, not used and discarded.
- Begin by contacting all of the individuals that you feel can assist you in moving closer to the position you seek. Start with faculty members, current/former employers, friends and family members.
- Notify every contact you create about the kind of position that you are seeking. You should be detailed and avoid the trap of saying you will accept anything. Your network contact can be of better assistance to you when he or she specifically understands your career goals.
- Make sure to follow-up with each lead of information that your contact has provided and maintain a list of all contacts. Keep networking contacts updated on your progress and remember to thank them for their support.
- Become a member of a professional organization and actively participate within the organization. Often times these organizations are completely connected to the network in a profession and people typically know who is entering the field and who is leaving.
- Keep in mind that you may be in a situation to help someone someday, so offer your assistance in any way that you can.

### Resources:

*A Foot in the Door: Networking Your Way into the Hidden Job Market*, Katharine Hansen

*Power Networking: Using the Contacts You Don't Even Know You Have to Succeed in the Job You Want*, Marc Kramer

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### Search Firms

Another avenue to explore and learn about current job openings is through search firms (also called agencies, 3<sup>rd</sup> parties and head hunters). A search firm receives compensation for their services, typically from the employer. Many search firms work only with experienced professionals because they command a higher salary and as a result, a high commission for the search firm. If you choose to go this route, always inquire about fees and who is responsible for paying those fees. If you are required to pay, be sure to ask yourself what it is you are getting in return. In many cases, the same services are available for free through the Career Services office. It is also recommended to investigate the search firms' track record with the Better Business Bureau or the State Attorney Generals Office.

### Record Keeping

The reality of a job search is that you will be submitting your resume and cover letter for many positions and to a variety of individuals. Stay organized by creating a record-keeping system to monitor your progress. Record leads and contacts as well as how these leads were developed. Save and file job descriptions of positions you have applied for, copies or correspondence and document contacts with employers including, dates of contacts and content of the interaction. This will help if selected for an interview. See example below:

Company	Contact	Date Applied	Application	Follow-Up
ABC, Inc.	John Smith	May 1	Web site	Email, May 15
XYZ Co.	Jane Miller	May 5	Email	Phone Call, May 19

### Timeline

Always be cognizant of time in your job search. Do not spend hours upon hours a day applying to jobs. Spread out your time effectively to ensure that your documents are well-prepared. This will also help to eliminate stress.

Consider that 3 months is reasonable time to allow for an entry-level job search. If times are tough, you are re-careering or your goal is to enter a very competitive field, then it is wise to allow for a 6-month search. In some cases, the industry may have their own timeline for hiring dependent on their busy seasons.

The key to success in the job search is not to wait until the last minute and to be prepared. A good rule of thumb is to always have your resume up to date so that you are prepared for unexpected opportunities.

### Contingency Plan

Six months has come and gone and your ideal position hasn't come through. Perhaps it is time to reassess your approach. Take a moment to be honest with yourself about your job search and what you have learned about yourself and the industry. Are you missing a key skill needed in this particular field, are you presenting yourself well in the interview, have you truly proactively committed yourself to the job search?

While it may feel a bit awkward initially, it is perfectly reasonable to ask for feedback as to why you were not included in the interview pool or if interviewed, why you were not offered the position. If employers are looking for experience you do not yet have, think about how you might gain this experience or knowledge. Look into temporary, contract, internship or volunteer situations that can provide you with relevant experience. Are you willing to take less money or apply for another position in the field or company to get your foot in the door?

Always be open to new ideas and opportunities. The more flexible you are, the greater the chances will be of landing in an industry, and job, of your choice.

### Career Services

Career Services can help in your job search. Take advantage of the numerous resources available both in-person and via online materials. Come in and meet with a staff member, attend the annual Job Fair or participate in any number of workshops.