

FINDING WORK – Carrying Out a Job Search

Challenging job market conditions and changing hiring practices means that 'looking for work' looks different than when you last found a job. Employers are unreceptive to generic applications that do not focus on their specific business needs. Applying to jobs ads on large job posting sites doesn't work very well either.

Did you know...

It is commonly acknowledged that approximately 80% of job openings, especially those for students and new graduates looking for career-related work, are not found on large job-advertising sites. Unless you know how and where to look, you will never see most available jobs. This is the 'hidden' job market. Organizations strive to reduce hiring costs, so recruit candidates in multiple ways. Posting on job sites is expensive, time consuming and unnecessary for most.

Thinking like an employer hoping to hire the ideal candidate is the best way to connect with quality opportunities and get a job! Connect to specific job needs in resumes, cover letters, phone calls, emails and information requests.

Typical Recruiting Process:

1. Decision to fill a position made/approved.
2. Search begins through:
 - Internal promotion/competition (vacating position of successful candidate).
 - Posting through the company website, professional associations and/or referrals from staff, and trusted colleagues.
 - Only if viable candidates are not identified through those sources are large job boards or third party recruiters typically considered.
3. Applicants are evaluated against on-the-job competencies needed, eliminating all but top candidates, usually through a series of word/phrase searches of applicant resumes stored in an applicant tracking system (ATS).
4. Preliminary screening, interviews, reference checks are completed. Formal offer is made.

Effective Work Search Process:

1. Decide to begin an active job search targeting one to three specific types of work. Research typical day-to-day tasks and accountabilities for each.
2. Brainstorm examples of experiences and class assignments that are similar to day-to-day tasks identified in your research.
3. For each role targeted in #1 identify a list of 10+ specific organizations, department and/or work teams, including supervising managers, business/industry challenges and current projects.
4. Develop targeted STAR (Situation, Task, Action, Result) stories, resumes, cover letters, and conversation starters to clearly convey ability to contribute.
5. Schedule daily steps you will take to connect with organizations, managers, additional information and leads.

Steps to an Effective Search

There is always work. Organizations are always adapting to retirements, parental leaves, promotions and technological change. Too many unsophisticated job seekers waste valuable time by jumping into job search using a general resume to apply to a wide range of jobs – many of which need widely differing abilities and to which their resume does not appear to meet basic employer competency requirements.

Effective job seekers are strategic in identifying, capitalizing on and even creating opportunities overlooked by others, and position themselves on resumes and cover letters as a valuable choice.

To increase your chances of success, have a plan, use multiple job search strategies and get help from professionals in Career Services.

1. Basic research (*this is a 'need to do' step*)

What do you want to do in this next job? Spend at least two hours learning about the industry, the employers, projects, and the accountabilities associated with the role. Information will not be found in one place but rather through multiple online sources and talking to people in the field. Learn about:

- Specific job/work content – tasks you would be doing and at what level of difficulty/accountability.
- Internal or external client groups with which you would work.
- Specific industries, challenges you would become 'expert' in understanding.

Use sources such as Google searches and alerts, articles, newsletters, blogs and company websites.

2. Be aware

Be realistic about the jobs you are qualified to do. Be able to clearly explain what makes you a good choice, including:

- Your scope of competence at tasks common to the work you seek and specific examples that demonstrate what you can do that they need.
- Paid, volunteer or class project experiences with related client groups and/or job-relevant tasks.
- Who can speak about these that you could approach as a potential reference?

3. Clarify

What specific industries, companies and departments would you like to become a part of? Document what interests you about their business.

- Smaller organizations whose name recognition may be low is where most new jobs are created. Consider identifying and approaching these companies.
- Become familiar with their products, services and competitors.
- Find out where in the organization the type of work you want is currently being done. What projects, challenges or opportunities are they working on? Do they have 'new graduate' or summer programs?
- Learn company or industry recruiting strategies, preferences and hiring periods, what 'qualified' ideally means at each, and what are key professional organizations staff belong to.
- Identify the correct people to connect with. Check company websites, professional associations, newsletters and professional networking sites such as LinkedIn.
 - » Unless you want to work in Human Resources, do not focus on connecting with the HR department. People supervising areas in which you wish to work will usually be the decision makers.



4. Consider contract, project or temporary work as well as permanent or summer positions

These opportunities frequently develop into permanent work. If not, you have successfully moved into your field, grown your network, built strong business references and increased your competence.

Develop targeted tools and scripts focusing on what you can do to contribute to a prospective employer's business projects and resolve specific business challenges. This is important to pique interest during a proactive search as well as when responding to a posting with hundreds of other applicants.

- A well thought out long and short version of your personal introduction/conversation starter ensures people remember the YOU you want them to remember.
- Resumes targeted to each employer group's needs and outlines specific examples of competence and accomplishments directly related to their business interests (***see tip sheet on Resumes***).
- Cover letters connect what interests you about a specific organization's business and how you are offering to contribute to specific business successes (***see tip sheet on Cover Letters***).

5. Map out and execute a comprehensive job search plan

Well planned steps leading from where you are now to two to three scenarios of where you want to be gives you more control, opens up unseen options and minimizes time wasted on low-return activities. Be sure to:

- Advise your personal and developing professional network about the work you seek. Three-quarters of successful job seekers found work opportunities through their networks. If people don't understand what you want to do, they can't connect you to decision makers for opportunities.
- Routinely associate with industry insiders. Attend professional meetings and industry events frequently to increase your profile and expand your reach (***see tip sheet, Networking***).
- Create/update profiles on professional social networking sites such as LinkedIn and join professional interest groups on alumni and professional sites (***see tip sheet, Online Professional Presence***).
- Spend the bulk of your 'applying time' to job postings on employer and professional association sites or developing proposal offers.
- Make cold calls (***see tip sheet, Finding Work – Cold Calling***).
- Read news feeds, newsletters, industry blogs and trade journals. Follow companies of interest.

Track activities and progress on what you are doing to connect with decision makers as well as applications submitted. Set specific goals such as: "This week I will reach five decision makers and have a conversation about their needs and my capabilities."

- Each lead, resume sent, information interview, new contact, job application and interview needs follow-up. Omitting or delaying this activity will cost you opportunities.
 - » Ensure application documents are directed to the right people, confirm they are received and follow up with a personal conversation.
 - » Other follow-up can be done using multiple methods including email, phone, in person and LinkedIn.
- Use these opportunities to restate why you believe you are a great fit for the work you are seeking and someone to consider or support.
- Set aside time to celebrate smaller successes such as successful referrals, a number of information interviews completed or the expansion of your network. Share your 'wins' with your support network.



Electronic job search tips

- Do not rely solely on job bank postings, job alerts or LinkedIn recommended jobs. Incorporate these into a larger plan. A large percentage of jobs created come from small and medium-sized businesses or emerging industries which often have a less extensive online presence and no ability to wade through thousands of applicants which are generated from large posting sites.
- If considering posting a resume online, do your due diligence. Find out:
 - » Is the site specialized to focus on your field? Do they receive postings for your level of qualification? Do they post jobs for your target city?
 - » How is your personal information protected to avoid misuse, spamming or sale of your personal data?
- Craft your online presence to work for you. Surveys of employers have found that most look at candidate online presence and have rejected candidates based on what they found. Professional sites, personal networking sites, blogs, Twitter and Instagram all add to, or subtract from your professional image.
- Have you applied to company websites? Do you know what happened to your application? Follow up with the department manager you would be working for and offer to supply additional information.
 - » Don't know the name of the manager? Call and ask, do an Internet search for COMPANY + DEPARTMENT + MANAGER and read publications and articles that are found!

Tips for distance job search

For many students, summer or graduation means returning to a hometown or relocating to another city. Searching from a distance can be challenging – start early to increase success.

- ✓ Subscribe to local news feeds to familiarize yourself with the economy, industries and companies of interest. Even current events suggest hidden job opportunities.
- ✓ Work your network and use LinkedIn company pages to find people to connect with.
- ✓ Write and call to arrange and complete information interviews to learn about the local market and develop contacts. If possible, follow up with a visit to introduce yourself personally.
- ✓ Consider using a local address and/or phone number, where possible. Many employers prefer local candidates as they are unable to assist with relocation costs.
- ✓ If you plan to move before securing a firm offer, have a solid contingency plan to cover living or other critical expenses.

Career Services can help you:

Meet with a Certified Career Development Professional to discuss your career options.

Have your resume critiqued and get one-on-one interview preparation assistance.

Find relevant part-time, summer and post graduation work through events, fairs and job postings.

CAREER SERVICES

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