

Job Search Strategies Guide

Source: The Career and Employment Service Center, Kansas State University

Overview

This tutorial provides a set of tools that allows for an organized and targeted job search, utilizing a combination of university and publicly available resources.

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1. Introduction

Whether you have already begun your job search, or are just beginning to think about it, you have a marketing campaign ahead of you as you actively enter the job market. You need to think of your job search as being a job in itself. It is not enough to be highly qualified for a position—to be the best accountant, researcher, manager or computer programmer in your class. If you are truly ready to make your move toward your ideal job, you need to mount a well-orchestrated campaign to “sell” employers on the idea of hiring you. Your job search should have many different facets.

Always strive for and achieve a balance among research, preparation and action. If you take a narrow approach to your job search, you may find that you’re devoting a lot of time and effort to a process that yields minimal rewards. For example, if your only job search activities are to check classified ads and randomly send out your résumé to various employers, you’ll probably find yourself with a handful of interviews at firms that may or may not be right for you. On the other hand, you will significantly increase your chances of finding the right job and getting hired by developing your network, researching employers, and targeting those employers that are a good match for your skills, interests, and experiences.

This guide will provide some general tips on how to conduct an effective job search and research employers. Keep in mind that the staff members at your Career Center are available to assist you in all stages of your job search.

2. Focus Your Search

A job search is most effectively conducted when you are able to focus your efforts. To start focusing your efforts, it helps to initially step back and closely assess yourself and the needs of employers.

Knowing Yourself (Self-Assessment)

A successful job search begins with careful planning. One of the first steps in a well-planned job campaign is to know yourself. At this point, you need to realistically look at your strengths, weaknesses, abilities, education, and experience. This information will be transferred into a résumé. In addition, clarify your values. What are your top priorities...

salary, geographic areas, autonomy of work, advancement potential, etc? You'll have gained a better understanding of yourself, and that will make you more able to determine and pursue a satisfying career.

Steps you should consider taking in getting to know yourself:

- **Make an appointment with a Career Center advisor at your college's department** to discuss various career options and job search strategies
- **Participate in special learning programs**
 - By participating in a part-time job, internship/co-op and/or summer job you will gain an invaluable opportunity to explore career options and gain valuable experience. Students who participate in special learning programs are likely to be more marketable than their peers and have a better sense of the career path they have chosen.
 - Today, many employers expect students to have experience in their field before graduation. You also have the opportunity to:
 - Check your career goals against the "real world" of your profession
 - Earn a comparable salary as full-time professionals
 - Take a break from classes
 - Learn practical applications of classroom experience
 - Start your own network of professional contacts and friends
 - Increase your self-confidence
 - Explore new areas of the country or the world
 - Become aware of new "sub-fields" in your major

Remember, it is never too early to participate in the special learning programs!

Visit the offices of your department's Career Center or university counseling services to learn more about assessing your interests, values, and abilities. Utilize the information regarding the world of work available at Career Center

Know Your Employer/Target Companies

You will need to conduct methodical and thorough research of careers and industries that match your skills. No job search can be considered complete without such research. Your best approach is to combine library research and field research. This research will help you focus on the 'big picture' of your job search.

- **Library Research** is very similar to research you have done for college courses. There are a couple of areas you will want to focus on:
 - a) **Industry.** If you are not sure where you want to work, you might want to look at industries in terms of:
 - size
 - salary averages
 - stability
 - atmosphere
 - growth potential

Use the Standard Industrial Classification (SIC) codes available at CES and on the Internet at

www.fedmarket.com/procurement_library/tools

- b) **Company.** If you think you'd like to work for a certain company, you'll want specific company information including:
 - structure
 - size
 - products/services
 - performance
 - reputation
 - attitude toward employees
 - career opportunities
 - projections for future

For information on researching companies, visit the resource set for that purpose at your Career Center.

- Field Research takes what you have learned so far from your self

assessment and library research, and brings it into the world of work. Field research allows you the opportunity to interview professionals who are already established in their careers, to gain the benefit of the experience and insight.

Talking to people who are doing the kind of work you might like will help you:

- test your career assumptions
- establish contacts
- broaden marketplace exposure

This type of interaction with professionals is called informational interviewing. If you think you want to be a banker, speak to a banker. Networking with alumni working in this field can provide excellent information and allow you to broaden your own network.

3. Develop Job Leads

The job market is complex. It might therefore help for you to think of the job market as being divided into two distinct sectors—the **Visible (or Advertised) Job Market** and the **Hidden Job Market**. You will need to actively explore and work both sectors of the job market to conduct a truly successful job search and develop as many quality job leads as possible. Keep in mind: Approximately 80% of all jobs in the American market are never advertised! We'll briefly discuss both the Visible and the Hidden Job Markets and offer suggestions on how to tap into and develop quality job leads within each of these markets.

The Visible Job Market (or when the employer looks for you)

Most job seekers are comfortable with the Visible Job Market because it makes sense to go where you're being invited. However, the Visible Job Market can be frustrating and slow for both the employer and the applicant. For the applicant, it means lots of competition—particularly for entry-level positions. For the more experienced and specialized worker, the Visible Job Market may not be that visible: the employer's network is faster, cheaper, and more effective than advertising.

People **DO** find jobs through the Visible Job Market however. The successful candidates in the visible job market are most often those who meet or exceed employer requirements (and submit a resume and a cover letter that are on target). But the Visible Job Market is only a fraction of available jobs. Some of the best positions are never advertised.

Where is the Visible Job Market?

Some segments of the workforce rely heavily on the Visible Job Market for the majority of their job openings. Government jobs at federal, state and local levels are routinely announced via job postings, employment hotlines and classified ads.

Within the private sector, the Visible Job Market is often linked to high demand and low supply of workers. For example, careers related to computers (certain hardware, software, network systems) and biotechnology are currently "hot". The Visible Job Market is also productive where there is high demand and high turnover—such as telephone sales. Employers in both types of situations are motivated to set up employer hotlines, participate in job fairs, and advertise positions in the newspaper or on the Internet.

If your skill set or industry setting are not in "high gear," you are probably frustrated by the lack of advertised job openings. Employers in your industry may not have to advertise; enough acceptable candidates are finding them and saving the employer the trouble of looking.

The Visible Job Market consists of publicly advertised positions open to immediate applications. Look at the following sources for jobs in the Visible Job Market:

➤ **Advertised positions in print**

Ads in newspapers, professional journals or bulletins published by associations, organizations or other colleges. Your Career Center likely has several bulletins as well.

➤ **Advertised positions available through the Internet**

- A listing of full-time and internships/co-op/summer positions, is usually available at your Career Center.
- The Internet offers a wealth of advertised positions. Use links to thousands of jobs, including state, federal and local government listings, and the home pages of companies and organizations who often list their positions on the Internet.

➤ **On-Campus Interviews**

Participate in on-campus interviews with the many companies who visit.

➤ **University Career Fairs**

Many universities sponsor career fairs when employers visit campus and provide students with an opportunity to learn more about job possibilities.

➤ **Employment Agencies**

There are public agencies that provide job services usually without charge. Some agencies will work for the employer and do not charge candidates a fee; others have substantial fees. Be careful to review written material before contracting and check with your city's or state's Better Business Bureau for a reference on the agency record.

**The Hidden Job Market
(or when you look for the employer)**

Remember: 80% of all positions are filled without employer advertising. These positions are filled by—or created for—candidates who come to an employer's attention through employee recommendations, referrals from trusted associates, recruiters, or direct contact with the candidate.

Successful job seekers are able to connect with the employer's network. Does this mean the employer knows them? Not necessarily. But the candidate comes "pre-recommended" by someone the employer trusts. **Networking**, using your contacts to connect with the employer's contacts, is the key to the Hidden Job Market.

Where is the Hidden Job Market?

The Hidden Job Market is as close as your telephone, e-mail account or next professional association meeting. Your contacts—and those you meet through your contacts—can help you learn about positions, projects or needs that will not be formally announced.

Employers are constantly on the lookout for suitable candidates to replace departing, retiring, or inefficient workers, to work on new projects or to add expertise in a particular area.

Calling employers without a referral, or a connection, no matter how slight, is known as a "cold" call. Cold calls may result in an interview—but you will have to be prepared for lots of rejections along the way.

Networking, using referrals as an introduction, is less stressful and more productive.

So how do you establish a NETWORK?

First of all, let's start with the basics . . . What IS networking? Networking is simply "talking to people." When people say you should network, they mean you should talk to people. People are happy to help others if they can. You need to be clear about how you'd like their help and clear about what you're looking for.

You'll need to make a list of all the people to whom you can talk.

These people do not need to be friends, or even acquaintances, just any and all people with whom you have enough of a common thread to initiate a conversation. If you can pick up the phone and call them, for any reason, they are potential networking contacts. Using this loose definition, most people have hundreds, perhaps even a thousand contacts.

Your contacts don't have to be people who can obviously help you. Don't limit yourself by thinking: "How could my neighbor know anything about events management?" Give your neighbor a chance to tell you that her son is an attorney for the founder of a large local association that plans conferences all over the Western United States. This may look like a "long shot" until you consider that everyone has a network. With assistance from your neighbor, her son may introduce you to someone in his network.

Sources for Networking Contacts

Remember; all you need is a connection that would allow you to call and say who you are, get a nod of recognition that there IS a connection, and ask for specific leads, information and introductions.

- **Personal Contacts**
Friends, acquaintances, neighbors, relatives, church members, classmates, teachers, club members.
- **Professional Contacts**
Employers, faculty members, advisors, supervisors, colleagues, subordinates, clients, customers, fellow association members.
- **Internet Contacts**
Subscribers to mailing lists you participate in, any personal or professional contact that you might communicate with via e-mail.
- **All the People Your Contacts Know**
Just as you have hundreds or thousands in your network, so each person you contact is connected to others. You will want to be able to call a stranger and say: "Phil Wilson said you'd be the best person to talk to about convention bookings in the East Bay."

Reprinted from JobStar: California Job Search Guide,
<http://jobstar.org>

Other Potential Resources—Tapping the Hidden Job Market

- **The Internet**
You may locate a number of the resources on the Internet. For more tips on tapping into the Hidden Job Market, start on our web page; Go to Job Search Resources: Jobs Search Tips on WWW (click on resources such as Job Star, College Grad-Job Hunter and Monster Campus).
- **Prospective Employers Lists**
There may be lists, arranged by college and major, which contain names and addresses of companies who have hired alumni of your college or university available at your Career Center.
- **Job Hunter's Sourcebook/Occupational Outlook Handbook**
These books, which may be found in your Career Center, identify professional associations, publications and other resources for hundreds of professions. The Occupational Outlook Handbook is available on-line at **<http://www.bls.gov/oco/>**
- **Trade and Business Publications**
All occupations have publications reporting events that advertise products that can provide information for follow-up. Remember, you are prospecting for leads to write letters of inquiry.
- **Directories**
The article, "How to Research Companies" in this Guide identifies the wealth of resources for gathering information on employers, including names of officers and addresses.
- **Super Directories**

Major sources for listings of other research material include the Encyclopedia of Associations, the Guide to American Directories and Business Publications Rate Data.

➤ **Telephone Books/Chambers of Commerce**

The Yellow Pages of the phone book offer an organized approach to finding companies within certain industries. There are also numerous yellow page directories on the Internet.

➤ **Specialized Job Opportunity Publications**

The Peterson Job Opportunities in Health Care; Business; Engineering and Technology and The Environment; The Good Works; and various internship books probably available in your Career Center offer contact information for letters of inquiry.

4. Develop the Tools for the Job Search

Pay special attention to your résumé. Develop a cover letter that can be adapted for various applications. If you have designs or other work samples to offer, build a portfolio that can be reviewed by employers. Check out interview books that may be available at your Career Center.

Finally, prepare a brief three-minute "infomercial" describing your qualifications for employment. Be prepared to use this in responding to an employer's question: "Tell me about yourself!"

5. Implement the Job Search

Recognize that a job search takes time. Professional advisors estimate a month of search for each \$10,000 sought in salary. Plan to spend at least 25 hours per week.

Cover all the bases by using all the following job search methods:

- Letters of inquiry . . . write to "explore" career possibilities
- Response to advertised positions
- Direct walk-ins . . . dress for interviews and visit the office
- Calls by phone . . . inquire about openings, contacts
- Registration with public or temporary employment agencies
- Attendance at Career Fairs and Trade Shows
- Networking with alumni, friends, and relatives for leads and information.

Be persistent. It often takes several months for firms to make hiring decisions, so check back monthly to confirm your interest. The advisors at your Career Center will be available for consultation. Job hunting is not a win/lose kind of game but a dynamic learning process. Roadblocks can create new opportunities, not disappointments. Play the game of job hunting, don't struggle with it!

6. How to Research Companies

by Karmen N.T. Crowther

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CRUCIAL to a successful job-search campaign is knowing how to research companies and organizations. To tailor your résumé and cover letter to a particular position and especially to prepare effectively for an interview, you need to know as much as possible about the company or organization.

Employers perceive "researching the company" as a critical factor in the evaluation of applicants because it reflects interest and enthusiasm. In the interview, it shows that you understand the purpose of this process and establishes a common base of knowledge from which questions can be asked and to which information can be

added, thus enabling both applicant and interviewer to evaluate the position match more accurately.

What Employers Say About Research

Time after time, when employers are asked about what job candidates can do to shine in the job interview, the response is "thoroughly research the company and be able to talk knowledgeably about it in the interview." According to employers responding to surveys conducted by the National Association of Colleges and Employers, candidates who have done their homework are better able to discuss how their experiences and qualifications match up with the company's needs; prepared candidates who know the company can also talk about how they can make an immediate contribution to the organization. The candidate who can do that is typically the candidate who gets the job offer.

Try to locate the following items of basic information about the company: age, services or products, competitors within the industry as a whole, growth pattern, reputation, divisions and subsidiaries, location/length of time established there, size, number of employees, sales, assets and earnings, new products or projects, number of locations, and foreign operations.

To begin your search, visit your Career Center and locate recruiting literature provided by companies. Be sure to also check company profiles appropriate for your career choices in one of the NACE *Job Choices* magazines. Then look for other reference books such as *Standard and Poor's Register*, which has several volumes that include information on industry classification, geographic locations, names and profiles of company executives, and company addresses. When you have considered all available materials, turn your attention to the business reference section of your campus or local library and continue your search. The following are excellent research materials you can and should use in your job search.

Valuable Resources in Researching Employers

The below-referenced resources are only a partial listing of excellent resources you should use in researching employers. Use your Career Center, campus and/or local libraries and keep an eye open for electronic resources to discover new/updated information and resources.

These resources provide helpful directory information, including addresses, telephone numbers, and names of top executives:

- *Million Dollar Directory*, Dun's Marketing Services; covers 160,000 U.S. businesses with a net worth of more than \$500,000; provides addresses, products, approximate sales, and number of employees; and lists top officers.
- *Ward's Business Directory*, Gale Research Inc.; provides brief data for both public and large private companies arranged alphabetically, geographically, and by sales size.
- *Standard and Poor's Register of Corporations, Directors, and Executives*. Volume 1 of this set lists 45,000 corporations, with addresses, top officers, annual sales, and number of employees.
- *Thomas Register of American Manufacturers*. More than 20 volumes provide a comprehensive directory of American manufacturers, arranged by product. Two volumes are an alphabetical list by company name. This resource is also available through the Internet at www.thomasregister.com
- *Specialized single-industry directories*. Hundreds of such directories are published for a wide variety of industries. Check your library's catalog to see what is available for the industry you are interested in, e.g., advertising agencies, electronics, sporting

goods. The entry in the catalog will look like this: ADVERTISING AGENCIES—DIRECTORIES

The following resources are useful for balance sheet and income statements, stock and security data, product lines, and/or organizational structure.

- *Moody's Manuals*, Moody's Investor Service. Volumes in this series cover companies listed on U.S. stock exchanges in a variety of business areas. Information for each company usually includes a brief corporate history, business and products, a list of subsidiaries and properties, officers, comparative income and balance sheet statistics, and securities data.
- *Standard and Poor's Corporation Records*. Similar in content and scope to Moody's Manuals, this set has both financial and narrative profiles of publicly owned U.S. companies.
- *Value Line Investment Survey*. Analyzes and reports on approximately 2,000 stocks in 90 industries on a rotating quarterly basis. Data for each publicly owned company's stock are presented as a one-page summary that includes a 10-year statistical history of key investment factors plus future performance estimates.
- *Annual reports to stockholders*. A publicly owned corporation's annual report to its stockholders contains current financial statistics and other information about the firm's operation. Many libraries keep files of these reports. A growing number of public companies include a link to their annual report on their web page. 10-K reports. These financial disclosure reports, submitted annually to the U.S. Securities and Exchange Commission by publicly owned corporations, are available in many libraries and contain a variety of financial data. The full text of these reports is available at the SEC's Edgar web site (www.sec.gov/edgarhp.htm).
- *Disclosure Corporate Snapshots*, Disclosure, Inc. This CD-ROM product contains excerpts from both annual reports to stockholders and 10-K reports, making it a quick source of financial information about public corporations.
- *Yahoo Finance Company and Fund Index*. Provides financial and corporate data on 8,000 public companies. <http://biz.yahoo.com/i/>
- *Hoover's On-Line*. This Web site (www.hoovers.com) has basic directory and financial information for about 8,000 public companies, including links to their web pages.

Finally, for useful background articles on all aspects of the company, take a look at the following resources:

- *Business Periodicals Index*, is a subject index which covers approximately 350 English-language periodicals in all areas of business from accounting to transportation. It is a starting point for periodical articles on any business topic.
- *Predicasts F & S Index*, is an excellent index for current information on U.S. companies, products, and industries drawn from a variety of periodicals and trade journals.
- *ABI/Inform, UMI*. Available only in electronic form. This index covers several hundred general and scholarly business periodicals.
- *Business Index, Information Access*. This subject index may be available in your library in microfilm format or as a part of the Infotrac CD-ROM system. It covers several hundred business periodicals, the *Wall Street Journal* and the financial section of the *New York Times*.
- *Wall Street Journal Index, UMI*, indexes the major U.S. business newspaper on a monthly basis. Articles may cover companies and industries of all kinds in locations nationwide. The WSJ has a web

site (www.wsj.com) but you must subscribe to use it.

- Several other business news sources are available through the WWW. For example, look at *Top Money News* (www.usatoday.com/money/mfront.htm) CNNfn (<http://cnfn.com>) or Bloomberg Personal (www.bloomberg.com). Each of these contains today's business news stories, plus a limited number of stories from the past few months.

5 things you need to know before you start

Here are some simple rules of thumb to remember before you begin your search for company information:

1. Publicly owned companies are usually easier to find information about than privately owned ones.
2. Corporations as a whole are generally easier to find information about than their subsidiaries or divisions.
3. Large, nationally known corporations are always easier to find information about than local or regional ones.
4. Information found in a library may be somewhat dated. You are unlikely to find much, if any, information on very recent developments (last six weeks) unless they are newsworthy enough to be covered by a national newspaper or by a weekly news magazine.
5. No single library may have everything you need. In addition to your college or university library, consider visits to your public library, the chamber of commerce, or government offices, as well as telephone calls or letters to trade associations, in your search for company information.

A Note About Electronic Information Sources

Whether you're browsing the World Wide Web (WWW), using CD-ROM indexes, or searching an online database, you'll find that information about potential employers is increasingly available electronically. In addition to locating facts about a specific company or industry, you can survey employment forecasts or the general economy - just by tapping out a few words on a keyboard or clicking a mouse. If you have your own computer and access to the WWW, use the tips in this article to start researching an employer now. Alternatively, visit your campus or local public library. If you haven't been there lately, you'll probably find more computers than pencils in use.

CD-ROM information sources are widely available in larger libraries, easy to use, and usually free of charge. CD-ROMs may be company directories or they may provide financial data, statistics, or an index of periodical articles. Many of the information sources noted in this article are available in this format. Most are user-friendly, so you will be able to search them yourself with little or no training.

Searching an online data base, part of a specialized computer information systems (generally available in larger libraries), is another time-saving and efficient method to gather information. This can be an expensive option, however, as fees are often charged if the system you want to use requires a trained searcher as intermediary. Investigate your other sources of information first; if all are dead ends, then discuss this option with a librarian.

The WWW has exploded with information useful for company research. Few familiar print information sources are freely available on the web, but there are a number of alternatives. For example; many public and private companies, both large and small, have established web pages that can provide you with information about products and services, corporate history, recent accomplishments, and more. Many libraries provide access to the WWW. Explore it by using a web search engine

or try some of the WWW sites suggested in this article.

Finally, despite the value of electronic information, don't forget that many important facts, vital to evaluating an employer, can be found only in print information sources.