



YOUR ULTIMATE JOB SEARCH GUIDE

Tips & Techniques for a Successful Job Search



Chances are you are launching a job search for one of two reasons. You have either recently lost your job or it is time to move on from your current job or organization. Both are strong motivators to hit the pavement to search high and low for something new to meet your professional, financial, and personal goals.

The rise of the digital age has made job searching easier – in theory. Online job postings have replaced searching through the Want Ads. Resumes can now be submitted with the click of a button, doing away with hand-delivering applications. Professional relationships can be formed through platforms such as LinkedIn. Because of these advancements, you might think getting a job is easy and you're ready to get started immediately. We have a better plan...

CREATE A JOB SEARCH PLAN

Your job search will be more effective if you have a job search plan in place. Before you search the first job board, you need to have a clear picture of several things. First, understanding the unique value proposition of the product you are selling – YOU – will make you the best salesman around. Second, you must know where you're going before determining how to get there – outlining your professional goals is key. Additionally, identifying the pros and cons of your current role and organization drives your search for your ideal employer. Lastly, pinpointing reliable and connected colleagues can help you get your foot in the door of just about any company you can think of – so long as you have a plan in place.

Building a job search plan can feel overwhelming – and you haven't even begun looking for a job yet! Start simple – Create a weekly or daily schedule of job search activities to keep you on track and feeling productive. An effective job search will require approximately 30 hours/week to be effective. For those of you working full time, expect to spend 10-15 hours/week on your job search. Once you have your schedule in place, simply follow our tips and advice to craft an efficient and effective search.

YOUR BRAND

Whether you are a basketball star or fast food restaurant, branding matters. The same is true for YOU. Our recruiting firm is continually reminding job seekers to develop a unique message that is unforgettable, clear, supported by concrete experience, and marketable. How do you accomplish that? By knowing your Professional DNA- Drive. Niche. Accomplishments. This simple concept will make you stand out from the competition. (Hint: Saying you're a "hard worker" or a "fast learner" is neither unique nor memorable.)

Think of your brand as an organization. We'll call it "Me, Inc.". The cornerstone of Me, Inc.'s marketing is its latest and greatest product – your unique combination of achievements, skills, and experiences. Consistent and visible messaging spotlights what differentiates Me, Inc. from the competition; do this effectively and the marketplace will be compelled to “buy” the product – namely, YOU.

MUST HAVES AND NO WAYS

When we ask candidates why they are launching a job search, the most common answer we receive is: I hate my current _____ (role, boss, team). Believe it or not, this is an excellent job search starting point. It's not difficult to describe your dream job. The challenge lies in clearly defining why you don't like your current position. What aspects of your role are making you unhappy? Is it poor training and support, continually changing deliverables or a lack of upward mobility? In what ways is your supervisor's leadership style incompatible with your own? How is your department making success impossible? How is the dynamic of the team preventing you from reaching the goals you've set? There is a saying in the recruiting world “People join companies and leave managers”. If this rings true for you, spend the time identifying the specific management style that is inconsistent with your business philosophy.

The best way to create this “ideal job profile” is to compile a list of the “Get Tos” and the “Have Tos” – in other words, make a simple list of the things you do in your daily routine that you love doing, and those you try to avoid at all cost.

Once you pinpoint the specifics of what is and isn't working, you now have your list of No Ways. These are the leadership deficiencies, job functions and departmental dynamics you want to avoid. You can't always see these things immediately, but you will vigilantly watch for hints of them during your job search.

Ideally, you are leaving your current job with the hope of finding something better – and in today's hot job market, there is no reason for you to settle for anything less. Again, it's important to identify what “better” looks like. Perhaps you are looking for a more flexible schedule with the option for telecommuting. You may be after a better work/life balance, allowing you to “clock out” at the end of the day and not be on call all night. For some, a strong training program and support system is the key to professional happiness.

These Must Haves will be as much of a driving force in your job search as the things you're trying to avoid.

[Here are the 7 Most Common Reasons Good Employees Quit](#)

CREATING A FIRST-CLASS RESUME

In today's competitive job market, human resource managers, hiring managers, and recruiting professionals are inundated with hundreds of resumes for a single position. Translation: You've got 10-30 seconds to wow her! So, what can you do to ensure that YOUR resume stands out?

Even in the digital job search age, your resume is very important. Research shows, a polished, professionally written resume significantly increases your chances of securing an interview. While the layout and aesthetics are certainly important, your resume should succinctly highlight your work history, technical and leadership skills, professional achievements, and education while answering the employer's most important questions: "What unique value do you offer?" and "Does it meet my needs?" Don't forget, your resume must be consistent with your LinkedIn profile, including dates of employment, company names, titles, etc.!

How do you create a resume that meets those criteria?

Be succinct. Be specific. Be truthful.

Remember, you've got 10-30 seconds to convince the hiring manager your resume belongs in the "Interview" pile. A checklist of day-to-day tasks or a long-winded laundry list saturated with jargon and acronyms does not provide him or her with any substance or specific examples of your successes.

Instead, use job, field, or industry-specific keywords to concisely emphasize your qualifications. Give measurable examples of achievements, such as the programs or processes you developed and implemented to successfully reduce costs and improve efficiencies. Remember, companies want to know what makes you stand out as someone that will bring something unique to their organization. Never exaggerate or lie about your capabilities and successes.

Tailor all your materials for each specific job and audience, including your cover letter, resume, and thank you note. If your skills or experience aren't an obvious match, it's up to you to connect the dots for the hiring manager.

Before you craft your resume, take the time to compile a list of the positions you have held, including the corresponding duties. From this, outline your accomplishments and results in each role. Compile an inventory of your top 8 hard and soft skills. This process can be challenging but will provide you with the fundamentals to create an impressive resume.

[Download our resume essentials tool kit.](#)

Remember, your resume is a marketing piece. It must sell the employer on your unique value proposition. It is valuable real estate and must catch the reader's attention in an easy to read, chronological structure. Do NOT include personal data such as marital status, a photograph or date of birth. This information is irrelevant.

When it comes to cover letters, research shows that only 10%-15% of them are ever read! Many job seekers spend hours and hours, perfecting their cover letters, and just a fraction of this time on their resume – the reverse should be true! If you decide to include a cover letter, it shouldn't be a regurgitation of your resume. Instead, use the cover letter to address issues that are not mentioned in your resume (e.g. relocation, the reasons for leaving your last few jobs if the tenures were less than 1 year, citizenship or legal work status, etc.)

BEYOND A RESUME- YOUR LINKEDIN PROFILE

As we've mentioned, hiring is largely digitally-driven. It makes sense, then, that you are where hiring managers and recruiters are searching for top talent – LinkedIn. Most people think of LinkedIn as the online version of their resume. For a job seeker, it is more than that. It's the expression of your personal brand, your corporate worth, and the kind of employee you are.

Each section of your profile will showcase who you are and what you specialize in. Written in paragraph form, the 'Summary' allows you to expand on the information you shared on your resume. It the perfect place to express your personality and highlight your special skills and experiences. Be sure you include those keywords we've discussed! This is also the perfect place to post media such as videos, presentations, and links to relevant articles you've published.

The most 'Experience' portion of your profile is another place to incorporate keywords and share your capabilities in more detail than you could with your traditional resume. We strongly suggest reaching out to colleagues, people who reported to you, and former employers for recommendations and endorsements. Research suggests that LinkedIn Profiles with recommendations are three times more likely to get inquiries through LinkedIn searches than those without them.

[Buy our book](#) and learn more tips & secrets to creating a LinkedIn Profile hiring managers will notice.

RESEARCH, RESEARCH, RESEARCH

Research Your Ideal Role

Whether you are looking to advance to the next level or make a lateral move, you must research the type of role you are seeking. A lot has probably changed since the last time you looked for a job – everything from job titles and reporting structures, to metrics and KPIs. Every role has its own language, using specific keywords to demonstrate required competencies. Become fluent in the language of your target position. Researching job descriptions for specific roles (and the people who have them) will help you to uncover where you have an edge over the competition. This will also reveal any deficiencies that may require additional training or experience.

If you are making an industry change in addition to or instead of a role change, researching your role is absolutely essential. The current job market is tight. Many employers are open to hiring talent across industries.

Additionally, it is imperative that you isolate your ideal company structure and culture. Big companies vary significantly from small businesses; early stage or venture-backed businesses differ from family-run operations. None of these options is right or wrong for everyone – the key is to determine what is right for YOU.

Research Your Ideal Companies (Your Target Companies)

For some job seekers, anywhere is better than their current place of employment. Hopefully, this is not you. Launching your job search with a few key companies in mind will make the process move more quickly and successfully. Identify a few target companies through an acquaintance or based on your personal or professional passions (e.g. golf, drug discovery, travel, etc.). Researching an organization provides a glimpse into the corporate culture and helps you determine whether this option will maximize your “Must Haves” while avoiding your “No Ways”.

If you haven't created a list of target companies or identified your ideal company structure, you should get started right away. The most comprehensive and reliable source is a professional acquaintance- be it a former colleague or boss. Search out people who enjoy their job and consistently sing their organization's praises. Ask them to share the company's strengths and weaknesses. Most importantly, ask about your “Must Haves”.

Another excellent source for a company's reputation is the good old Internet. Websites such as [Glassdoor.com](https://www.glassdoor.com) or even a simple Google search can reveal a lot. As you identify organizations of interest, visit their website to learn more about who they are and what they do. Find their company page on LinkedIn to see if you know anyone connected to the company who can give you further insight and possibly connect you with the right people to get you hired. Additional resources include analyst reports for public companies, "Best Places to Work" lists, industry rankings and reports.

Research Your Ideal Compensation

Think of salary negotiation like buying a house – you wouldn't make an offer unless you knew what similar houses in the same area were selling for. Your salary is no different. Doing your due diligence and finding comparable numbers for your role, experience, and location will help you with your search and salary negotiations. The information you compile will help you set reasonable and attainable compensation expectations. Ideal sources include other open positions, colleagues who are in a comparable role, compensation consultants, and recruiters.

Familiarize yourself with your state's laws regarding salary history. California recently became the 8th state to pass legislation prohibiting employers and their agents from asking prospective candidates about their salary and benefit history. Additionally, they are now required to publish salary ranges for any open positions. What does this new law mean for you as a job seeker? Regardless of where you reside, your age, race or gender, you now have an all-access pass to competitive compensation packages.

All this information will help you calculate what we call "Your 3 Numbers". Your Dream Number. Your Walk-Away Number. Your comfort numbers.

FINDING A JOB

Now that your Job Search Plan is in place. You've created a solid, marketable brand; and you know what you do and don't want in your next role. In your hand, you have a professional, succinct resume that highlights what sets you apart from the crowd. You've pinpointed the role you want, the companies that are appealing, and what you can reasonably expect in compensation. Now you're ready to hit the pavement... or click the mouse.

Hiring has predominantly become a digital endeavor; but don't underestimate the power of a good handshake, a face to face meeting, and small talk. Keep in mind, 75% of today's jobs are filled through

networking, referrals & connections; 10-15% are filled through online job postings; and approximately 10-15% are filled by recruiters. This is why we recommend a three-pronged approach to finding your next job.

Networking – the #1 resource for finding a job

Because some people are more comfortable behind a computer, while others prefer to make eye contact, both online and in person networking can be effective, if done right. The key to productive in person networking is to look at it as socializing, rather than simply looking for a job. You have to be willing to help others first if you are going to rely on them to help you. Joining industry organizations is an excellent way to meet peers and potential employers with whom you already have something in common. Research local networking groups and regularly attend their events. It's tempting to attend an event only once, making a rash decision about future meetings from this organization. However, be sure to give them more than one chance. If, after several events, this group is not the right fit for you, try something new. Making networking personal rather than just professional is another way to make great connections – having some fun along the way.

Online networking is also extremely valuable if handled correctly. Thanks to the great connector, LinkedIn, you can connect with anyone from your fifth-grade teacher to your current employer. However, the breadth of connections available can make it difficult to know where to start. We suggest beginning with a list of current and active contacts, former colleagues and bosses, and fellow college alumni. Make sure you are connected to them through LinkedIn as well. Use your list of target companies to identify potential contacts and by extension, prospective employers. Research those companies to find the hiring managers, HR directors, internal recruiters, department heads, and even the person who has the job you want.

Now that your connections are bursting at the seams, it's time to leverage your LinkedIn network. There are those who actively participate on LinkedIn by posting their own unique content, sharing other's content, participating in discussions, and making introductions. Then there are those who simply have an account they occasionally pop into. Guess which one is growing their viable network and meeting their next employer? Use LinkedIn for what it was designed – connecting people who otherwise would have no contact. Invite colleagues of colleagues to join your network. As we stated above, find employees of the companies you want to join and take the first step to getting your name on their radar.

Order your copy of our book on how to use LinkedIn to find a job.

Job Boards, Job Postings, and Company Websites

Job boards like LinkedIn and company websites are the fastest way to see who's hiring. LinkedIn is the premier place to look for a job. Its members span the globe, giving you 24-hour access to the latest job openings. Another benefit of using LinkedIn's job board is its connectivity. You can simultaneously identify open jobs in your industry or role while getting instantaneous access to information about the organization through their Company Page and find any connections you may have to the organization.

Company websites also offer an up-to-the-minute listing of open positions. The size of a company is important here. It may be more challenging to connect with a person in a larger organization. Most job postings include a portal for resume submissions. On the other hand, these larger companies have robust Applicant Tracking Systems (ATS) which carefully screen those submissions, quickly identifying and flagging viable candidates through their matching algorithms.

The unfortunate thing about the abundance of online job postings is that the applicant pool can be enormous. This creates a huge backlog of resumes for HR professionals and hiring managers. Typically, fewer than 10% of the online applications that you complete will ever get a response, so don't get frustrated or disheartened if you aren't hearing back from the company. It's up to you to follow up every 7-10 days with the employer if you haven't received an email follow up or acknowledgment of your application being received.

Working with a Recruiter

We wouldn't be a [successful Executive Search Firm](#) if we didn't sing our own praises, once in a while. The [value of a recruiter](#) is undeniable. They have the inside track on open jobs that have not yet been made public; and their working- relationship with the hiring manager makes them privy to the specifics of the ideal candidate. Connect with reputable recruiters on LinkedIn or in person. Following the recruiting firm will give you real-time access to any searches they may be working on. Ideally, you will want to build a list of 3-4 recruiters that you can rely on – some will be geographically focused, some will work in one industry, and others (like us) will focus on specific functions. Don't forget! The job specs they post reveal a lot about the types of competencies and experience hiring managers are seeking. These will help you tailor your resume and add to your own LinkedIn profile.

[Read our article on how a recruiter can help you find a job](#)

MEMORABLE INTERVIEWING

The interview is the make it or break it part of the job search process. An employer is looking not only for the right skill set, but also the “right fit”- someone who fulfills the technical job requirements and meshes with the current staff and company culture. Be prepared.

The phone interview is often the first hurdle that a candidate must successfully overcome to move forward in the process. It shouldn't be taken lightly. Effectively representing yourself over the phone can be challenging. Unlike an in-person interview, the conversation doesn't include the nuances and visual aids that we often use in a conversation. For example, the person on the other end of the phone can't see you shaking your head to answer no, or the smile on your face in agreement. However, research shows that smiling on the phone will make a positive impact on the listener. It forces you to be more upbeat, to slow down your speech and to demonstrate your passion for the position. Body language counts, even on the phone!

If things go well, the next step will be an in-person meeting. To make this interview successful, showcase your skills and personality. It's also your chance to assess the company and decide if this opportunity will meet your needs. Remember to end every interview with “I am very excited about this position. Are there any aspects of my background that I can clarify to ensure that I am a good fit for the job?” We encourage you to add “Based on what I have shared today, what are your thoughts on my fit for this position?”. If you're not prepared with responses AND questions, the process of interviewing can seem overwhelming, exhausting, and nerve-racking.

Be prepared in advance to provide references. References from past employers carry the most weight. Select 3-4 individuals that can speak to your skills, abilities, and work style. Remember to notify them in advance to expect a call.

Don't forget to follow up. Saying “thank you” is not only the right thing to do, it is an effective job search strategy. A hand-written thank-you note is another opportunity to sell your qualifications and leave a positive impression on the employer. Send it immediately after the interview is complete so you don't forget. Follow up with an email the next day and consider attaching an interesting and relevant article. If you interview with several people, send a thank you note to each one. You can use essentially the same letter but vary a sentence or two to individualize each one in case the recipients compare notes.

NEGOTIATING A COMPETITIVE SALARY

Congratulations. You received an offer! You aced the interviews, the chemistry between you and your soon-to-be boss is solid, and you are passionate about the company's products and services. Now take a deep breath and pat yourself on the back. It has probably taken you a few months to reach this point in your job search – savor the moment! Ok, time's up!

Now it's time to negotiate a compensation package that is competitive, meets your financial needs, and falls within the company's budget. And you thought the hard part was over!

As we discussed earlier, proper preparation is key to a successful job search. This is especially true when it comes to salary negotiation. Before you get to the final interview, you should take some time to determine what you feel is the appropriate compensation package for the position, considering all aspects of the job (location, travel, upward mobility, the state of the business, the expectations of the company, etc.). Based on your earlier research, you should already have your Dream, Walk-Away, and Comfort numbers. If you start negotiations with your dream number, you will likely land in comfort zone. If you don't initially ask for that higher number, we guarantee you will never get it. Salary negotiation is difficult, but once mastered, will take your earning power to new heights. A recent survey showed that less than 30% of job seekers negotiated their compensation package during the interview process. While it is certainly more prevalent in some positions vs. others, don't be afraid.

[Download our guide to securing a competitive salary.](#)

Remember, you must maintain a positive attitude and respectful demeanor throughout the salary negotiation process. Continue to demonstrate your excitement and enthusiasm for the position even if things don't go exactly as you planned. After all, assuming you come to an agreement, you will be working alongside the very same people you negotiated with. It's important that you start out on the right foot.

When negotiations are done effectively and for the right position, you will be the proud owner of a new job. You will be earning a competitive paycheck and your new employer will have gained a committed, engaged, and savvy employee. However, if an agreement is not reached, it is very important that you avoid burning bridges. If your ultimate response to their offer is, "I'm sorry, but I just can't accept this position for that salary. I am going to have to turn your offer down," it is important that you keep it professional and respectful. Chances are your paths will cross again someday and this town is too small to risk leaving a bad taste in their mouth.