



CENTER FOR PROFESSIONAL EXCELLENCE
ELMHURST COLLEGE

Enhancing Professional and Personal Development

Job Search Techniques



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Job Search Techniques

Looking for a job can be a full-time job in itself! In today's job market, it is important to know yourself, what you want, what employers want and how to make a good match between the two.

Step-by-Step Job Search Process

1. Identify your Skills and Abilities

Self-evaluation is vital to understanding your unique occupational needs and desires. How can you seek a position if you don't know what you want from a job and what you have to offer prospective employers? In order to determine your needs and desires, take an inventory of your **skills, interests, and values**, and evaluate your temperament, passions, experiences and accomplishments. You can learn more about yourself by talking with a **career counselor** and/or using various **assessment tools** (FOCUS, Strong Interest Inventory, Myers-Briggs Type Indicator) available in the Career Education office.



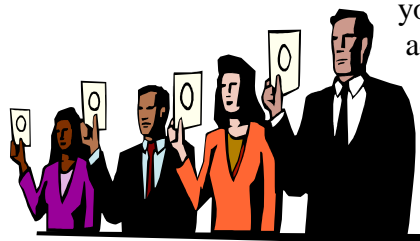
2. Specify a Job/Career Objective

Once you have a better understanding of yourself, you can now begin to explore the "matches" between your identified skills, interests, and values and the demands of career fields and organizations. Are you satisfied with your current occupation? Would you like to continue your job in another industry? Would you like to try another job in the same industry? Or, do you need a complete career change?

- ▶ Use the **Occupational Outlook Handbook** and **“What Can I Do With this Major?”** to get job descriptions, future employment trends for over 250 of the most popular jobs in the workforce. and connect majors with careers.
- ▶ Research occupations, industries and companies using resources including newspapers, books, and the Internet.
- ▶ Conduct **informational interviews** with professionals working in the industry or your field of interest to inquire about current trends, get advice and other referrals. This could also lead to potential jobs (see Networking below)!!
- ▶ Perhaps the best way to explore career options is to try out intended jobs through **internships, cooperative education** positions, **part-time** or **summer** jobs, or **volunteer** opportunities.

3. Create (or update) your Resume and Cover Letter

Once your job goals have been targeted, resumes and application letters can be tailored to reflect your qualifications as they relate to the interests of prospective employers. Because employers will review your resume for an average of 30 seconds, use professional and powerful action words making the connection between the skills an employer will be looking for and the skills and experience you have had. Employers are more interested in your **results** and **achievements** than a list of your previous job responsibilities. Pick up a copy of the *“Writing an Effective Resume”* and *“Making your Cover Letter count”* handouts available in the Career Education office. We will also **critique** your cover letter and resume so that it is the best reflection of you. It must be perfect!!



How the Center for Professional Excellence can help you:

- Arrange to take an assessment of your skills, interests and values
- Attend a resume workshop and have your resume critiqued
- Use the Career Education resource library for books on career-related topics

4. Apply for Jobs

The best approach in searching for job openings is to commit to a variety of traditional and non-traditional methods. The most commonly used job search technique is to respond to advertised vacancies, both in print and electronically.

Sources of vacancies include:

- ECconnect, ISCPA online career center job listings
- Newspaper classified ads
- Internet job boards (Careerbuilder, USAJobs,)
- Campus interviews through ISCPA's Interview Network
- Publications from trade or professional associations
- Jobfairs
- Employment services (Placement and temporary agencies)



Unfortunately, the most popular method for locating positions, responding to advertised vacancies, is **not the most effective**. According to an article in the Harvard Business Review, nearly 80% of the openings available at any one time are never advertised. Job-seekers should respond to employment ads, but the main thrust of your efforts should be toward establishing networks and identifying the hidden job market. Review *“The Art of Networking”* (available at the CPE or on ECconnect).

• **Develop a Contact Network**

Once you have targeted a career or specific position, you should develop a network of professionals in that field or organization. These professionals offer you an insider's view and can constitute your contact network, which can open doors that might otherwise remain closed. To begin developing your network, **secure names of specific individuals**. These names can be obtained through several means:



- ▶ Professors, friends, relatives, and former employers - or any professionals these people recommend.
- ▶ Members of professional associations.
- ▶ People in the information business - resource center directors or librarians.
- ▶ Community service agencies or area chambers of commerce.
- ▶ Alumni contacts - can be accessed through an appointment with a career consultant.

Once you have identified people with whom you wish to speak, **contact them** and request a 20 minute appointment to gather career information and to request names of other professionals that might assist you to learn more about the industry and know of available opportunities! Networking is key to job search success – **7 out of 10 jobs are received as a result of networking!!**

• **Contact Employers Directly**

Send your cover letter and resume to the Human Resources department or specific managers in companies you are interested in and have researched. The success of this method is greatly increased when letters are followed up by phone calls, which may result in an invitation to visit the employer.

5. Prepare for Interviews

One of the most common errors made by job seekers is inadequate interview preparation. To combat interview blunders and anxiety, review *“Keys to Interviewing Success”*(available at the CPE) and set up a **mock interview** with the Career Education office to gain a better understanding of the types of interview questions to expect, get feedback on your answers, mannerisms and voice inflections. In addition, learn as much as possible about the company, specific job, and key individuals in the organization. After the interview, don't underestimate the impact of a **thank you letter**.

Principles for Job Search Success

1. **Be patient and persevere:** Expect at least three months of hard work before you connect with the job that's right for you.
2. **Be honest with yourself and others:** Honesty is always the best policy, but do not focus on your weaknesses.
3. **Don't be discouraged with setbacks:** You are playing the odds, so expect disappointments and handle them in stride. You will have many "no's" before uncovering the one "yes" which is right for you.
4. **Develop a positive attitude toward yourself:** Nobody wants to employ guilt-ridden people with inferiority complexes. Focus on your positive characteristics.
5. **Associate with positive and successful people:** Finding a job largely depends on how well you relate to others. Avoid associating with negative and depressing people who complain and have a negative attitude.
6. **Set goals:** You should have a clear idea of what you want and where you are going. Without these, you will present a confusing and indecisive image to others. Set high goals that make you work hard.
7. **Plan:** Convert your goals into action steps that are organized as short, intermediate, and long-range plans.
8. **Be energetic and enthusiastic:** Employers are attracted to positive people who appear energetic and demonstrate drive. Generate enthusiasm both verbally and non-verbally.
9. **Ask questions:** Your best information comes from asking questions. Learn to develop intelligent questions that are non-aggressive, polite and interesting to others. Don't ask too many questions and thereby dominate conversations and become an annoying inquisitor.
10. **Be a good listener:** Being a good listener is often more important than being a good questioner and talker. Learn to improve your face-to-face listening behavior and use information gained from others. Make others enjoy talking with you.
11. **Be polite, courteous, and thoughtful:** treat gatekeepers, especially receptionists and secretaries, like human beings. Avoid being aggressive or too assertive. Try to be polite, courteous and gracious. You are always on stage!!
12. **Maintain a professional stance:** Be neat in what you do and wear, and speak with the confidence, authority and maturity of a professional.
13. **Do not overdo your job search:** Occasionally take a few days off to do nothing related to your job search. Develop a system of incentives and rewards if you accomplish your targets.
14. **Be open-minded:** Too much planning can blind you to unexpected and fruitful opportunities. Learn to re-evaluate your goals and strategies and seize new opportunities when appropriate.
15. **Evaluate your progress and adjust:** Take a few hours once every two weeks and evaluate what you are doing and accomplishing. If necessary, tinker with your plans and reorganize your activities and priorities. Don't become too routine in your search and therefore kill creativity and innovation.

Now that you know the steps and principles used in a successful job search, it is time to take action. The task ahead may seem overwhelming and discouraging, however it can be done! So, take a deep breath, and take one step at a time by breaking down your day into small, accomplishable goals. Inevitably, your efforts will lead to the "right" career!