

JOB SEARCH METHODS

Finding a job is a full-time endeavor requiring the equivalent of a five-day, 40-hour work week. How many weeks needed depends on the current job market supply and demand, your schedule and commitments, the thoroughness of your preparation and your commitment to your action plan.

A successful job search requires planning, structure, strategies, record keeping, motivation, perseverance, creativity and support. It can be an exciting and energizing experience, offering an opportunity to strengthen relationships, and at the same time, be tedious, exhausting, lonely and frightening. A degree of career anxiety is natural. It usually results from insufficient knowledge and lack of confidence. The more time you allow, the more active role you take, the more reality-testing you do, the less anxiety you will experience!

People find jobs in a variety of ways. The more methods you use, the greater the probability of securing a position.

TRADITIONAL WAYS TO FIND JOBS:

These methods focus primarily on applying for advertised positions. Traditional methods tend to have limited possibilities because most jobs are never advertised, and those that are generate stiff competition. However, some candidates are successful, so consider using traditional approaches, but devoting a smaller percentage of your time and energy to them.

Ads and Postings: Online job postings through [search engines](#), [employers' websites](#), our own [Career Opportunities](#), newspapers, and in trade journal publications supply only about 15% of jobs that are currently available. (That percentage includes print ads.) If your qualifications meet about 80% of the identified job requirements, it is probably worth pursuing the opening.

Mass Resume Mailings: Sending many copies of your cover letter and resume to unsolicited companies may result in an occasional response. Usually though, this is a wasted effort that lands in circular files and only provides you with the illusion of a productive activity.

Employment Agencies: State employment agencies are public agencies that try to match applicants with job openings listed by companies. There is no charge to the applicant. Contingency agencies and retained search firms are private agencies that are paid by an employer to help fill positions. If you decide to use the services of an employment agency, make sure that you do not have to pay any fees! Determine how long the agency has been in operation, see if it specializes in certain industries or career fields, check if it has professional certifications or affiliations, and ask what its placement rate is. Also, try to work with an individual staff person who has several years of successful experience.

NON-TRADITIONAL WAYS TO FIND JOBS:

These methods involve a thorough self-assessment and a corresponding determination of what jobs you want, where they are, and how to pursue them. They offer an effective, efficient, and energizing way to access the job market and help you uncover the 85% of jobs that are not advertised. You may find these "hidden" jobs in the following ways:

Networking: Formal networking is a structured process in which you utilize friends, relatives and acquaintances to help connect you with professionals in your field of interest. People you already know, even if they do not work in your career field, may know someone who does. Start your network by

contacting someone with whom you are comfortable, letting that person know your current situation and what type of assistance you need. (For instance, you're starting your senior year in college, you're pursuing information about the public relations field in St. Louis, and you're wondering if your contact person knows of anyone working in the field, or knowledgeable about it, to whom you might speak. Or, your current company is facing a potential downsizing, and you're considering a career change. Your contact person has been recommended to you as an authority in marketing and you are interested in exploring opportunities in the field.) The professional referrals you receive from your initial contacts can offer you up to date information about an industry or about a specific company, may provide leads to employment opportunities, and could give you names of additional people it might be useful to meet.

To get the fastest results from your professional network, it is important that you clarify that you are not asking for a job. Instead, provide your contacts with a clear sense of the type of work you want to do and convey your knowledge of the industry or field you wish to enter. You are asking them for their opinions about your existing qualifications for entering the field, advice about your job search strategies, trends in the field, companies that may be hiring, and names of other professionals they might refer you to for additional assistance. While you are usually only six people away from a job lead, realize that you will probably need to meet many people before securing a job!

Always send a thank-you letter to the people in your network, and keep them posted on your progress.

Informal networking involves making initial contacts with people who you might add to your formal network. Skilled job seekers increase their chances of meeting the right people by going to the right places: professional meetings, conferences and seminars. Be alert to additional networking opportunities at social functions and recreational events, church or community activities, even riding the Metrolink! Listen to what people are talking about and be ready to respond to the question "What do you do?"

Targeting employers: You need to identify and research potential employers who match your interests and abilities. Employer and company directories or even the yellow pages can pinpoint companies of interest. (Remember the smaller companies!) Ask your networking resources if they know of people working in your selected companies whom you might contact for information. You can also send targeted marketing letters to the companies or call to see if they have openings. Make sure your inquiry is brief, professional, courteous and confident.

Identifying Trends: Many of today's jobs did not exist five or ten years ago. Try to hypothesize what careers might develop in the next weeks, months or years by recognizing the factors that create and terminate jobs: mergers, downsizings, corporate relocations, demographic changes, new products, new social problems, politics, legislation, environmental challenges, and turnovers due to promotions, retirements, and spousal relocations. Expand your reading past the job postings/classified sections to see what's happening!