

Sharpening Your Job Search Skills

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Overview

So, you have a great résumé and you're fully equipped now to embark on your job search. Your résumé is the single most important tool to finding a new job, now you have to be sure that you are using it in a way that will optimize the results. The job search process is one that requires careful analysis, planning and dedication if you hope to succeed. For this, you will need a plan of attack. The concepts and practices for executing your job search campaign are outlined in the following section.

Remember that your résumé is in every essence, a marketing tool. This marketing tool should be used as a door opener and a topic of future discussion that **you** initiate when delivering it. Aside from mass mailings and Internet site posting, there are new jobs advertised and assigned to recruiters every day. With the notion of the résumé being a "contact initiator", we want you to envision the aspect of your search campaign that targets individual job listings as an ongoing contact. Sending the résumé to a company without later investigating to see if it was received is a common mistake that can kill an otherwise successful job search.

This guide should be used as an outline of the practices to be employed during the course of the job search. This guide is meant to help ensure success in your search and should be utilized before coming back to us for a re-write if you have been unsuccessful. The results of your job search and the feedback you received are not only an integral part of re-writing (if necessary), but we cannot make an educated decision about what needs to be changed without this information. If you employ the methodologies herein, you will not only be more successful but you will earn a

better understanding of what companies are looking for and how your skills are compared to these needs.

We have done our very best work in producing your résumé, and we expect you to give these documents the best chance for success by following the methodologies in this guide. If, during the course of your job search your objectives change or you use the résumé for positions unlike those we targeted the document for – we cannot re-write the document for you. In addition, if you butchered the résumé prior to sending it out we also cannot be accountable for the results it provides.

Keep in mind throughout the search process that there are a few often overlooked truths about looking for a job. These are:

1. It's no mystery what companies are looking for. In fact, most of those responsible for writing a job advertisement are also the same people that will be evaluating incoming résumés for the position. You can read almost exactly what that person wants to see right from the ad.
2. You can expect that less than half of the résumés sent will actually be read by the intended hiring manager or final decision-making authority for the position.
3. Many Human Resource personnel and hiring managers are very passive or totally uninterested in reviewing unsolicited résumés due to the increasing numbers of people sending them. Only when it is expressed in so many words or actions that you're actually interested in finding a position at their company do they provide at least some level of attention to your materials.
4. The vast majority of job seekers never follow up with the potential employer to make sure the résumé was received, reviewed and considered for a position.
5. All hiring managers want to fill every open position in spite of their occasional and apparent lack of interest in doing so. It helps when a job seeker steps up to the plate and makes their job easier by providing the information they need without having to prospect for it.

Planning Your Job Search Campaign

The task of planning a job search campaign or a “Personal Marketing Campaign” as commonly coined, must be one of excellent organization and a little bit of ingenuity. In getting organized, you will need a specific method of keeping track of all prospects, company names, telephone numbers, contact people, possible or published job openings, résumé versions sent, and log of your contacts with each organization and the outcome.

You will find a copy of a useful contact log at the end of this guide that can prove to be very helpful in organizing this information. Keeping yourself highly organized will keep you on top of where you stand with each company. In addition, you will impress would-be employers by knowing who you spoke with, when you spoke with them and the details of your interaction with them. Don't, however, carry the list into an interview and unleash your secret. Copy only the relevant information to reference during your in-person visit.

Your résumé will likely not be a 100% perfect match for every opportunity you seek, so the copy you send each company might use a good 30-second tailoring to bring to front those skills that are important to them. Unless you are changing careers your history and abilities should already be a reasonable match from which a prospective employer could identify transferable skill useful in their organization. Whether or not you modify each résumé, you should keep track of which copy you provided them and have another copy available if you are called in for an interview. It happens in some cases that a company calls 2 months after being contacted, perhaps after the résumé has undergone changes.

If you plan to broadcast your résumé or post it to job boards (in which case there's no possibility for individual tailoring), the strategy is to keep the document more general – the way it is when first prepared. This will appeal to a wider audience. Keep track also, which copy was distributed or posted.

With these ideas in mind, the step-by-step plan for organizing your job search is below:

1. Put together a contact log or use the one provided at the end of this guide.
2. Identify all possible leads and opportunities (outlined in the following section) and input these in the contact log.
3. Plan a timetable for your first contact, follow up contacts and set a reasonable goal for the number of people per week you can maintain correspondence with. The initial résumé distribution can usually be all done at once but subsequent contacts should be planned and executed on schedule.
4. For individual job orders/postings and advertisements found, identify the critical needs unique to this company – if any, and make note of them.
5. Identify opportunities that require the identical or a very close set of skills and proficiencies and group them together. They will get the same résumé copy.
6. Make any general modifications such as re-arranging of words or statements to bring the most attractive aspects of your background to the forefront of the résumé if necessary – for each group of opportunities.
7. It is recommended that either you print or have a professional copy shop print your résumés on a quality, neutral, light colored paper. Print enough so that you have a few extras of each copy for future use and reference.

Identifying Leads and Opportunities

Most people know how to look for advertised job openings, but finding opportunities may be another issue. Whether you're looking online, in the newspaper, at trade shows or anywhere else you should remember that not all available jobs are advertised right now. Changes in the economic environment, normal turnover and industry changes generate new positions every day. Some of these positions are offered through advertisement, but some are through recruiters or other means. Not all of them are necessarily legitimate opportunities. Recruiters for instance, often specialize in particular areas and use a single advertisement to attract the specific talent they seek continually whether or not a position exists at the time. Companies participate in this practice less often, but it does happen. For these reasons it is a good idea to identify as many potential opportunities as possible. Any company that utilizes a skill set you possess represents a potential opportunity.

Job boards do represent an opportunity for a company that you have not considered – to find you. We don't recommend using only this method of promotion and call it "job searching". A proactive approach can land you a position much faster than passively posting online and occasionally looking through the listings on a job few boards. Broadcasting your résumé to scores of recruiters and companies can provide excellent results, but keep in mind that you are not in control of the contacts and you are often unable to follow up. There are companies that will love me for saying this, but if you are able to use the same broadcast method twice – once for the initial contact and once to follow up (using a follow up opening to the résumé or presentation instead of the original introduction), you can increase your chances by hitting the same contacts twice instead of once. This enables you to, in a sense, follow up with them. A well-rounded list of advertising companies, non-advertising companies, recruiters, growing organizations, job boards and perhaps venture capital firms will provide the best results.

You should also consider forwarding a résumé copy to corporate offices of companies with a presence in your area. This has done wonders for clients in the past. In a few cases, people received responses from both offices, which provided two separate contacts with the company. This also provides you with a second opinion of your qualifications from a single company even if one person has already written you off.

Establishing Contact

Now it's time for your plan to take action but you might need to do some last minute detective work before you begin. It is best if you have the name of someone on the inside capable of either considering your qualifications or forwarding you to someone that can.

As you browse the list of companies you wish to contact, you might have contact names for some of the people conducting the search but in many cases you will not. Some companies listing jobs online choose to keep their contact options limited to a generic email address or an online form. If you try, you can find out who some of these parties are by looking for the names of proprietary technologies, email domains, company profiles or by other means. If you know the name of the company and where they are, you are in pretty good shape. If not you'll just have to keep a record of the web URL from which you originally replied so that you can follow the same method to follow up with them.

If you have the company name but not a contact person, the old standby is to send the résumé to the company President or CEO by postal mail and/or email. This is better than sending it to "Company", where it may never be seen by the right person.

A trick that recruiters use to play the "Who's Who" game is to call into the company during off hours and try to navigate through the company voicemail system hoping for a directory of names and/or departments. If you are privileged enough to have a personal email address from an ad, you can sometimes decipher the name well enough to find the person in the voicemail directory and get both their first and last name. Knowing their name will put you well ahead of your competition when you send them your résumé, addressing them directly as if you were referred to them personally. You also have a real person to ask for when you call to follow up.

You can call the company and in many cases the operator will tell you whom you should speak with about a particular opportunity just for asking.

We recommend mailing your résumé as well as forwarding it electronically whenever possible.

Print your résumé on a quality 24lb paper if you have not already. Get matching full-page size 9_ x 12 envelopes. If you're able to print addresses directly on the envelopes or can print labels to address the envelopes, with it will look more professional than hand-written envelopes. Be sure to include the contact person's name if available just below the company name and above the address so that it is delivered directly to the intended recipient. Mail all of your résumés out at once, ensuring that each company has the appropriate copy enclosed.

Allow 2 days for local delivery, and four business days for the rest of the addresses you have sent your resume to. On the anticipated day of arrival of your resume, send a copy by email and announce the arrival of the hard copy in the mail. It is best if your email goes out the day before or the exact day that your resume arrives. Mention in the email that you will follow up with them by phone on a specified day and state whether you will call in the morning or afternoon. You should call no later than three business days after your resume arrives.

Following Up

Whether or not you promised to in your original correspondence, you should follow up with each contact using the same method of original delivery and by phone to increase your level of success. This is likely the 2nd most important ingredient to an effective job search besides an effective résumé. Scores of people with poorly prepared résumés still find jobs by following up and making a personal impression. This takes hard work and motivation but it can pay a generous reward.

The concept of following up is very simple. Your objective is to find out whether or not you are in the running for an interview or not. Automated résumé collection and storage methods often render a résumé unseen until it is manually looked for within the company database. If you have ever been a Recruiter, Human Resource employee or a hiring manager with a company utilizing this technology you may know first hand, that almost nobody checks the internal database on a daily basis because it is boring and/or because of negative reinforcement of looking often and finding nothing of interest too often. As you may have guessed, finding out if you are in the running for an interview should begin with determining whether or not someone has actually seen your résumé.

Once you know your résumé has been reviewed you should expect an invitation for an interview, a decline or a planned delay in their decision once you can confirm receipt. For starters, your following up will illustrate that you are adamant about learning of their decision and that you didn't just "Spam" their mailbox because it was quick and easy.

Make follow up calls with your résumé and the advertisement (if available) in hand. If you are at a loss for words you can try the phone scripts from the following section. If you have to make another follow up call next week, ask them if you may contact them next week to see how their selection process is going if there has been no decision made at that time. You should continue process until you have an answer, interview or rejection letter. Befriend the person you are

calling, call them by their first name after the first call and keep your résumé copies handy at all times during the process so that you are better prepared if they should call you unexpectedly.

In cases where you are unable to call a company or specific person, the follow up letter in the following section can be used in some form to make this second contact. If you hesitate to call because of a “No Phone Calls Please” clause in the ad or on their website, the method of sending a letter (the same way you delivered your résumé) will serve as your second contact with them. If you modify the letter, I don’t recommend changing the line that states when and how you will follow up. If the letter is taken seriously, they will be expecting your call or will proactively contact you. Make note of the promised date and time of your pre-warned follow up call and make sure you do it.

Example Follow Up Letters

Follow up letter #1

For following up on résumés sent for advertised positions

Date 00, 200X

Contact Name
Company Name
Company Address

Dear Mr./Mrs. _____,

On **DAY/MONTH/YEAR**, I forwarded a copy of my résumé and credentials in response to your position advertised as _____. To date, I have not received any word of response. Again, I would like to invite the opportunity for us to meet in person and discuss my potential value for this position.

In review of the attached résumé you will find that I am highly capable performing this role and associated functions as your needs may indicate. I will follow up with your office by telephone on **Friday, January 5th between 1:00pm and 4:30pm** to ensure that you have received my materials and to discuss the position. Meanwhile, I can be reached at **(555) 555-1234** if, in advance you wish to contact me.

I have also included my résumé copy for your convenience. Thank you once again for your time and careful consideration.

Sincerely Yours,

Name

Enclosure

Follow up letter #2

For following up on résumés sent unsolicited

Date 00, 200X

Contact Name
Company Name
Company Address

Dear Mr./Mrs. _____,

On **DAY/MONTH/YEAR**, I forwarded a copy of my résumé and credentials to you and have not received any word of response. I know that your company may have positions that represent a fit for my qualifications and would urge you to review the attached résumé. I would like to explore the opportunity of speaking with you in person to discuss my potential value to your company.

You will find that I am highly capable performing this role and associated functions as your needs may indicate. I will follow up with your office by telephone on **Friday, January 5th between 1:00pm and 4:30pm** to ensure that you have received my materials and to discuss the position. Meanwhile, I can be reached at **(555) 555-1234** if, in advance you wish to contact me.

I have also included my résumé copy for your convenience. Thank you once again for your time and careful consideration.

Sincerely Yours,

Name

Enclosure

Thank You Following An Initial Interview

Date XX, 200X

Contact Name
Contact Title
Company Name
Address
City, State, zip

Dear Mr/Mrs_____:

Our discussion today was very informative and I would like to express my continued in interest in pursuing your position of **Title**. I am highly confident that your need for **specific skills/abilities** are an excellent match for my abilities.

Thank you once again for your time and consideration. It was a pleasure to meet you **and names of others** today.

I will be available to answer any additional questions and to schedule another visit by contacting me at **(555) 555-1234**. I'm looking forward to moving on to the next step and will stand by for your response.

Sincerely yours,

(sign your name here)

Name

Follow Up Phone Scripts

Receptionist **This is Mr/s, how may I help you? (Make note of his/her name)**

Caller **Good afternoon name, this is Mr/s Jones calling for Mr/s Interviewer**

Receptionist **I'm sorry, Mr/s Interviewer is not available, would you like their voicemail?**

Caller **Well... When would be a better time to call?**

Receptionist **I don't have their schedule available, but Mr/s Interviewer is always in and out all day.**

Caller **Would it be possible to leave him/her personal message at his/her desk?**

Receptionist **Perhaps, but I would also recommend leaving a voice message.**

Caller **Ok, again, my name is Firstname Jones and I can be reached at (555) 555-1234. You may transfer me to the voicemail also if you wish. Thank you very much!**

Receptionist **This is Mr/s, how may I help you? (Make note of his/her name)**

Caller **Good afternoon name, this is Mr/s Jones calling for Mr/s Interviewer**

Receptionist **Please hold and I'll connect you.**

Interviewer **This is Mr. Interviewer.**

Caller **Good afternoon Mr. Interviewer, we haven't spoke before but I forwarded you a cover letter and copy of my résumé on **date** and I wanted to make sure that you received it.**

Interviewer **We will be reviewing résumés for that position next week and we will get back to you if we feel that you are a good fit.**

Caller **Terrific. I would like to follow up with you near the end of next week to see how the selection process and schedule is working out. How would next Friday at 2:00 be?**

Interviewer **I'm not sure right at the moment, but my receptionist will be able to take a message should I be unavailable.**

Caller **It has been a pleasure speaking with you. Thank you very much!**

Receptionist **This is Mr/s, how may I help you? (Make note of his/her name)**

Caller **Good afternoon name, this is Mr/s Jones calling for Mr/s Interviewer**

Receptionist **I'm sorry, Mr/s Interviewer is not available, would you like their voicemail?**

Caller **Well... When would be a better time to call?**

Receptionist **I don't have their schedule available, but Mr/s Interviewer is always in and out all day.**

Caller **Would it be possible to leave him/her personal message at his/her desk?**

Receptionist **Perhaps, but I would also recommend leaving a voice message.**

Caller **Ok, again, my name is First name Jones and I can be reached at (555) 555-1234. You may transfer me to the voicemail also if you wish. Thank you very much!**

Receptionist **This is Mr/s, how may I help you? (Make note of his/her name)**

Caller **Good afternoon name, this is Mr/s Jones calling for Mr/s Interviewer, I spoke with you last week.**

Receptionist **I'm sorry, Mr/s Interviewer is not available, would you like their voicemail?**

Caller **If you don't mind, I would like to try reaching him tomorrow afternoon, he's expecting my call.**

Receptionist **Would you like for me to give him a message?**

Caller **Sure, again, my name is First name Jones and I can be reached at (555) 555-1234. Thank you very much!**

Company Name:
Company Address:
Contact Person(s):
Phone Number(s):
Title or position(s) sought:
Date advertised (if applicable):
Date Mailed: **Date Emailed:**
Date of 1st call: **Date of 2nd call:** **Date of 3rd call:**
Notes:

Company Name:
Company Address:
Contact Person(s):
Phone Number(s):
Title or position(s) sought:
Date advertised (if applicable):
Date Mailed: **Date Emailed:**
Date of 1st call: **Date of 2nd call:** **Date of 3rd call:**
Notes:

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Notes: