



Job Search Handbook

Learn the Secrets to Win the Job

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If legal advice or other expert assistance is required, the services of a competent professional person should be sought.



INTRODUCTION

Thomas Alva Edison was quoted as saying **genius is 99% perspiration and 1% inspiration**. Fortunately, you don't have to be a genius to find a job so we're not going to ask you to sweat that much.

With this guide, we'll reduce your perspiration by pointing out some simple ways to make your job search more efficient and effective. We'll also give you inspiration with innovative ideas and stories that will convince you to keep the faith, even if you don't find that perfect job right away.

USING THIS HANDBOOK

This handbook was put together in a format designed to help you access the information and resources you need quickly. The guide is broken down into chapters reflecting the natural progression of a job search, starting with defining your vision and ending with post-interview follow up.

BE A PERSON WITH A PLAN



Many people use a gradually frantic approach to their job search. They try a number of different approaches at random, hoping something will eventually work. The problem with this approach is that it ends up wasting a lot of time—and usually doesn't help you move closer to achieving your career goals.

COME UP WITH A VISION

On the other hand, people who develop a long-term vision for themselves often find the pieces just fall into place. For example, Michael Jordan envisioned playing in championship playoffs before he was even in the NBA. When Coach Dean Smith of the University of North Carolina first noticed Jordan, he didn't see NBA material. Jordan didn't even make his high school's varsity basketball team. However, the UNC basketball clinic accepted Michael for a summer training program because he was quick on his feet and showed potential. Coach Smith talks about how his staff was amazed at the amount of effort Michael put into practicing and learning the skills that ultimately made him a great basketball player.

If everyone had the same focus Michael Jordan had in his basketball career in their professional careers, the world would be full of a lot of happy and fulfilled people! Playing in the NBA championships might not be in the cards for you. But I'm sure you could imagine a job where you'd be totally happy and fulfilled.

BE A PERSON WITH A PLAN

EXERCISES AND RESOURCES FOR COMING UP WITH A VISION

Exercises

Despite the fact that Michael Jordan wasn't polished when he started off, he did have the raw abilities required to become a great basketball player. Likewise, you have unique abilities and interests which could help you become great in your field.

If you already have that kind of enthusiasm and vision for your career, you're one step ahead of most people! If you don't, the following are some exercises which may help you.

Exercise 1

Take a few minutes to imagine what the following people would plan to do for a career if they were in your shoes:

My favorite celebrity, _____, would plan to do this if they had my talents and interests:

The person I admire most in my field, _____, would plan to do this if they had my talents and interests:

My wisest friend, _____, would plan to do this if they had my talents and interests:

Exercise 2

The first exercise is mostly introspective. You may also find it helpful to get input from some other people.

One way to do this could be with a Talent Contest among your friends. The way it works is this: you give your friends a description of the skills you have now and the job you have now, and their challenge is to come up with something you could be doing 5 years from now that you would be totally passionate about. The only rule is your friends have to be able to explain, logically, how you would be able to get the job starting from where you are now. The person who describes the best job wins (of course, this is subjective). You can even throw in a prize, like taking the winner out for dinner.

Talent Contest Winner:

Description of winner's ideal job for me 5 years from now:

Other notable job suggestions friends had for me:

RESOURCES

America's #1 Free Career Test!

Not sure which career is right for you? LiveCareer offers a scientifically-proven career test that can help you discover your true career passion in minutes. Get instant results.

Take the test for free right now at: <http://www.livecareer.com/career-test>

STRETCH YOURSELF

When you're envisioning the type of job you'd like to land next, consider the steps you'd have to take to get to your dream job. Successful people tend to maximize a concept that Human Resource professionals call "job stretch." Job stretch means challenging yourself to take on tasks and responsibilities that may go beyond the limits of your job description. This means volunteering for that project at work that you might have to spend some extra time researching to be able to do well. And it means applying for jobs that require slightly more expertise than you currently have, rather than slightly less. "Stretching" can make your work more engaging and exciting.

BE A PERSON WITH A PLAN

Once you've had a chance to think about the type of job stretch you'd like to experience in your next job, the type of company and co-workers, you should be able to picture in your mind's eye about what your next job will be like.

Examples of job stretch:

- Going from managing two people to managing five
- If you're an in-house accounting professional who currently works on only internal financial reporting, taking a job or project that involves some external financial reporting
- If you're a computer programmer – going for a job where you would get exposed to new programming languages and technologies

DEVELOP YOUR SALES PITCH

The next step is to come up with a pitch to give to potential employers and recruiters. This is also called an "Elevator Pitch" because you should be able to deliver it in the time it would take to ride an elevator for several floors with a very important person who could help you in your job search .

The pitch should take into account your vision of your ideal next job, where you want to go career-wise, and why you're qualified. People (including employers) are attracted to individuals who are driven and have a plan to get somewhere in their lives and careers. Having a pitch is also helpful for networking, which as we'll discuss later accounts for more job placements than any other method.

If you can develop a pitch that's memorable, even if someone you talk to can't help you with a job lead right away, they'll remember you and may talk about you to someone else.

When you compose your pitch, you could consider using bullet points to remind yourself of things to talk about. Start with the most impressive things first and plan to end with a question that would help you "close" the deal. Closing the deal means different things in different situations. If you're just networking, the closing process is about finding out how the person can help you and actually requesting that they help you. If you were a sales professional, the following might be your outline for your elevator pitch:

- Sales professional who has sold more than \$2 million worth of services to Fortune 500 companies over the past year
- Clients served include IBM and General Motors
- Have an MBA from Columbia University
- Seeking an opportunity to get in on the ground floor with a proven company

Say this hypothetical sales professional, named Jane, meets a Vice President of Sales at Oracle (software maker) at a networking event and she's currently working at Microsoft. She sees the nametag says "Beth" on it. The following might be how she'd start off the dialogue:

Sales Professional (Jane): Hi Beth, how are you?

Sales VP (Beth): Good, Jane. What brings you to this networking event today?

Sales Professional (Jane): Beth, I'm a sales professional who has sold more than \$2 million worth of services for Fortune 500 companies over the past year. Some of my clients include IBM and General Motors. As a graduate of Columbia University's business school, I have been able to bring a consultative approach to the sales process by understanding how my clients' businesses work. I'm looking for a ground floor

Your elevator pitch is something that you'll need to practice out loud and get feedback from others to perfect.

BE A PERSON WITH A PLAN

EXERCISES AND RESOURCES FOR DEVELOPING AN ELEVATOR/SALES PITCH

Exercises

Brainstorm a list of the ten most impressive things you have achieved at your current or most recent job. Try to think of things that are quantifiable and easily understandable by a layperson. Here are some examples:

- Increased sales by \$1 million
- Exceeded quota by 20%
- Designed custom financial reports which helped the Controller identify \$1 million per year in cost savings
- Manage relationships with people at several Fortune 500 clients
- Developed web site which is visited by over 10,000 people per week

List the ten most impressive accomplishments for your current or most recent position below:

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.
- 5.
- 6.
- 7.
- 8.
- 9.
- 10.

Now that you have come up with this list, ask a trusted friend or a career advisor to help you select the three things they find most compelling:

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

The next most crucial piece of information to integrate into your pitch is why you're looking for a new position. It can't be "because I got laid off" or "because I'm desperate!" – even if those things are true! You need to come across as being in control of your own destiny. The more of a rare opportunity you are, the more people will want to help you find a job. The more of a commodity you seem to be, the less interested they'll be in you. Here are some "good" reasons for being open to considering another opportunity:

- Just graduated from college or graduate school
- Looking for more challenging work
- Feel there are more growth opportunities in another industry
- Want to move to a larger/more corporate environment
- Want to move to a smaller/less bureaucratic environment

Here are some things you would not want to give as reasons for looking when in a networking or interviewing environment:

- Don't like my boss (if you say this, people may think you have a problematic personality – even if it is really your boss's fault)
- Commute is too long (people will think you're not dedicated to your work and that your only concern is getting home earlier)

Whatever reason you choose, it should be something that you have some passion about and can talk about at greater length if given an opportunity. For example, if you are looking for a more challenging position, you

BE A PERSON WITH A PLAN

should be able to talk about the types of work you'd like to get an opportunity to do – like managing others, giving presentations to senior executives, meeting more with clients, etc.

Try making a list of reasons for looking which could be mentioned (this would be towards the end and possibly the last thing mentioned in your elevator pitch).

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

Now that you have some compelling accomplishments and possible reasons why you're looking, you have the two most important aspects of your elevator pitch. You may want to mention where you got your most advanced degree from – if it was recent and/or if it's an impressive degree or institution.

Try giving your elevator pitch to a friend or career advisor, ending with one of the reasons why you're looking. Try giving the pitch with a few different endings and ask your friend or advisor which one made you seem the most attractive and would make them most inclined to want to help you (if they were in a position to help).

The version of my elevator pitch that my advisor thought seemed most compelling was:

Try making a list of reasons for looking which could be mentioned (this would be towards the end and possibly the last thing mentioned in your elevator pitch).

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

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BE A PERSON WITH A PLAN

RESOURCES

Resume Refinement

Refining your resume can also help with your elevator pitch. A great resume should highlight your most impressive accomplishments. Once you have a great resume, you can simply pick and choose points from your resume to integrate into your elevator pitch.

LiveCareer, home of America's #1 Resume Builder, is a great place to start if you want to improve your resume. With step-by-step guidance, expert tips and job-specific text examples, LiveCareer makes it easy to create a resume that will sound impressive on paper, and in an elevator pitch. They also offer a library of sample resumes you can refer to for more ideas on making your resume better.

To learn more, visit <http://livecareer.com>.

IMPROVING YOUR RESUME



As you start developing your elevator pitch, you will probably notice certain aspects of the pitch make sense to emphasize in some situations more than others. For example, if you're talking to someone at a networking event you'll want to make sure that your pitch is specific and relevant to the industry that person is in. Similarly, you will want to have different versions of your resume to emphasize different aspects of your career. You may start off with just one version, but as you start to apply for jobs in different industries or that require slightly different expertise, fine tuning your resume for these different audiences makes sense.

Here are some critical things your resume must do for you:

1. **Quickly communicate exactly what you can do** recruiter

should be able to scan the resume and in less than 10 seconds be able to understand what your job function is.

2. **Communicate which industries you have worked in.** – an employer listed on your resume is not a well-known company, you should note what field the company is in. Recruiters are often looking for someone who comes from a certain industry.
3. **Communicate that you are professional and diligent.** Just as you would make sure you iron your shirt before you go into an interview in person, you need to make sure your resume looks professional too. This means you can't have any spelling errors or grammatical mistakes. If you can't afford to hire a professional resume writer, an English teacher would be a good runner-up choice. Most librarians are also good proofreaders because they read a lot.
4. **Emphasize results you've achieved for the companies you've worked for.** Simply noting that you were an accountant will not make your resume stand out. Be as specific as possible about your achievements, and whenever possible, use numerical benchmarks (e.g. "Managed a \$200,000 budget and reduced costs by 15%") See the previous section on Elevator Pitches for ideas on how to identify your important accomplishments.
5. **Be "searchable,"** because most resumes are processed through automated systems these days. Searchable means that a recruiter searching for someone by typing in keywords needs to be able to find your resume. The twist here is that not all recruiters will think of the same keywords for the same kind of person. One recruiter may type in "attorney," and another may type in "lawyer."
6. **Don't use too much jargon.** Keep in mind that some people who read your resume will not be experts in your field. Don't use big words in your resume to try to impress people. The first person who sees your resume may be completely unaware of the technical terms for the work you do. It's ok to use some technical words if a layperson can still get the gist of what your background and talents are from the context.
7. **Reflect the experience level the company is looking for.** If someone reads your resume and thinks you're too senior for a job, you won't be considered. Likewise, if they read your resume and on first glance don't think you're senior enough, they will also move on to the next resume in their pile/search. One of the first things

IMPROVING YOUR RESUME

recruiters look at when they see your resume is the position titles. They often look for someone whose most recent or current job title is the same as the job title for the position they're trying to fill. Many recruiters (the good ones) will also consider resumes where the most recent job title is slightly junior to the title of the position they're trying to fill because they realize top performing people are interested in advancing in their careers.

- If you're concerned that a job title on your resume makes you seem too senior or not senior enough, consider using a short functional description rather than the formal title. For example, if you were the Chief Financial Officer at a small company and wanted recruiters to consider you for financial management positions at larger firms, you could write "Financial Manager" instead of your official title.
- Likewise, let's say you were applying for a job as a software development project manager. Your current job title is "programmer," but you have also managed some other programmers on some projects. Writing "Developer and Project Leader" instead of your official title would indicate that you have some management experience and make the recruiter more interested in seeing if you could be a potential fit for the job.

8. **Don't give away how old you are if you are an older professional.** It's unfortunate, but age discrimination does exist. Recruiters associate certain stereotypes with older workers, and you won't have a chance to prove those prejudices to be inaccurate if they don't get to meet you in person! Many recruiters and employers feel older employees are less energetic, not "coachable," and not worth the higher salary that they probably expect.

- Don't show years of graduation for schools you've attended unless you're a recent grad applying for your first job out of college or graduate school.
- Generally, ten years of job history is sufficient. If you show only ten years of job history, a recruiter looking at your resume might not know whether you're 35 or 55, and that's not a bad thing!
- Especially if you're an older employee, your resume should communicate energy and enthusiasm. You should also be sure to convey energy in phone calls and in-person meetings/interviews.

9. **Don't reveal obvious gaps in employment.** The biggest concern an employer will have about a gap in employment is whether it is any indication of your likely future performance and/or reliability.

If an employment gap is short or occurred several years ago, most employers and recruiters won't notice and you probably don't need to bring it up unless they do.

However, if the gap is noticeable, there are several ways you can deal with the situation:

- Use a functional resume! A solution many resume writers would recommend is to use a functional resume instead of a chronological one. This can work if you have a complex job where you have achieved many things in various areas. For example, a programmer who has worked with several technologies could legitimately use a functional resume, dividing up the resume by technologies worked with instead of time periods. This can also work with other technical professions like engineers, attorneys, etc. If the work you do is rather straightforward and you work with a fairly limited range of skills, using a functional resume could make it seem like you're trying to hide your dates of employment.
- If you do use a functional resume, many people looking at it will still want to know what kinds of companies you've worked for and what the most recent employer's line of business was. You can deal with this by including a note above your list of experiences indicating the most recent employer's name, location and line of business. In this same section you can list other employer names and lines of business you have worked in.
- Including an explanation of the gap. Another approach is to include an explanation of the gap on the

IMPROVING YOUR RESUME

resume itself. This makes sense to do if using a functional resume instead of a chronological one would seem odd because your profession doesn't lend itself to such a resume format. It's also important to note that most people reading resumes prefer the chronological format. If you have a legitimate story as to why you have a gap in your employment dates that most people could sympathize with and understand easily, just being forthright and listing it on your resume is fine.

- If you took time off from work because of the birth of a child, for example, you're better off explaining that briefly on the resume instead of not mentioning anything at all.

For example:

- Dec 2002 to Nov 2004: Took sabbatical from work for the birth of my daughter.

10. **Be congruent with the rest of your "pitch."** This is Advertising 101: once you figure out what message you want to deliver to your audience, you have to be consistent or else they will question it. Your resume should reinforce what you say in other places, such as in your cover letter and in interviews and in phone conversations.

- Here's an example: Let's say you're applying for a sales job in an industry different from the one you're currently working in. In a phone conversation with the recruiter you mention you think a big part of being successful in a sales position is coming in to the position with existing contacts. So if your resume does not mention any companies in the recruiter's company's industry after you've said that, then your resume is not congruent. This will create a dissonance in the recruiter's mind that they may not even be aware of consciously. Being a successful job seeker requires thinking like a marketer: always being aware of how your message is being received by the people you're broadcasting it to.
- For this reason, it is best to think through anything significant you say you have expertise in – either verbally or in writing. Whenever you claim to have expertise in something, you should be able to back it up with at least one real-life story about your experience with it.

It helps if your resume is written in an engaging and interesting writing style.

If your resume is pleasant to read, recruiters will already have a good impression before they pick up the phone or send an e-mail to get in touch with you. This is an area where resume writers can be especially valuable because they specialize in making their writing compelling and interesting to read.

IMPROVING YOUR RESUME

EXERCISES

Have a Friend Review Your Resume

Find someone who isn't very familiar with what you do for a living. When they look at your resume, ask them to grade you on these things:

1. Can they figure out what your job function is within the first 10 seconds of looking at your resume?
2. Can they figure out what industries/markets you have worked in?
(Hint: if your resume does not state this explicitly, the companies you've worked at should be well-known)
3. Do they remember several significant things you've achieved for your employers after reading your resume? (Hint: if your accomplishments were not memorable, they won't be able to!)
4. Were they able to understand what you accomplished in each of your jobs without having to refer to a dictionary or ask you what a word means?

Making Sure You Don't Come Across As Over Or Under Qualified

If you've been sending resumes out to a number of recruiters or have responded to more than 50 job ads and haven't gotten a positive response yet, your resume may be portraying you as under or over qualified for the positions you've been applying for. Point #7 in the preceding list addresses this and suggests some ideas for modifying your resume to make it more appealing.

Making Your Resume Searchable

In point #5, above, we discussed making your resume searchable. We recommend thinking about your career background from a recruiter's perspective. If an employer were looking for someone with your unique talents, what words would come to mind to single you out from the crowd?

For example, a college history professor who teaches undergraduate students would want to make sure the following keywords were included somewhere within their resume: College; University; Professor; Teacher; Education; Undergraduate; History; Lectures; Students.

In addition, if there is more than one way to refer to the name of a place you worked or went to school and there's a chance a recruiter might be looking for someone from one of those places, be sure to include all the different ways the organization or institution could be referred to. For example, someone who attended or worked at NYU would want to include both "New York University" and "NYU" in their resume, as recruiters could be searching by either of those.

Try this as an exercise: Without looking at your resume, brainstorm a list of keywords that a recruiter looking for someone like you might type into a search. List them below here first, and then go back to your resume and make sure they're mentioned at least once:

IMPROVING YOUR RESUME

Any keywords that you think are highly likely that a recruiter would use to search for you should be used more than once in your resume.

Tracking Pitches

It may be helpful to keep a diary or a simple list of the jobs you've applied to, and to keep track of which versions of your resume you send to each. If you emphasize a specific aspect of your background in a conversation with a particular recruiter or hiring manager, it's a good idea to make a note of that. You may find it beneficial to have a few different versions of your "Elevator Pitch" available to deliver verbally, just as you have a few different versions of your resume for different kinds of jobs.

Resume Refinement

Looking for more help with your resume? LiveCareer, home of America's #1 Resume Builder, is a great place to start. With step-by-step guidance, expert tips and job-specific text examples, LiveCareer makes it easy to create a resume that will sound impressive on paper, and in an elevator pitch. They also offer a library of sample resumes you can refer to for more ideas on making your resume better.

To learn more, visit <http://livecareer.com>.

COVER LETTERS



- For example, if you're applying for jobs in both the insurance and financial services industries, you could have two different resumes available with two slightly different Objective statements.
- Further customizing your resume for the specific position you're applying for makes sense if it's a position you're really interested in and you want to stand out from the pack.
- Keep in mind though that if you're sending out 100 resumes, it may not pay to spend 5-10 minutes customizing each one since landing a job is also partly a numbers game.

WHAT COVER LETTERS DO FOR YOU

Cover letters can be a powerful way to establish a relationship with the potential employer – especially if you haven't met the person yet. They also provide more room for you to discuss the synergies between your goals and theirs than is afforded in a resume. The goal of a cover letter is to establish a personal relationship. To that end, a cover letter needs to at least appear that it was customized for the specific person it's being sent to. A good cover letter will reference the name of the company it is being sent to and the position title.

Now for a brief word about what a cover letter should not be: it is not a summary of your resume and should not look like a form letter (even if it is one). Some busy managers and recruiters simply skip cover letters and don't read them. However, sending a resume to an employer without a cover letter will give them the impression you're randomly sending your resume to lots of companies and don't really care in particular about their firm. Unfortunately, you'll create the same impression if you send a cover letter that looks like a form letter and isn't customized at all. Even worse though, the person reading the resumes may have spent an extra 20-30 seconds reading a letter that did not provide them with any additional information than was in your resume and did not take advantage of the opportunity to start a personal relationship with the person.

RESUME CUSTOMIZATION AND USING COVER LETTERS

Before we get into some of the specific ways of finding job leads, let's briefly discuss the concept of "resume targeting." This is the practice of customizing your resume for a specific audience. Targeting with resumes is the same concept as advertisers customizing their message to a particular demographic.

Here's how you can effectively customize your resume for different employers:

- Have several versions of your resume available for the different types of positions you're applying for.

COVER LETTERS

EXERCISES AND RESOURCES FOR COVER LETTERS

Exercises

Determining How Powerful Your Cover Letters Are

As an exercise, save all the job ads you reply to and the corresponding cover letters you send in response for a week. At the end of the week, ask a trusted friend or a career coach to make believe they are the hiring manager for several of the jobs you applied to. To do this, they will need to first review the job ad. Then, they will read your cover letter as if they received it and were considering you among many other applicants for the job.

Ask them to answer these questions:

1. Did they feel like your cover letter demonstrated that you understood who they were looking to hire?
2. Did they get the impression by reading the email or cover letter that you had some skills/qualities which might make you an outstanding candidate for the job?
3. On a scale from 1 to 10, how excited would they be about getting in touch with you after reading your cover letter/email? If it's not a 10, what could you have done differently in your cover letter to make them more interested in talking to you?

RESOURCES

Your cover letter is often the first impression you'll make on employers, so you'll want to make it count. LiveCareer can help you build a targeted, professional cover letter in just minutes. Our Cover Letter Builder features easy-to-use cover letter templates, one-click designs, and pre-written sample phrases to make writing a snap. LiveCareer also offers a professional writing service that can craft a customized cover letter for you. To find out more, visit <http://livecareer.com>.

NETWORKING



Many studies about job searching have all come to the same conclusion: networking is the #1 way people find new jobs. That's not to say that other methods don't help. You may find yourself applying for a job with a company and not getting hired there, but one of the people you interview with might pass your name along to someone else. So networking may be involved in a way you don't expect. If you expand your definition of networking and make it a part of your life, chances are you'll have a much easier time of moving ahead in your career.

Harvey Mackay, one of the most renowned experts on the subject of networking, says whenever he meets someone, he comes up with an "excuse" to stay in touch with the person. It may be something personal they have in common, such as both being tennis players, or something business related like being in the same professional association. He also talks about how having an attitude of being

predisposed to looking for ways to help people you know is contagious: they'll try to think of ways they can help you too. This is the essence of networking: staying in touch with people and looking for ways to make the relationship mutually beneficial. Harvey Mackay's "Dig Your Well Before You're Thirsty: The Only Networking Book You'll Ever Need," is the definitive book on the subject.

TAPPING YOUR CURRENT RELATIONSHIPS

When you're looking for a new job, don't forget about one of the most powerful resources you have: people you already know. Think about who's in your address book. If they knew you were looking for a new position, would some of them be able to help you? Putting in a simple phone call or sending an e-mail to people you know could help you uncover some valuable job leads. Keep Mackay's principles in mind though: your relationships need to be mutually beneficial. If someone knows you are happy to help them, they'll be more interested in helping you.

INTEGRATING NETWORKING INTO YOUR JOB SEARCH

When you're meeting people who can help you advance in your career – whether it's at a networking event, an employer's offices, or meeting with a recruiter – keep in mind these basic principles of salesmanship:

- Always look your best. You are marketing yourself so you want to look as appealing and professional as possible.
- Don't come across as desperate. Remember: you are the prize.

If you're not used to networking and need a little hand-holding to get started, a Career Coach can be a great resource. Even people who are a little shy can be successful at networking with a little personal coaching. Your career coach can give you some pointers that fit in with your unique personality that you can use to be successful in various networking situations. Having a coach available can also be helpful in overcoming specific networking/professional relationship challenges.

EXERCISES FOR NETWORKING

Exercises

Coming Up With Reasons To Stay In Touch

One of the most effective ways to build a strong network of contacts is to stay in touch with existing contacts. This takes a continual effort of coming up with reasons to reach out to people. People appreciate it if you remember their birthday, anniversary, something that's important or interesting to them.

Get a jump start on this right now – go through your address book and find “excuses” to get in touch with 10 people you haven't been in touch with for a while. Showing genuine concern/interest and being open to helping them will make it more likely that they will be opening to helping you at some point when you need it.

Keep in mind: Every one of your contacts increases your networking reach exponentially. If you figure everyone has an average of 200 contacts, you could have access to up to 40,000 people through your network if your relationships are maintained well.

USING JOB BOARDS



One of the best ways to find a wide range of new job opportunities is to use job boards. Job boards allow you to search by job title, keywords, or location, so you can pinpoint the kind of opportunities you're looking for.

Here are some tips to get the most out of using job boards:

1. **Make sure the salary you're asking for is in line with what other people with your background are looking for.** Think about it from the employer's perspective: if you got a list of 50 resumes, and 45 of them are asking for a salary you think is reasonable and 5 of them are asking for a salary that seems high, which ones will you look at first?
How do you know what a reasonable salary is? One way is to look

at job listings for your profession in your local area and make sure what you're asking for is within the range of what employers are willing to pay.

2. **Make sure recruiters can reach you easily at the contact information you provide.** The e-mail address you put down on the job boards should be one that you check frequently. Keep in mind that with free e-mail services like Yahoo and Hotmail, you have to check them at least every few days if you're getting a decent amount of e-mail so they won't fill up. If a recruiter tries to email you and their message bounces back because your mailbox was full, chances are they'll just move on to the next person on their list. Same goes for phone numbers. You should provide both a work or cell phone number so recruiters can reach you during the day, as well as an evening phone number just in case they're working late (as many recruiters do) or they brought some resumes home with them. You should have an answering machine or voice mail, and make sure it works properly. If you have a fax machine on the same line, make sure it's set not to answer the phone.
3. **Make sure your resume is compelling.** Your resume is your representative. Would you hire someone to represent you if they didn't look at least as professional as you yourself? Probably not. Same goes for resumes. Make sure your resume is free of spelling and grammatical errors (be sure to proofread, and consider using an online resume checking service like [LiveCareer's Resume-Check](#)). Make sure your resume is easy to read and can be understood by a layperson. If a busy recruiter has 50 resumes to look through on a job board and they can't understand within the first 30 seconds of looking at your resume how you can help their company, they'll just skip on to the next resume. No one wants to work any harder than they have to. See the Resources section below for ideas on improving your resume.
4. **Post your resume to boards that have jobs from multiple sources.** Give yourself the best possible chance to find a job by searching on multiple job boards. LiveCareer's job board is a great place to start. We've got 1000s of jobs in our extensive database that are available right now. Search by job title, industry, or location, and find relevant jobs instantly. Visit jobs.livecareer.com to find out more.

USING JOB BOARDS

5. **In the best case, you could have a 50% chance of finding a job through a job board.** Don't put all of your job-finding eggs in one basket. Using job boards can be a great strategy for finding a job, but it shouldn't be your only strategy. Instead, act like a smart investor and diversify your portfolio using several different job search methods. Instead of spending 20 hours a week responding to job ads, your time is most likely better spent first making sure you have a great resume (see the section on Improving Your Resume earlier in this handbook), then getting your resume posted on all the pertinent job sites (see point #4, above), and responding to only the most promising job ads. Use the remaining time on other methods of job searching like attending networking events.
6. **Don't think of job leads you get from job boards as just potential jobs.** Think of them also as Networking Leads. When you get asked in for an interview after posting your resume or responding to a job ad, go there with a networking mindset. Regardless of whether you're meeting with a third party recruiter or a direct employer, your approach should be to think of opportunities to create a long-term relationship with the company or individual. If you are looking for ways to help them long-term -- whether it's referring friends to them or other potential business -- they will start thinking of ways to help you long term. They will also be more receptive to referring you to someone else if they don't think the position is the right fit for you.

If you come across a third party recruiter who gets to know you a bit and submits you to a position that seems like a good fit, this is a recruiter you want to establish a relationship with, regardless of whether the initial position they submit you for works out. A recruiter who understands your unique qualities can make an enormous difference in your job search. This is the kind of person you want to make an effort to get to know: Are they married? Do they have kids? What do they like to do for fun? This way, when you call them to follow up and find out if they have job leads, you can connect with them on a personal level and keep the relationship going even if they don't have a job to submit you to at that moment.

7. **Get Noticed.** The multimillionaire Aristotle Onassis came to this country as a poor immigrant from Greece who couldn't speak English very well. He didn't think he had a good chance of getting a loan if he followed the normal protocol and filled out an application at the bank. So he decided to follow the bank's loan officer around. He didn't say anything to the man, but wherever he went, Onassis was not too far behind. One day the loan officer was coming out of a restaurant after finishing his lunch and noticed Onassis standing across the street. He went up to him and asked, "Who are you and what do you want?" To which Aristotle replied, "I'm Onassis and I want a loan." Sure enough he got one and the rest is history.

Does this mean you should follow employers around? Probably not. But considering how many resumes employers have to sort through for every job they post, you should

Make an effort to stand out from the other applicants.

One great way to do this is with a stand-out cover letter. **LiveCareer's Cover Letter Builder** (<http://www.livecareer.com/cover-letter-builder>) has been specifically designed to help you write a targeted, professional cover letter that grabs the attention of employers or recruiters right away.

USING JOB BOARDS

RESOURCES

Posting Your Resume

Posting your resume on job boards has several advantages over proactively responding to jobs. It's not as time consuming if you do it right, for one. It's important to note that there are over 90 major job sites in the U.S. Your resume should be posted on all the pertinent job sites to be seen by as many recruiters as possible. Some recruiters subscribe to one job board but not others.

Posting Your Resume With The Right Salary Range

Posting your resume with a salary range can actually make you more attractive to recruiters. Recruiters generally have their own salary range - what the company can pay.

One easy way to find out what kind of salary range you should be looking for is to use **LiveCareer's Salary Calculator**. This report provides reliable, up-to-date salary information based on your location, industry, education, experience, and more. To get your free salary report, go to <http://www.livecareer.com/salary-calculator>.

RESUME SAMPLES AND EXAMPLES

LiveCareer offers a library of thousands of professionally-written sample resumes you can refer to for ideas on how to create an impressive resume.

Need help with your resume? LiveCareer offers a library 1000s of professionally-written sample resumes you can refer to for ideas on how to create an impressive resume of your. You can view samples from a wide variety of jobs and industries at <http://livecareer.com/resume-examples>

RESUME DISTRIBUTION



Up until this point in our discussion, the term “recruiter” has been used to refer to both direct employers (i.e. hiring managers working inside companies looking to hire people) as well as to refer to third party recruiters who are hired by an employer to find job candidates. Often, the distinction doesn’t matter because you always want to present yourself in the best possible way. But there are differences and they’re important to point out, especially when it comes to distributing your resume.

Direct employers are the companies that make the ultimate hiring decision. Within a direct employer, there are the hiring managers who are the people who decide if someone is hired. Then there are “gatekeepers.” Gatekeepers are people like human resource

professionals and assistants to the hiring manager who screen out resumes and candidates and whose job it is to present the most qualified people to the hiring manager. Some hiring managers don’t use HR people or assistants. This is the best situation because these gatekeepers often make mistakes and screen out qualified people. When communicating with a direct employer, you may not know right away if you’re talking to a hiring manager or a gatekeeper. It’s always best to treat the person as if they’re a hiring manager and present yourself in the best possible way. Your pitch, which we mentioned early in this guide, can be used to communicate your strengths. Making yourself memorable is one way to get past gatekeepers. Third party recruiters can be subdivided into contingency recruiters and retained recruiters. Recruiters paid on a retainer receive a fee based on the amount of time they put in. Contingency recruiters are paid a commission when a person they recommend to the direct employer is hired. If the direct employer doesn’t hire any of the people they recommend, a contingency recruiter is not paid anything. If an employer goes with a retained recruiter, they usually have just one firm working on filling a position. If they go with the contingency approach, they typically tell a number of firms about the position and hire the first person they like – regardless of which recruiter the candidate came from.

From the job candidate’s perspective, there are advantages and disadvantages to each type of recruiter. With contingency recruiters, the recruiter is looking for a candidate that they think will be appealing to the employer. They’re looking for someone who’ll be an easy sell. If you don’t come across to them as an easy sell, you may still be able to get the recruiter to pitch you to the employer if you provide them (the recruiter) with a good pitch that can help them make the sale. With retained recruiters, the employer generally expects the recruiter to be more thorough, and to present candidates who have been vetted, or screened, to a higher degree than they’d expect from a contingency recruiter. This often includes doing reference checks before a candidate is presented to the employer, whereas contingency recruiters often pass employees to the employer without doing reference checks first. Of course contingency recruiters are also concerned about the long-term fit because they usually offer a guarantee – if you quit or get fired within the first 3 months after the placement, the contingency recruiter gives the recruiting feedback to the client (the direct employer). But with contingency recruiters, there’s more of an emphasis on selling because they have to get one of their people hired before one of the other contingency recruiters

RESUME DISTRIBUTION

presents someone to the client that the client decides to hire. So when dealing with contingency recruiters, you have to give them ammunition to use to sell you to their client (more about the sizzle). With retained recruiters, you have to communicate to them why you are in fact a good fit for the job (more about the steak). Establishing relationships with recruiters can be a very powerful way for you to get hired. It is a recruiter's business to have relationships with many employers. A recruiter can open a lot of doors for you if they're motivated to do so. Whereas hiring managers are busy and generally not focused on recruiting, recruiters' only business is to recruit so it's generally easier to create relationships with them.

When it comes to resume distribution, you can target recruiters, direct employers, or both. If you're an executive and you're interested in working for a startup, distributing your resume to venture capital firms could also be a good idea.

A variation on the approach of responding to appropriate job listings that match your background precisely would be to look for job listings in your industry and in a similar professional specialty that are posted by agencies/third party recruiters. Even if the position is not an exact fit, the recruiter posting the position may have other positions available that are a better fit, so you could try contacting them to find out.

INTERVIEWING



There are several things you can do to increase your chances of a successful outcome in your interviews.

- 1. Research the company beforehand.** If you come in to the interview knowing about the company through research on their website, perhaps through talking to people who've worked there, etc., you will come across like a professional who is serious about finding a good match with an employer.
- 2. You should do as much listening as possible in the interview to find out what the employer is looking for.** The more you know about what the employer wants, the better you can tailor your responses so that they fit in with the employer's vision for the position. This doesn't mean you should lie or exaggerate. However, knowing more about what qualities are important to the employer will help you determine which aspects of your experience, personality, vision for your career and vision for how you can help them to emphasize.
- 3. Have materials available to help illustrate your expertise.** You should always bring at least one copy of your resume with you to an interview. And it's a good idea to bring more than one copy in case you spend time with more than one interviewer. Having other materials available can also be helpful and can provide more opportunities for you to discuss your strengths.
- 4. Most interviewers will give you an opportunity to ask questions about the position or the company.** Depending on how much structure there is to the interview, you could bring up the topic yourself or the interviewer may ask if you have any questions at the end. This would be a good opportunity for you to ask questions to determine if you think the position would be a good long-term fit for you. Questions could include asking the interviewer what they think of the company. Or asking what the co-workers are like. In addition to these questions providing you with information, they illustrate to the interviewer that you are serious about finding a good match and they will be more likely to see you as an honest, straightforward person they can feel comfortable hiring.

One caveat: don't be too eager to ask questions about benefits or vacation time. You want to be seen as someone who's motivated by a challenging opportunity and a chance to make a valuable contribution to a team effort. If you start asking questions about what's in it for you too soon, it could undermine the idea that you're a team player. These kinds of questions are best left to after the employer has decided you are a good fit and wants to offer the job to you.
- 5. Give the interviewer a reason to decide.** This is what salespeople call "closing." Showing the interviewer that you'd be a valuable addition to their company is the most important part of the interview. But you can increase your success rate with interviews by giving the interviewer a reason to make a decision. If the interviewer thinks they have all the time in the world and that you'll be available whenever they finally get around to making a decision, they might decide not to decide and keep interviewing people until they come across someone who makes them feel more compelled to make a decision. However, if you make yourself come across as more of a rare commodity, they will feel that if they want to hire you, they have to decide quickly. If you say something like "I am interested in a new position but I want to conclude my job search within the next week so I can be happily settled in with my new employer," that will convey that you are serious about making a move and they too have to be serious about considering you. Whatever you say to try to "close," make sure it's genuine. No one

INTERVIEWING

likes someone who comes across as manipulative. Another important point: closing works best when they've already been sold on the product (you).

If you get nervous before an interview, you're not alone. Most people do. It involves skills like selling and negotiation that most people use very rarely. One way to deal with the nervousness is to practice.

Another way to reduce your nervousness is to learn as much as you can about how to be successful in interviews. We have outlined some exercises and resources below to help you with both.

Asking For The Right Salary

One easy way to find out what kind of salary range you should be looking for is to use **LiveCareer's Salary Calculator**. This report provides reliable, up-to-date salary information based on your location, industry, education, experience, and more.

To get your free salary report, go to <http://www.livecareer.com/salary-calculator>.

Exercises

Mock Interviews

The biggest aspects of success in job interviews are preparation and effective communication.

Being prepared involves researching the company and the industry. If the job requires skills you don't have or haven't used for a while, you should read up on those things as much as possible before the interview, while still being candid about how much experience you have with them.

On the communication side of things, you should keep in mind that most interviewers are not skilled at the interview process themselves. Coming in to an interview expecting to overcompensate for the interviewer's deficiencies is better than expecting them to know the right questions to ask you. If you haven't been asked a question that would give you a chance to reveal information which would show how you're qualified for the job, look for an opportunity to interject that information yourself.

If you are unclear about a requirement of the job or don't feel you have enough information about the position, the company, etc. to answer a particular question, speak up! It's better to ask for more information than to answer a question "incorrectly" and have the interviewer think you're not smart or experienced enough.

Setting up the Mock Interview

With all this in mind, find a friend or a career coach who can do the following exercise with you. Find a job opening that you'd like to apply for. Give the job ad to your friend or career coach and ask them to prepare to interview you. The interview will take place a few days to a week after your friend gets the job ad from you (depending on how much time they need to prepare). Your friend/coach should do the following:

1. Learn about the company they are interviewing you for.
2. Make up any details about the job that are missing from the job ad. For example, if the job is for a marketing manager but the job description doesn't say how many people are to be managed, they would make that up.
They should not let you in on these additional details until the interview actually takes place.
3. They should come up with what they think the most critical qualities are for success in the job. Some of these may be already stated or implied in the job ad. Again, this is information they should keep to themselves.

Meanwhile, you should do whatever you would normally do to prepare for the interview. At the interview itself, your friend/coach should describe the job opening, then ask how you're qualified for it and how you would go about performing the job duties if you were hired. They should also ask you any follow-up questions they wish. They should be sure to take notes so that they can answer the questions that follow. Afterwards, your friend/coach should provide you with this feedback:

1. Based on what they learned from you in the interview, what percentage of the required qualifications and skills did they think you had?
2. On a scale from 1 to 10, how well did they think you could do the job? If it was not a 10, what were they unsure of and what did they think was missing from what you told them?
3. How well did they think you knew the company and industry?
4. How good of a match did they think the job would be for your background, based on what they saw in your resume and what you expressed to them in the interview?

RESOURCES

Interview Tips & Tools

The best way to succeed in an interview is to go in prepared. LiveCareer's Job Interview Tips can help you stand out from the other candidates and move on to the next stage of the hiring process. Also valuable is LiveCareer's library of Interview Videos, featuring both good and not-so-good answers to some of the most common interview questions. To find out more, visit <http://www.livecareer.com/interview-tips>.

AFTER THE INTERVIEW



After the interview is over, your first step should be to make an assessment of how it went. Here are some questions to ask yourself:

1. Did I understand what qualities were important to the interviewer and what the central duties of the job would be?
2. Did the interviewer understand the important aspects of my background which would make me qualified for the position?
3. Did I provide examples citing the most similar prior experiences I had which prepared me to deal with the most critical aspects of the position?
4. If the interview was with the hiring manager and not with a recruiter who's acting on the hiring manager's behalf, was the

hiring manager someone you could see yourself getting along with and having a productive working relationship?

5. On a scale from 1 to 10, how interested are you in the job after going on the interview? These post-interview inventory questions are designed to help you think through in an objective way how the interview went. In cases where you were not able to satisfy what the interviewer was looking for, sometimes it will be that you're not the best person for the job – the job may turn out to be different from what you initially thought. In other cases, the interviewer may have been in a bad mood, have been a poor communicator, or otherwise impaired from being able to give you a fair chance to show how you were qualified. And lastly, there will be situations where you could have performed better if you had been better prepared.

After completing your post-interview assessment, if you realize there were one or two critical things you did not bring up in the interview, a thank-you letter can be an opportunity to bring those things up. These are discussed in more detail below.

THANK-YOU LETTERS

Goal Of Thank-You Letters

The primary goal of a follow-up letter is to create positive feelings on the part of the interviewer, and for those feelings to be associated with you. A secondary goal can be to remind the interviewer of your strengths and what talents you can bring to the job. This can be especially helpful to mention if you're unsure if the interviewer understood in the interview how skilled you are in a particular area.

Format Of The Letter

A thank-you letter should be fairly short. Keep in mind it's being received by a busy person who is probably having a stressful day. Making the letter positive and perhaps including a tasteful joke can make the interviewer feel good about having taken the time to read the letter. You may also express your appreciation for the time they spent with you in the interview and the information they provided. If you have good handwriting, you can even send a hand-written note to make the letter seem more personal. Otherwise, a brief email is fine.

The salutation you use in the letter should be the same salutation you used with the interviewer in person. So if the interviewer said to "call me Laura" then that's the salutation you should use in the letter. If you're unsure, it's always safest to use a formal salutation like "Ms. Smith."

AFTER THE INTERVIEW

SAMPLE LETTER

Dear Mr. Smith:

Thank you for taking the time to meet with me on Friday regarding the position of Senior Accountant at your firm. I was very impressed with your operation and the people I have met so far in your office. I appreciate how critical it is for your firm to revamp its financial reporting systems, and I would appreciate the opportunity to help ABC Corporation reach that goal. In my experience revitalizing the financial reporting systems at my current employer, DEF company, I have seen how beneficial a successful resolution of these issues can be. Again it was a pleasure meeting you and I remain interested in joining your team.

Sincerely,
Joe Doe

Employment References

Most people don't give much thought about references until after a potential employer asks for them. After all, searching for a job is very time consuming and doesn't give you much of a chance to think about anything except getting interviews. But reference checks are a very important part of the job search process: both for job seekers and for employers. For employers, references are a chance to add depth to the information they have learned about you from the interview and from your resume.

At a minimum, your references should confirm the information the employer has about you and that you are a competent employee. However, you should strive to provide references who can be as enthusiastic about you as you would be about yourself. A great reference makes the hiring manager feel good about their decision to hire you and sets a positive tone for your first few days on the job.

As the saying goes, you only get one chance to make a first impression and your references can help you do that.

Getting Your Ducks In a Row

It's a good idea to get a reference letter from your manager as soon after leaving a position as possible. Getting a reference letter right away makes it easier for your manager to recall specific contributions you made to the team. Even if you don't end up needing a reference right away, having the reference letter provides you with something to fall back on in the event you are unable to contact your former manager at a later time. Plus, if you decide to go back to the manager a year or more later to ask them to provide a phone reference, you can remind them about the reference letter they wrote for you.

Employers who ask for references want to confirm dates of employment and position titles at a minimum. They will also try to find out if your former boss would rehire you given the opportunity. And many employers will ask the reference to grade your abilities in the specific areas that will apply to your new job. For example, if you're applying for a job as a manager, the employer may ask your reference to rate your managerial skills on a scale from 1 to 10. Having a sense of the types of questions employers are likely to ask your references, you should try to gauge the potential reference's response to these questions before deciding to let them vouch for you. For example, you could say "I'm curious - if you had the chance, would you hire me again to work for you?"

Using Non-Employer References

If you don't have a lot of good references from former employers, non-employer references can be helpful too. Generally, a potential employer will want at least two references from former employers. But if they require three references, you may be able to provide two from former employers and one from someone else. Professors, former co-workers and customers can all be good references if they know you well. If you have a choice between providing three lukewarm references from former employers or two lukewarm references from former employers plus one glowing reference from someone you didn't work for, the latter is probably

AFTER THE INTERVIEW

the better choice. A survey done by the Society of Human Resource Management (SHRM) found more than eight out of ten human resource professionals regularly check references, so don't count on an employer not contacting a lukewarm or bad reference.

Legal Issues

There are a lot of misconceptions about the legal issues surrounding reference checks. Some job seekers mistakenly believe that former employers can only provide dates of employment, position titles and salary history. Even though many companies have established regulations specifying that managers are only to confirm dates of employment, position and salary history, many managers are either unaware of these regulations or simply ignore them. Legally, an employer can provide as much information as they want about your tenure with their organization.

As long as a former employer does not knowingly provide false information in a reference check, it is fair game. An employer can legally say or write negative things about you if they are statements of fact. For example, the employer could say "John did not meet his sales quotas." What is not legal would be for an employer to knowingly provide false information. For example, if a former manager didn't like you, they could not say "John started a fire in our office building that caused thousands of dollars in damage" if it was not true.

Opinions are a gray area: if an employer states something that is an opinion and not an objective fact, it may leave the company open to liability. For example, saying "John is not a hard worker" is subjective and could be challenged in court.