

# The Ultimate Student & Graduate Job Handbook

Gavin F. Redelman, RedStarResume



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Gavin F. Redelman

# **The Ultimate Student & Graduate Job Handbook**

Everything You Need To Transition From College Graduate To Job Seeker

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The Ultimate Student & Graduate Job Handbook: Everything You Need To Transition From  
College Graduate To Job Seeker

1<sup>st</sup> Edition

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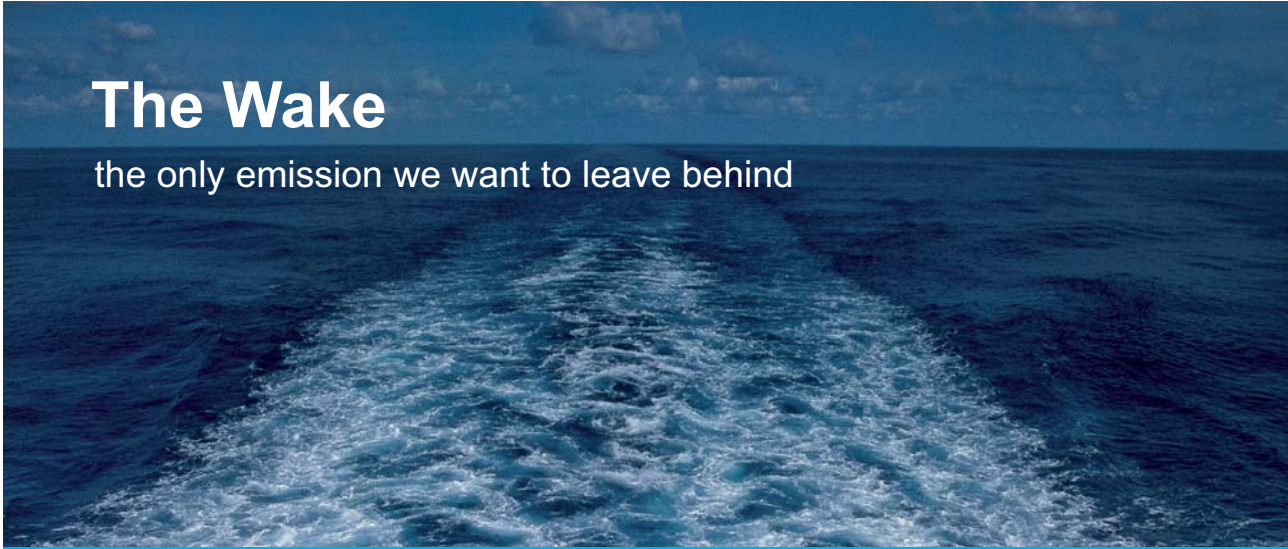
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# 1 University is Finishing – Now What?

## 1.1 Is Higher Education Right for You?

It used to be that having a college degree could land you a job in the majority of career fields. As bachelor's degrees become more and more common, however, and the competition for jobs grows, a lot of employers are now looking for more advanced and specialized degrees. For some occupations such as medical physicians, specialists and law professionals, you need an advanced degree even for entry level positions. That being said, going for post-graduate studies such as a Master's degree, MBA, JD, MD or PhD can be costly and time-consuming. You should evaluate your motives for pursuing higher education and see if the pay-off is worth it to you in the long run. Think about the following questions to see if higher education is right for you.

### **What are your career goals and how will higher education help you to get there?**

It's important to know specifically what your career goals are in pursuing graduate studies. Due to the tough job market, it's tempting to go back to school with the expectation that an advanced degree will make it easier to land a job. Unfortunately this isn't always the case and you will most likely end up with higher debt to pay for the degree, so it's important to have a real understanding of where you want your advanced degree to lead you.

### **Will graduate school pay off?**

In some industries, having a graduate degree will make your earning potential significantly higher, while other degrees won't yield as substantial an increase in pay. Research the types of positions you'll be looking at to see the rate for undergrad degree versus graduate degree. Make sure to factor in the amount it will cost for you to go to school for the degree to see if the increase in salary is worth the money you'll spend to attain it. For some it may be worth it to pursue a graduate degree even if the financial rewards aren't significant, but it's always best to know the situation before making a decision.

**Should you go to graduate school immediately after completing your bachelor's degree?**

There are reasons for and against going for higher education right after earning your bachelor's degree. If you know that you definitely want/ need to go to a post-graduate program for the career you want and are in a financial position to continue on with school, you may want to go straight after your bachelor's. For some people, it's easier to go to graduate, law or medical school without a break when your study skills are sharp, you don't have growing obligations and you want to complete your studies sooner so you can focus on your career without having to worry about returning to school one day. On the other hand, waiting a few years before going to graduate school has its benefits. By taking some time off from school to gain real work experience, you'll be able to make a better judgment of the type of program you want to pursue and have a practical understanding of the field. Work experience will also help you to land a job once you graduate since you'll at least have some practical entry level experience in the field. In addition, some employers will actually pay for some or all of your graduate expenses and you will already have some financial stability.

**1.2 Breaking Into A Career**

Once you decide what type of field you want to go into (the more specific, the better!), there are a couple of things you can do to break into the career and get some foundational experience. Whether you take on an internship, work for smaller companies or land a job through a connection, remember that everything counts. It won't do you any good to slack off in an internship or waste time at a summer job because it's your dad's company. In every position you have you should demonstrate your hard work ethic and perform your job well so that you can get a good recommendation, be eligible for promotion, or be hired on when a position does become available – it will only help you:

Student internship or volunteer during the summer, semester or upon graduating: Interning or volunteering in your field is one of the best ways to get some real experience in the career you want and boost your resume! Many companies are more willing to hire a candidate right out of college if they've at least had some relevant experience in the field through internships or other part-time work.

Look for smaller companies for your first full-time job: In many fields, it can be easier to land a position in the field in smaller, local companies. Depending on the size of your city or town, you may even know some of the people working in the field that interests you. It can often be easier to land a position with a smaller company in order to get the experience and expertise you need to move into a larger institution.

Think about your connections and networks: Think about your parent's careers, an aunt that works in a bank, a friend in advertising, etc. and ask them for advice about how to get into the field. You can also ask them to let you know if they hear of any available positions within their company or in similar ones.

Take on a lower position in the field: As a student or recent grad, you may have an idea about the particular position you want in the field. Unfortunately, the positions we want sometimes require you to have experience in the field first, as well as demonstrated knowledge and skills. Think about the type of position you hope to hold, and then look at the positions under them which many people start out in and work their way up from. You may feel that the positions you're looking at are less than glamorous and you may even feel over-qualified. But just remember, most jobs nowadays require more work experience, not just a college degree and working for a little while in a lower position can set you up for promotion in the company, or give you the experience required to apply for the positions you actually want.



### 1.3 Avoid Job Searching Burnout

When I first found myself unemployed after college, I was so stressed about finding a job quickly that I devoted myself to constantly being on my computer searching and applying for jobs. Every time I was home, my laptop was open with the objective of looking for jobs. It was the first thing I did in the morning and even when I ate or sat down to watch a movie, I had those career sites open next to me. Soon I began to feel that job searching was the only thing I was really doing, and it quickly became discouraging and draining.

My best advice is to devote a few hours every day to the job searching process (preferably around the same time each day so you can develop a routine). The rest of the time you can spend improving your skills, taking courses, practicing hobbies, and enjoying your time with family and friends. This way, you'll spend time searching and applying for jobs, but you'll also maintain a healthy balance. It may be hard for you to pull yourself away from job searching after a few hours at first, but it's better to spend focused, productive time job searching rather than long periods of time where you are tired and wasting time. Trust me, in the long-run you'll be much happier and you'll also end up being more productive.

In order to make your time most useful, you should focus your energy on particular tasks each day and organize your time wisely. Set weekly goals for yourself – explore new career websites, make a list of organizations you want to research, find positions you want to apply for, create social networking profiles and network. Unfortunately, you typically have to apply to many job postings before hearing back from one. Try to stay focused and motivated. Keep in mind that you're not only competing with recent grads, you're also competing with professionals of all levels who may have several more years of work experience than you do, so don't be discouraged if you apply to numerous positions without hearing back.

Take your job searching process seriously, but don't let it take over your life. Dedicate time to physical fitness and social activities and never underestimate the importance of developing new skills. Enrolling in a relevant course, taking up a new hobby or learning a foreign language will serve as a constructive use of your time and will also help you to become a more marketable candidate.

Remember to be patient and target your job search to the right positions. Stay positive and persevere!

#### 1.4 I'm A Senior, What Are My Options?

Senior year rolls around quickly. Before you know it, it's time to decide what the next step is after college. There's no right or wrong option here, I had some friends go straight into grad school programs or medical school, others participate in national service programs, and others immediately enter the workforce. While I knew I wanted to pursue graduate school in the future, I knew senior year that I didn't want to go straight into it. Think about these 4 main options and decide which is right for you.

##### **Enter the workforce:**

This is the most obvious option – you've gone to college in order to better your career prospects and the time has come to finally get that well-deserved job. You may want to start a career in your industry or gain a few years of work experience to get a better feel for which graduate program you'd like to pursue. If a job is what you seek after graduation, start preparing your job searching activities early during your senior year. Start networking, create your professional resume, prepare for job/career fairs and begin searching for positions several months before graduation.

**Pursue post-graduate education:**

If the career you desire requires additional degrees or certifications after college, you may consider applying for post-graduate education. Going straight into a program upon graduation can be a good option for students who are sure about their career goals and want to finish all required schooling quickly to be ready for a career. Of course you should consider your financial situation and determine if you have the study skills and motivation to pursue further education right away.

**Full-time fellowship or internship programs:**

Some companies and organizations offer full-time internship programs for recent graduates. Being an intern can be a way to gain valuable experience and skills in the workforce and can also be a chance to get into a company that you want to work for in the future. Many of the programs will provide a stipend for living expenses but may pay less than a standard job does.

**Gap year or full-time service programs:**

Some students choose to take a few months to travel after graduation, teach English abroad or participate in national or private service programs working in community services while receiving housing and a stipend for living expenses. There are lots of different kinds of programs, some are affiliated with the U.S. government and students can receive educational award money that can be used towards student loans or further education.



## 1.5 Job Searching Tips For College Seniors

### Have a game plan:

Senior year creeps up quickly. The job searching process takes time – months in fact, so if you decide this is the route you want to take after college, it's important to get a head start senior year if you want to have a job lined up after graduation. If you're not sure exactly which job types you're looking for, make some time early during the year to figure it out. Schedule an appointment with a career advisor to hone in on your career interests, schedule a meeting with a professor to discuss career paths or set up some informational interviews with professionals in your field to learn about different job titles and careers in the industry. Make a timeline for your senior year as you prepare to enter the workforce. Set deadlines for yourself for when you'll meet with a career advisor or professor to discuss job titles, practice interviewing techniques, create a professional resume, attend job fairs coming to campus and searching for open positions.

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**Make decisions:**

If you've decided (or you're still considering) entering the job market upon graduation, you have several things to consider. Think about where you want to live and work upon graduation – are you only looking in one city or are you willing to relocate if you find a job elsewhere? What industries are you trying to get into and which entry level job positions will you seek? What types of companies are you targeting? Make decisions that will focus your job search and keep you on track, but stay open to new opportunities if they come up.

**Last-minute boosters:**

If you realize your resume is looking empty or you haven't yet partaken in an internship or part-time job, now's the time to do it. Senior year isn't too late to step into a leadership role in an extra-curricular group you've been part of or to find an internship during the school year or part-time job. It's important to have some experience when applying for jobs.

**Network:**

Don't wait until after graduation to start networking. Senior year you should start talking to family and friends about your intentions post-graduation and the career path you'd like to pursue. Let them know what kinds of positions you'll be looking for so they can keep an eye out for you if anything turns up or refer you to anyone they know in the business. Most people are happy to help new graduates and provide advice so don't be afraid to ask.

If you stay on track and start your job search early on, you'll be on your way to starting a new job upon graduation!

## 1.6 Skills You've Learned In College

Graduation loomed in the distance. While I was excited to put my studies behind and finally enter the real world, a kind of dread came over me when I looked at my classmates and realized the strong technical experience the engineers and IT students had. As a liberal arts major, most of my classes were based on reading, researching, analyzing and writing papers. What real skills did I have to convince employers to hire me?

As graduation gets closer, a lot of students (especially the liberal arts majors out there) start to feel intimidated and wonder what relevant skills they've actually gained from college. You may not realize it, but you've learned more skills through your college years than you realize. It's important to recognize the skills you've developed through your college education and be able to communicate it to potential employers.

Let's think about just some of the skills you've probably gained as a student that employers look for in job candidates. Think about the activities done for courses and translate them into skills you've acquired. Remember, these are skills on top of the technical skills and other knowledge you've gained through your studies. I'm sure you can think of numerous other examples:

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**Critical thinking:**

Critical thinking involves analyzing information, seeing the big picture and comprehending information. Students use critical thinking skills in many ways during their college years including humanities courses where you're asked to analyze information or take a particular viewpoint on a topic or piece of work. You also use critical thinking skills in labs and other hands-on courses where you need to analyze the results of your findings.

**Communication:**

Effective communication skills mean you can write and speak clearly, communicating ideas and information. As a student, you've definitely used communication skills reading, speaking up in class lectures and writing papers and reports. Being an effective communicator is one of the essential skills employers seek in job candidates.

**Team player:**

Most jobs require at least some collaboration with fellow employees, clients or stakeholders. It's important to be able to work well with others to achieve a common goal. As a college student, you've likely worked with your fellow students on class projects, research assignments, labs, or in extracurricular clubs and sports teams.

**Time management and coordination:**

As a student, you've likely juggled a lot of different classes and activities all at once during your college career. Maybe you even did it with a full or part-time job. If you've made it to graduation, you've definitely learned this skill – time management. Employers look for employees who can handle several tasks at once, are able to prioritize their time and get everything done on time.

## 1.7 Turning The Wrong Degree Into The Right Career

What happens if you're getting ready to graduate and you realize the career you now want requires a different degree than the one you're graduating with? Unless most of your credits will transfer and you can get a different degree with only another semester or two, the best thing to do is let it go and graduate with the wrong degree. You'll waste a lot of time and money going back and doing it all over again for a different degree. There are ways to turn whatever your degree is into the career you want it to be, so don't panic. Move forward and don't look back. Focus on these two key areas and start contacting people you know for leads on how to get your foot in the door.

**Transferable Skills:**

No matter what your major was, you've definitely learned worthwhile skills that are valued in the workplace and can easily transfer from one career field to another. Let's say, for example that you're an English major wanting to go into a career in Advertising. Some of your transferable skills might include:

1. The critical thinking skills you've gained through the reading comprehension and analyses you've had to do in your studies. This can be useful in seeing the whole picture of an advertising project or campaign.
2. The communication skills you've perfected reading works and writing dozens of English papers. You can use these skills to develop and ensure that the message you're sending to your target audience is the best it can be.
3. The creative/artistic skills you've learned through creative writing projects. This can help you create catchy phrases and slogans for the products and services you're advertising to your target audience.

**Relevant Experience:**

For many careers, employers will tell you that experience can make up for whatever your degree is in. As long as you can get your foot in the door in the industry you want, you can usually work your way up. For example, you could combine your English background with experience in advertising by:

1. Volunteering to create signs and other advertising materials for book signings and new releases at a bookstore or library.
2. Finding an internship creating slogans and writing materials for an advertising agency.
3. Offering to develop advertisements for a friend's company or local businesses. A lot of smaller businesses can't afford large advertising campaigns and this can be a great way for you to get some experience in the field.

If all else fails and the career you want really does require a different degree, well hey – there's always grad school. ☺



## 2 Using College Resources To Your Advantage

### 2.1 Top Resources At College Career Centers

Few students realize what a valuable resource they have on college campuses through their career center or career services office. Students can talk to trained professionals on career development and support services. Here are some of the many resources you can find at your college career office. Some career centers will schedule workshops and lectures on these topics, or you can request to meet individually with a career counselor. Every center offers different services so be sure to go into your center to find out about what they offer.

**Get help deciding on a major:** many students are interested in learning more about specific majors and what types of careers they can lead to. Some career centers schedule workshops or talks about what you can do with a major in different subjects.

**Explore career paths:** receive helpful information and resources about different types of careers and the steps you need to get there.

**Meet one-on-one with career counselors** who are trained to guide you as you explore careers and work-related issues to prepare for your future.

**Use computer assessment tools** to evaluate your own interests and values as it relates to a career and some possible fields you might want to consider.

**Participate and learn how to conduct informational interviews** and job shadow with professionals in a career of interest to you. Some schools may have partnerships with alumni or professionals in the community who are willing to meet with students to talk about their career and show them what their job entails.

**Find graduate internships** with companies in which you have a strong career interest. Some schools have established summer or semester-long internship programs that you can participate in, while others can help you locate suitable internship placements.

**Participate in mock interview sessions** at the career center and gain valuable feedback about your interviewing style, strengths and weaknesses. The more you practice interviewing, the more confident and comfortable you'll be when you go for real job interviews.

**Learn about on-campus recruiting and career fairs** with companies interested in hiring new grads. You can usually get a list of companies scheduled to attend these events so you can prepare and/or schedule an interview ahead of time.

**Attend graduate school information sessions** with representatives from different programs you might be interested in. You can also gain information about searching and applying for graduate and professional programs.

**Learn about the best job searching tools** for the types of jobs you're looking for. There are so many job databases and websites to look at for job openings so it can be helpful to learn about some resources you might not know about as well as different techniques to help you during your job search.

**Learn about networking tools and alumni clubs** in different areas. Your school may offer ongoing career support for alumni and networking groups in different cities and industries.



## 2.2 Find Success At Job Fairs

### **Register ahead of time:**

There are many different types of job and career fairs, including informational fairs about graduate programs and post-graduate service programs. Many job fairs, especially ones at college campuses, allow job-seekers to register online prior to the event to see a list of companies attending the fair. Some even allow you to submit your resume or set up interview appointments ahead of time. This is an easy step that can help you make the most of your time at the job fair and find the companies that interest you.

### **Do your homework:**

I've gone to several career and post-graduate fairs without doing any research beforehand to browse the companies and schools attending. Take it from me; this will be a waste of your time. About half of the career/post-graduate fairs I've been to had few, if any companies that even interested me. Had I simply gone to the job fair website and looked at a list of companies/organizations attending I could have skipped looking around at companies I had no intention of working for and gone straight to the booths of companies that did interest me and possibly set up an interview ahead of time. Find out the companies attending the job fair, do some research on them and make the most out of a chance to meet and possibly interview for a job.

**Have a professional resume ready to go:**

Companies use job fairs to meet and screen a large number of candidates at once. Don't miss your chance by not being prepared with copies of your professional resume ready to hand out. Most hiring managers won't waste their time following up with you to get your resume, having copies will show that you're serious about working for the company.

**Dress for success:**

If a job fair is located on campus, you might get the impression this is an informal occasion and that it's okay to stroll out of class in your sweats and t-shirt to take a look at the companies – please don't! These are real companies and representatives attending the fair, it's imperative that you make a good first impression if you want a chance at landing a job. The person you meet may or may not remember you later, but don't risk your first impression being a bad one if you care about the position.

**Network:**

Use your time at the job fair to meet with representatives from companies, ask about any questions you have and pick up information they may be giving out. It's also a good idea to talk to other students and job-seekers that share the same interests in organizations. You can actually learn some valuable information from peers looking in the same field as you.

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**Market yourself:**

If you're not able to set up an interview ahead of time with companies attending the fair, you only have a brief chance to market yourself and make a good first impression. Prepare a quick list of some of your key strengths and top achievements to easily tell employers about when you get the opportunity.

## 2.3 Make Your Internship Count

Internships can be the gateway to finding your true calling or landing that dream job. But unfortunately internships can also feel like a useless waste of time if you don't establish goals ahead of time and be proactive in getting the most out of your internship. Sometimes you have to push to get the type of exposure and experience you want out of your internship.

**Set out clear goals you want to accomplish during your internship:**

Some internships provide actual job descriptions with a list of duties and responsibilities for the intern; however many internships aren't that structured and you'll end up getting more out of your internship if you set clear goals you want to accomplish throughout your time. Make personal goals for yourself such as gaining exposure to certain aspects of the company or department, deciding which area you'd like to specialize in, learning research skills, building relationships with staff, attending meetings, etc. Try to set out goals before you start the internship and go back and evaluate them a few weeks after you start to make sure you stay on track to accomplish them. Make sure to keep track of the projects you've worked on and skills developed to translate them into accomplishments on your resume.

**Keep an open mind:**

Internships are about broadening your horizons and gaining exposure to a particular career. An internship may help you solidify your career goals, or help you to realize a job isn't for you. Be sure to keep an open mind during your internship to learn new things and discover the aspects of the job you like and dislike. You may learn that the dream job you've always wanted looks a lot different in reality, or learn about a job title in the field you didn't realize existed before.

**Meet with your designated supervisor:**

It's important to set up a time to meet regularly with your supervisor. You don't want to take up too much of their time, as they're probably busy people, however you want to be able to share things you're working on, give progress reports and be able to ask any questions you have or clarification you need. Your supervisor can be a good resource for you in the future if you build a good relationship with them during your time.

**Perfect the small tasks:**

It's true that sometimes intern tasks can seem like dummy work. If you're going to advance to assisting with bigger projects during your time though, you need to perfect these little tasks first to prove your reliability and competence. Once you demonstrate success doing small things efficiently, you can open up the possibility for handling larger projects.

**Network and build relationships:**

Internships are often a student's first opportunity to network with professionals in their career field. Take your internships seriously and try to meet employees, ask questions and build relationships. Aside from making your internship more enjoyable, the relationships you build during your internship can be helpful career resources in the future.



## 2.4 The Best Kept Secret On College Campuses



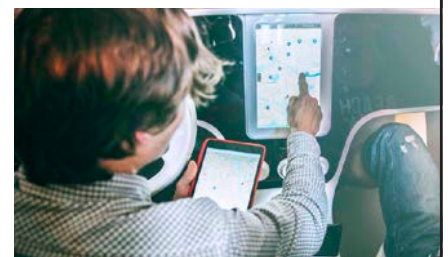
It must have been sophomore year when I stumbled into the career center at my university, freaking out about what I would do with my major and what career path to follow. I made an appointment with a career counselor, determined to plan out my future. When I met with the career counselor, surprisingly the first thing she did was sit me down at a computer so I could complete a lengthy, in-depth self-assessment and personality test. While I secretly love personality tests, I wondered what this had to do with a career and figuring out what I was going to do with my life. When I met with the counselor to go over my results a week later, the assessment had provided insight into the types of things I wanted and valued in a job, as well as some possible occupations I would be well-suited for.

As it turns out, a lot of the careers it listed were already ones I was considering, but it was helpful to see everything laid out as it was. After that, the career counselor introduced me to the college online alumni network and job database, LinkedIn advice and some helpful tips to networking with professionals in the field. It didn't seem like much at the time, but when I started searching for jobs again a year after college, how I wished I had made use of the services offered at the career center! The campus career center is one of the best kept secrets at colleges, and it's included in your tuition and fees, so you might as well take advantage of it.

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Most students are only vaguely aware of the existence of a career center on their college campus but the earlier you locate and step foot in your career center, the better. Many students will tell you they wished they had come to the career center sooner to take advantage of the abundance of information, resources and counselors who are there solely to help students find their way into careers upon graduation. You don't need to have a specific reason to go into the career center either, just have a look at the workshops and information sessions they have scheduled that might be useful to you.

**TIP:**

Don't underestimate the value of having a career specialist to look over your resume, give you personalized tips into developing your career or teaching you to write a cover letter. You won't find the kind of quality and abundance of career services available for free once you graduate, so reap the benefits while you can!

## 2.5 Researching Your Career

It's a little overwhelming trying to choose a career if you don't know a whole lot about the career itself or the job market in the field. It's important to do some research in different careers so you can properly plan your course of action to break into it. The more information and sources you read about a specific career, the more you'll be able to make an informed decision about the right career path to follow. Following are some helpful tips for where to look to find useful information about a career or industry.

Most governments provide an Occupational Outlook Handbook or website providing labor statistics, expected job growth, working conditions, average salary information and required training and educational levels for certain career fields. These types of sites can be very helpful in providing current information on specific career fields and give an overview of the industry in your area. The U.S. Department of Labor's Bureau of Labor Statistics has such a handbook to start with.

Search for job websites, especially those that are specific to the industry and look at the types of job titles advertised that are related to the career. Look at the duties and responsibilities, experience and requirements requested and types of companies hiring. This can give you some insight into the types of job postings available in the industry and you'll gain a better understanding of the type of experience employers are looking for.

Look at professional associations and networks related to the industry and see what they say about careers in the field. Many of them will provide information about the industry as well as emerging trends, related news articles and latest developments in the field. It's helpful to get information like this to stay updated on important issues and topics going on in the industry.

Search the web for careers in the field you're looking at and see what sites come up. For some careers there are entire websites dedicated to information about careers in the field, while others might bring up career development sites and industry specific articles. You can find an abundance of basic to comprehensive information resources this way.

The final tip on ways to learn more about career fields is to look at college or university websites. Many colleges list information on departmental web pages as well as on career service links about careers related to majors and specific studies that can help show which majors lead to certain types of careers. Many colleges/ universities will provide information and links to resources to help students learn about careers and opportunities post-graduation.



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# 3 Job Seeking: What Are My Options?

## 3.1 Organize Your Time While Job Searching

Job searching can be overwhelming, long and tiresome. In order to use your time productively and get the best results, you should organize your activities and set short-term goals. Organizing your time will help you to stay focused, avoid burning out and help you to achieve maximum results.

Below are some tips for activities you can focus on to organize your time, but remember there are many ways you can do this according to your objectives, schedule, career field, and any interviews, new job postings or contacts that emerge. You can choose certain days to focus on a couple of activities, adapting your schedule to any contact leads or interviews you get from employers:

It's a good idea to spend some time each day checking the top career websites in your field. You may even want to choose one or two career sites to focus on each day. Make a list of the positions that interest you and that match your skills and experiences. You should make time to fill out an application, customize your resume and cover letter to the position and include any other specifications to apply for the job within the same week.

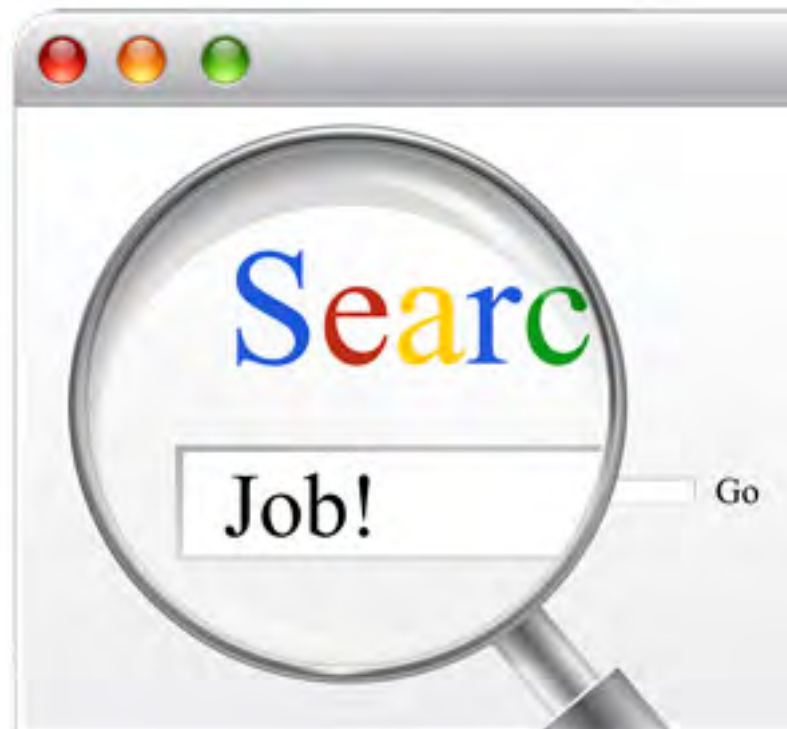
Research companies or organizations in your field that interest you. Save your top companies and frequently refer back to their websites for job postings. Remember to also research small companies in your field of interest. It can often be easier to land an entry-level position in a smaller company when you're first starting out.

Spend some time building your social networks and relevant career site profiles. Make time to talk to family and friends about anyone they may know in the field you're interested in. Ask them for contacts to set up an informational phone call or meeting so you can network and learn about any hiring fairs or updates in the field.

If an employer contacts you to set up an interview, your first priority is to research the company and prepare for your interview. Read up on relevant news or information in your field. Employers like to see that you stay updated on developments in the field and you'll also gain more insight into the job market.

Try to create goals for yourself each week. They can be simple goals, such as: find and read 3 articles related to your field; find and apply to 5 relevant positions, catering your professional resume and cover letter to those specific jobs; create your LinkedIn profile and join groups in the type of work that interests you; create a list of organizations you want to research – you get the idea!

Setting goals each week will help you stay focused and motivated so that you can find the right positions and eventually land a job.



### 3.2 If You Find Yourself Unemployed

If you suddenly find that you're finishing your studies or your job is ending before you've landed a new one, don't panic! Unfortunately nowadays it can take longer to go through the application and interviewing process and successfully secure a position. It's important to stay focused in the job search while building your skills in other areas. Below are some tips of activities that can help you build your skills and stay productive while looking for work:

#### **Learn a new language or brush up on your skills:**

Knowing a second, third or even fourth language is always considered an asset in the job market. While some fields require it more than others, it is typically valued by any employer as you can communicate with particular clients/ customers for the company or organization.

#### **Volunteer:**

Find a local community organization that interests you or that you have an interest in and see how you can get involved. Volunteering will get you out and allow you to give back to the community and gain a different perspective. It's also good to show employers that you've been making use of your time, even if you haven't been working. It can also help you meet more professionals in the community you live in.

**Intern with an organization:**

Look for internships with companies or organizations you want to work for, or in a related field. This will help you gain contacts and get your foot in the door in case any open positions open up within the organization. Even if the internship doesn't directly lead to a job with the company, you'll still learn valuable skills directly in the field which will make you a more competitive candidate for other positions you apply for in the field. While you might not get paid for the work you do as an intern, the experience you gain will be worthwhile and beneficial to you.

**Find temporary work:**

Ask family and friends if they have any odd jobs they need done around the house, look for babysitting gigs, tutor students after school, or provide music lessons. Whatever your talents or skills, try to use them to help you gain part-time or temporary work while you look for something full-time in your field. Having some temp work will help you to earn some income and take a little of the pressure off from immediately finding a job.

**Take a related course:**

It's always good to update or improve your knowledge on certain areas or skills you need in your field. Try taking a related course to brush up on your knowledge or learn a new component of the industry. This can help you become better-rounded in your career and prepare you for when you do land a job in the field.

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**Take up a hobby – for fun!**

Whatever it is you love to do, be it sports, dance, theatre, crafts, etc. take some time to do things that you like doing. Job searching and especially being unemployed can be tiring and disappointing, so it's important to focus on some things that you enjoy doing and take your mind off the stress of being without work.

Whatever you choose to do with the extra time you have if you're unemployed, taking up an activity whether work-related or just for pleasure will help you to stay motivated and positive during your job search!

### 3.3 What Is A Gap Year?

The alternative to going straight into a job or post-graduate education after college is a gap year where you can partake in many different types of activities in endless locations. Below are some of the main ways individuals might choose for spending their year between graduation and their next step.

Remember that even a gap year isn't free from your overall career development. Be sure to articulate the skills you've learned through your experiences and translate them into accomplishments to future employers. Even if it's not directly related to your industry, you should be able to identify transferable skills you've gained.

**Travel:**

If you have the resources to do it, traveling locally or internationally is a great option. Before you get settled into a job and particular lifestyle, you may want to take the opportunity to expose yourself to different places and cultures in the world. It's definitely possible to travel while you're older but it does get trickier with a job, family and bills to pay.

**Teach English Abroad:**

There are more and more opportunities to teach English abroad with a college degree. Some require special Teaching English as Foreign Language (TEFL) certifications, while others only require mastery of the English language. Some programs will also pay well to teach English for the academic year. Make sure to research programs thoroughly as some provide housing and orientation, while others pay you a salary, and still there are some programs requiring fees to participate in their programs. I've seen plenty of programs that will pay YOU for teaching so there's no need to go for a program with high fees.

**Service Programs:**

There are both national and international programs that allow you to live in a particular location while giving back to the community. In the U.S. there are many different service programs, including a national Americorps program through the government. You won't make a lot of money this way (actually you'll learn to live simply and scrape by) but you'll get a unique experience and gain valuable working skills. Many national programs, including faith-based ones, allow you to earn hours and receive an educational grant towards student loans or future education with the completion of required hours. There are international programs both religiously affiliated and secular, some will provide housing and a living stipend especially if your time commitment is 1–2 years, but beware – there are a lot of organizations out there with steep program fees for participation. Make sure to do your research before choosing a program and feel free to utilize your network to see if you have any connections in the area you want to be in.

**Forge Your Own Path:**

I once had a classmate who spent his summer on an Alaskan fishing vessel. And no, he wasn't from Alaska or studying anything to do with fishing. The point is there are lots of ways to find unique opportunities to do something that interests you. You only live once, why not go for it?



### 3.4 If At First You Don't Succeed

It was a Tuesday morning when deliverance came. I had just been dealt a particularly brutal blow by an organization I was dying to work for after making it to the second round of interviews. I was at my wits end by that point. I had heard everything from 'not enough work experience,' to 'a better candidate was suited for the position,' to...well, no response at all where your application falls into a black hole somewhere, to – this just in – "overqualified" (and what the heck does that mean!?). And then suddenly it happened. An employer was calling about an application I had filled out months ago, one of those "we're not hiring, but we always accept applications" kind of things. Two weeks later I was hired and the six months I had spent working retail, feeling demeaned and obsessing over job applications had finally come to an end.

Life is tough for the recent grad. It seems like no one is willing to even give you a chance to prove yourself. And with so many job candidates out there you're competing with, why should they? But trust me, having a chip on your shoulder won't help you get the job you're after – in fact it will probably guarantee that you don't get it. Take ownership of the situation you're in, whatever the reason and do a bit of self-evaluation. Sometimes we get so tired of looking at job application materials that everything looks the same. It's only when we take a step back we can see that perhaps we haven't done everything possible to make our application stand out from the crowd or market ourselves in the best way possible.

The fact is that everyone I know who has been out of a job and actually looking for one (however long it took), eventually found one if they kept searching. One friend found a really cool traveling job teaching reading to adults after substituting for several months at a Montessori school; another worked at all kinds of temporary or seasonal jobs – taking over for a teacher who went on maternity leave for a semester, working at a restaurant and then directing a summer camp until finally landing a full-time, salaried position; another friend found two part-time jobs substitute teaching and directing youth ministry in order to get enough work. Another friend took on an internship to gain experience in her field after being unemployed for a few months, then landed a full-time position through networking in her field. Even a family friend working in the entertainment industry eventually found a job simply by continuing to call his connections in the business and making monthly visits to a couple of the companies he had previously worked with.



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The point is – a job will come eventually. On a day when you least expect it, your self-confidence is in the gutter and you’ve just about given up, you’ll get that call saying you’ve finally landed the position. All you have to do is keep trying, change up your tactics and do whatever you can to keep moving forward.

*“Many of life’s failures are people who did not realize how close they were to success when they gave up.” – Thomas Edison*

### 3.5 Making the Transition

There is a certain amount of relief when a student finally graduates from college; the years of hard work through all levels of school have finally paid off and they now stand, degree in hand, with their future laid out before them. That relief tends to be short lived when the reality strikes home that student loans now have to be paid and it’s time to get a real job! Trying to land that first big job is always a daunting task, but perhaps even more so, at the moment given the tight job market. Companies are now offering fewer graduate positions and with literally hundreds of candidates applying for the same role, the interview process is even more important. With that in mind, here are some tips that can help you when making the transition from school to work.

#### **Research and Prepare:**

If you have graduated from college with great grades, then that means that you have spent a great deal of time studying, which is a trait that you should carry over to your interview process. Take time to do homework on the company you are interviewing with and find a way to naturally weave that knowledge into your answers. Your pre-planning shouldn’t only be limited to the actual interview, but also how to get there. Showing up late will put an immediate strike against your name and potentially eliminate you from the interview process. Plan the route you need to take to get to the location and don’t be shy in giving yourself an extra 10 minutes to get there.

#### **Practice Makes Perfect:**

Job Interviewing can be a daunting experience which is why it’s a good idea to do a few mock interviews before the big day arrives. You can ask a friend or family member to conduct the “interview”, but make sure that it is someone who is subjective and who isn’t afraid to tell you that your answers were not that strong. A great tip is to write down 10 examples of achievements or skills that you would like to portray to the interviewer and integrating these examples into your answers. The worst mistake is going to the interview without preparation and stuttering your way through the interview.

**Creating a Professional Image:**

Most people are aware that they have to dress the part when going for an interview, but that extends beyond the clothing. Make sure that your hair is neat and tidy, and that you are well groomed; having a hairstyle that looks like you just stepped out of bed will quickly negate the fantastic suit you are wearing. As a recent graduate, portraying a professional image is vital to your success. Remember that a hiring manager will make an immediate impression about you the second you walk in the door. A positive first impression is vital to your success.

Being prepared, arriving on time, and looking the part is only a small part of the process. You have a limited amount of time to impress the interviewer, so use that to sell yourself as best as you can, without coming across as arrogant or pushy. Confidence is as important as your education, and it may just end up being the deciding factor between you and another candidate.

### 3.6 Why Does Nobody Call Me Back For A Job Interview Request?

Do you currently find yourself in a position of applying for multiple jobs every single day yet never seem to get a call back or interview request? Why does this happen? If you have the right skills and experience surely you should have hiring managers calling you to arrange an interview?

Unfortunately job seeking is not as simple as just applying for jobs and waiting for the phone to ring. Demand for new jobs is more competitive than ever and with more and more people applying for jobs via online websites it is now much easier to send off your resume in a much shorter time period. I recently worked with a job seeker who had been laid off after 10 years of loyal service with the same company. This person told me that she was applying for up to 20 jobs a day. When I asked her if there were 20 new jobs being advertised every day that suited her skills she said she didn't care. "The more jobs I apply for the greater my chance of getting an interview."

In my experience, if you are applying for jobs and never hearing back it is typically down to two main factors. Reason number one, is your resume is not good enough to attract the hiring manager and therefore your resume is most probably being deleted before the reader even has a chance to recognise the skills that you can bring to the role. The second reason you may be getting overlooked is simply that you are not qualified, skilled or experienced enough for the types of roles you are applying for.

**Your resume is just not good enough:**

Before you apply for another job take a long hard look at your resume.

If you were the hiring manager would you hire yourself based on your resume? Your resume is your marketing document and as such needs to be written to highlight your value added skills that you can bring to your next job. If you are applying for a management position you need to emphasize your management experience. Don't assume that the hiring manager will know this information unless you provide evidence. For example, rather than just stating "5 years of management experience" which does not tell the reader much information apart from the obvious, you need to include further explanation to highlight this experience "5 years of management experience leading expert teams, capable of analyzing all areas of operations and implementing dynamic improvements, cost savings and overall growth and profit" – From a hiring managers perspective it is obvious which statement stands out.

**Are you qualified for the job you are applying for?**

Although you may think you could perform a certain job and maybe if given the chance you would prove to be the perfect person, unfortunately if the employer needs certain requirements they then expect that those applying for the role have these requirements. If the job requires an accountant with minimum 2 years of experience with specific skills in auditing, it is not reasonable to think that they will hire a graduate accountant with less than 1 year of work experience. My advice is don't waste your own time by applying for roles where you don't meet certain expected requirements.

**Final thought:**

If you are not receiving interview requests and feel that you are being ignored every time you apply for a job, you're not alone. Job seeking is a tough business, but in order to give yourself the greatest opportunity of finding success you need to ensure that your resume is written, structured and presented correctly. Every time you apply for a new job you may need to adjust or tweak your resume. Remember that the best resumes are those that are achievement based and written to target that specific job you are applying towards.



# 4 Networking



## 4.1 First Steps Of Networking

If you've started your job search or looked at career resources, you're probably hearing this word a lot – Networking. You may be thinking you don't know any professionals in the career that interests you, or find the task daunting. In reality, each of us already has networks that can help us in our career path and job search.

The first step to networking is to think about the people closest to you – your family and friends. These individuals are people you already talk to regularly and who can vouch for your character and work ethic. They're also the people that are most willing to put themselves out there for you by providing a reference for a position and contacts. Start brainstorming the people in your life that you talk to regularly, as well as their current employment positions. Then start talking to these people about the career that interests you, jobs that you're applying for, and ask for any advice or contacts they may have in the field that interests you. Even if no one you know personally works in the field, it may be that your close contacts have friends, colleagues, parents, etc. that are in the field you want to be in.

Think outside the box when networking. You may know people in your field that you don't even realize. They could be neighbors, family friends or someone you volunteered or went to school with in the past. The more people you talk to about the field you're interested in, the more opportunities you'll have to talk to professionals and gain insight into the career field, which may eventually lead to internship or job opportunities. Most people are happy to at least offer information and advice to students and recent grads about their field, so don't be afraid to ask questions.

Remember that landing a job is not the real goal of networking. Networking is about building professional relationships. These relationships can provide you with contacts and show you the skills, education and knowledge you'll need for success in the field. Over time your networks can help you build friendships, gain knowledge and experience and alert you to potential job opportunities. Keep in mind that networking is not a one-way-street. Just as you hope to network with people having more experience than you do, you should also be ready to network or serve as a mentor to younger students and colleagues. Professional networks, like personal ones are built on reciprocity. Remember to show gratitude if someone refers you to a contact, job or internship opening, or simply takes the time out of their busy schedule to talk to you about their career. In return, you should be ready to share your knowledge and appropriate contacts with others.

Being a student or recent grad is the most difficult time to network. As you start working in your career, you'll meet colleagues in your own company as well as others in the field. Soon you won't even need to worry about networking; you'll be doing it without even thinking!



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## 4.2 Networking As A College Student

Unfortunately networking and career development are not always the main focus on college campuses but you can do more networking at college than you think. Whether it's for a job in the future, or you're seeking an internship or summer position, networking is a great way to share knowledge and open doors for yourself.

### **Talk to your professors:**

Aside from teaching courses, professors conduct research in their field and have usually worked with or for associations and companies. Talk to your professors who specialize in a particular area that interests you outside regular class hours. They can provide valuable insight into your career field and they may be able to direct you to internships, companies and associations of interest.

### **Talk to fellow students:**

You already talk to fellow students; why not share knowledge of internships, summer programs and career related resources? If you find a fellow student in the same course of study, or someone who has landed an internship or research position that interests you, ask them how they found it and which resources they've used to search for positions. Fellow students are in the same boat as you are; they can often have great resources to share.

### **See a career or guidance counselor on campus:**

Career counselors are there to assist you with finding resources and providing services for your career development. They won't actually find you a job but they can direct you to companies that recruit at your college, share internship information or let you know about where students have interned in the past and assist you with other career preparation.

### **Reach out to your school's alumni network:**

Most colleges have an alumni network and try to stay connected with the different industries and organizations they work for. Some colleges have established programs where students can connect with alumni or you can visit the career services or alumni offices to ask about contacting alumni in your field of interest. Many alumni are happy to assist students from their same college if they can.

### **Talk to your own family, friends and acquaintances:**

Don't forget your family, friends and acquaintances also have careers and have friends with careers. You never know who may have a connection in your field. One of your friends could have a parent in the industry, or you might not realize a neighbor who works in the field. The more people you talk to the more your network will expand. Start out by enquiring about possible internship programs at some of your connection's companies or opportunities for summer employment.



### 4.3 LinkedIn Is The Best Choice For Business Professionals

The advent of Internet has opened new avenues for people to build and sustain professional and business relationships. LinkedIn is one such communication channel that facilitates a robust and authentic pool of talent. By employing LinkedIn profile writing services, professionals and businesses can support their claims in the most effectual manner. Still wondering why you should become a part of LinkedIn? Read on!

LinkedIn was created with the sole objective of promoting talents, skills, and products to millions of people around the globe. When you sign up for a LinkedIn profile, you become an exclusive part of a community that includes companies, recruiters, vendors, customers, and competitors. What makes LinkedIn unique and attractive to people is the fact that it fulfills their professional objectives, unlike other social networking sites where entertainment is the key focus. Here are some of those unique benefits that make LinkedIn worth every effort.

#### **Gain Visibility for Unique Professional & Business Opportunities:**

LinkedIn offers a search engine. When recruiters or companies are searching for specific talent to fill their vacant positions or when people are searching for specific products and services, LinkedIn search engine permits your profile to be populated. You can gain and enhance your profile's visibility, making it readily accessible to the targeted audiences by optimizing it with appropriate usage of keywords. It is recommended that you examine the keywords before constructing your profile.

**Build Professional & Business Relationships:**

The chief objective of marketing platforms like LinkedIn is to make connections. Through such podiums you gain the opportunity to meet the right companies or individuals that aptly fit with your set of business or professional requirements. Connecting with significant people in your industry strengthens your credibility and consolidates the position of your business.

Furthermore, recommendations play a vital role in improving your profile and its visibility. The more recommendations you're able to gather, the more appealing and credible your profile appears. It works like an endorsement for your skills, products, services or company and increases your trustworthiness. Recruiters or customers always prefer candidates, services or products that have been approved by others. So, always request your clients or colleagues to leave reviews on your profile.

**Identify Business and Job Trends:**

LinkedIn tools are highly effective in identifying new business trends and job opportunities in your industry. By knowing the current trends you will be able to formulate appropriate strategies that will carve your path to success. Job seekers and businesses that remain abreast with emerging trends stay coordinated with the professional and business requirements.

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**Generate Job and Business Opportunities:**

Marketing is a method designed to promote and sell skills, products and services, and the LinkedIn interface as a marketing tool just does that. By creating an impressive LinkedIn profile you effortlessly launch your skills and services into the market. However, leaving it unattended for months at a stretch will lead you to nowhere. In order to derive the optimum levels of benefits from this incredible marketing platform, you need to explore what it has to offer you – things like search tools, forums and direct ads.

If other social networking sites are able to facilitate emerging professionals and businesses to a large extent, then LinkedIn ought to be ahead in the competition as it is specially oriented to marketing professional skills and business products/services. The core advantage is that you build up a relevant network of professionals without wasting your precious time.

#### 4.4 Keyword Rich LinkedIn Profile

It goes without saying that networking is an effective way to build your business, or to get yourself seen when looking for a new career. Back in the day, that meant pressing the flesh and exchanging business cards, but the internet era has made that something of a thing of the past. Social networking is now the way that most people connect online, but it's hard to think of Facebook or Twitter as places where you could advance your career. That is why LinkedIn has become the social networking site for those that are serious about building their business and making connections.

The first time people arrive at the site, the most common question that they ask is, "how do I use LinkedIn?" The answer really depends on what you want to get out of the site. This may be anything from getting your resume out to potential employers, to simply connecting with other people that share your profession. The best way to jump right in and get started is by filling out your LinkedIn profile and utilizing all the different sections to ensure that you promote yourself in the best way.

Your LinkedIn profile will actually look somewhat like a resume by the time you are finished with it, and it's the information contained within that will help people find you. Try to keep that information as up to date as possible, just in case you are looking for work and an employer decides to come calling. Keeping your profile up to date will help you look a little more attractive than others in your industry who don't. Remember that as this is a business network for professionals, your profile should reflect that, so try to keep your LinkedIn writing as professional as possible.

A great way to connect with people and start networking is to join groups. Based on the information that you provide in your profile, LinkedIn will suggest a number of groups that you may be interested in. You will find that most will be based around your profession, but some will also match categories that you have listed as skills and interests. This is a great way to meet like-minded people and to get your network up and running quickly.

Groups are a fantastic way to keep up with everything that is happening within your industry, as well as a way to help others who have questions about the profession. If you are using LinkedIn to find employment, then you may be able to find out which companies are hiring, which in turn could save you a ton of time in your job search process. There are many different ways to use LinkedIn, and the layout is so familiar to other social networks, you will quickly be able to get the hang of how to navigate and will start reaping the benefits quickly.

Final Reminder: Don't forget to use strategic keywords throughout your LinkedIn profile. The more keywords you can incorporate into your profile the greater the chance that your profile will be found by potential recruiters and hiring managers. Give yourself the greatest opportunity of finding success with a keyword rich LinkedIn profile.



#### 4.5 Using A Specialist Recruitment Agent

These days, landing a regular job can be quite an arduous task. The world economy is in turmoil and job seekers are experiencing uncertainty and distress. Even though jobs are hard to find that does not mean that there are none available, you just need some help in tracking them; and this is where a recruiter comes in handy. If you are still unsure about using a specialist recruiter to help with your job hunt, then maybe these benefits will be able to change your mind about job recruiters.

### Job Recruitment Agencies Know Where the Jobs Are:

As mentioned previously, due to the financial crisis, many companies have started downsizing their workforce in order to cope, but not all of them are doing that. There are still quite a lot of companies that are looking for skilled workers to help them with day-to-day operations, and these companies often hire recruitment agencies to help them find the best employees. If you go to a recruitment office and they believe that you may be a perfect fit for a job opening that they have, then they will send you to the company with their recommendation.

### Recruiters Know What Kind of Person the Company is Looking For:

Companies do not just hire any person to fill in the vacancies; they need people who have certain skills, experience and qualities that will make them perfect for the job at hand. If you consult with a recruiter about a job opening at a certain company, they will usually tell you what kind of people that company is looking for and type of culture of that company. When the time comes for you to interview, you can use this inside information to stand out against your competitors.



"I studied English for 16 years but...  
...I finally learned to speak it in just six lessons"  
Jane, Chinese architect

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**Recruiters Know What Kind of Job is Perfect for You:**

If you have recently been laid off from your job, you may be in a situation where you need to think about changing your career. A professional recruiter can provide you with advice on alternate career paths where you can transfer your current skills into a new role. Just because you have experience in one particular industry or one particular position, this does not mean that your skills are not required within different industries.

**What Else Can I Do?**

Using a recruiter to help you find a new job is only one strategy you should employ. Ensure you network with as many people as possible to find out different opportunities that may exist. Also, don't forget to keep your resume up to date and keep practicing your interview techniques.



## 4.6 What Does Your Email Address Say About You

**Reasons to have a “professional” email address**

First impressions are important when it comes to job seeking, and an email address can make quite a first impression. Often times, the email address is the first thing a hiring manager sees – before even seeing your name! Before you send out your next resume, consider what your email address alone might say about you. Do you “appear” professional?

As most job applications are sent via email these days, your email address alone can play a huge role into whether or not your resume is opened. I have heard numerous stories from hiring managers about applications getting tossed simply because of someone's email address. Often times, email addresses at face value appear to be spam and are never even opened. Email addresses like "sexykitten0007" or "bigmuscles", for example, might be automatically filtered into a spam folder by an email server because of word content.

The good news is that hiring managers are quite straightforward in what they believe makes up an "unprofessional" or unappealing email address. While it may sound harsh that most hiring managers critique email addresses, it does happen because they do create a first impression.

Below are 7 deadly email sins to make sure to stay away from so you don't end up in the "unprofessional" pile.

**Wrong Name:**

John\_smith@....com (when your real name is David Jones)

Don't confuse the reader from the start! Is your name John Smith or David Jones? There is no reason to have the hiring manager ask this type of question at the start of your resume.

**Fantasy Name:**

Invisibleman@....com

Are you applying for a job or are you auditioning for a video game?

**Creepy Name:**

collegestrangler@....com

Given the fact that over 80% of companies now run background checks on potential employees, there is no reason to give an employer the impression that you may have a criminal record.

**Sportsperson:**

tigerwoods50@....com

This might have been ok when you were in high school, but not in the workplace.

**The numbers:**

998877665544@....com

Confusing! You are just asking for someone to send an email to the wrong place.

**The Crude Name:**

hairychest@....com

Not a good first impression. Also, many of these email addresses contain words that will usually get filtered into the spam folder

**Confess love email address:**

bonjovilover@....com

Again, you are applying for a job, not a role as a groupie.

So...what should you do?

Stick to the basics. The best email addresses will contain your full or partial name, followed by either characters or numbers. Think about how most workplace email addresses are set up – most of them contain a combination of an employee's first and last name. Try to mimic this – a professional email address represents a professional job candidate. Don't give your reader the wrong impression!



# 5 Preparing For The Job Search

## 5.1 Is Google Your Friend Or Foe?



I recently “googled” my name and found an assortment of results come up that I didn’t even realize were out there and visible to the public. Social media sites, registries I created, and websites that I’ve registered on and long forgotten about. When it comes to job searching, employers are now able to see more about our personal lives than ever before through the internet. This can either help or hurt us when it comes to applying for jobs.

It is said that an estimated 2 out of 5 companies search the online profiles of job candidates. As we use more and more social media sites and more tasks are accomplished online, this number is expected to grow. It’s important that we be aware of the fact that our co-workers, bosses and hiring managers are able to see certain things about us that we might not even realize. To be prepared, you should do a little research on your online profile and see which websites, profiles and forums of yours are visible to the public.

You should make sure that the online profile you portray to the public matches the image you want to present to potential employers, co-workers and supervisors. There are a couple of things you can do to help create the image you want to portray through your online profile. To start, you can review your privacy settings on social media sites and limit the types of information that is visible to the public or to members of the site you're not connected to. Many sites now allow you to customize the people that can see your posts; however some online forums and web reviews are visible to the public so you should be aware of the things you write about that everyone can see.

This doesn't mean that you can't enjoy social media sites to share pictures and stay connected to family and friends, but be conscious of what you're putting out there. It is becoming more and more common for individuals to create a personal profile as well as a professional one to categorize what types of information are shared with whom. Creating a separate professional account to social media sites, such as Facebook for example, can be a good idea and a way for you to maintain a professional image while also being able to use these sites for personal enjoyment. It will allow you to share things with family and friends without worrying about your boss seeing it on Monday or a hiring manager getting the wrong impression of you because he doesn't know about your sarcastic sense of humor or an inside joke you have going with your friends.

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On the other hand, your online profile can enhance your chances at a job if it demonstrates the skills and experiences you have that are related to the jobs you're applying for. For example, if you're applying for a position as a web developer and your blog page is innovative and dynamic, this may show employers that you have what it takes. In any case, you should make your online profile what you want it to be and not what happens to pop up about you.

## 5.2 Acing The Dreaded Job Interview

There's a reason why we all dread job interviews. Going to an interview can feel like an interrogation session where we are asked question after question, sometimes catching us off guard and making us feel anxious. Many times the interviewer gives little feedback or facial expressions to indicate whether or not we seem like a good candidate for the position, which makes it even more uncomfortable. Employers use a series of questions to figure out whether an applicant matches the requirements they need, and whether they'd be a good fit in the company and position.

While it may seem intimidating in an interview, it's important to remember one thing: Not only should you be trying to show that you're the right person for the job, you should also use the interview to decide whether the job is right for you. You may be thinking, "That's nice and all but I really need a job." The truth is, you'll be much happier, perform better at your job, and stay at the company longer if you actually feel that the position matches with your skills, experience or interests. It's better to think about whether a job is right for you, instead of taking anything you get and trying to leave after a couple of months. It's a waste of your time, as well as the employers.

The employer may do most of the job interviewing and ultimately be the one who decides whether the position is offered to you or not, but you should also ask the interviewer questions about the company and position to determine whether it really is a good fit. This also shows employers that you're serious about the position and you actually want to see if it's right for you. Although employers realize that you're on the search for a job, it's not good to appear as if you will take any position, even if it doesn't match your skills and interests.

Whenever you are asked in an interview if you have any questions, you should always be prepared with a list of questions for the employer. Ask questions related to the company and position, such as how much time the position spends on certain tasks, the main qualities looked for in a candidate for the position, whether the position works closely with any other departments, some of the big projects during the year, etc. If you feel that your skills or qualities match a response to one of your questions, be sure to tell the employer that you enjoy certain tasks; have worked in similar projects, and so on to show that you are in fact a good fit from what you've learned.

You'll actually look better in the interview if you ask relevant, strategic questions to the employer and you'll also get a better idea if you actually want the position if it's offered to you. Viewing the interview as a chance to figure out whether the position is a good fit can also take away some of the stress and pressure we feel during an interview. It can allow us to portray a more accurate, honest version of ourselves, skills and experiences.



### 5.3 Quality Vs Quantity

Let's face it, when you're looking for a job, you want it as fast and as easy as you can get it. It can be overwhelming and time-consuming searching for a job. It's true that you likely won't land an interview, or job for that matter, without actually applying for job openings (unless they come through *Networking* and weren't advertised). However, when it comes to applying to jobs, you'll actually have a better chance at landing a job interview if you focus on quality over quantity of job applications. You will benefit more by spending increased time on individual job applications – customizing your professional resume and cover letter and doing research on the company before sending in your materials, than on shooting out dozens of generic responses to any job openings you see. Here's why...

Whether you're searching for job opportunities while working, going to university or you're unemployed, you really only have a certain amount of time and energy to focus on job searching and preparing your job seeking materials (Is your LinkedIn Profile updated?). If you spend your entire time finding anything you're even remotely qualified for and sending generic resumes and cover letters, you'll end up wasting a lot of time and are more likely to get discouraged faster when you don't receive any feedback or requests for interviews. It's more beneficial to you to take your time finding a few job openings that really match your interests and qualifications and put all your effort into customizing your materials to suit the position.

One of the main reasons employers give for not contacting job candidates is because they don't even meet the minimum requirements they listed on their job posting. If you're responding to dozens of job postings that require a minimum of 3 years in the field while you only have one, you might be wasting your time. Sometimes employers do call in candidates that don't quite have the length of experience they're looking for, but it's wise not to spend a lot of time sending out your application materials unless it's a position that strongly appeals to you and that you feel you could qualify for in other ways. Especially for jobs that don't match your experience level, you'll have to put all your effort into that job application in order to prove to hiring managers that you can be an asset to the company despite other factors.

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Another reason employers don't call back job candidates is that their resume or cover letter was very general and didn't convince them that they have the experience they're looking for in the position. You'll be more likely to get a call-back if you spend time looking at the company, analyzing what type of candidate they want for the position and then customizing your resume and cover letter to show that you have the skills they're looking for.

Try it and see what happens!

## 5.4 The Elevator Speech Marketing Tool

When you're on the search for a job, it's important to pull out all the stops. The competition for jobs is fierce; in order to stand out amongst the crowd you have to market yourself in the best way possible. For some of us, that doesn't come as easily as others but creating an "Elevator Speech" concisely stating who you are and your most valuable assets can get you on the right track.

For those of you who haven't heard of an Elevator Speech, it's a speech designed to sell an organization or individual's brand to someone in the amount of time it takes to ride in an elevator with a stranger from the top of the building to the bottom floor. It should be engaging, persuasive and brief so that you could theoretically tell it to anyone you meet for career networking, job fairs, during job interviews if asked to talk about yourself, or in everyday situations where you might meet someone and describe what you do in your professional life.

### **An Elevator Speech should be:**

**Brief:** This is something short and to the point that you can easily remember. The short version need only be 15 to 30 seconds but you can also create a longer, more in-depth version between 1–2 minutes long.

**Persuasive and enthusiastic:** If you're not excited about your "product", which in this case is yourself, then why should anyone else be? Present yourself confidently and build up the accomplishments you've made.

### **Include:**

- 1) Your name
- 2) Your recent position or career field. State your current position or professional title so people can understand what line of work you're in. If you're a student or recent grad it's okay to use that as your position.

- 3) A few of your top skills and recent accomplishments. This is where you really sell yourself. What makes you unique? What makes you an invaluable asset to any company or organization? Talk about what you see as your key skills in the workplace and some successful accomplishments you've achieved. You could include a promotion, recognition you received, a new program you implemented, sales goals you reached, and so on. It's important to be honest about your accomplishments but don't downplay your work either. Activities we take for granted in a job can usually be seen as valuable experience and achievements.
- 4) What you're looking for. If you are in the market for a new job or career change, think about how to mention what field or job positions you're looking for and how you are hoping to apply your previous experiences and skills (your transferable skills) in a new job or industry.

Create a sample Elevator Speech and test it out on friends and family to get some feedback. Make sure your speech really is a self-promotion and convinces individuals and employers of your invaluable competences.

## 5.5 What Should I Include In My Resume?

One of the first steps in making the transition from student to job seeker is to create a professional resume. At first glance it may seem like you don't have much to put on your resume as a student or recent grad. However, if you assess your past experiences you'll realize you have more relevant experience to highlight on your resume than you think. Employers look to your past performance to predict your success in the future. As a student and recent grad, jobs aren't the only way you can demonstrate your prior success.

### **Relevant Coursework:**

As a student or recent graduate, employers realize that so far most of your life has been spent in the classroom, learning and studying. It's beneficial to highlight coursework that is related to the field you're applying for. This can show employers that you've learned relevant material from your studies and that you have thorough knowledge that can be an asset to their company.

### **Internships:**

Of course you'll want to include any and all internships you've had in the past. It's always better if you've participated in an internship related to the jobs you're applying for; however having any type of internship can show a level of maturity and responsibility. It also shows that you've been exposed to a real working environment and are better prepared to enter the workforce.

**Part-time/Summer Jobs:**

Don't belittle your part-time or seasonal work experience. A job in retail or summer camp may not seem relevant to the field you're going into, however you learn a great deal of foundational skills by having a part-time job that prepares you for having a full-time position. Employers like to see that you're mature enough to hold a job and learn some basic skills and work ethic.

**Volunteer Work:**

Volunteering can also provide valuable skills and promote leadership and cooperation. It's good to include any volunteering you've been part of in the past, as it can also demonstrate maturity, responsibility, team work and cooperation.



**Extra-curricular Activities:**

Feel free to list relevant extra-curricular activities on your resume. Anything you do on your free time that shows commitment, leadership, team work, etc. You can demonstrate skills you've acquired through your extra-curricular activities. For example if you've played on a sports team while in school, this can show you're a team player and able to successfully handle multiple tasks.

**Memberships/Affiliations:**

Including relevant memberships and affiliations can help demonstrate your commitment to a particular field of study, issue, or show your success in a certain area if membership is merit-based.

## 5.6 Replacing The Objective Statement With A Qualifications Profile

Does your current resume begin with a generic objective statement telling the reader what type of jobs you are looking for? Let me guess that it reads something similar to this:

“I am seeking the opportunity to expand my skills, knowledge and experience in a challenging professional environment. I am honest, reliable, eager to learn and open to tackling a range of tasks. I am a strong and empathetic team player and always complete tasks to a high degree of quality and to deadlines”.

If this is how your resume begins, it's time to make changes. In the competitive job environment where hiring managers may receive upwards of 500 applications for a single position, an objective statement is more likely going to lead to your resume being deleted. From a hiring manager's perspective, they are not interested in a non-specific, all-purpose statement that adds no value to the resume and provides them with no reason to want to hire you. You may have the best skills and be the perfect fit for the job however, you may never get this opportunity because your resume has already been deleted.

### **What is a Qualifications Profile?**

A great way to introduce yourself on your resume is by creating a qualifications summary or career summary. Rather than telling the reader you are seeking an opportunity to expand your skills, rather promote what skills you actually can bring to this specific role. A targeted resume including a targeted profile will encourage the reader to continue reading the resume as opposed to pressing the delete button. For example, if you are applying for an IT job that requires programming skills, list your programming skills within your introductory profile. That way, the reader will straight away be interested to read on as they know that you have skills that are required for this position.

### **How long should my Qualifications Profile be?**

The last thing you want to do is turn your qualifications profile into an essay! Statistically, a hiring manager will only spend between 15 to 20 seconds when initially reading your resume. If they open your resume and see a half page profile they are more likely to be turned off as they won't be bothered to read all this information. A well written profile should be no longer than 2-4 sentences. It needs to be targeted and present value.

### **Final Thought:**

When you begin to write your new resume, don't forget the number one rule. Your resume is a marketing document. The more you can showcase your skills and achievements the greater chance you will have of being selected for the interview stage.

## **5.7 Facebook And Your Job Application**

It is estimated that over 80% of employers conduct background checks on potential candidates that they are looking to hire, and some of these background checks now include social media checks on Facebook, LinkedIn and Twitter accounts. Almost everyone is on Facebook these days, and while it's great for your personal life and for keeping in contact with friends and acquaintances, I am finding that it is becoming more and more detrimental to candidates' job searches.

Companies conduct background checks in order to try to paint an accurate picture of who you really are and to avoid negligent hiring. They want to hire people they can trust to represent the company, and what better way to find out about "the real you" than through social media sites.

Facebook is an interesting (and free) way for employers to check up on you. Not only can they see your basic information, but they can also see your photos and what you discuss with other people on your wall. They can see what networks you belong to and even where you work. For the most part, companies don't care about how you spend your free time – as long as it's legal. What they are looking for are racist remarks (not only by you, but also by people who post on your page), sexually explicit photos or videos, and flagrant displays of illegal activity. Any signs of these will raise red flags to anyone performing your background check, and this can hinder your chances at securing your job.

You don't need to panic and start deleting all of your photos and wall posts right away... especially if you don't think you have anything to worry about. To start with, what you can do is check – and frequently recheck – your privacy settings on these sites. You might think that your privacy settings are all turned on, but the truth is that many social media sites update and reset these settings on a regular basis, and you might not even know that yours have accidentally been switched off.

The most important thing you can do is be more aware of what you have on your social media sites and go from there. Go through your photos (yes, even from those college days) as you never know what you might find. Are there “questionable” photos of you? Are there inappropriate remarks somewhere on your page that might be taken the wrong way? If you have to think about it, un-tag yourself or delete it...it's not worth the risk.



# 6 Bonus Chapter

## 6.1 Essential Criteria To Include In Your Resume

When it comes time to write your resume, you will find that a lot of people will offer differing advice on what to include and exclude from your resume. Sure, a lot of these thoughts are subjective, but there are 5 vital things that need to be on your resume – no matter what. Hiring managers will be looking for the below information (whether it seems obvious or not), so be sure to include these somewhere in your resume.

### Contact Information:

While this may seem more than obvious, it goes without saying that it is beyond important that your name and contact details be included in your resume – and make sure these details are correct! I can't tell you how many times I have tried calling a candidate, only to find that their number listed on their resume is incorrect. It is also quite common for people to have typos in their email addresses. The important thing here is to double check – you don't want to miss out on an interview simply because a hiring manager can't contact you!



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**Professional Experience (if any):**

Potential employers are looking for the best candidate to fill a job position, and your professional experience can give them an insight into your capabilities. Remember – they do not know you! The only information they have to go off is on your resume, so make sure you are detailed in listing your experience, duties and responsibilities.

**Key Achievements:**

When you include your professional experience on your resume, do not just merely list your daily tasks. Sure, employers do want to know that you've held similar or relevant positions, but they also want to know that you are capable of making a positive difference to the organization. Did you introduce new initiatives into the business that increased revenues? Did you consistently meet your targets? Be sure to include this type of information as it is exactly what they're looking for.

**Educational Qualifications:**

Educational qualifications are not always compulsory to some job positions, but listing them will never hurt you. If you don't have a Degree, this is a section where you can list any other relevant certificates you have earned.

**Relevant Skills:**

Every job advertisement calls for certain qualifications or skills from a candidate, and it's always a good idea to incorporate these somewhere on your resume. Relevant skills are either incorporated into the body of the resume (for example, skills can be listed as part of a candidate's professional experience), or they can be listed as their own section either right before or after professional experience on a resume.

At the end of the day, it's important to remember that all resumes are different, and you need to write one that sells you. That being said, however, there are still things that hiring managers must see on a resume, so remember to include your own version of our top 5 suggestions.

## 6.2 What Is The Cover Letter?

Most people hate writing a cover letter even more than they hate preparing a resume! I recently worked with a job seeker who said that he refused to apply for any graduate roles that required a cover letter to accompany the application. This is what I liked to call a "resume bomber" – someone whose aim is to apply to as many jobs as possible and just "hope for the best". Unfortunately, he quickly realised that most companies not only require a cover letter, but *demand* a cover letter. If a hiring manager sees that a cover letter is missing from the job application, it is more than likely that the resume will be deleted immediately. From the viewpoint of a hiring manager – if the candidate cannot follow basic instructions in applying for a job, how can they be trusted to perform the job?

Before we begin to go through the importance of the cover letter, it is important to define exactly what the cover letter is and what purpose it serves.

The cover letter is an introductory letter to accompany the resume or curriculum vitae. The cover letter is not a job application, nor should it be a part of the resume or follow the conclusion of the resume.

In the competitive job environment where first impressions count and the time we have to impress the potential reader is becoming shorter and shorter, the most effective way to ensure that your application stands out from the competition is through a professionally written cover letter. There is, however, a fine line between a cover letter that enhances your application and a cover letter that can actually do you a disservice.

### **Top 3 Tips to Cover Letter Writing:**

#### ***First impressions:***

You may have the greatest personality and the exact skills required for a particular job, but without a compelling cover letter that attracts the reader's attention immediately you will never get the opportunity to prove that you are the perfect candidate. Establish your reason for applying to the role within the first couple of sentences. As a graduate you need to establish your "brand" and make it clear to the reader that you have unique attributes that make you the perfect person for the job.

#### ***Target your cover letter:***

A "one size fits all" approach to job seeking does not work. There is no quick fix to getting a new job and a generic cover letter will be spotted from a mile away! The key to cover letter writing is to individualize the cover letter to the reader and make sure that they know that your letter has been written for their specific job. A targeted cover letter can help open doors and portray that professional image.

#### ***Forget the clichés!***

I can't stand clichés! It's my number one pet hate. When I read through a cover letter, I want the person's personality to shine. The last thing I want to read is a cliché. As the hiring manager, I want to feel that what I am reading is a truthful assessment as opposed to statements that do not add any value to the person's application.

**The final point to remember...**

If you are serious about your job search, you need to get serious about preparing a targeted cover letter to compliment your resume. As mentioned above, first impressions rule and to ensure that your resume is given a chance, you need your cover letter to shine. In the ultra-competitive job environment, hiring managers are looking for any excuse to delete a candidate's application. Do not let yourself down by failing at the very first step.

### 6.3 Preparation And Job Searching

Job seeking can often be a lonely and frustrating business, but if you organise yourself properly, define what your preferences are and what goals you would like to achieve, then, it can make the job searching process more enjoyable.

Whether you're looking for a job or a change of career, the approach should be similar and there are certain things that should be in place before you start on your path to finding suitable employment. Too often people jump straight into sending out their resume for every job under the sun. This approach is not just wrong but can be a total waste of time. Preparation is key to job seeking and those that prepare properly ultimately come out ahead.



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**Job Preparation and Research:**

Before you even begin to start thinking about applying for jobs, ensure that your professional resume is up to date and that your cover letter is targeted towards the jobs and industry you are applying for. Focus your resume on highlighting achievements and the value added skills that you can bring to the organisation. Remember that demand for jobs is ultra-competitive and when potential hiring managers may receive in excess of 500 resumes for one position, your resume needs to be perfect in order to stand out from the crowd.

Once your resume and cover letter are ready to go, you need to decide exactly what type of work you want to do and where your skills are best suited. This will make the job search process more straightforward.

**Focus your job search:**

There are many different tactics you can implement to search for jobs. Don't get stuck into only applying for online jobs because they are easy to apply for. Create profiles on different networking sites such as LinkedIn. A LinkedIn profile is a fantastic way to attract recruiters and potential head hunters. You can also use networking sites to find job vacancies, network with hiring managers and meet other job seekers who are in the same shoes as you.

**Remain Positive and Focused:**

Job seeking is not easy and can often take a long period of time. Rather than sitting at home waiting for the phone to ring, utilize this time to learn a new skill. (Have you ever wanted to learn a new language?) Perform community service or even just try to improve your health. The more you focus on the negative the more depressed and stressed you will become. Set out a certain amount of time every day to job search and spend the other time in the day doing something else.

Having a common sense approach to your job searching will make it easier in finding suitable employment.

Adopting a flexible approach, a willingness for work and a good attitude will give you more leverage and help in your quest of finding the ideal job.

## 6.4 The Advantages and Benefits of Creating a LinkedIn Profile

No matter if you're a current student or graduate or a high flying executive, a professionally written LinkedIn profile can help open up doors to opportunities and networks. Before LinkedIn existed, it was virtually impossible to connect directly with potential hiring managers, bosses or even other individuals who share similar job titles to your own. With LinkedIn, not only can you create an online marketing profile but with a click of a button you can begin networking.

**Creating a positive first impression:**

When a hiring manager or recruiter first reads your LinkedIn profile, they will typically make their opinion of you within the first 20 seconds. A professionally written and completed profile that includes up-to-date information about your skills and experience will automatically get the reader's attention. Including key achievements, examples of projects and value added skills towards the top of your profile will further maintain the reader's attention and create that positive first impression. Don't forget to include a picture. This will help to humanise your profile and put a face behind the name. Remember that your picture is a representation of you. If you are applying for a corporate position, a picture of you at 3 o'clock in the morning holding a beer will not portray that professional corporate image.

**Be Found:**

Different companies are now using social networking such as LinkedIn when it comes to hiring or headhunting new talent. A good example is seen within the ultra-competitive credit card industry, where companies who often try to poach talented staff from their competition and the easiest place to find these people are via LinkedIn. Even if you're not actively seeking a new job, just by having an account could change your career!

**Network:**

The benefits of LinkedIn are almost endless with no downside to having a LinkedIn profile. Get involved in forums, join groups and meet like-minded individuals like yourself. Best of all LinkedIn is totally free. Job seeking is a tough business and applying for online jobs each and every day is a job in itself! From a job seeker's perspective, LinkedIn is another tool that you can use to help get ahead when searching for a new job.

Don't forget one important aspect. While the advantages and benefits of having a LinkedIn profile can help open up doors to opportunities that may never have existed previously, having an incomplete or unprofessional LinkedIn profile can actually have a detrimental effect and portray a negative impression of being lazy or having a lack of attention to detail. If you choose to create a LinkedIn profile (which I suggest) prepare it properly and utilize everything that LinkedIn has to offer.

## 6.5 Selecting The Best Job Recruitment Agent

Every job market is unique and in order to gain the most out of your job search, working alongside a specialized recruiter can be your ticket to success. Just as you may use a mechanic to help you with your car or a plumber to help stop your leaking tap, an expert recruiter can help you find a new job that matches your requirements. Best of all, it's completely free for you to use. Even if they find you a job, you will never have to pay a cent. The employer fits this bill.

In order to find the best recruiters, the first thing you need to do is spend some time researching recruiters in your industry. For example, if you are a senior accountant, you need to align yourself with accounting recruiters who specialize in senior management accounting positions. There is no point in wasting time speaking to accounting recruiters who only specialize in graduate recruitment. To further maximize your research, do some investigating into the recruiter company's clients. Many times, recruiters will work with the same set of clients. If you wish to work for a large multinational company, you will need to find recruiters who have these contacts. A small boutique recruitment firm is more likely to work with smaller clients as they don't have the size to be able to recruit for larger organizations.




# The Wake

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**How can I begin to find a job recruiter who can help me?**

Creating a LinkedIn profile and networking would be my number one piece of advice to job seekers. Once you have a professional LinkedIn profile that highlights your experience, achievements, skills and expertise, you can begin to network and research recruiters in your field. Typically, most recruitment firms are listed on LinkedIn and you can search within their company profiles to find individual recruiters.

**How do I know if a certain recruitment agent is right for me?**

Building up trust and rapport with your recruiter is vital to finding success. Many people send their resume blindly to a recruitment company and wonder why no one calls them back. In order to have the recruiter searching for jobs on your behalf (remember recruiters don't get paid until they place you) they need to know that you're serious about the job search. Go and meet your recruiter face to face. Be upfront with your recruiter and tell them the types of roles you require and the companies you wish to work for. If you can provide a recruiter with all the information that they require they will be able to work as best as they can on your behalf.

**Final thought:**

Finding the right recruiter can certainly help you in your job search. Having someone with inside knowledge will increase your odds of finding a new job. However, just because you have a recruiter working on your behalf don't think that you can just sit back and relax. Finding the right recruiter is only one aspect of job seeking. In the competitive job environment, you need to be constantly networking to ensure that you are ready when the opportunity presents itself.

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