



Job Search Guide

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The Basics of Your Job Search

Prepare Your Resume

Learn how to write successful and job focused cover letters

Prepare a powerful reference list

Explore relevant search firms/staffing agencies

Apply for jobs of interest to you (adopt focused approach)

Prepare your focused list of questions for each interview

Prepare your portfolio/samples of your work to distinguish you from competition



Tools and Tips for Your Job Search

You are about to begin your job search. You need to plan and manage your job search just as you would any other project at work or in life. Managing a project involves clear stages, specific steps, and well defined outcomes. In many cases these stages, steps and outcomes are not pre-defined. The good news with your job search project is that it already has a well defined path and, if you follow it, you will increase your chances for success. The purpose of this guide is to provide you with a framework for your search, to help streamline each step on the way, and to arm you with tools and tips you can use for a successful outcome.

You might have some concerns as you start the process. Identifying these concerns is the first step in overcoming them:

- Fear of the unknown - If you have been in your job for several years, the job search may not be something you've experienced in a while. This guide is to help you be as prepared as possible for this new experience.
- Lack of job search skills - You might feel you lack some of the skills required to conduct an effective search. The tips and tools included in this guide aim to help you develop these skills.
- Lack of planning - Planning, prioritizing, and tracking your job search activities is important for a successful search. It will make your job easier and less overwhelming.
- Avoidance - Avoiding the tedious hours of resume writing, computer applications, networking research, cover letter creation, etc., can prevent you from moving forward with your job search. Adopting the mindset that finding a job is your current job may help to shorten the transition period.
- Distress - Feelings like depression, anger, or anxiety are expected in a job search and need to be acknowledged so that they don't interfere with the successful outcome of the search. Working on your job search toward a specific goal may be the best remedy for the expected stress associated with job transition periods.
- Lack of time management - You have probably heard the statement that job searching is a full-time job. Managing your own time is critical in a job search process. It is different from the structured schedule of the regular work day. The distractions are more and the environment may be different. It helps to be aware of this and to be motivated enough to overcome these barriers.



- Lack of immediate results - It is likely that you will not find your next job right away. Not hearing back or receiving a rejection letter most likely will happen. Try not to be discouraged. Viewing each networking conversation or interview as an exercise for your job search skills may be quite helpful. Asking for feedback and adopting it can only help you move forward.

Although difficult, keeping a positive attitude and continuing to believe that you are working toward your next job will lead you to a successful outcome.



Preparing for Your Job Search

The first step in a successful job search project is the preparation stage. Here you will focus on analyzing your professional environment, outlining your job search objective, and linking it to your long-term career objective. This will be the time to build your customized job search toolkit including the list of your skills, accomplishment stories, strengths and weaknesses, competencies, and personal values. You will also draft and fine-tune your resume, learn how to create meaningful cover letters, and build your list of references. Then you will determine your job search preferences and target market and build your communication strategy.

Step 1 - Your Professional Environment

Understanding your profession and industry helps you better evaluate the overall environment in which you will be conducting your search. You need to know the trends that are impacting your profession and industry in order to avoid dangers, identify opportunities, and make the right decisions about where you can best fit in the workplace. Being knowledgeable about these trends can also help you in conversations with potential hiring managers and at interviews.

Before you begin to evaluate your professional environment, it helps to effectively define your profession. What is it that you really do? Does your current title realistically describe your job? For example, the title “project coordinator” may not mean a lot outside of your former work environment. Defining your title would involve an examination of your work experience and expertise.

A good way to define your title is to research the current market. Job titles are constantly changing in today's world. The trend is more and more towards cross-functional job descriptions, hence more generic job titles. The key then becomes identifying the skills and experience required in your job function and searching for them rather than the imprecise job titles. In addition, having a good sense of where a particular job function or profession is heading can be key to your current search and future career management.



TIP: Below is a list of resources for researching job titles

Dictionary of Occupational Titles
http://www.occupationalinfo.org/contents.html This publication from the Department of Labor provides general descriptions of an enormous range of job titles.
O*Net
http://online.onetcenter.org/ The O*NET system serves as the nation's primary source of occupational information, providing comprehensive information on key attributes and characteristics of workers and occupations. The O*NET database houses this data and O*NET OnLine provides easy access to that information.
Occupational Outlook Handbook
http://www.bls.gov/OCO/ This Bureau of Labor Statistics handbook is a nationally recognized source of career information. It is designed to provide valuable assistance to individuals making decisions about their future work lives. The handbook is revised every two years.
Bureau of Labor Statistics Projections
The Bureau of Labor Statistics supplements the Occupational Outlook Handbook with articles and figures concerning the projected future of particular occupations.

As you research your current professional arena, it is important to think about the following questions:

- How steady is my profession? Is it growing or shrinking?
- Will it become obsolete?
- What is the probable length of time I can continue to work in it?
- What are the compensation ranges? Explore www.salary.com
- What additional education and training are required?

TIPS to help you define your professional arena include:

- Review your work history and the profession(s) in which you have worked.
- Explore advertised positions online. Professional networking sites like LinkedIn and FaceBook may have profiles of real people and their professions that may give you a realistic glimpse.
- Review your current job description.
- Ask friends and colleagues what profession they see you in the future.



Once you have defined your professional arena in terms of what you do and where you want to do it, educate yourself on the latest developments in the profession. Some ways of doing this are:

- Study online job postings. Note all the companies and industries that need your professional services.
- Read newsletters and professional journals, printed and web based. Use the information you discover to generate additional questions and to share in your conversations.
- Talk to professional organizations and generate contacts on the phone.

TIP TO KEEP YOU ORGANIZED:

Begin to build files and favorite web articles on your profession and the industries that interest you, and continue to collect these throughout your search. You may even help your contacts solve problems by sharing this useful information. Reviewing this information before an interview might make you stand out.

Step 2 - Your Job Search Objective and Career Objective

Your job search objective will provide the direction to plan your search. It takes into consideration your overall experience, skills, values, and personal characteristics. It will also set the tone for your resume and other communications. Perhaps the most important reason for crafting your job search objective is that it is a reflection of you and where you want your career and work life to go next. A well-developed objective presents you with an opportunity to broaden and explore your options more fully. The objective needs to be sufficiently focused - not too broad and not too narrow.

Sample job search objectives:

- Senior information systems manager position providing opportunity for project leadership in application of quality and statistical methods.
- Communications management in higher education emphasizing research content awareness and successful fundraising efforts.



Please use the space below to draft your own job search objective following the examples above. Try to make each word count. Make sure that you can support everything in your job search objective with realistic experience, education, and professional accomplishments.

My Job Search Objective:

An immediate job search objective is usually best formulated in the context of a long-term career objective. Establishing a long-term career objective involves looking five or more years into the future. This exercise will help you formulate the answer to the long-term career goal question that is bound to come up more than once in your job search. To prepare for that question and formulate a concise answer, please review and respond to the following questions:

Where do you want to be in your work life in five years?

What would you like your work situation to be?

What percentage of your time would you like to dedicate to work as opposed to other things important to you?



Sample Career Objective:

Five years from now, I am an established academic administrator with a reputation for high admission rates. Serving in higher education, I am working toward a career as an Assistant Dean of Students. I am continuously challenging myself with new projects, am quite independent, and am able to keep a healthy work/life balance.

Use the space below to draft your own long-term career objective following the example above. Make sure that it relates to and supplements your current job search objective.

My Long-Term Career Objective:

Step 3 - Your Job Search Tools

Thinking about and formulating your job search tools is probably the most important part of your job search preparation. This toolbox consists of a list of your skills, a rich selection of your work accomplishments/stories, a well-defined and thoughtful list of your strengths and areas for improvement, a few of the top competencies that will distinguish you from the competition, and acknowledgement of your personal values in reference to your targeted job.

Your Skills

When you are asked about your skills, consider three things:

1. **Things You Can Do** - Employers want to know the specific actions you can take in a project/situation, such as “develop a project timeline” or “organize a good event”.
2. **Things You Know** - Employers want to know if you know the essentials of the job.
3. **Roles You Can Play** - Employers want to know how you can combine skills, knowledge, and personal characteristics to fulfill particular workplace roles. The ability to work well with others will also be an important aspect for evaluation.

A successful method for identifying your skills is to analyze your accomplishments at work. The first step is to identify your accomplishments, which are indicators of one or more skills in action. The second step is to build the story of each accomplishment



and see what skills you used. These accomplishment stories will be invaluable in drafting your resume and preparing for interviews.

EXERCISE:

Follow the exercise below to **identify your accomplishments** at work. Review the questions and respond with a “Yes” or “No” in the space provided in the first column. Beside each item with a “Yes” response, specify the most obvious skill demonstrated by the accomplishment. Feel free to use the inventory of skills listed in the second table on the next page.

Accomplishments vs. Skills

Yes/No	Accomplishment	Skill
	Did you participate in decision making or planning? What contributions did you make to the team? What were the results of your efforts?	
	Did you write any major reports, programs, publications, promotion or newsletters? Who was the audience? What was the distribution?	
	Did you improve the efficiency of people or operations? What were the savings?	
	Did you identify a problem and solve it? What were the results?	
	Did you introduce a new system or procedure that made work easier or more accurate?	
	Did you save your group money or time? How much? What positive impact did the savings have?	
	Did you manage systems or people? What were the results of your efforts?	
	Did you receive any awards, bonuses, or promotions?	
	Did someone in a higher position ever give you a strong compliment?	
	Did you automate or create systems or procedures? Did you train people? How many?	
	Did you produce reports or data that enabled management to make more informed decisions?	
	Were you involved in a star-up or shut-down? What were the changes and successes you had?	
	Were you a liaison between departments? How were you able to make things run more efficiently?	



Sample Skills Inventory

(Adapted from technicaljobsearch.com, resumesandcoverletters.com, quintcareers.com)

<p>Communication/Social Skills</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Addressing Advertising Arbitrating Editing Facilitating Interviewing Listening Mediating Negotiating Observing Writing 	<p>Creative Skills</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Acting Combining Composing Conceptualizing Creating Designing Developing Illustrating Integrating Shaping 	<p>People Development Skills</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Assessing performance Coaching Counseling Developing Helping others Motivating Teaching Team building Training
<p>Organizational Skills</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Administrating Assigning Cataloguing Categorizing Correcting Following up Projecting Recording Reporting Restructuring Scheduling 	<p>Financial Management Skills</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Auditing Budgeting Controlling Cost accounting Financial analysis Financial planning Fund-raising 	<p>Customer Service Skills</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Client relations Handling complaints Responding promptly Following up Serving customers
<p>Management Skills</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Approving Delegating Developing procedures Developing systems Formulating Implementing Instructing Interpreting policy Making decisions Managing projects Managing people Managing tasks 	<p>Data Management Skills</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Analyzing data Assessing quality Computing Gathering data Managing information Measuring Research 	<p>Technical Skills</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Computer savvy Designing Designing systems Developing products Engineering Inventing Scientific research Manufacturing Programming Tooling
<p>Research Skills</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Analyzing Clarifying Collecting Conducting Detecting Determining Evaluating Examining 		



Your STAR Stories

Building an inventory of accomplishment stories and keeping them fresh in your mind will be one of your most important interviewing tools. A popular model of building and organizing these stories is the **STAR** model (**Situation/Task/Action/Result**). The more STAR stories you keep in mind, the better prepared you are for a job interview. Try to remember at least three STAR accomplishment stories to use at any given point in your job search process.

EXERCISE:

Select the three most important work-related accomplishments from the list on the previous page and analyze them further by using the STAR model below:

Accomplishment #1

Situation: Describe a situation/project you were involved in that resulted in a positive outcome.

Task: Describe the tasks and obstacles you encountered while dealing with the situation/project.

Actions: List the actions you took.

Results: Describe the results of your actions and the benefits to your group.



Accomplishment #2

Situation: Describe a situation/project you were involved in that resulted in a positive outcome.

Task: Describe the tasks and obstacles you encountered while dealing with the situation/project.

Actions: List the actions you took.

Results: Describe the results of your actions and the benefits to your group.

Accomplishment #3

Situation: Describe a situation/project you were involved in that resulted in a positive outcome.



Task: Describe the tasks and obstacles you encountered while dealing with the situation/project.

Actions: List the actions you took.

Results: Describe the results of your actions and the benefits to your group.

Your Strengths and Areas for Improvement

We all have strengths and areas where we could improve. Analyzing and being able to discuss them at interviews is an important piece of the job search preparation process. The list of personal traits below may help you identify your own strengths and areas in need of improvement.

List of Personal Traits

Accurate Adventurous Artistic Challenging Committed Communicate well Compassionate Confident Creative Curious Dedicated Dependable	Inquisitive Efficient Emotional Energetic Entertaining Enthusiastic Expressive Good attitude Hard worker High standards Imaginative Independent Intelligent	Intuitive Kind Leader Levelheaded Loyal Original People-oriented Perfectionist Personable Persuasive Physically fit Practical Productive	Rational Responsible Responsive Self-assured Self-controlled Self-starter Sense of humor Sensitive Sociable Stable Tolerant Trustworthy Other: _____ _____
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EXERCISE:

Think about the personal traits you used in the STAR stories above and make a list of them. Try to stick to a manageable number of up to six.

Of the six personal characteristics that you have selected, place a check next to the three that are your most prominent traits. Then go back to the list and identify three of your most prominent traits that an interviewer may view as an area for improvement.

Please list your most prominent traits in the table below:

Strengths	Areas for Improvement
1.	1.
2.	2.
3.	3.

It may be a good idea to ask an objective third person to assess your personal traits so that you are certain that the list is realistic. We will refer back to this list in the interviewing section of this guide.

Your Competencies/What Distinguishes You From the Rest?

The ability to put your skills, knowledge, and personality traits together into competencies relevant to those of your target organization is an important part of the job search process. Your competencies must be important to the organization you would like to join and distinguish you from the competition. To identify these relevant competencies, review the job requirements in the job postings of interest to you and think about your own skills and personal characteristics in relation to them. Also think about the following:

- What do you do that no other person can do as successfully?
- What is your niche?
- How do you set yourself apart from others in your profession?

Sample Competency Statements:

1. Financial leader who:
 - Demonstrates a track record that is efficient, clear and result oriented
 - Persuades and influences, in writing and public speaking
 - Uses current knowledge of latest innovations and stays ahead of the curve
2. Information systems specialist whose strengths include:
 - Data administration
 - Strategic data planning
 - Relational database design, development, and implementation



Your Personal Values

Exploring a job is a two-way process. You will be evaluating your prospective employers as much as they will be evaluating you. In order for you to be successful in the decision-making process, you need to be aware of and able to consider the match between your personal values and the perceived values of the organization you would like to join. The list below provides you with a list of personal values that relate to employment choices.

EXERCISE:

Please rank the sample personal values below or select the top three in order of importance to you:

- Autonomy
- Friendship
- Challenge
- Power/control
- Management
- Leadership
- Service
- Technical expertise
- Safety
- Work/life balance
- Personal growth
- Money

Identifying your own personal value priorities will help you make the match with your potential new employer. It will also help you craft important questions you may want to ask at interviews.

Step 4 - Your Resume, Cover Letters, Reference List

These are the three most important documents you will need in a job search. They can be supplemented with additional relevant information, e.g., an article you wrote, a portfolio of projects you put together, presentations you made, etc.

Your Resume

Your resume is often the first impression you will make on a future employer. It serves as your signature because it presents an overview of what you have done in the past and indicates what you can do in the future. It is helpful to view your resume as a personal sales brochure. It should be flexible and customizable, depending on the specific requirements of the job at hand. Remember that everything on your resume may be a subject for discussion.



Resume Headings

- Contact information - Your name, address, telephone numbers, and email address.
- Objective - You may add your job search objective, but it is optional as it may restrict your potential employment options. If you have a separate cover letter outlining your interest in a particular job, the objective on the resume may be redundant.
- Skill Summary Statement - The summary emphasizes key information detailed in the body of the resume. It is a concise statement summarizing experience, areas of expertise, technical or professional skills, traits, and any distinctions. It is a good idea to use key words that match what your desired organization is looking for. A resume with a skill summary statement can be used for networking purposes. It will highlight the story you would like to share with networking contacts.
- Employment History - Employer names, years employed, and job titles. Show progressive history of success and outline your duties with bullet points starting with action verbs.
- Education - Summarize your educational background in reverse chronological order including your highest degree and university.
- Professional Development and Training - List additional training or courses that support and are relevant to your job objective. This section can be separate or included as part of your education with the heading: Education, Training and Development.
- Professional Memberships/Relevant Volunteer Activities - Include memberships and offices held in professional associations, boards, and community activities that support your objective.
- Other Categories - List languages, technical skills, licenses, certifications, publications, etc.



Resume Formats

The two most common resume formats are chronological and functional.

Chronological Resume - It is most frequently used and accepted. It lists work experience in reverse chronological order, outlining your job history from the most recent job backwards, with greater emphasis on the most recent job. It provides clear information on job titles, areas of responsibility, and periods of employment for each employer. Accomplishments are tied to workplaces and time frames.

The chronological resume is helpful when:

- You have a progressive work history of success
- Your job objective is similar to your recent experience
- You are not looking to make a career change

Functional Resume - It promotes and headlines skills and accomplishments without emphasizing where or when you developed those skills. The functional resume is suitable for job seekers who want to make a change in their field or functional areas. The decision to use a functional resume should be carefully weighed because many employers prefer chronological resumes.

The functional resume is helpful when:

- Your objective is different from your experience.
- You want to emphasize skills not used in recent work experience.
- Your experience has been gained in different, not connected jobs.
- You are entering the job market after an absence.

Guidelines for Constructing your Resume

- Describe specific responsibilities and highlight accomplishments.
- Support all activities and accomplishments with specific results and benefits.
- Highlight your work history selectively and keep in mind what the market is looking for. Make your resume speak to the specific company or job you are applying for.
- Do not include anything that would raise suspicion or cause you to be screened out. When in doubt, don't list such information, address it at the interview.
- Use the present tense to describe your current or most recent job.
- Always start your accomplishment statements (bullets outlining your experience) with an action verb.
- Use key words and phrases appropriate to your next, not your previous, employer or industry.
- Do not use abbreviations.
- Keep the resume to one or two pages.
- Include your name and contact information on the second page.



- Make your resume easy to read.
- Be aware of information or dates that could be used to screen you out of consideration.
- Devote more space to recent jobs than to earlier ones.
- Spell check your document and double-check grammar.

TIP:

Use the “So what?” test to check your resume accomplishment statements to be sure they convey your value to the reader.

Example:

- Reorganized the entire department
- Edited a 500-page technical manual

These examples fail the “So what?” test because the reader has no way of knowing if these were better or worse after you took the action. The key is adding a clear statement of results, such as:

- Money -ways you have saved money, earned money, or managed money
- Time - ways you saved or improved time management
- Amounts - How much? How many? (\$, %, number of people or things)

Example that passes the “So what?” test:

- Reduced staff costs by \$50,000 and improved problem resolution time by 15% by reorganizing the entire department.

The following two resumes provide examples of (1) a chronological resume and (2) a functional resume:



GEORGE SMITH

33 Lakeview Street, Cambridge, MA 02134
(617) 553-1234 - george.smith@email.com

SUMMARY

Skilled administrator with nine years of sponsored research experience, solid financial background, and strong computer skills.

EXPERIENCE

MASSACHUSETTS INSTITUTE OF TECHNOLOGY

July 2000-present

An institute of higher education whose mission is to advance knowledge and educate students in science, technology & other areas of scholarship

Financial Assistant II

- Conduct pre- and post-award administration
- Prepare budgets for grant applications
- Manage accounts for research and faculty fund accounts
- Approve requisitions and process invoices
- Process travel vouchers
- Review and verify procurement purchasing transactions
- Monitor expenditures for compliance with sponsor guidelines in accordance with approved budgets
- Provide financial projections
- Conduct financial review and controls

NEWTON COMMUNITY LEARNING

1994-2000

A community service organization that integrates community work with classroom work
Project Manager

- Coordinated an education project for over 50 children and their after school activities
- Managed transportation and schedules between the elementary school and the college
- Trained over 10 new workers and student workers on after school activities for children
- Managed an office of 5 staff members
- Managed annual operational budget of \$50,000
- Introduced new programs and added train the trainer sessions for teaching staff

EDUCATION

BRANDEIS UNIVERSITY, Waltham, MA
Master of Science in Finance

May 1994

BENTLEY COLLEGE, Waltham, MA
Bachelor of Science in Finance, Cum Laude

May 1990

COMPUTER SKILLS

MS Word, MS Excel, MS PowerPoint, FrontPage, Access, SAP, PeopleSoft, Oracle, COEUS, HTML, Statistical Analysis System (SAS), Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS)



Georgina Smith
66 Sunshine Street, Somerville, MA 02342
617-253-6788, gsmith@email.com

Qualifications Summary

Administrative support professional with strong organizational, technical, and interpersonal skills. Confident and poised in interactions with individuals at all levels. Detail-oriented and resourceful in completing projects, able to multi-task effectively.

Experience Highlights

Administrative Support

- Performed administrative and secretarial support functions for the VP of a large sportswear manufacturer. Coordinated and managed multiple priorities and projects.
- Provided discrete secretarial and reception services for a busy family counseling center. Scheduled appointments and maintained accurate, up-to-date confidential client files.
- Assisted with general accounting functions, maintained journals and handled A/P and A/R. Provided telephone support, investigated and resolved billing problems for an 18 member manufacturer's buying group. Trained and supervised part time staff and interns.

Customer Service and Reception

- Registered incoming patients in a hospital emergency room. Demonstrated ability to maintain composure and work efficiently in a fast-paced environment while preserving strict confidentiality.
- Conducted patient interviews to elicit necessary information for registration, accurate prioritization, and to assist medical professionals in the triage process.
- Orchestrated hotel special events and reservations; managed customer relations and provided exemplary service to all customers.

Management and Supervision

- Promoted rapidly from front desk to assistant front desk office manager at an upscale hotel. Oversaw all operations including restaurants, housekeeping and maintenance. Troubleshoot and resolved problems, mediated staff disputes, and handled customer complaints.
- Participated in staff recruitment, hiring, training, and scheduling. Supervised a front-desk staff.

Employment History

Accounting Assistant, Guardian, Inc, Cambridge, MA
Patient Services Registrar, Somerville Hospital, Somerville, MA
Assistant Front Office Manager, Sheraton, Cambridge, MA
Receptionist/Secretary, Family Counseling and Guidance Center, Boston, MA
Administrative Assistant, Greenland Sportswear, Brookline, MA

Education and Training

Bunker Hill Community College (1988 - 1989)
Concentration in Business Administration
Technical College, Somerville, MA (2000 - 2002)
Certificate in Business Administration and Management

Community Involvement

Active volunteer in Habitat for Humanity, public schools, children's homes, elderly homes, and organizations for children with cancer.



Below is a list of action verbs - by skill categories - that you may want to use to create accomplishment statements in your resume:

(Adapted from technicaljobsearch.com, resumesandcoverletters.com, quintcareers.com)

Communication/People Skills	Creative Skills	Data/Financial Skills	Helping Skills
Addressed	Acted	Administered	Adapted
Advertised	Adapted	Adjusted	Advocated
Arbitrated	Began	Allocated	Aided
Arranged	Combined	Analyzed	Answered
Articulated	Composed	Appraised	Arranged
Authored	Conceptualized	Assessed	Assessed
Clarified	Condensed	Audited	Assisted
Collaborated	Created	Balanced	Clarified
Communicated	Customized	Calculated	Coached
Composed	Designed	Computed	Collaborated
Condensed	Developed	Conserved	Contributed
Conferred	Directed	Corrected	Cooperated
Consulted	Displayed	Determined	Counseled
Contacted	Drew	Developed	Demonstrated
Conveyed	Entertained	Estimated	Diagnosed
Convinced	Established	Forecasted	Educated
Corresponded	Fashioned	Managed	Encouraged
Debated	Formulated	Marketed	Ensured
Defined	Founded	Measured	Expedited
Developed	Illustrated	Netted	Facilitated
Directed	Initiated	Planned	Familiarized
Discussed	Instituted	Prepared	Furthered
Drafted	Integrated	Programmed	Guided
Edited	Introduced	Projected	Ensured
Elicited	Invented	Qualified	Intervened
Enlisted	Modeled	Reconciled	Motivated
Explained	Modified	Reduced	Prevented
Expressed	Originated	Researched	Referred
Formulated	Performed	Retrieved	Rehabilitated
Furnished	Photographed		Represented
Incorporated	Planned	Organizational Skills	Resolved
Influenced	Revised	Approved	Simplified
Interacted	Revitalized	Arranged	Supplied
Interpreted	Shaped	Catalogued	Supported
Interviewed	Solved	Categorized	Volunteered
Involved		Charted	
Joined	Management/Leadership Skills	Classified	Research Skills
Judged	Administered	Coded	Analyzed
Lectured	Analyzed	Collected	Clarified
Listened	Appointed	Compiled	Collected
Marketed	Approved	Corrected	Compared
Mediated	Assigned	Corresponded	Conducted
Moderated	Attained	Distributed	Critiqued
Negotiated	Authorized	Executed	Detected
Observed	Chaired	Filed	Determined
Outlined	Considered	Generated	Diagnosed
Participated	Consolidated	Incorporated	Evaluated
Persuaded	Contracted	Inspected	Examined
Presented	Controlled	Logged	
Promoted			
Proposed			





Research Skills Publicized Reconciled Recruited Referred Reinforced Reported Resolved Responded Solicited Specified Spoke Suggested Summarized Synthesized Translated Wrote Technical Skills Adapted Applied Assembled Built Calculated Computed Conserved Constructed Converted Debugged Designed Determined Developed Engineered Fabricated Fortified Installed	Maintained Operated Overhauled Printed Programmed Rectified Regulated Remodeled Repaired Replaced Restored Solved Specialized Studied Upgraded Utilized Converted Coordinated Decided Delegated Developed Directed Eliminated Emphasized Enforced Enhanced Established Executed Generated Handled Headed Hired Hosted Improved Incorporated Increased	Initiated Inspected Instituted Managed Merged Motivated Navigated Originated Overhauled Oversaw Planned Presided Prioritized Recommended Reorganized Replaced Restored Reviewed Scheduled Secured Selected Streamlined Strengthened Supervised Terminated Maintained Monitored Obtained Operated Ordered Organized Prepared Processed Provided Purchased Recorded	Registered Reserved Responded Reviewed Routed Scheduled Submitted Supplied Standardized Updated Validated Verified Experimental Explored Extracted Formulated Gathered Inspected Interviewed Invented Investigated Located Measured Organized Searched Solved Summarized Surveyed Systematized Tested
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Your Cover Letters

A cover letter should always be submitted with each job application. Customize each cover letter to highlight the skills and competencies as they relate to the basic requirements for the job.



Sample Cover Letter Format

Your Contact Information

Name
Address
City, State, Zip Code
Phone Number
E-mail Address

Date

Employer Contact Information (if you have it)

Name
Title
Company
Address
City, State, Zip Code

Salutation

Dear Mr./Ms. Last Name, (Leave out if you don't have a contact)

First Paragraph

The first paragraph of your letter should include information on why you are writing. Mention the position you are applying for, including any specific job number, if available, and where you found the job listing. Include the name of a mutual contact, if you have one.

Middle Paragraph(s)

The next section of your cover letter should describe what you have to offer the employer. Mention specifically how your qualifications match the job you are applying for. *Remember, you are interpreting your resume, not repeating it.*

Final Paragraph

Conclude your cover letter by thanking the employer for considering you for the position. Include information on how you will follow up.

Complimentary Close

Respectfully yours,

Signature

Handwritten signature (for a mailed letter)

Typed signature



Your Reference List

List your references on a separate sheet of paper, not on your resume. With your professional objective in mind, provide a concise, targeted list of people who can give an overview of your abilities and talk about your skills.

Reference checking is usually done by telephone, most often in the final stage of hiring. Use a multilayered approach to the list: people for whom you have worked, people who have worked for you, and colleagues with whom you have worked. Having you former bosses on the list is the best. Include your relationship to your reference on the list.

See Sample Reference List:

YOUR NAME HERE

123 OAK STREET, BOSTON, MASSACHUSETTS 02130
(617) 555-1212 [H] | (617) 333-7523 [C] YOURNAME@GMAIL.COM

References

Robert Stevenson

Board of Directors, Biogenymatic Corp.
Chairman of the Board, Jimmy's Biosciences
(617) 222-1234 (O)

bob.stevenson@biogenzymatic.com

I reported to Bob during his tenure as interim CEO at Jimmy's Biosciences and had extensive interactions with him during key in-licensing discussions and bi-monthly board meetings. Bob is familiar with my skills in valuations, term sheet development, negotiations, and driving deals forward both internally and externally for the company.

Matthew Grundel

CEO, Biogenymatic Corp. (former)
CEO, Tiny Pharmaceuticals (current)
(774) 444-1212 (C)

mgrundel@tinypharma.com

I reported to Matthew during his tenure at Jimmy's Biosciences as CEO, and I lead the in-licensing evaluation for a Phase I product. Matthew would be able to speak to my strategic assessment skills and my ability to work collaboratively with a broad set of experts and build consensus within a team of decision makers.

Russell Helion

CEO, Biogenymatic Corp.
(617) 999-12121 x3352 (O)

rhelion@biogenzymatic.com

I reported to Russ most recently at Jimmy's Biosciences. Russ is familiar with my ability to develop relationships with potential partners, manage corporate development resources (people and budget), and negotiate licenses and contracts. Russ was formerly Senior Vice President of Biogenymatic.



Step 5 - Your Job Search Communication Strategy and Market

Your Job Search Communication Strategy

Your job search communication strategy ensures a consistent message for the full job search cycle. Your communication strategy needs to be carefully crafted and authentic. The same message must be communicated in the resume and in interviews and supported by your references. You should never say anything to undermine it.

There are two questions to address through your communication strategy.

1. Why are you looking for a job?
2. Who are you and what do you have to offer?

Why are you looking for a job?

The answer to this question should be brief, non-defensive, and positive. When applicable, let others know that your departure was not due to any fault of yours. Try to spend as little time as possible on the past and focus on the future and how it relates to your job search.

EXAMPLE:

Due to a lack of funding in the Department of [NAME], twenty positions were eliminated, including mine. I am now exploring opportunities that will take full advantage of my engineering background and extensive grants management experience.

Please draft your answer in the space below. Be sure to check it with a few objective people before finalizing it.

Why are you looking for a job?



Who you are? What do you have to offer?

The answer to this question is often referred to as the “elevator pitch”. It is a fundamental communications tool you will use in interviews and networking meetings throughout your search. You will also use written versions of it in your cover letters and on your resume where it becomes the basis for your skill summary statement. After you have written your elevator pitch, practice it so it comes out naturally. Your pitch should not be longer than two minutes. It should follow the structure below:

- **Profession** - “I am a research administrator.”
- **Expertise** - Focus on the skills discussed earlier - “grants administration, pre- and post-award management, budget analysis and tracking, etc.”
- **Types of organizations** - Summarize the organizations in which you have worked - universities, Fortune 500 companies, government organization, healthcare, etc.
- **Unique Strengths** - Articulate the competencies that differentiate you from others in your field, emphasizing deep technical knowledge, problem solving skills, etc.

Example of an elevator pitch: I am a research administrator with 20 years of progressive experience in higher education, deep knowledge of government funding regulations, and strong analytical skills. Currently, I am a fiscal officer for a department of 20 faculty and 30 staff. My strengths are data administration, financial forecasting and analysis, as well as problem solving under tight deadlines.

Please draft your own elevator pitch in the space below:



Your Job Search Market

To conduct an effective job search, you must know who you are trying to reach. Your target market is defined by four factors:

- **Geographical location**
- **Industry or type of organization** - Identified by the Standard Industrial Classification (SIC) or North American Industry Classification System (NAICS) codes.
- **Size** - Stated in annual reports, number of employees or other measures appropriate to your profession.
- **Culture of the organization (optional)** - Determined concretely enough to allow focused research of the organizations, e.g., an organization with more than 20% women at all levels or an organization that routinely uses cross-functional teams.

Carefully defining your job search market increases your chances of more quickly finding an organization in which you will be happy. Having conversations about the organizations you are interested in, their pros and cons, can prove to be quite helpful.

Once you have developed your job search market criteria, you need to create an initial list of organizations to pursue. This list may be built by researching the Web, databases such as Dun & Bradstreet, and other business directories online. Please refer to the Job Search Resources section of this guide for specific suggestions.

Example of a personal search market:

Geographic: MA, RI, NH

Industries: Higher Education, Healthcare

Size: Any size

Organizational Culture: flexible career paths, cross-functional training, support for employee development, team spirit



Before initiating any contact with the organizations on your list, you need to be prepared to present yourself in the most effective way possible and to explore how you might best contribute to them. This information will prepare you for the interview and can be helpful in the process of securing an interview. This will also help you make an informed decision about potentially joining the organization.

There are many ways to research the organizations on your list, e.g., through their annual reports, using the Web, and most importantly through insiders willing to share their personal opinions.

TIP:

Try not to spend more than 30 minutes online researching information at one sitting. Have well-defined questions prepared before you turn on the computer. Get your answers and act on them. It is very easy to get lost in the sea of information available on the Web.

TIP:

One of the best resources of marketplace information is personal contacts. To that end, conversations with friends and acquaintances can be invaluable. The conversation may not be about a specific opening. Rather, you can ask for advice and general information about the organization. You could also ask them to fill in the gaps in the marketplace research you have already done.

TIP:

When pursuing marketplace information with friends and acquaintances, always ask for referrals to additional people with information. Any time your contact does not have the information you need, ask if they know someone else who might. This may provide you with another contact.

TIP:

Create a tracking system for your marketplace research from the very beginning. One way to do it is the following:

Contacts	Research	Openings	Your Portfolio
General	Information on targeted organizations	List of positions you have applied for	Resume
Insider	Industry information	Copies of related documents	Cover letter
Recruiter contacts	Key people and events		Reference list
			Other relevant documentation

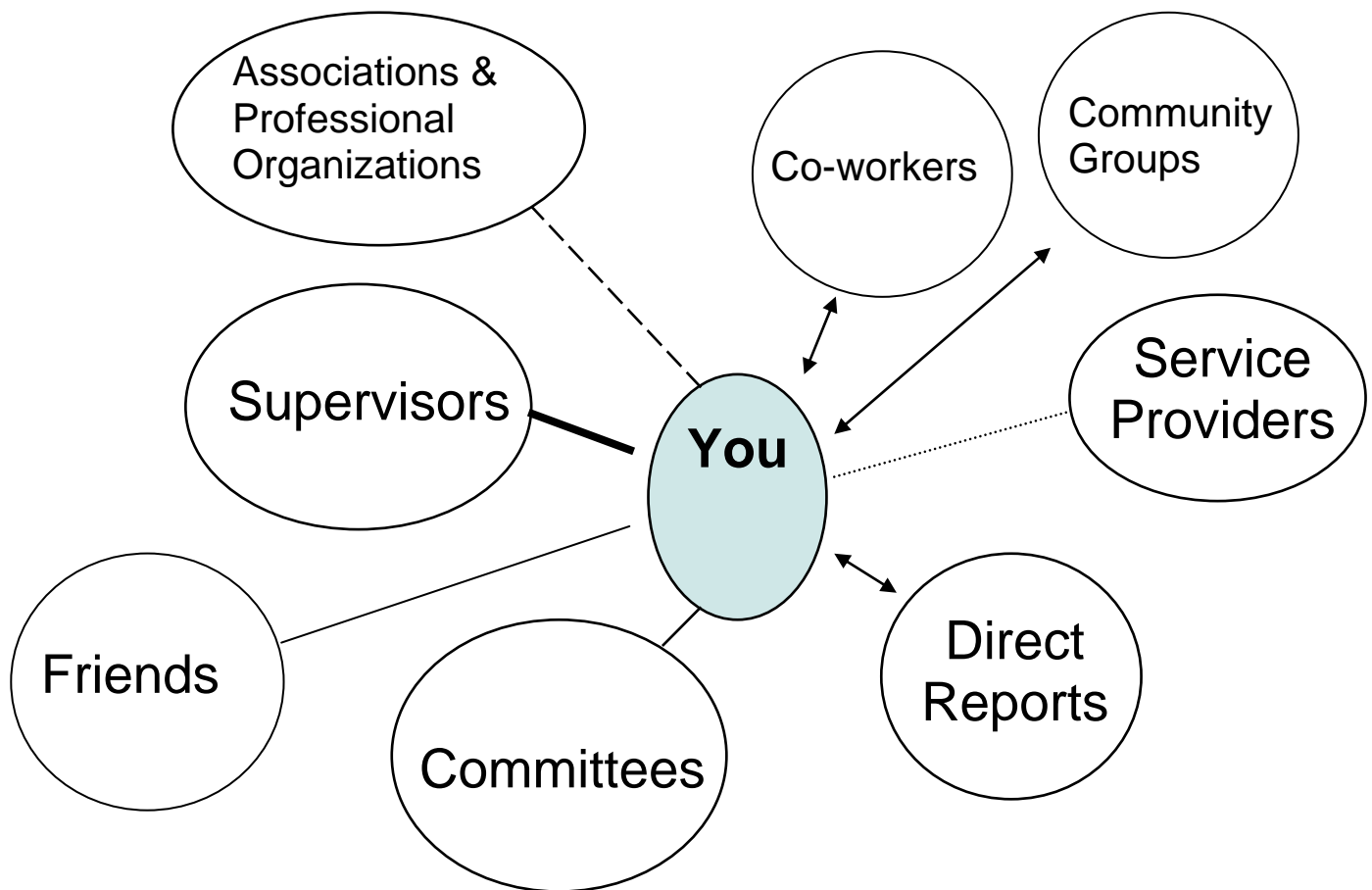


Implementing Your Job Search

Step 1 - Networking

Networking and promoting who you are and what you have to offer is at the heart of the job search process. The most effective way of getting your message out is by talking to people. When you get your message out effectively, you enable others to make useful connections for you. Roughly 65% of job seekers find their new jobs via effective networking, according to New York Times statistics & SellYourSmarts.com.

The best place to begin is by compiling a networking list from your current circle of family members, friends, and acquaintances. Anyone you are comfortable talking to is a good place to start. Each of your initial contacts has contacts of their own that you can reach out to.





EXERCISE:

Please list as many contacts in the table below as you can think of:

Friends, relatives, neighbors	Professional, alumni, religious organizations
1. 2. 3.	1. 2. 3.
Co-workers, suppliers, customers (past and present)	Personal business connections (bankers, broker, CPA, lawyer, doctor, dentist)
1. 2. 3.	1. 2. 3.
Community, political groups	Your spouse's/partner's network
1. 2. 3.	1. 2. 3.

In order for people to be able to help you, they need to know your clear message. Here is an example of a possible way to set up an initial networking meeting:

"Hello John, this is Bill. I'd like to get together with you because I have recently left my position at MIT and would like to bounce some ideas off of you. Could we get together for a short discussion?"

Conducting Networking Meetings

Follow the "STAR" approach (different from the STAR approach in interviewing):

Summarize your message - Use your job search objective and elevator pitch. If necessary, explain the reason why you left your most recent employer.

Transfer information - Share your job search and networking plan, list of your preferred organizations and contacts, and try to give your conversational partner useful information. Make the conversation a two-way street whenever possible.

Ask questions - Ask about the organizations on your list and their challenges, strengths, problems, and people.

Referral - Always ask for introductions to others who might have more information on the organizations you discussed. Ask for introductions to organizations' insiders, including hiring managers, when possible.



Sample STAR Script:

Opening - Introduce yourself and mention who referred you

"John Smith of Boston University's Office of Sponsored Programs suggested I contact you. John and I went to college together and he thought you might be someone I could speak to about sponsored research programs at Harvard University."

Summarize Your Message

"As a result of funding cuts at MIT, my position as a sponsored research financial analyst was eliminated. I have particular strengths in pre-award preparation and post-award analysis and tracking. I am now looking for a position in the sponsored research administration field either in academia or healthcare. I think I am a strong candidate because..."

Transfer Information

"I am conducting my search primarily in Boston and the vicinity. I consider higher education and healthcare institutions with more than 1,000 employees to be my most likely targets. May be you'd like to share your thoughts on the list of organizations that I feel fit my search criteria."

Ask Questions

"Which institutions from the list are you most familiar with?"
"Do you know of any that have problems/needs in the research administration arena?"
"Can you think of any other organizations that should be on my list?"
"Are you familiar with the sponsored research aspect of the healthcare industry?"
"How would I find out more about that?"
"Do you know who is in charge of that?"
"Do you know someone who might know more?"
"What are the biggest issues they are facing right now?"
"What is your opinion of...?"

Referrals

"You mentioned that you know a couple of people at Tufts and someone at Harvard. These are exactly the kinds of people I would like to talk to. I would like to find out more about who is doing what in the sponsored research field. Would you be willing to introduce me to them?"

Closing

"I really appreciate your offering to introduce me to Gary Roberts and Tammy George. Would you be willing to email them so they are expecting my call? I'll let you know how the meetings go."



TIPS:

Always follow up with your contact and inform them of the progress you've made thanks to their help.

Try to reach out to insiders from the organizations you are interested in.

Try to develop a reputation as someone to network with. If people see you as someone who is connected, they will always take your call and try to help you.

Consider networking online, e.g., professional and alumni organizations, [LinkedIn](#), [Facebook](#), etc.

Step 2 - Informational Interviewing

Although it takes only one person to make the decision to hire you, it generally takes many conversations with potential hiring managers to uncover the right opportunity. All of these conversations, regardless of how casual they are, are a form of an interview and require a certain level of initiative and skill on your part. These interviews are oftentimes called informational interviews.

Setting Up Informational Interviews

Assuming that you already have the name and contact information of a potential hiring manager, you are at a point where you may set up a meeting. Before you make the call to set up that meeting, make sure you have the items listed below handy for quick reference. You may not use all of them during the phone conversation, but you need to be prepared with all of them:

- Your **introduction/explanation** of why you are calling. If you were referred by a mutual acquaintance, mention that person's name immediately.

Example: *"My name is John Smith. Ben Roberts suggested I call you because of my background in sponsored research administration in academia."*

- Your **elevator pitch**. Use the short version of it and provide a reason for the meeting, suggesting some value to the potential hiring manager.

Example: *"Ben and I worked together at Boston University. I am in the process of career transition and would like to get your thoughts on the field of research administration in the Boston area. As part of my transition preparation, I have done considerable research on key issues and trends in the field which I'd like to share with you."*



- Your **calendar**. This will make it convenient for you to suggest a meeting time and agree on one.

Example: *"I'd like to stop by your office and get acquainted. Would morning or afternoon work better for you?"*

Other items you may need if the conversation gets longer would be your resume, questions on this organization, findings from your research of the organization.

Informational Interview Framework

Preparation for informational interviews:

- Prepare your "introduction".
 - How will you explain your reason for reaching out?
 - What is your elevator pitch?
- Do your homework.
 - Learn about the organization and the individual you are interviewing.
- Research the career or function in general including trends, current issues, etc. <http://onetcenter.org>
- Prepare the questions that you want to ask.

Conducting the informational interviews:

- Reiterate your reasons for meeting with this person.
- Relax - you don't have to be nervous - this isn't a job interview.
- Ask open-ended questions that show you have done your homework and would like to collect further information about their needs.
- Take notes and to the degree possible, mention the competencies you have that might fit the needs of the organization.
- DON'T ASK FOR A JOB.
- Use information obtained in this meeting to arrange a next contact.
- Honor the time that that interviewee has scheduled and stick to it.

Following up after the informational interview:

- Send a thank-you letter via mail or e-mail - please see sample follow up letter to a potential hiring manager below.
- Review the information you received.
- Keep good notes to use later (include dates, names, addresses, etc.) as you may refer back to this information at an actual interview.
- Periodically stay in touch if appropriate - follow up calls should be friendly, always offering something useful and provoking a response.



Sample Follow Up Letter (after an informational interview)

John Smith
5 Coolidge Street
Cambridge, MA 02139
617-222-4567; jsmith@internet.com

Date
Mr. Adam Carter
Executive Director, Office of Sponsored Programs
Clark University
Address

Dear Mr. Carter,

Thank you for meeting with me yesterday morning. I appreciated your candor about the challenges facing the higher education arena and your institution in today's times of downsizing economy.

During my ten years at Smith University, I was able to contribute significantly to the processing of both private and government funding for scientific research. As a result of my efforts, the efficiency of the pre-award preparation was increased by 20% and the processing time was reduced from thirty to fifteen days. I also implemented a post-award processing template that was adopted by the whole university. I can utilize my ability to increase efficiencies in the sponsored research field at Clark University and help you reduce grant processing costs.

If your schedule permits, I would like to talk with you again about how I might contribute to the Office of Sponsored Programs at Clark University. I will call you in early March to see if we might continue this conversation.

Thank you for the time well spent.

Sincerely,

John Smith



Step 3 - Other Job Search Techniques

Networking and talking with people is the most effective job search technique. However, there are a few others that may be worth exploring. They are:

- Working with search firms
- Using employment and temporary agencies
- Responding to advertisement and internet postings

Working with Search Firms

Search firms (headhunters) work on behalf of employers, not job seekers. They both recruit people who are employed and active job seekers. There are two types of search firms: retained or contingency. A retained search firm is hired by an organization to identify, recruit and evaluate candidates for specific positions. Retained firms are generally very selective in their process of matching candidates to positions. Because they receive a retained fee from the employer, they get paid regardless of whether their candidates are hired or not. Contingency search firms receive a fee contingent upon finding the person who is eventually hired for a job. A contingency firm may refer a number of people to a company to ensure that one of its candidates is selected for the position.

The best way to select the search firms you would like to work with is by asking for referrals to the most reputable search firms in your industry, profession and compensation level. You can also research search firms using the Directory of Executive Recruiters, <http://www.recruiterredbook.com/index.php> and other on-line and library directories. You can even explore the local Yellow Pages with some good results.

Things to consider in the process of selecting executive search firms:

- Geographic areas they serve
- Industries, fields they specialize in
- Kinds of jobs they fill
- Size of the firm
- Job levels at which they do their recruiting
- Are they contingent or retained?

Guidelines for using search firms and employment agencies:

- Present yourself as if you are on an actual job interview
- Share your salary requirements
- Do not pay a fee
- Have several resumes with you all the time
- Clarify what they can and will do to help you with your job search



Working with Employment and Temporary Agencies

Employment Agencies	Temporary Agencies
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Specialize in certain kinds of positions e.g., HR, finance, administrations, etc.• Can help with entry to mid-level positions (\$50 - \$70 pay range)• Placement fees are always paid by the employer (15% - 25% of the annual salary of the placed candidate; 30-90 days probationary period)• You may have to sign a contract. Please make sure that you don't pay a fee.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• May be a good way to show what you can do for the employer. Ensuring proper match between you and the culture of the organization and network within.• Temporary assignments may lead to long-term employment. This arrangement is becoming more and more popular.

Responding to Internet Postings

Internet postings are placed by employers, agencies, and search firms. Internet postings can also be used as a source of information to tell you which companies and industries are hiring, what titles are currently being used, what words to use in describing your qualifications, typical job requirements and descriptions, and occasionally salary information.

Guidelines for Responding to Advertisements and Internet Postings

- Read each listing carefully and answer each with a customized response.
- Assess each job requirement and relate your experience, qualifications, and accomplishments to the requirements (in both your cover letter and resume).
- When a contact name is not listed, try to find out the name of a specific person to whom you may direct your letter.
- Always send a cover letter with your resume:
 - customize it to the particular job you are applying for and highlight a few of your competencies that match the requirements for the job
 - do not mention any part of the job for which you do not qualify
 - always double check your letter for the correct name, spelling and grammar
 - always keep a copy of your cover letter for your records
 - please refer to the sample cover letter discussed earlier in the guide



Step 4 - Interviewing for Success

The interview is the most important step in getting a job. It is the ultimate result of your planning, preparation, research, and networking. The interview is your opportunity to market yourself by demonstrating what your skills, experience, and qualifications can do for the organization. It is also your opportunity to ask questions and decide if this is the right position and organization for you.

What are Interviewers looking for?

Competence - Can you do the job? It is realistic to want a job that stretches you a bit but it's not realistic to want a job you cannot handle. The latter will almost always guarantee failure. The interviewers are looking for evidence that your experience, skills, and competencies match the position and the organization. This would be the time to arm yourself with the STAR model stories that you started putting together earlier (page 11).

Compatibility/Chemistry - Will you relate effectively to the employees in the organization? Do they like you enough? Do you like them enough? Usually, you will have interviews with several representatives in the organization to determine your compatibility.

Compensation - It is likely that you will be asked for your salary requirements in the beginning of your interviewing process. This question should not come from you, but it is important to determine whether there is a compensation match before going too deep into the interviewing conversations. Remember that compensation is a combination of dollars, benefits, and job satisfaction.

Types of Interviews

- **Screening** interview (possibly phone interview) - review of job history, possible discussion of salary requirements; matching skills and experience to the requirements for the job; conducted by a recruiter, hiring manager or human resources representative
- Interview with **hiring manager** - technical and competency questions; overview of employment history, questions to ensure fit with the work group. This is the most important interview.
- Interview with **hiring manager's manager** - usually just a formality, some of the same questions manager asked
- Interview with **work group members** - questions about work style. Compatibility is very important since these will be your potential coworkers
- Interview with a **search committee** - more formal interview, each candidate is usually asked the same questions
- **Behavior-based interview** - at each of the interviewing stages above, you may be asked for evidence of your technical and performance skills. Think about specific accomplishments you have had in your prior work history and present



them in the **STAR** format at interviews. Having a library of appropriate examples ahead of time can come in handy. Try to match your stories to the technical and soft skill requirements for the job you are interviewing for.

Guidelines for Interviewing

Preparing for the Interview	Conducting the Interview
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Research the organization through all possible sources (i.e., web, professional magazines, libraries, etc.) • Familiarize yourself with the job description • Know who the interview is with • Have a list of questions to ask • Be ready to discuss your strengths and weaknesses • Do something memorable - have a portfolio with accomplishments that distinguish you from your competition • Know your own resume • Practice • Be prepared to stay late - that's a GOOD SIGN! 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Be punctual • Dress accordingly (business casual is safe in most cases) • Have extra resumes with you • Be clean and tidy • Communicate clearly and with specifics • Be a good listener • Exhibit good eye contact and smile • Be alert to the environment and show it accordingly • Ask good questions and compliment the organization you want to join • Use a firm handshake • Be sincere and genuine. • Give direct answers to direct questions • Speak with passion • Takes notes and go back to them with your STAR stories, if appropriate • Take contact information of interviewers • Follow up with a "thank-you" email or letter within 24 hours of the interview

Things to Avoid at an Interview

- Don't be late (call if you are).
- Don't make jokes (you have to be professional).
- Don't mumble, avoid jargon.
- Don't get distracted.
- Don't look or sound impatient.
- Don't say more than necessary, stick to the point.
- Don't try to answer a question when you are not sure of the answer; it's OK to ask for clarification.
- Don't answer a question with another question.
- Don't talk about money (unless you are asked).
- **Don't criticize current or previous employers.**
- Don't interrupt the interviewers (they may interrupt you).



Asking the Right Questions

What do you want to know:	Sample Question:
Team environment	What opportunities would I have to work with others?
Flexibility	What are the typical work hours for this job?
Opportunities for development	After a few years in the position, what would be a reasonable next step?
Benefits	Can you tell me about some of the benefits your organization offers?
Manager or supervisor	Can you tell me about your management/supervisory style?
Challenges	What are some of the significant challenges in the job?
Performance Management	What performance measures does the organization use to help individuals track their performance goals and objectives?
Reason for the opening	Why is this position vacant?
Culture of the organization?	How would you describe the culture of the organization?
Show that you have done enough research about the organization	"I see on your web site that you are coming out with a new initiative. How will this impact the person in this role?"

Try to avoid asking about the salary. Chances are that the topic will come up, but it is important that it is not brought up by you.

Types of Interview Questions

- **Experience questions** - Describe your responsibilities in your previous job?
- **Behavioral/Competency Based Questions** - Tell me about a time when you had to deal with a difficult client?
- **Opinion Questions** - What would you do if....
- **Credential Questions** - What is your degree? What was your major?



Sample Questions That May Be Asked Of You

- Why are you looking to leave your current employment?
- What is your ideal job/supervisor/environment?
- What are your strengths/weaknesses?
- What is your long term career goal? (five years from now)
- Why are you interested in this job?
- What accomplishment are you most proud of?
- What decisions have you been responsible for?
- How do you handle conflict (people, situations)? Tell us about a time when you had to handle a difficult supervisor/customer?
- Do you prefer working in teams or by yourself? Please give examples of each.
- What management style works best for you?
- What is your management style?
- How do you work under pressure? Please give us an example of a stressful work situation and your involvement with it.
- How would you solve a work problem? Please describe a time when you identified and resolved a specific problem?
- Are you comfortable speaking in public? In what format are you most comfortable?
- Tell me about a time when you took the initiative at work? What was the project and the outcome of your efforts?

Discussing Your Areas for Improvement

The personal characteristics exercise you did earlier may come in handy at this point. Questions about your strengths and areas in need of improvement are traditional and you have to be prepared for them. It may be a good idea to prepare a list of a minimum of three strengths and weaknesses so you don't get stuck on this question at an interview.

There are two classic ways to respond to questions about your weaknesses:

1. Providing a weakness that is not really a weakness from the interviewer's point of view.
Example: "Some people say that I am too preoccupied with accuracy and deadlines. And I must admit I am very fussy about them."
2. Redirecting the focus of the question and showing that you are aware of the weakness and are working towards making it a strength.
Example: "I must admit that I had difficulties with public speaking before and focused my energy on fixing this. I took on a project that I presented at a staff meeting and then continued volunteering for public speaking arrangements. I can say that I am comfortable with public speaking at this point."



Sensitive Issues

Certain topics are not to be discussed at interviews. They include the following:

- Birthplace
- Age
- Race
- Religion
- Nationality
- Ages of children, childcare plans, plans for having children
- Height and weight
- History of drug or alcohol addiction
- Arrest record
- Marital status
- Sentiments about unions
- Disability or physical limitations
- Hobbies, outside interests

A good strategy for addressing inappropriate questions is to respond with a question.

Examples: *"Is there a concern about this that relates to the position?"*

"Can you help me understand how this relates to the job responsibilities?"

"I'm not sure how this question pertains to the job we are discussing. Can you elaborate?"



Handling the Salary question

Since the salary question is very likely to come at some point in the interviewing process, you have to be prepared to answer it. There are three ways to address this question:

1. Acknowledge the question, but do not answer.

Examples: *"I cannot really say without completely understanding what I would be responsible for. Can we talk more about that?"*

"I think we may be in the same range, but I need to know more about the job. Could you tell me a little more about...?"

"My requirements are flexible. "

2. Respond with a question.

Example: *"What is the range you usually pay? Is this the midrange or top-range?"*

3. If need be, give a range yourself. Be sure you will be happy with the low-end of what you convey.

Example: *"Based on what you have told me about this position, I think a range of -----to -----would be appropriate."*

Following up after the interview

A follow-up letter or email should be sent within 24 hours after the interview. The follow-up message should:

- Reference information you gathered in the interview to build a personal bridge back to the interviewer. Always build a customized letter to each of your interviewers.
- Thank interviewers for their time.
- Include any points that you may have forgotten to add that you consider relevant.
- If you promised to send additional information, include it with your letter.
- Tell them you will call them to follow up and mention when.



Closing Your Job Search

Congratulations! You got an offer for a new job! There are a few things you need to know before you can relax and say “I did it”.

Step 1 - Negotiating the Offer

Negotiating an offer can begin only after you have received one. There are a number of things that can be negotiated depending on the level of the position and the size of the organization. They are: salary, job description/title, start date, vacations, decision-making authority, budget/resources/support, relocation expenses, health and pension benefits, professional memberships, stock options and bonuses.

Guidelines for Negotiating an Offer

- Do not accept an offer on the spot, no matter how good it seems. Always ask for time to think about it.
- Do not reveal your salary requirements too early in the process.
- Do not exaggerate your present income. It can be verified.
- Negotiate cash compensation first and then consider the total compensation benefits.
- If you cannot get the salary offer increased, you might try for a sign-on bonus, performance incentives, or added benefits.
- If you are not successful in your negotiations regarding the current offer, concentrate on the future, e.g., review in six months, increase after twelve months, etc.
- Be enthusiastic about everything when negotiating.
- Do not ignore considerations beyond salary, e.g., scope of responsibility, degree of autonomy, non-cash compensation, etc. Familiarize yourself with the benefits of the organization because non-cash compensation items can provide significant financial advantages to you.
- Agree on a decision date and be sure to give your answer by that date.
- Try to get the offer in writing and make sure all contingencies are met, e.g., reference checks, security checks, education verification, etc.

Step 2 - Following up with your network contacts and other job search resources

You have to make sure that you close your search graciously. Any pending negotiations with other organizations should be stopped. All recruiters and other network contacts who have helped you in the search should be notified of your job status change with a thank-you note or call. You may want to stay in touch with the ones you consider most valuable. Remember how much effort you put into building your network list.



Sample follow up email to network contacts:

To: jsmith@internet.com
From: Debbie Rose
Subject: Exciting News!

Dear John,

I would like to share exciting news with you! I've just accepted the position of Director of Sponsored Research Administration at Harvard University. The position offers an opportunity to put my management and financial skills to work in an organization that values creativity and innovation.

I am extremely grateful for the role you played in making my job search a success. The information, referrals and support you gave me are very much appreciated. It was your suggestion to network with my colleagues at the National Council of University Research Administrators that eventually led me to this opportunity.

I hope we stay in touch and I have an opportunity to be as helpful to you as you were to me, or even more.

Sincerely,
Debbie

Step 3 - Acclimating into a New Position

A successful career transition is complete once you are established in your new role. Most employers have probationary period policies you need to be aware of. There are a few things you can do to get acclimated to your new job as quickly as possible:

- Participate in your announcement, if you can. This will ensure the best possible presentation.
- Clarify your responsibilities and your manager's expectations. Identify the challenges you are facing and address them as soon as possible.
- Develop a learning strategy. A systemized approach for learning about the organization, the people, the work, and the norms can help you build solid relationships with your new manager, colleagues, and staff members. Some people build lists of critical contacts they need to talk with to acquire information relevant to their job. Others rely more on formal training. Regardless of your strategy, you must plan well and follow through.

GOOD LUCK!