



# Proactive Job Searching

"The employer hires the person who is best at getting the job." Richard Bolles

## Attitudes for the Job Search

Finding a job is a job in itself, but it is worth the effort. It can be an investment for life. The job search process can seem overwhelming, so break it down and make it an adventure. Establish a support system to get you through the challenging times. Work can be what you enjoy doing, so go after what you want!

## SECRETS OF A SUCCESSFUL JOB SEARCH

- 1. Develop a game plan:** There is no 'one way' to locate and land the perfect internship or job. To increase your chances, use a variety of strategies and resources. Set goals for number of contacts or amount of time to spend on your job search each day and each week.
- 2. Evaluate** your interests, values, skills, and personality, in addition to your work environment requirements. Decide exactly what you have to offer and where you want to use your skills. Be able to communicate them to a potential employer. Make a plan to enhance your skills.
- 3. Prepare** your job search marketing tools:
  - **Resume:** Have a well-written, professional resume full of key words ready to send.
  - **Cover letter:** Any time you submit a resume, include a cover letter targeted to the specific employer, briefly highlighting your relevant qualifications and written communication skills.
  - **Interviewing skills:** Research your target employers and practice answering common interview questions. Schedule a mock interview with a Career Counselor.
  - **One minute commercial:** Create a profile to introduce and market yourself taking from 30 seconds to one minute. Include who you are, what you want to do, an illustration of your skills, and how others will benefit from what you do. Practice!
- 4. Target** industries and organizations that interest you. Identify from 5-25 companies you want to research and approach, depending on your field and geographic restrictions. Focus your job search and go after your goal.

## NATURE OF THE JOB MARKET

The **Formal Market** includes all positions that a company or organization has taken some active measure to publicize; 20% of jobs are in the formal market, and 80% of job seekers search in this area. As soon as a position is communicated the selection process begins (competition!)

The **Informal Market** includes all positions- in varying stages of conceptualization- which have not yet been communicated; 80% of jobs exist in the informal market, while only 20% of job seekers look here. If you can assess this hidden job market you will reduce - if not eliminate - the competition. Spend the majority of your time on the informal market.

## **JOB SEARCH STRATEGIES**

### **The Formal Market - Follow the employer's lead.**

- Look for vacancy sources.
- Access both paper and electronic sources.
- Apply to job announcements with a quality resume and cover letter.
- Proactively follow up with a call in a few days to confirm that your resume was received.
- Personalize your job search by showing persistence, enthusiasm, and assertiveness.

### **Sources of job listings**

#### Job ads:

DU Careers Online (www.du.edu/career)  
Newspapers/magazines  
Online job search engines  
Organization web sites  
Professional associations

#### Agencies:

State and local job service agencies  
Employment/Placement agencies  
Temporary agencies  
Recruiters/headhunters

### **The Informal Market - Take the initiative and penetrate the hidden job market by conducting a creative job search.**

- Find a need you can fill or a set of problems or goals you would love to solve. Consider...What do you want to do? Where? With whom? What do you want to offer?
- Make a target list of employers using internet sites (i.e.: Monster.com and www.du.edu/career, see Career Links under Researching Organizations and Industries), Book of Lists, Reference USA, Hoovers, newspapers such as the local business journal, and other resources through the Penrose and Career Center libraries.
- Research each organization inside and out. Read their web sites and articles in the press. Speak with employees and customers as well as recruiters if possible.
- Send a professional resume and cover letter to target organizations stating what you could offer them; direct it to the person for whom you wish to work, even if there is not a job announcement.

*Successful job searches incorporate both strategies.*

## **NETWORKING**

Develop contacts and become known. Think of networking as relationship building; you are contributing your knowledge and attributes as well as gaining benefits. It is the primary way people make contacts and find jobs. The biggest mistake job seekers make in today's market is to think the Internet replaces a network, and that responding to Internet ads replaces a disciplined, targeted job search. Fewer than 4 percent of all job hunters actually found work through Internet sites, whereas 61 percent of job hunters found their job through networking.

- Come up with a list of at least 50 people you know.
- Inform them of your job search and how they might help.
- Use your network to find unannounced openings or to create your own job.

### **Where to find contacts:**

Begin with people you come in contact with every day, i.e. friends, family, co-workers, service-providers (dentist, hairdresser, mail carrier). Research company and organization directories for contact names. Join or visit a professional association or chamber of commerce. Initiate an informational interview (see handout on Informational Interviewing). Make sure people understand you are gathering information about an occupation at that point and not asking for a job. Ask for referrals and follow the trail they lead you on.

College affiliations - Utilize student groups and projects. Talk to professors. Make sure you are on mailing lists to receive publications and notices about upcoming events.

Service clubs - Philanthropic organizations are often excellent places to meet leaders in the community and provide a good opportunity to develop leadership abilities.

Volunteer organizations - Choose a cause you are passionate about and you will meet people with similar passions who can enhance your network.

Cultural institutions - Fine arts and other enriching enterprises can bring organizations together around a common interest. Religious organizations may provide another opportunity to network and build leadership experience.

Professional associations - Attend local meetings, conferences, and other professional opportunities to become integrated into your field.

Internships, volunteering, or temporary work - Trying out a position can help to get your foot in the door in addition to giving you an opportunity to gain experience.

## **ORGANIZE YOUR JOB SEARCH**

### **Manage the job search paperwork:**

- Keep a calendar of job search activities and a file of your contacts and information on your last interaction with them.
- Track your applications and attempts at following up.
- Keep copies of your letters.
- Put notes about your interviews on the back of business cards.

## **REFERENCES**

**Take care of your references. People matter more than paper when you are looking for a good job. Devote twice as much time to your references as to your resume.**

- Call your reference before you need them. Ask permission to use them as a reference. Stay in touch with them. Give them notice if they will be contacted.
- Give your references permission (in writing) to discuss whatever the perspective employer wants. Many employers are restricted from revealing anything but confirmation of employment.
- Refresh the reference's memory. Remind them of the projects you did and skills you might want them to highlight.
- If you think you have a problem reference, test it. Have a trusted friend call and check the reference.

## **DEVELOP A PLAN B**

### **If you don't get your dream job right away:**

- Take a position that will allow you to develop "transferable skills".
- Work in a similar industry, if not the exact position.
- Consider volunteering, a temporary or part-time position, or an internship.
- Be persistent!

## **TIPS**

- Send every contact a "thank-you" note and another note when you land your job to inform them and thank them again.
- Don't let the fear of rejection hold you back and don't take rejection personally.
- Manage your time and your stress.
- Prioritize your time and efforts.
- Use your support system to keep you motivated and positive.