

Chapter 7. Job Search Basics



You have evaluated yourself and your strengths and weaknesses. You know what type of job you want. Your résumé and portfolio are written, double-checked, and ready for distribution. You have carefully prepared answers to possible interview questions. You are dressed and groomed appropriately. You are ready to dazzle an interviewer with your charm and a positive, can-do attitude. Now all you need is an interview! This chapter shows you many methods of finding job leads.

Chapter 7

A. Places to Begin Your Job Search

Searching for jobs involves much more than looking in the classified section of the newspaper. Other good sources of job leads include the following:

- your network of friends and acquaintances
- employment agencies
- the Internet (see Appendix J)
- trade and professional journals (see Appendix C)
- career fairs (see your local college or high school career counseling department or look on the Internet)



- the U.S. Department of Labor One-Stop Career Center System
- professional and trade associations (see Appendix B)

B. One-Stop Career Centers

A common frustration among job seekers and employers today is the difficulty of finding quality information on available employment and training programs and services. The U.S. Department of Labor, in partnership with state and local governments and private sector partners, is developing a high-quality service delivery system to meet the needs of job seekers and employers. This system, called the One-Stop Career Center System, is transforming what is often a fragmented array of employment and training programs into a convenient, one-stop source.

The program began in 1994 with the distribution of one-stop career center grants to 25 states. Today more than 1,500 one-stop service centers across the country deliver job and training services to workers and busi-





nesses. The cornerstone of the Workforce Investment Act, these centers, which have opened at a variety of sites from community colleges to private businesses, will eventually serve 200,000 people nationwide.

Each state's one-stop system is designed in conjunction with local communities to best meet their needs. The following four principles are key to all these systems:

1. **Universality:** All population groups should have access to a wide array of job seeking and employment development services, including initial assessment of skills and abilities, self-help information relating to career exploration and skill requirements of various occupations, consumer report information on the performance of local education and training providers, and labor market information.
2. **Customer choice:** Giving customers choices is critical to the One-Stop Career Center System. Employers and job seekers have choices in where and how they can obtain information and services they need.
3. **Integration:** The one-stop career center offers a seamless approach to service delivery, providing access to employment, training, and education

programs from a single access point. The program demands the integration of state and local governance structures.

4. **Performance-driven, outcome-based measures:** To ensure customer satisfaction, one-stop career centers must have clear outcome measures and consequences for failing to meet these measures.

How to Access Your Local One-Stop Career Center

To access local one-stop career centers, you should first visit the Department of Labor at **www.ttre.doleta.gov/onestop**. On this page is a point and click map that allows you to get information about all One-Stop Career Centers across the country. If you do not have access to the Internet, try using an Internet-connected computer at your local library. You can also contact your local department of labor for information about these centers. Be aware that individual states and regions may give their one-stop career centers different names, but all are affiliated with the national system.

There are a number of Web sites affiliated with this career center project.



America's Career InfoNet

www.acinet.org/acinet/

Use this site before making important career decisions. It provides information about national and local job markets. Through Career InfoNet, a person can learn about employment trends (what occupations are growing, what occupations are shrinking); how much different jobs pay; what kind of training is needed for different jobs; and what other parts of the country are like for living and working. Still to come is a directory of local service outlets one can visit in person to talk to a workforce development professional about career goals.

America's Job Bank

www.usworkforce.org/

This is the largest and most frequently visited job bank in cyberspace. Thousands of job seekers view hundreds of thousands of job vacancies (there are 6.7 million job searches per month). All types of jobs, from sales clerk positions to high-tech (one of the top three occupational groups) jobs, are listed by major corporations and small businesses nationwide. New jobs are added each day. The service is simple to use; people just need access to the Internet. Sign onto America's Job Bank, click on "Job Seeker," choose one of the options under "Search for Jobs," and search away!

America's Talent Bank

<http://atb.mesc.state.mi.us/atb/>

America's Talent Bank is a nationwide electronic résumé system. Job seekers add their résumés to this national network, which employers use to find workers who meet their needs. Supported by the Department of Labor, America's Talent Bank is a product of state employment service agencies and is provided as an additional service to the public.

What Services Are Available?

Although each state and local one-stop career center's offerings vary, many offer the following services for job seekers:

- in-depth career counseling, testing, and assessment services
- assistance with a career development plan
- job search assistance
- customized services to selected groups, including veterans, persons with disabilities, older people, and single parents
- case management services
- assistance in filing unemployment insurance
- connection to school-to-work transitional programs and programs for dislocated workers

- information on job trends and labor market data
- help in finding federal or state dollars to cover some or all of the costs of training
- information about employment and training providers
- information on program eligibility and financial aid opportunities
- referral to apprenticeship programs
- short-term child care while using the center
- veteran's services

C. The Art of Networking

The old saying “It’s not what you know, it’s who you know” is a cardinal principle of effective job searching. In fact, 85 percent of jobs are never advertised. This does not mean that nobody knows about the jobs; it means only that *you* do not know about them—until someone you know shares “inside” information with you.

Your network encompasses anyone and everyone you know, meet, or actively seek out, and it is your most effective tool in finding a job. While some people will give you more job leads than other people, everyone is a possible source of job market information.

Effective networking takes organization, planning, and lots of patience. To succeed, you must do your homework first. Research companies, institutions, and other possible sources of employment. This may involve calling a company for information, looking it up on Web, going to the library and finding out information, or speaking with a current or former employee. Next, list all your current contacts, including trusted co-workers, fellow students, friends, and family members. Take the time to give them a call or send a letter to tell them you are looking for work in a particular field. Your initial contacts will then refer you to others, and your circle of contacts will begin to expand.

As a recent graduate, for example, you might begin with your professors, who can often refer you to people for informational interviews in your area of interest (see Chapter 2). While these people may not know of job openings themselves, they can provide invaluable insights into your field of interest and will often provide names of others whom you can contact who in turn may provide still more information and contacts. The informational interview is a time-honored tool for developing a strong network of people who can provide job leads as you progress in your career.

Professional organizations, unions, and other job-related groups also offer excellent networking oppor-

tunities. These organizations often have job banks for members and offer seminars and other training opportunities for those just breaking into the field. Your local yellow pages and national directories like the *Encyclopedia of Associations*, available at your local library, provide listings of national professional, arts, and other organizations.

Once you have met your current career objective, be sure to contact those members of your network who have helped you along the way. Bring them up to date on your search and thank them for their help. It is always a good idea to keep in touch with members of your network as you progress in your career.

D. Employment and Temporary Agencies

Employment agencies are typically geared to finding positions for clients in the field of business. Agencies that deal exclusively in the creative arts are rare to nonexistent in most parts of the country, although agencies that specialize in business arts such as graphic design and advertising are beginning to emerge in larger cities. While employment agencies may sometimes list arts-related openings in museums, galleries, or businesses, they are not your best resource for finding jobs in the arts.

In some states, agencies cannot legally charge applicants for job placement, so be sure you know your state's laws before signing with an agency. Where fees are permitted, read the application and contract carefully to be sure you understand exactly what payments you will be obligated to make.

Temporary agencies can legally charge you a fee for employment obtained as a result of a temporary assignment, even if it is not related to the work you performed. If you are working as a word-processing temp in a major law firm and learn that the firm's art curator is leaving, and you apply for the position and are hired, you and/or the law firm may be obligated to pay the temporary agency a percentage of your annual salary or a flat fee, depending on the length of time you have worked for the agency.

Working for temporary agencies does have many benefits. Temporary agencies can provide steady work and steady income at fairly good hourly rates (\$10 or \$15 per hour) if you have good basic office and computer skills. This resource can be very important when you are an episodic earner, as are many people who make their careers in the arts. In addition, having the flexibility to leave your job when a good opportunity arises is essential. Many temporary agencies also offer health benefits

if you work enough hours monthly. So consider temporary agencies and temporary employment when you are thinking about the best ways to pursue your career path and still pay the bills.

E. Want Ads

Despite what you might have heard, people do find jobs in the classified advertisements. But as you have probably noticed, most ads are for positions in business. Many listings for creative positions—positions as designers, artists, actors, and so on—generally do not make it to the Sunday classified section. Word about those openings is more likely to circulate through networks of people employed in the same industry.

But at the very least, a weekly perusal of the Sunday want ads will give you an idea of the types of jobs available in or related to your field, as well as the job categories most likely to provide good leads and the companies who are actively hiring.

Reading the want ads can also be a form of market research. Many provide basic job descriptions, all list experience requirements, and a few even mention salaries.

Even ads for positions outside your area of expertise can provide valuable clues that a company is growing,

developing new lines of business, or otherwise expanding into areas that might in the future require the special talents of a person like you.

Employment agency classified ads can be useful as well. They will give you an idea of agencies that may specialize in placements in your field.

An ad is often a wish list, a depiction of the ideal candidate. So if you have equivalent or better experience but not the qualifications mentioned in the ad, by all means respond, but be prepared to make a strong case for yourself in your cover letter. Stress the experience and skills you have that match the ad's wish list. Do not mention the skills or experience you lack if you feel you are otherwise qualified for the job.

On the other hand, some employer specifications probably are not negotiable. If the ad calls for a doctorate in fine arts and 20 years' experience and you are a new grad with a minor in art history, do not bother sending a résumé.

Take time to compose your cover letter, making sure you cover each of the points mentioned in the ad—preferably using the same words. Your cover letter is often your only entrée, especially if the response goes to a box number, so rewrite it as often as necessary to fine-tune your sales pitch.

Do not worry about being the first applicant. Job ads are often run for several days or weeks, so the later you submit your letter, the more likely your résumé will end up on the top of the stack.

F. Creating a One-of-a-Kind Position: The Employer Proposal

It's possible to create a job, with no competition, that only you can fill. For instance, a copywriter who wants to leave the world of advertising agencies might decide that his or her skills would help law and accounting firms produce better marketing materials and business proposals.

There are several steps involved in creating a one-of-a-kind position. First, you gather industry-specific information to assess your prospective employers' needs, business environment, and competition. In *Beyond Traditional Job Development*, Denise Bissonnette recommends asking these questions as you proceed:

- What skills do I have that will motivate this employer to develop a working relationship with me?
- What resources and opportunities does this business offer that will motivate me to develop a business relationship with it?

Then you develop a formal, written proposal to market yourself to your targeted industry. Your proposal should be a detailed business plan answering questions the employer is likely to ask, including the following:

- How much time and effort will this involve? What amount of resources will be needed? What are the initial costs? What are the hidden costs?
- How will this person save or make money for us?
- What are the opportunities associated with this proposal?
- What are the risks associated with this proposal?
- Does this proposal fit in with or expand our mission?
- How credible is this person? What qualifies this person to perform the proposed services for us?
- How successful has this approach been for other firms or companies?
- What might I gain or lose from giving this person a chance?

Your proposal should also present a first-year budget, including equipment and resources required, salary and benefits for yourself (and staff, if required), expected expenses, and other costs. If possible, demonstrate with a cost-benefit



analysis that the projected income will offset these expenses.

As Bissonnette says, your value “is determined by the employer’s perception of what you have to offer, not by what you do well. [You] need to identify the wants and needs of potential employers, then...see how you can meet those needs. Marketing experts call this ‘nichemanship’—carving a niche where your talents and strengths meet the needs and wants of the business.”



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