



# Job Search Strategy Guide

10 Steps to a More Effective Job Search

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Your job search isn't getting the results you expected. You've pursued opportunities you were sure matched your abilities—without result. Now you find yourself targeting positions for which you know you're overqualified, but what else can you do?

*A mistake at this point in your career could prove very costly.*

Previous searches didn't seem to be this difficult. Then it occurs to you—as your income, talent and value to the marketplace have grown, managing your career has become more sophisticated.

The *Job Search Strategy Guide* was designed with you in mind. While it can't take the place of a career coach, if you are prepared to be intentional and purposeful about executing a more effective search, the following ten steps can help lay the foundation for getting better results.

## 1

## Begin with a Rigorous Self-Assessment

Essential to job search success is honest self-assessment, a process that will enhance your ability to articulate your strengths. Start by listing all of the jobs you've had since you began your professional career. Then identify the component skills used in each job – don't dismiss seemingly insignificant skills! Just because something seems to come easily to you doesn't mean that it is not of great value to a

Just because something seems to come easily to you doesn't mean that it is not of great value to a potential employer.

potential employer. Next, thoughtfully identify one or two significant achievements you had in each job, focusing on the *results* you delivered.

The next step in the process is to determine where you want to go! Lack of clarity and focus on “what’s next” are huge stumbling blocks for many potential job seekers.

Start by identifying your core values, cultural requirements, areas of expertise, and areas of passion in a work setting. A career coach can help you see the common characteristics in your past successes and assist you in identifying the kinds of problems you like to solve.

Then, determine what companies might have those types of problems. Study business publications for ideas on emerging trends and growth opportunities. Spend some serious time thinking about the kinds of organizations you might like to be part of. Defining your direction is crucial to your success in the process.

# 2

## Create Your Personal Commercial

Once you identify the skills and expertise you have to offer, you must then be able to articulate them. You have less than a minute to make a first impression. This includes not only how you look, but also the words you use to describe yourself. This statement should not be more than 60 to 90 seconds. It answers the question: "Tell me a little bit about yourself." In addition to providing your key areas of expertise, you must communicate what value you bring to that company. Once you develop a brief commercial template, it can be tailored to the needs of specific companies as needed. This can be used in: (1) a social networking function, (2) a meeting with an executive/key company employee, or (3) during an interview.

In developing your personal commercial, consider:

- Who are you?
- Why would the company "buy" you (your value)?
- What skills can you provide?
- What are your relevant key accomplishments?

## 3

## Design Your Personal Marketing Materials

Using an approach that utilizes a marketing concept works well when developing information that is sent to prospective employers, or in sharing information about yourself. In developing your materials, present those key skills and accomplishments that best represent the value you bring to a company. Use strong words such as “directed”, “implemented”, “created”, and “developed” when identifying these strengths. Statements should be made in the third person, such as: “Directed the development of a corporate strategic plan during a crucial acquisition ...” When developing a resume, use relevant buzz words to describe yourself, particularly when responding to an ad. Identify key words used in the posting and incorporate those words as related to your experience. Resumes should include your key strengths, quantifiable accomplishments, and a chronological history including key job responsibilities. Include education and certifications as they apply to the job and company.

## 4

## Build Your Online Brand

One of the most important weapons in your career management arsenal is your online presence. If you are a serious candidate for a position it is very likely that at some point an Internet search will

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be done to discover what can be learned about you. To see what others will find, “google” yourself. Enter your name in quotations for a more efficient search, and there you will see what recruiters, hiring professionals, and potential customers will find when conducting a search about you. If you are like most people, there will either be bits and pieces of information, or nothing at all. Here is your opportunity to tell your story and communicate your brand.

[LinkedIn.com](https://www.linkedin.com) is a great place to start your online branding and networking. The professional summary is an important branding element. Your career coach can help you develop your message and fine-tune your summary prior to posting. Your LinkedIn profile will optimize your visibility on search engines and will likely be the highest-ranked item on the search results page. An additional benefit is the ability to build your network on the LinkedIn site. You will watch your exposure grow exponentially through your added contacts, bringing you closer to hiring managers in companies of potential interest. Also, members of your network have the ability to write endorsements, so the searcher sees not only your professional profile, but also recommendations that others have made about you.

If you have a more common name like John Smith, it will be challenging to differentiate yourself from all the other John Smiths out there. Experiment with using various forms of your name to see where you have the least competition. Try using your full first name, your middle initial, or full middle name. The point is that when a hiring

manager, HR professional, or recruiter searches for you online, you want to be found. You will be lost among millions of results in a search for “John Smith” (unless you happen to be the founder of Jamestown), whereas a search for “Jonathan Reginald Smith” currently yields only one result. Once you have decided what form of your name you are going to use, be sure to use the same format on your resume for consistency.

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[Zoominfo.com](https://zoominfo.com), a data aggregator, is another effective tool for gaining additional exposure. At Zoominfo you may find a profile created for you from miscellaneous information already found online, i.e. association websites, articles you have written or that mention you. You will want to claim any existing profile and add your professional summary and other historical data. If you do not find an existing profile you can build one from scratch.

[VisualCV.com](https://www.visualcv.com) is an exciting tool that offers the opportunity to create your own website using resume content, charts, graphs, video and other information. It is a powerful application but requires creativity and planning to take full advantage of the resources offered. You can start by importing information from your LinkedIn profile and build from there.

A strong online presence gives you a significant competitive advantage. These steps will help you communicate your value to people who are inquiring about you.

## 5

## Develop a “Who Loves Me?” Reference List

Develop a list of four to six people who can testify to your specific professional skills and related achievements. Choose from: past/present supervisors, subordinates, peers, customers (internal or external), or vendors.

Plan to prepare each reference as if the person were part of your “marketing team.” Verify that the daytime contact information (phone and e-mail) you have for them is correct. Share your self-introduction

*Plan to prepare each reference as if the person were part of your “marketing team.”*

commercial and ask the reference to confirm specific skills they saw you use during the time you worked together. Coach them through developing “success stories” that support your identified skills so that they can relate these specific stories to potential employers when contacted.

Send each reference a copy of your current resume. Once references are presented to a potential employer for verification, plan to contact each reference with details about the position you are being considered for so that they can be prepared for a call from the employer.

## 6

## Prepare a Contact/Referral List

Your network of contacts is one of the most valuable assets you have created over the span of your career. Using these contacts as a basis for referral is the most powerful way to connect to new professional opportunities.

Your network consists of four different categories of contacts:

- *Potential Employers*: These executives could hire you immediately or have the power to create a position especially for you inside their company; they are influential leaders, and are connected to other organizational leaders within the community.

Networking is not a transaction; it's a process of building and maintaining relationships.

- *Key Influencers*: These leaders are highly influential, have the ability to open doors for you in target companies, but are not in a position to employ you themselves.
- *Caring Influencers*: These individuals know you and care about your ongoing personal/professional development. Don't rule them out simply because you are not sure how they are connected, or what influence they might be able to extend on your behalf.
- *Viable Targets*: Through company/industry research, it is possible for you to identify key decision-makers within target organizations, and for you to approach them directly – even without a referral.

Networking is not a transaction; it's a process of building and maintaining these relationships! Finding the ideal job will be the by-product, rather than the primary focus, of actively participating in your network.

## 7

## Conduct Company and Industry Research

Most job seekers will write a generic cover letter, add a fresh copy of their resume, and then send these materials off to a prospective employer with the hope of being selected from dozens, hundreds, even thousands of applicants. Your chances of success using this method are less than 2%.

Managing your career is an active process, not a passive one. You can greatly improve your odds of being taken seriously by performing

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both company and industry research. Include this information in your correspondence, and it's sure to stand out! There are a number of resources that can help you to do effective research, including

company websites, on-line business databases, local libraries, local/national newspapers, and many more. Your career coach can also assist you with local market expertise.

To create an effective job search strategy, you will need to address the 6-Ws:

- What industries need your specific skills, talents and experience, and can provide you with career growth?
- Why would they be interested in you? Why are you interested in them?
- Where are they located? Where do you want to be located?
- Based on the above, Which specific companies are the best targets for you?
- Who is the appropriate decision-maker for you to approach?
- When would be a good time to target that decision-maker?

## 8

## Strategize for Interview Success

“Playing to win,” means being prepared for all aspects of the competition. A large part of the job search process involves being successful in the interview, and preparedness for interviews leads directly to differentiation in the selection process.

When you receive a call to set up an interview, ask:

- Who will be the interviewer? Get name(s) and title(s).
- What will the interview format be? Individual or a panel?
- What is the planned duration of the interview?
- Why is the position open, and how long has it been open?
- If it is a newly created position, what were the catalysts for creation?

Before any interview, obtain as much current information as possible about the organization. As you study the information, prepare questions to ask during the interview to show your interest in this specific company.

Also, study potential interview questions and practice giving appropriate responses using success stories that highlight your skills and delivered results. Role-playing with a career coach can give you greater confidence and a powerful competitive advantage. In the interview, be prepared to SMILE and introduce yourself with your dynamic commercial, presenting self-confidence and likability to the decision-maker.



## Negotiate the Best Deal

*Dealing for Dollars:* An offer is not an offer until it is presented in writing. In negotiating a salary and benefits package, negotiations begin only when you have the full offer. Should the employer mention a specific salary, your response should be only to acknowledge that you would be happy to see a contract to make an informed decision. Not every company will provide you with their best offer on an initial contract. Do salary research for your area and determine if the salary is commensurate with your value.

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*Bargaining for Benefits:* Get details of the company benefits in writing. Talk to the HR representative at the company regarding full benefits. Vacation may be a worthwhile benefit to negotiate, as well as phone, computer, car expenses, and earlier entrance into a 401K program. Medical benefits should be considered, and sometimes can be negotiated to start earlier, or coverage of any COBRA expenses prior to medical benefit initiation.

*Searching for Severance:* For senior positions, it may be wise to ask for a severance package based on time of employment, especially if relocation is required for the position. Check with the company to identify any corporate policies.

*Batting for Bonuses:* In reviewing a bonus package, the bonus structure should be based on *your* performance. This ensures that *your* performance is being rewarded. A bonus could bring your package to the level you are seeking. Do the calculations to make sure the numbers are realistically attainable.

# 10

## Accelerate Your Transition

The transition from applicant to employee often is taken for granted. Here are some suggestions for setting yourself up for success:

*Clarify expectations.* As you enter into a new role, many expectations may be assumed, even though unspoken. Seek specific feedback on expectations from those who are most closely associated with you and your role.

*As you enter into a new role, many expectations may be assumed, even though unspoken.*

*Create a plan* for getting up the learning curve quickly. Identify what you will need to in order be successful in your new role by tapping into existing resources inside the organization, as well as finding new ones.

*Document your successes and learning.* Your resume is not the only document you should maintain on a regular basis. Preparing for your first review is much easier if you take regular notes about your accomplishments and the associated quantitative/qualitative results you achieved.

## Conclusion and Resources

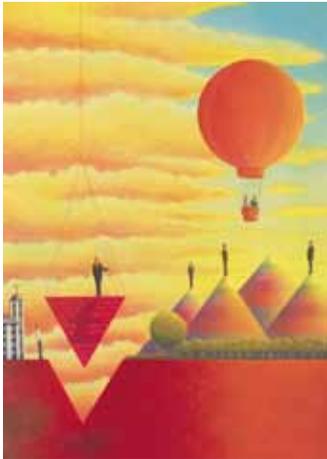
We hope these ten steps prove to be helpful in your search for the right career opportunity. Should you discover you need more assistance to find the right opportunity, contact us at [Venturion](#) a career management and coaching firm based in San Antonio, Texas. You may also find the following resources helpful:

[CareerBooksOnline.com](#) has a variety of the most helpful job search books with a section recommended by career coaches.  
[The Career Guide Blog](#)

Best wishes for job search success!

The Venturion Team

[www.venturion.net](http://www.venturion.net)



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Contributors:

Don Huse  
Donna McIlveen  
Sally Daniel  
Jean Herges