



The Job Search Process

An effective job search process involves a well-organised strategy to:

- fine tune your resume and cover letter for each job
- research organisations and opportunities
- prepare appropriate questions and answers
- keep records and
- proactively follow up applications and leads

This handout describes the ‘who’, ‘what’, ‘when’, ‘how’, and ‘why’ of job seeking. For information on the ‘where’, see the handout **Where to Find Jobs**.

Who is my job search for?

Although you may receive career planning advice from friends and family members you also need to consider your own needs in the job search process. You’ll be most satisfied in a job, career or working environment that relates to your interests, goals, skills, values and personality. So in addition to researching prospective employers, it’s important that you have a good understanding of yourself and what you have to offer an organisation. For more information refer to the Career Advice section of the Careers Centre’s website.

What strategies do I need for an effective job search process?

- Prepare a resume and cover letter tailored to each application. For further information see the handouts on **Resume Writing** and **Cover Letters**.
- Follow instructions. For example, if the advertisement states that you must post your application to a particular person and you e-mail yours to someone else, you run the risk of missing out on an interview.
- Use your initiative to uncover the ‘hidden’ job market. ‘Cold canvassing’, ‘applying on spec’ and ‘active job search’ are terms describing direct approaches to employers who have not advertised jobs. Approximately 80% of jobs aren’t advertised, so researching opportunities is very important. For further information, see the

Careers Centre’s handout **Where to Find Jobs**.

- Shortlist potential employers in an area of interest and approach them directly with an ‘unsolicited application’. Although each application may seem like more work than just sending the same letter to many employers, it’s more effective and cheaper to choose fewer and more appropriate targets. You may decide that the letter you sent to legal firm A will be suitable also for legal firm B, but in general avoid standard letters.

What strategies can I use to target employers who have not advertised jobs?

Send an application then follow up by phone:

Sending an unsolicited, personalised and tailored letter can show your initiative and self-confidence. Studies show that if you can get your application to the specific person you’d be working for, your chances of gaining a job are better than if you write to a generic Human Resources position. Find out who to send the letter to by phoning the organisation and asking for the name of the person heading the section you wish to work in or the Human Resources Manager (or whoever deals with recruitment). Check that you have the correct title and spelling!

The employer will read your letter with the organisation’s needs in mind, so don’t just say you’re interested in getting into journalism or property development or finance. State how you can add value to the organisation and contribute to its success. Say why that particular organisation interests you or why your own interests, knowledge, skills, values and potential are particularly relevant. Relate these to the industry and the organisation to make a good impression.

Don’t leave it up to the employer to contact you. Say at the end of your letter, ‘I will telephone on ... (about a week later) to see whether I can make an appointment with you.’ Then show your initiative and reliability by following up as promised. Find further information in the handout **Cover Letters**.

Phone then send your application:

You can avoid the initial letter and instead try direct personal approaches or telephoning. This can also demonstrate your initiative and self-confidence. Prepare questions and answers and practise them before phoning. Keep your list of questions next to you so you don't stumble through the conversation and give the impression that you have inferior communication skills.

What results might I get from targeting and following up employers?

The outright rebuff.

When you phone you may not be able to speak to the particular person. When you follow up your letter with a phone call you may be told that the organisation is not at all interested in you and they don't even remember seeing your letter. Although this response can be disappointing, don't assume there was anything wrong with your approach or your general employability - just with your timing. You simply write it off to experience.

The lukewarm response.

Your telephone call is received politely, and your initiative commended, but there are no immediate prospects and they don't have the time for you to visit. But you might, with a few judicious questions, glean more information about the industry or the organisation, and helpful hints about where else to try. Be prepared. Before you make that telephone call, make sure that you have things to ask and say to enable you to get value from the conversation.

The welcome response.

An invitation to visit the company, talk to key staff and make your good impression in person. For more information see our web page on Interviews.

When should I conduct the job search process?

The job search process involves your time and can be a job in itself. Devote a regular time each day to your job search. Graduate Recruitment positions are advertised in March, so you need to be prepared early if applying for these. Otherwise commence your job search 1-2 months ahead of when you hope to be employed.

How can I make my job search an active and organised campaign?

Research information on organisations you'd like to work for. Find out about:

- services or products
- size, structure and reputation
- locations (nationally and internationally)
- time established
- competitors
- growth pattern
- financial information
- recent developments, new products and projects

Keep detailed, organised and up-to-date records of applications sent, contacts made, responses from employers and interviews attended. Use a diary, exercise book, follow-up file or computerised records. You may have applied for a number of positions and met a lot of people. If you're contacted by any of those people you need to be able to recall which organisation and job they're associated with.

Follow up contacts on the dates promised. Also follow up on additional questions and actions to be taken.

Why should I do anything after the interview?

If you don't hear a result within the expected time be proactive by phoning the employer, stressing your enthusiasm for the position, and asking tactfully about progress. The employer may not have made a decision or there may be other factors that have caused a delay in appointing a candidate. Your phone call may prompt a decision and you may even have some bearing on the outcome. It is generally reasonable to make a follow up call about two weeks after the interview unless you have been given other instructions.

Stay (or get) physically fit and healthy. If you don't have a driver's licence or good keyboard skills, try to organise some practice. Investigate short courses offered by your local community college, WEA, TAFE or similar provider that might fill some gaps in your general business knowledge but not cost too much.

You need to stay confident. Job searching takes time and persistence. Even with a carefully planned campaign you'll have disappointments, so be ready to deal with them. Think about what you've learned from your application and how you can improve next time.