Career Services

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Job Search & Networking

Reality of the current market

Many of us have heard of the "the hidden job market." This term relates to the how and where employers find candidates, and how and where candidates seek employment. Well, what does it mean? According to labour market research, most jobs are not posted online by employers. Typically employers look to promote from within, then they ask their employees for referrals and usually the third or fourth step might be to post online. As a result, most jobs are found through networking and being pro-active. Depending on the study, estimates suggest that up to 80% of the jobs out there are not posted!

For job seekers this has serious implications. If you are looking for a job to establish your career you are going to have to do more than just applying to job ads from postings. This workshop and your Career Specialist will help you through this process because it can be difficult.

Take Charge - Conduct an Active Job Search

In order to be effective and see results in the current market, a job search needs to be active, have intention and follow certain steps. These include:

- Preparation and Research
- Connect
- Follow-up

Each of these steps will be explained in further detail. An important element to consider for every job seeker is the importance of seeking support. Finding a job is hard work, and you may feel some rejection. Take care of yourself throughout this process.

PREPARATION & RESEARCH

There are many ways to find out what you want. Our workshop on Personal Awareness & Self-Assessment as well as Identifying Skills and Building Competencies provide useful exercises to uncover what you want and have to offer in your future career. You can also check out the Serious Job Seeker or ALIS to clearly identify your strengths and targets.

What are your job search targets?

What strengths do you have to offer?

Research will include understanding what industries are, where you want to work and who the key employers are. Targeted contacts within organizations can also help you to understand and uncover where they opportunities are. Market trends also provide valuable information about labour market needs. Excellent information can be found here on how to conduct this research effectively.

Where do you want to work?

What industries can you work in?

What are the current market trends?

Prepare Targeted Marketing Tools

Once you have identified your strengths and targets and have connected with the labour market, you will need to prepare targeted marketing tools. Each cover letter or approach letter, and every resume will be unique to the position you are applying for. Marketing materials also include online profiles, business cards and portfolios.

Action Plan

Now you are ready to create an action plan for your search. You have your targets, you understand the market and you have the materials you will use to connect. Now all you need is an action plan for how you will conduct your search.

The steps below have been adapted from ALIS and provide a great summary of how to create your own action plan. You must bring all of your work in the previous stages together into one overall plan. From that plan, list tasks in the order in which you must complete them and set deadlines for each task.

Successful strategies include a variety of methods to bring you closer to your goal:

1. Mark tasks on a monthly calendar, noting important dates such as application deadlines.
2. Make weekly or daily lists of things to do in an appointment book or use a calendar-type software program.
3. Cross off tasks as you complete them.
4. Ask a friend to check on your progress regularly—you're more likely to get things done if you know you'll be asked about it!
5. Reward yourself for completing major tasks. A reward can be inexpensive, like giving yourself some guilt-free time for an activity you really enjoy.

Marketing Tool Kit

As we discussed, your materials need to be targeted. Within your marketing tool kit you will have items such as a resume, cover letter, networking business cards and references. Marketing tools also include online profiles and verbal business cards. Online profiles are usually found through Social Media such as LinkedIn, Twitter, Branched Out, Facebook. We discuss Resumes and Online Search in more detail in those workshops.

Business cards are an excellent tool when you are meeting with people. Sometimes, it can be difficult to know exactly what to include. Here are some recommended details:

- Name, Telephone, E-mail
- Title
- Creativity – Portfolio Design
- Business tool
- Optional: "Key Points", Strengths/Skills possibly on back

Suggestion: put three key points summarizing your skills:

- "Project planning, coordination and management skills"
- "5+ years' experience in group training"
- "Dedicated team player with an unmatched work ethic"
- "Inspiring Leader able to quickly establish rapport and generate enthusiasm in others"

Organize Yourself

When you consider how much information you have compiled and the amount of documents you will be using in your search, organization becomes a necessity. The Serious Job Seeker suggests using a Career Binder to help keep track of your search, contacts and research; In the Advanced Techniques for Work Search publication we also see an example of a Contact Tracking Worksheet. Some students use an Excel spreadsheet or a Word document to keep track of their search. Whatever you use, it needs to make sense for you and allow you to retrieve and maintain the information in a useful manner.

CONNECT

Your active job search begins once you have completed your marketing materials. Job search strategies can be categorized into four broad categories. We recommend that you try the various strategies; however, no matter what strategy you try, connecting or networking with people works the best and should be the cornerstone of any job search. A summary of the job search strategies is as follows:

Networking

According to Quintessential Careers: "Networking is one of the most important -- if not the most important -- activity that job-seekers need to master to be truly successful in your job-search. Because the majority of job openings are never advertised, job-seekers need to have a network of contacts -- a career network -- that can provide support, information, and job leads." Networking is about talking to people and sharing information. One of the most common mistakes people make when networking is focusing on job openings and getting hired. Instead, effective networking focuses on gathering information about companies and careers, and getting advice. Your network includes people you know, as well as people who are in careers you are interested in and people who make hiring decisions.

Showing an interest in others is an essential element of successful networking. This involves taking the time to get to know someone. People are always more willing to help individuals who seem genuinely interested in them. Another important element is looking for ways to give to others; it is not about using your contacts for all they're worth. Networking is most effective when both you and the contact benefit from the relationship. Even if your contact does not benefit immediately from knowing you, he or she should gain something from the relationship eventually. Lastly, always be ready to talk about yourself by preparing a sample networking introduction or elevator pitch. Sample networking introductions are presented in the appendix. One networking strategy, described in the handout appendix, is informational interviewing. While this is an effective technique for obtaining relevant information and building your network, you should also take advantage of other networking opportunities, including: career fairs, networking events, employer information sessions and association meetings. In addition, talk to people about their careers wherever you meet them, whether it is a recreational event or a line up for Tim's coffee. You never know when you might meet someone who can give you great information or advice that leads to your next job. Read more about networking.

Responding to Job Postings

You should definitely respond to job postings you are a good fit for. Some experts say that you are doing well if you get one interview for every 40 resumes you send out in response to specific postings. When conducting an online job search, consider using a job search engine, such as INDEED, which searches various job boards and company sites for postings. If you are interested in working for a specific company monitor the website and possibly subscribe to job postings offered on their site if available.

One recent challenge to job seekers applying for jobs online is the applicant tracking system (ATS). Larger companies may use an ATS to screen submitted resumes and identify the strongest candidates. ATSs are controversial in that some studies have shown that even the most qualified candidate can fail to be selected. Quintessential Careers has several articles on to prepare resumes in order to increase your chances of being selected.

Some online resources are:

- https://careerlink.ucalgary.ca/home.htm
- http://alis.alberta.ca/ec/ws/jp/jobpostings.html
- http://www.quintcareers.com/Canada_jobs.html
- http://alis.alberta.ca/worksearch/fw/engines
- http://www.indeed.ca/
- http://www.economyhunter.com/canada.php
- http://www.albertahealthservices.ca/careers.asp
- https://charityvillage.com/jobs/find-jobs.aspx
- http://www.calgarycvo.org/nonprofit-job-centre/jobs
- http://www.eco.ca/services/

Using Staffing Firms

This involves using recruitment agencies as well as "temp" agencies. Companies hire recruiters to find individuals for available positions (part time, full time or contract). Therefore, recruiters work for employers and not for job seekers. Utilizing recruiters tends to work best for people with work experience in standard job titles, such as administrative assistant, accountant, or engineer. If you are considering this approach, look at a recruiter's website first to see if they have relevant positions and then follow up with a phone call to introduce yourself and to ask them for the best way to utilize their services.

It is possible for job seekers to find excellent, full-time, long-term positions through temporary jobs. Temping allows you to make a livable salary while becoming familiar with a company or the industry prior to making a commitment. Temping with a company can also be a way to expand your network or to introduce yourself to a particular employer. This can be an advantage if you apply for a job that becomes available at the company you are temping for as the employers prefer to hire someone they know.

Direct Contact

Contacting employers directly to ask if they have openings or to offer oneself as a potential candidate is one of the oldest job search strategies. There have been widely publicized stories of individuals who have mailed out over 200 resumes with no results; however, if implemented properly, this method can be an effective way to introduce oneself to a potential employer, discover unadvertised openings and secure employment. One suggested approach is to identify organizations that interest you and then obtain the names of potential hiring managers at these organizations. Email or send a personalized cover letter to the identified individuals advertising yourself as a potential candidate. The key to success is to follow-up your first contact with a phone call to arrange an in-person meeting. Dan Miller, author of "48 Days to the Work You Love" notes that this approach can shorten the length of your job search significantly.

Another version of this involves visiting the company that you are interested in and then asking to speak to the hiring manager. While this method can result in professional jobs, it is most effective when seeking entry level or blue collar positions, such as sales associate. It is also one of the most time-consuming methods to use.

FOLLOW UP

Follow up is an important element of the process, whether it is following up after meeting someone at an event or after submitting an application for an advertised posting. Elements of following up effectively include: always being courteous and respectful, and being appreciative of others.

Always be courteous and respectful. This includes not making people uncomfortable by asking someone you have just met if they know of any job openings. Showing appreciation can involve thanking someone you have just met at a networking event for their time or it can involving sending a thank you note to a person you met for an information interview. Other ideas for following up with people you have connected with include:

- Providing regular job search updates
- Sending holiday cards
- Sending articles of interest

Another important element of follow-up is to document every connection you make. You can keep a hard copy folder or use an Excel spreadsheet to manage the information of the people that you meet. Remember that even if you keep your contact information in a database, you still need to have this information in a hardcopy so that you have a place where you can quickly take notes. You also need to keep everything organized for easy access and review! If someone gives you a business card, one tip is to write down key information about the person on their card. In addition, after every connection, debrief yourself. You can do this on the contact form. Make sure you have answered the following questions:

- What did I learn?
- How does what I learned fit with my skills, values and interests?
- What else do I need to know? Who else do I need to talk with?

Then, before the day is out, send a thank you note. It only needs to be a few lines long. Express your appreciation and tell them what you plan to do next. Finally, review the notes you've taken: Are there any other action steps to be taken on the basis of the information you obtained? Use note paper and the person's business card - make sure you have written down the names of everyone they referred you to.

APPENDIX

INFORMATIONAL INTERVIEWING

You can approach someone by email or phone and request an in-person meeting. Your goal is to connect with others in order to learn more about a company, an industry or to learn about job search strategies while building your network. Many students are reluctant to do this as they are concerned that employers or professionals will not be interested in talking to them. However, many people are more than willing to help others. If a high school student contacted you because they wanted to know more about the University of Calgary and the major you are taking, wouldn't you be willing to talk to them? So be courageous and reach out! When you contact people, always be courteous and respectful of their time. Common courtesies include being prompt and not asking for a job during the meeting. As well, it is professional to acknowledge when you have reached the agreed upon time and offer to close the meeting. Remain flexible and be prepared for anything to happen.

What are the benefits of Information Interviews?

Information interviews are beneficial because they allow you to:

- Access up-to-date career information
- Build confidence for interviews
- Discover exciting job opportunities
- Expand your professional network
- Explore careers and clarify your career goals
- Identify your professional strengths and areas needing improvement
- See the organization from the inside

Find the person to interview

There are various ways to identify people to meet with. The best place is to start is with people you already know. This includes peers, professors and family members. Ask them if they know someone in a particular company or field that you might benefit from talking with. Other possible ways to identify people to talk to include:

- Conferences
- Company websites
- Professional organizations
- LinkedIn.com
- Professional events, charity events, sports events
- Periodicals and resource books
- Volunteering position

Scheduling the meeting

Once you have found the person the next step is to contact them in order to schedule the meeting. You may decide to contact the person by email or phone or even both.

Sample phone script

Hello [Mr./Ms. Doe], my name is [. . .]. I'm a student at the University of Calgary and am in the [faculty name] program. I obtained your name from . . .

Ask if they are free to talk for a few minutes. If they're not, ask for the best time to call back and be sure you actually call then.

I understand you are the [. . . position] and I'm interested in learning more about your career [or company] I'm in the process of gathering information about the types of careers [or positions] that may be in line with my interests [and/or area of expertise]. Would it be possible to meet with you for 15 – 20 minutes to learn about your career [or company and the (job title) positions they have]?

Be prepared for a response such as: "I think our human resources people can probably answer your questions." You may want to respond with: "I'm sure that would be true if I were looking for a job, but I'd like to talk with you because _____ told me you could give me the best advice and suggested that I would benefit from your experience and insight."

Sample Email 1

Dear Mr. or Ms. (last name):

My name is (. . .) and I am a student at the University of Calgary. I am in the (program name). I came across your name (explain where and how) and I was intrigued to learn more about you and your career (or organization). I am currently conducting career (or company or industry) research and would appreciate the opportunity to learn about your own career path.

Would you be open to meeting with me for 15-20 minutes to discuss this? I would be happy to buy you a coffee or tea if you would be willing to share some of your valuable insights with me.

Regards,

(Full name)

Sample Email 2

Dear Mr. or Ms. (last name):

My name is (. . .), a recent graduate from the University of Calgary. We met (where and when) and I was impressed by your (highlight something specific here). I am currently conducting career (or company or industry) research and would appreciate the opportunity to learn about your own career path.

Would you be open to meeting with me for 15-20 minutes to discuss this?

Regards,

(Full name)

Sample Questions

There are dozens of questions you may want answered, so think about them carefully before you arrive at your interview. Write your questions down just in case you get nervous, but don't get too rigid or just read them off. Be sensitive to the time constraints of the person you are talking with and remember you asked for 20 minutes. The key to this whole process is enthusiasm! If you are truly interested in a topic, that will shine through. When it does, the person you are talking with will most likely respond positively. *Remember, this should seem like a conversation and not an interrogation.

- How did you get started in this field, and what do you think has made you successful throughout your career?
- Describe a typical day for you.
- What are the pros and cons of working in this field?
- What traits, skills or experiences do employers in your field look for in candidates?
- If you were me, what would you do to try to break into this field now?
- What publications, professional associations, or events should I check out for additional information?
- Do you know anyone else I can speak to for advice?
- If I have additional questions in the future, can I reach out to you again?
- Is there anything I can do to help you?

NETWORKING INTRODUCTIONS

As you begin networking, you will be introducing yourself to many people. As well, when you show an interest in people you meet by asking questions, they will naturally reciprocate by asking you about your background. It is important that you are able to make the most of these opportunities by being able to clearly and succinctly talk about your background. This is known as a networking or 'elevator pitch' and lasts between 15 to 30 seconds. Key elements of your marketing pitch include:

- Education
- What you are interested in or what you would like to do
- Relevant skills or qualifications from your education, work and volunteer background
- Possibly a question or request for assistance for the other person

Sample Elevator Pitch 1

I'm graduating in May with a Bachelor of _____. I would like to pursue a career _____ and in order to prepare myself have taken courses in _____ (top courses). I have strong _____ skills, work well with _____, and enjoy the challenges of _____ .

Sample Elevator Pitch 2

I am taking a degree in _____ . I really like it and am in my ___ year of study. I enjoy _____ and am exploring what I can do in my career. I am open to options and interested in learning more about _____ .

Sample Elevator Pitch 3

I am in my ____ year in _____ program. Last summer I completed an _____ internship at _____ where I especially enjoyed _____. I have also been an active volunteer in _____, and have experience providing _____.

COLD CALLING TO ARRANGE INFORMATION MEETINGS

INTRODUCTION

1) Hello, may I please speak to _____
2) Hello, my name is _____ and I recently graduated from the University of Calgary Communications Studies Program. I received your contact information from Carol Wert from the University of Calgary Career Services. I am interested in some career and industry exploration and Carol mentioned you would be a great resource to talk to.
3) I was wondering if you could spare 20 to 30 minutes in the upcoming week or so to meet with me over a coffee and discuss your career and industry experience. I was looking at your website and was especially interested in your specialty in

YES

1) Great what time would be good for you as I am really flexible?
2) Okay, to confirm → Date, Address, Time
3) I was wondering if I could forward you my resume to look at and see if there were any improvements I could make?

NO

1) I'm not interested in hiring
2) I'm very busy right now
3) I don't have any time, but what would you like to know?

1) I'm not interested in hiring anyone at this time

- I understand, however, I was looking more for career exploration and industry perspective from someone with your expertise

I'm sorry, I'm still not interested

- Thank you so much for your time and wish you a great dav

2) I'm very busy right now

- I'm so sorry to have caught you at a bad time. Is there a better time within the next two weeks I can contact you again?

Yes, please call me at this time/date

- Thank you so much_____, I look forward to speaking with you.

3) I don't have any time, but what would you like to know

- Great, I would like to ask you a few questions regarding the _____industry

5 QUESTION PHONE INTERVIEW

1) I researched your website and it says your company specializes in _____. I was wondering if you could elaborate on this and tell me more about your company
   a. How many employees are currently at the company?
2) What type of individuals do you look for to work at your company?
3) What kind of advice do you have for a new graduate interested in entering this industry?
4) Do you anticipate any growth within the company in the upcoming year?
   a. If so, when would be a good time to apply to your company if an individual was interested?
5) Do you know of anyone else within the industry I could contact who may be a good resource for career exploration.
   a. If so, can I mention your name as a point of contact?

Thank you so much for you time. One last item, I was wondering if I could **email you a copy of my resume for reference and also for review**. I would love to hear back any recommendations or comments you may have for improvement.

6) Would it be possible or appropriate to touch base with you and do a follow up call in the future?

YES YOU CAN SEND ME YOUR RESUME

Great what is your email address? Confirm email address

NO YOU CANNOT SEND ME YOUR RESUME/ NO FOLLOW UP CALL

Thank you so much for taking the time to discuss your industry and expertise with me. Have a great day.

YES YOU CAN GIVE ME A FOLLOW UP CALL

When would be a good time to call you? Thank you so much for taking the time to discuss your industry and expertise with me. Have a great day