

THE JOB SEARCH PROCESS

For the Current Job Market

You need to start long before you ever fill out the first application!

Getting a job these days is not easy. It usually requires having a strong network of people in your field who want to help you, as well as being one of the strongest candidates in your field... and those things are not going to happen overnight. On average, it's taking college grads 6-9 months to get hired.

- **Early in college:** Begin with the end in mind. Start preparing for your job search by doing internships, building a professional network, joining professional organizations, and learning job search skills.
- **At least a year before you graduate:** Explore potential opportunities and identify target companies.
- **By the start of your final semester:** Your active job search should be in full swing.

Getting a job is a full-time job... if you're doing it right, that is! Expect it to be a lot of work, and plan accordingly. Your success will be directly related to the amount of time and effort you put into your search!

There are only 2 ways to look for a job:

1. The employer looks for you (the Advertised Job Market).
 2. You look for the employer (the Unadvertised Job Market). *Over 80% of jobs are found here!*
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THE ADVERTISED JOB MARKET

The Advertised Job Market consists of **official job openings** that employers are **actively trying to fill**.

What are my chances of getting a job in the Advertised Job Market?

Not good, even though this is where most people think jobs are found. There are so many qualified applicants out there that employers don't need to do much advertising to find a good applicant anymore, and they'd rather interview based on a referral than review tons of resumes. When a position IS posted, the company will often get immediately flooded with hundreds of resumes. This means tons of competition and low chances of ever hearing back. You shouldn't rule out advertised jobs, but you also shouldn't rely entirely on this search method.

Finding advertised jobs:

In general, the more targeted the website, the better your results will be. Besides checking job posting sites, develop a strategy. Check BroncoJobs for employers looking to hire new BSU grads. Target companies and look on their websites. Join professional organizations in your field and search their job postings.

Some Job Posting Websites:

- BroncoJobs: <http://career.boisestate.edu> (click on BroncoJobs link)
- Career Builder (includes Idaho Statesman classifieds): <http://www.careerbuilder.com>
- Idaho Department of Labor: <http://labor.idaho.gov>
- Federal government jobs: <http://www.usajobs.gov>
- Idaho state government jobs: <http://www.dhr.idaho.gov>
- BoiseIdahoJobs.com: <http://www.boiseidahojobs.com>
- Twitter Job Search: <http://www.twitterjobsearch.com>
- LinkedIn: <http://www.linkedin.com>
- Craigslist: <http://www.craigslist.org>
- Indeed: <http://www.indeed.com>
- Dice (tech jobs): <http://www.dice.com>

Tips for applying for Advertised jobs:

- **Your other job search skills** (resume and cover letter writing, interviewing, etc.) must be exceptional.
- **Targeting your resume** to each job/company is essential.
- **Check as many** different places as possible, and develop a system to check each regularly.
- **Be strategic in your search.** Know what you're looking for and the best places to find those jobs.
- **Keep an organized record** of the jobs you've applied for, the application materials you sent, who the contact person is, etc., and save a copy of the job description. You will need all of this later!
- **Follow-up** on your applications. The more contact you can make with an employer, the better.
- **Get a referral** – find a contact who can help ensure your resume is considered.

THE UNADVERTISED (HIDDEN) JOB MARKET

The Unadvertised or Hidden Job Market consists of **jobs that haven't yet been advertised**, and **jobs that don't yet exist** – jobs that are created for a particular person. By far, more jobs are in the Hidden Job Market.

You find these jobs through networking. Remember the saying, *"It's not what you know, it's who you know."*

Rather, *"It's not who you know, but who knows you."*

But really, *"It's not just who knows you, but who's willing to help you."*

HOW TO NETWORK

The basic idea of networking to get a job:

- You have a network.
- Your potential employer has a network.
- Your goal is to use your network to *connect* to the employer's network.

In other words, you use the people you know to connect to people the employer knows, resulting in you being connected with the employer.

Forming a network: You already have a network. It consists of your friends, family, past and present coworkers, classmates, professors, etc. When you're looking for a professional job, you need to build a strong network of people in your career field. Use the people you already know, but strategically make contacts by:

- Doing internships or volunteering
- Joining professional and student organizations related to your career field
- Taking any opportunity you get to meet people in your field, like attending conferences or other events
- Getting to know your professors and making sure they know you- they often have good connections
- Getting to know your classmates who have similar career goals as you
- Doing informational interviews (This is when you sit down with someone and ask them questions to get information about their job, field, company, etc. This can be a way to get to talk to someone you haven't been able to connect with otherwise. See the next page for more info.)

Using your network to build your network: Job leads can be difficult to find right now. If you only focus on finding leads within your current contacts, you're likely to hit a dead end quickly. Instead, focus initially on collecting names and expanding your network. The basic process is simple. Start with your current contacts. Tell them all that you're looking for a job, as well as what you'd like to do, where you'd like to do it, and the skills that you have. Ask them if they know anybody you could talk to that might be able to help you. Collect names. Meet and conduct informational interviews with the people your contacts referred you to. At the end, ask them for referrals. Collect names. Meet with those people, and so on. Every time you talk with someone, always end the conversation by asking if there is anyone else they would recommend you talk to.

Get referred! An employer would much rather hire someone who has been referred to them by someone they trust than take a chance on someone they don't know much of anything about. A referral can get you an unadvertised job, or it can move you to the top of the pile of resumes submitted for an advertised job. It's not just important to KNOW people, but to form good relationships, so that people think of you when they hear of an opening, and believe that you will excel at the job. Your best contacts are the ones who are familiar with your abilities and your performance, and are impressed enough by you to want to recommend you to others!

Strategic Networking: In order to get a job in this economy, the random networking people once did (telling everyone you know you're looking for a job and hoping someone comes up with something for you) may not be sufficient. *Strategic networking means having a plan and connecting with people intentionally.* To start, you have to do your research, which will include things like identifying organizations you're interested in, figuring out who works there, and who you need to talk to if you want to get a job there. Next, you will need to formulate a plan to reach those people. There are now several online tools that can help you strategically network. For more information on these, see page 4.

INFORMATIONAL INTERVIEWING: HOW TO

What it is: An informational meeting with someone in a company or a job you're interested in, where you "interview" them, or in other words, ask specific questions about the company, their job, their career field, or anything else you might want info or advice about. **It is to gain information and advice; it is not a job interview.** It is intended to aid you in your research of options and opportunities, but is also an excellent networking tool that can get you in the door where you otherwise wouldn't have been able.

Critical Tips for a Successful Info Interview:

- **Approach it genuinely.** This is perhaps the most important tip. While it is a great way to build your network, the purpose is still to obtain information. Don't lie about what you want from somebody. Don't go in with questions you don't really care about just to get a contact out of it. Figure out what info or advice you genuinely would want to get from that person, and set that as your expectation.
- **Target the right people.** When "cold contacting" someone you haven't been referred to, WHO you choose is critical to your response rate. Everyone thinks HR and hiring managers are the people you need to be in contact with, which may be true eventually, but when trying to establish an initial contact with a company, these groups are the least likely to sit down with someone they don't know. People not in hiring roles, on the other hand, almost never get contacted by job seekers, and are therefore less threatened and more eager to talk with you. **Your best targets are people doing the type of job you hope to do**, because it's easier to explain why you want to talk to them (and be genuine), it can be flattering, and people often like to help others going down the same path they took.
- **Explain your request clearly.** It's all in how you ask. Make sure to clearly explain who you are, why you are contacting them, and what you want from them, all in a polite, professional way.
- **Don't be demanding.** Be flexible and respectful of their time. Only ask for 15-20 minutes initially, and leave it as open to their desired time and location as possible.
- **Do your research.** Don't waste your interviewee's time by asking questions you should already know the answer to had you gone on the company's website, reading about your intended career field, etc. The more research you can show your interviewee you've done ahead of time, the better impression you will make on them.
- **Prepare your questions ahead of time.** As you're researching, write out questions, and bring them with you. Also bring paper and a pen to take notes, and a nice looking folder or binder to keep it in.
- **Dress professionally.** You only get one chance to make a first impression.
- **Bring a resume...** but DON'T give it to them unless they ask!
- **Follow up with a "thank you."** Email is generally fine, but send it immediately. Make sure to sincerely express gratitude for the time they took to help you out.
- **Consider an added incentive.** Optionally (only if you are comfortable), you could invite the person to coffee or lunch (your treat) instead of just asking for a traditional office meeting.

Sample Questions:

You should always write your own specific questions based on your research for each interview, but here are some general ideas of the types of things you might ask about.

- What is a typical day on this job really like?
- How did you get into this field? Is there anything you would have done differently?
- What do you like and dislike most about this job/company?
- What qualifications are most important right now? What makes somebody competitive for this job?
- What are the best ways to find job openings?
- Can you tell me about some of the projects your department is working on right now?
- What are the biggest challenges the company is facing right now?
- What companies do you consider your top competitors, and how does this company set itself apart?
- How would you describe the culture here?
- What advice would you give you me on how best to pursue this career path?
- How important are graduate degrees in this field? When do people usually get them?

PERSONAL BRANDING, SOCIAL MEDIA, and STRATEGIC NETWORKING

Since the economy has changed, so has the job search process. With so many people looking for a job, and fewer jobs out there to find, how do you set yourself apart from all your (highly qualified) competition?

Personal Branding: Remember, you are marketing yourself to potential employers. This means that in order to successfully sell yourself to an employer (a.k.a. get a job), you have to think like a marketing professional trying to promote any other type of product. Part of this is creating your own personal brand, or in other words, creating a name and reputation for yourself in your field. As previously mentioned, employers want a known commodity, not a mystery candidate. You need to make yourself visible to employers in your field as someone with a lot of relevant knowledge and skills. This involves first assessing yourself and identifying what sets you apart from your competition. Then, it's just a matter of promoting your brand.

Social Media: Just like social media has become an important part of any marketing plan, it has become an important part of a personal branding/job search plan. Following is an overview of how you might leverage the three big ones in your job search.

LinkedIn: LinkedIn is a professional networking site, and is now one of the top sites for job searching. The basic idea is similar to Facebook – staying in contact with others, but with a professional focus. You start by building your professional profile, which can help you establish your brand online, as it is often one of the first search results displayed by Google. Recruiters also frequently use LinkedIn to find talent and to screen candidates. You then send requests to people you know on LinkedIn for them to join your professional network. These people are your 1st degree connections, but your network also consists of 2nd and 3rd degree connections- people who your connections are connected to, and who their connections are connected to. This allows you to do some strategic networking research by checking out who your contacts know, or searching a company's name to see who you are indirectly connected to there. You can also brand yourself and network with new people by joining groups related to your field and participating in relevant discussions.

Facebook: Facebook is a social networking site that was not designed for job searching, but can be used in your search if you choose. You can use it to stay in touch with friends who might be able to help you in your search, and to keep your network updated regarding your search. Keep in mind how you want to use Facebook, though. If you want to keep it social, make sure to keep everything private and restrict who you are friends with. If you are okay with keeping your Facebook presence very professional, you can then use it to expand your network and promote your brand.

Twitter: Unlike Facebook, which is designed mainly for keeping in touch with people you already know, Twitter is designed to help you build relationships with and spread information among people you don't already know. You can get creative with Twitter, but here are some common strategies:

- On Twitter, you can “follow” anybody you want, without them having to approve you. Both people and organizations are on Twitter. Target companies you're interested in and follow them. Target professionals in your field, follow them, and follow who they're following. Interact with them. Often people/companies will follow you back just because you're following them. Now you have the ability to make yourself visible to them, which you can take advantage of by “tweeting” info relevant to your field, and joining in relevant conversations. Twitter is another excellent tool for personal branding (so make sure to keep everything you put out there professional and appropriate!). You also have the ability to contact people directly through Twitter without needing an introduction.
- Many companies have started “tweeting” job openings. Follow companies of interest, and use Twitterjobsearch.com to search through jobs that have been tweeted.

Other Online Tools: Besides social media, consider other ways to strategically network and promote your brand online. Blog about your profession. Be active on discussion boards and others' blogs. Create an online portfolio. Create profiles on other sites relevant to your profession.

Potential employers will Google you and search your profiles, so make sure to clean them up!

Follow the Career Center on Twitter ([BSUCareerCenter](https://twitter.com/BSUCareerCenter)), and join our groups on LinkedIn and Facebook!

SUGGESTED JOB SEARCH PLAN

1. Define your goal. Assessing yourself is the critical first step in any job search. You'll need to figure out:

- What type of work do you want to do?
- What type of company do you want to work for?
- What do you *need* in a job? (i.e. minimum income level, flexible hours, interaction with people, etc.)
- What do you *want* in a job, and how do you prioritize the things you want?
- What are you good at? What are you experienced in? What skills do you have?
- What sets you apart from others? What unique contribution can you make to a company?

2. Build your brand using the results of your self-assessment. Build a clear, consistent marketing message that will show employers “why you.” Start establishing your brand using the info on the previous page.

3. Research what's out there.

- 1) **Locate companies** in the area you're interested in by:
 - Using LinkedIn (company search section)
 - Visiting local Chamber of Commerce websites
 - Attending career fairs
 - Asking your network (professors, classmates, and professionals, etc.)
 - Using resources available through your professional organizations
- 2) **Begin researching companies** of interest by:
 - Visiting the company's website
 - Searching online for articles or other information about them, and following them on Twitter
- 3) **Identify needs** that you could potentially meet based on your qualifications and interests.
- 4) **Compile a list** of all your target companies.

4. Formulate a networking plan. The goal of your plan should be to find or establish at least one contact at each company on your list. (This is how you'll hear about openings and get referrals.)

Identify people for informational interviews by doing the following:

- Start by using your existing network. Ask everyone if they know *anyone* who works at any of your target companies. Use LinkedIn to find connections. Ask for introductions or if you can use their name when contacting the person.
- For the remaining companies where you've been unable to find a connection, start digging for names/contact info of employees. (Tip: Avoid Human Resources and hiring managers. They are the least likely to respond to you. Target people in positions most similar to what you hope to do.)

5. Get out there.

- **Conduct informational interviews** with at least one person from each target company.
- **Join organizations** specific to your community, industry, and profession.
- **Attend events**, such as networking events, career fairs, professional organization meetings, community events, conferences, etc.
- **Promote your brand.** Make sure everyone knows who you are and what you have to offer. Build your presence online through social media, blogs, discussion groups, and portfolios, and in-person by volunteering, interning, and making your brand a consistent theme in how you present yourself.

6. Identify opportunities.

- Monitor the “careers” page of each of your target companies' websites.
- Follow up with each of your contacts and let them know you are looking and what you're looking for. Ask if they know of any upcoming openings either at their company or somewhere else. If applying for a posted opening, let your contact know.

7. Be an impressive applicant.

- Hone your resume, cover letter, and interviewing skills (see separate handouts).
- Always dress the part when making any contact with potential employers!

FAQs and COMMON JOB SEARCH PROBLEMS

I don't have any experience. Is that going to prevent me from getting a job?

Not necessarily. However, you will need to work even harder to overcome that obstacle. Most employers today expect that entry-level candidates will have had at least one internship or other relevant experience, and even without that expectation, the reality is that just meeting the minimum requirements is no longer good enough due to the amount of competition. You have to be BETTER than your competition. If you have no relevant experience, you have two options – get some, or look for other ways to set yourself apart. If you're still in school, do everything possible to complete an internship before you graduate. Even if you're out of school, you might still be able to get some experience. Some companies will take interns who are out of school. Consider volunteering... target a company, identify a need they have, and pitch them an idea of how you can help... for free. Even if you only have a few hours a week, it's far better than nothing. Otherwise, find ways to compensate for your lack of relevant experience. Prepare application materials that sell your other qualifications (your unique skills, class projects, extracurricular involvement, etc.). Find out what their need is and explain to them how you can solve it. Network like crazy. Establish yourself as an expert in your field in other ways- write a blog, be active on discussion boards, social media, and others' blogs, join professional groups, attend conferences, build online profiles and portfolios, etc.

I've been looking, and there are no jobs. (Unless you want to do sales.)

Aside from there being fewer jobs than there once was, the biggest thing that has changed is that far fewer employers are announcing that they have an opening, making it appear like there are far fewer jobs than there are. Therefore, the old approach of "seeing what's out there" and applying to jobs that sound good no longer works. In order to find jobs, you have to know what you're looking for, and proactively seek them out.

I've applied to hundreds of jobs and haven't heard back from any of them. What am I doing wrong?

Most people first assume there is something wrong with their resume. In most cases, the resume is not likely the problem; rather it's that most resumes are never actually getting looked at due to the amount of applications coming in for a posted job. First, ask yourself where you are finding these jobs, and how you are applying for them. Are you only looking online? Are you prioritizing quantity of applications over quality? Are you making contacts at each company of interest and obtaining referrals? Imagine you are trying to find a mechanic. Do you post an ad on Craigslist asking mechanics to send you a 1-2 page description of their qualifications, or do you ask people you trust who a good mechanic is?

I tried networking. It didn't work for me.

Generally, this is because there is still more you can do than what you've already tried. Often, when people say "networking," they mean they asked the people they currently know if any of them know of any job openings. Remember that the process of networking involves using the people you know to meet people you don't yet know, and should be a strategic process that involves identifying who you want to meet and ways to connect with them.

I don't buy the informational interview thing. Why would someone meet with me if they don't know me?

There are a lot of reasons someone might be willing to talk with you even if they don't know you... assuming you're doing things correctly on your end. People like to talk about their jobs. They're often flattered that someone is interested in what they do. They often feel inclined to help someone going through the same things they had to go through. If they don't have a job to give you, they're not threatened by your request. If you are polite, professional, and follow all the tips on page 3, you'll likely get some good responses.

I'm applying for government jobs, and they post all their openings, so all this networking stuff doesn't apply to me, right?

Most of it still does, with the exception of needing a contact to find out about openings. Just because they have a set process doesn't mean they don't already have someone in mind they'd like to see hired. You want to position yourself to be that person. It is more possible to get to the interview stage just based on a really good resume than in the case of other jobs, but it is also true that the candidates that had been talking to someone within the agency before applying typically score higher in all aspects of the process. Why? Because they had greater insight into what the agency was looking for than what could be gained from just the job description.