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Job Search Tips

I. Tips for everyone

1. Advice on finding an opening
2. Resume advice
3. Cover letter advice
4. Advice on references
5. Interview advice
6. Job fair advice
7. General advice
8. Evaluating offers

II. Tips based on your education

1. High school diploma or GED
2. College degree

III. Tips based on your stage in life

1. Advice for recent college graduates
2. Advice for career changes
3. Advice for people over 50

I. Tips for everyone

These tips are designed to help all job seekers enhance all aspects of their job search. You should read these tips even if you are looking for advice that pertains to your specific education level or stage in life.

1. Advice on Finding an Opening

- Let people in your network know you are looking for a job. Some of your contacts may know of open positions in their company. To learn more about networking, see our Workforce1 Resource Library document, "Networking Tips."
- Realize that there are many hidden jobs out there – jobs that aren't openly advertised, but known within the company. Hiring managers often tell employees to let them know if they know anyone who would be a good fit for a job.
- Know where your contacts work. Websites like www.inthedoor.com help you identify the companies your Facebook friends work for.
- If you're unsure of the type of job you would like, try taking an online personality quiz, such as the Myers-Briggs Type Indicator assessment. There are many websites that analyze your results from these tests and link them to careers that are best suited for your personality.
- If you have a specific company you would like to work for, make a pitch to that company by finding out who is the best person to contact (ie. the name of the hiring manager) and sending him or her a cover letter and resume. Be sure to state in the cover letter why you are interested in the company, what you can contribute, and what sort of position you're looking for. This position doesn't have to be one that currently exists if you can identify a new role that addresses the company's needs.



If you apply through a website, find out where your resume and information will be sent. It's best if they're sent directly to the employer.

2. Resume Advice

- Always keep your resume up-to-date and in case it is needed.
- Because employers often skim resumes, be sure to keep your organization clear and your content concise.
- Your job title from previous experiences isn't as important as what you did while in those positions. Spend less time wondering if you should reword your title and more time describing your accomplishments vividly.
- Highlight the accomplishments most related to the industry you are applying for and consider eliminating information that does not help you.
- Quantify your achievements. For instance, instead of saying "organized fundraising projects," say "Raised \$9,000 over the course of three fundraisers."
- Instead of simply reciting your duties, use action words to depict what you accomplished. For instance, instead of saying "was in charge of new programs," say "implemented four new programs."

- Tailor your resume to each job you apply for. Depending on what the job is, you may want to highlight certain aspects of your experience and leave out others.
- Always find a description of the job you are applying for and describe your experiences in a way that addresses the job's requirements. For example, if the job requires excellent communication, be sure to emphasize your communication skills and how you have used them.
- Make sure your resume has a professional tone and contains no typos or grammar mistakes.
- Follow-up on your resume submission by calling the hiring manager directly. This can help you stand out from the many other resumes the company is receiving.

3. Cover Letter Advice

- It's always a good idea to include a cover letter with every resume you send, even if the employer does not ask for one.
- Try to find out the name of the company or organization's hiring manager and address him or her by name. This is much more personal than "Dear Sir or Madam" or "To Whom it May Concern."
- Customize your cover letter to each employer and make sure you spell the company's name correctly.
- One way to customize your cover letter is by stating why you want to work for that company or organization.
- The purpose of the cover letter is to get the employer to read your resume, so do not summarize your resume's contents. Do, however, touch upon the one or two qualities and experiences that you wish to impress upon employers the most.
- Convince employers that you are the best match for this job by connecting some of your interests and experiences to job requirements and company culture.
- Don't write a cover letter that's longer than a page.
- If you are sending your resume by email, include the cover letter in the body of the email, not as an attachment. This increases the chances of it being read.

4. Advice on References

People you might request a reference from:

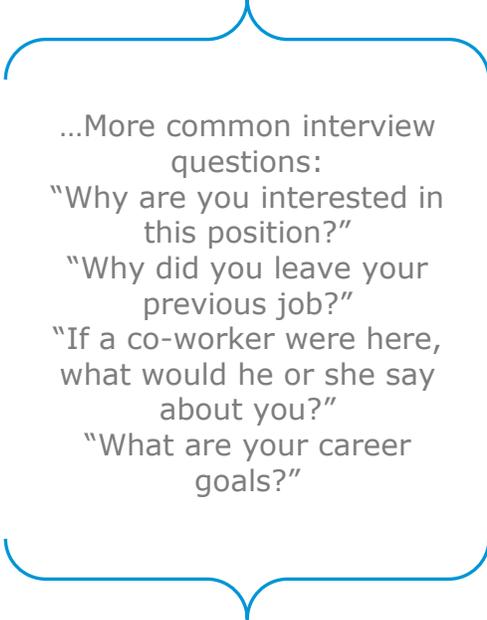
1. Co-workers and members of your team
2. Bosses
3. College professors
4. Mentors
5. Clients
6. Association leaders

- Nowadays, most companies don't request letters of reference. Instead, they ask for a list of references with their contact information and will call them to inquire about you.
- Asking your current boss for a reference might be uncomfortable if you plan on leaving your job. The best people to ask for a reference are often others on your team (your "peers") and people who recently left the company, who probably understand your situation.
- Every time you switch jobs, be sure to ask potential references if you can list them as a reference in the future. This way, you won't need to dig back into your files of past contacts to secure references.
- Have a list of references ready in case a potential employer asks for them. Bring this list to interviews.

- The references you use for each job application may differ. For example, if a job requires creative thinking, you might list a reference that worked with you on creative projects.
- In addition to obtaining permission to use someone as a reference, let him or her know when you have given a company his or her name, so he or she is prepared.
- If somebody sounds unenthusiastic when you ask him or her to be a reference, make note of it, and avoid giving his or her name to employers.
- If you get the job, let your references know by writing a thank-you note.

5. Interview Advice

- Always dress professionally.
- Research the company, industry, and job. Show you are interested by being prepared.
- Research the most common interview questions ahead of time and brainstorm answers for these. These questions include “Tell me about yourself,” “What are your strengths,” and “What are your weaknesses.”
- Practice cutting unnecessary words, such as “um” and “like,” from your vocabulary.
- Bring copies of your resume and cover letter, in case the interviewer(s) would like to see them again.
- Greet the receptionist and treat him or her, along with all the other employees at the company, with respect.
- Research has shown that first impressions make a big impact on how interviewers perceive you for the rest of the interview. Make the most of the initial contact by smiling genuinely, appearing confident, and giving a firm handshake.
- Maintain eye contact not only when you are speaking, but also when the interviewer is talking to you as well. This shows you are paying attention.
- When asked broad questions, such as “Tell me about yourself,” don’t give a summary of your life. Instead, talk about interests and experiences that make you the best candidate for the job.
- Keep your answers focused. After you have answered the question, refrain from babbling on.
- If you receive a particularly hard question, take a deep breath and think carefully. It’s okay to take a brief pause to think about your answer. Additionally, echoing the question can buy you a few extra seconds. For instance, if you are asked “What’s the most difficult project you’ve managed,” you can begin answering by saying, “I think the most difficult project I’ve managed over the years was...”
- Never speak negatively about former employers.
- The interview is not the time to be modest. Sell yourself. Don’t drop hints about your accomplishments; state them outright.
- Prepare some questions to ask about the job or company. Most interviewers will ask if you have any questions at the end of an interview. Not having any questions shows a lack of interest.



...More common interview questions:
 “Why are you interested in this position?”
 “Why did you leave your previous job?”
 “If a co-worker were here, what would he or she say about you?”
 “What are your career goals?”

- After the interview, send a thank-you note or email to the person who interviewed you, thanking him or her for his or her time and re-expressing your interest in the position and hearing back from the company.

6. Job Fair Advice

- Dress professionally, as if you were going to a job interview.
- Research the companies and organizations that will be at the fair beforehand.
- Have a list of a couple of companies and organizations that you would like to visit first.
- Bring many copies of your cover letter and resume to give to employers.
- Think of smart questions to ask. Many people go to career fairs, and a question like “Is your company changing its strategies given the latest projections for growth in India” is far more memorable and interesting than a question like “What’s working at your company like.”
- Have an elevator pitch prepared. An elevator pitch is a brief (around 30 seconds to a minute) statement of who you are (ie. your degree, most recent job), the type of opportunity you are looking for (ie. a managerial position, international business experience), your biggest achievements (ie. big projects you have accomplished, events you ran), and your skills (ie. fluency in a language, HTML knowledge).
- While you are waiting in line, why not network with the other jobseekers? Yes, you may be competing for the same position, but it never hurts to have extra contacts.
- Ask for name cards from the people you speak to. You never know when their contact information may come in handy.
- Write a follow-up email to the employers you met with, thanking him or her for his or her time.



We know you like to seek out job search advice because you’re reading this document. It might also help to speak with people you know who have recently found a job or are currently looking and share advice, insights, and experiences with them.



7. General Advice

- Create a personal brand that can help you develop a strong, memorable image during the job search. Your personal brand includes your personality and background, as well as your skills and experiences. It is the identity you wish to project on employers that is reflected in your job search documents as well as your social media accounts.
- Maintain a professional presence with appropriate email addresses and voicemail recordings.
- Join associations and networks that might help you in your job search, such as school alumni associations and industry-related organizations.
- Understand that when companies are looking to hire, recruiters first look for referrals, then people in their networks, and *then* job boards and ads. Thus, when searching for a job, look within your network of contacts first.
- Maintaining an updated blog or Twitter account may help you in your job search. Employers often Google potential hires, so write entries and Tweets knowing they could be the first impression a recruiter gets of you.

- If you're lacking work experience, think of volunteer activities, internships, and side projects that have prepared you for a job. Similarly, if you cannot find a job due to your lack of experience, try doing volunteering, an internship, or a freelance project first.
- If your skills are out of date, consider getting training or taking a class.
- If there is a gap or period of inactivity in your experiences, address it briefly by stating your reason for being away from work.
- If a specific aspect of your job search is unsuccessful (for instance, if your resume is constantly being ignored), take the time to improve it instead of continuing to use it.
- Don't let rejections discourage you. If you are rejected and are comfortable with speaking to your interviewer, give him or her a call (or send an e-mail) asking what you could improve on.

8. Evaluating Job Offers

- Keep in mind that while a job may offer a low salary, it may include an extensive benefits package (ie. health care, funding assistance for education).
 - If you would like to negotiate any part of your job offer with an employer, first ask whether they are flexible when it comes to discussing the offer.
 - Let a potential employer know about any relocation costs, tuition costs, or high living expenses that might stand in the way of you and the job. These circumstances sometimes convince employers to offer a higher salary.
 - If you seek to renegotiate an offer, know exactly what you want and let employers know the specifics of what you need.
 - Take into account the long-term benefits of different job offers, such as the opportunity for career growth, industry projections, and retirement benefits.
- Understand what sort of work-life balance and lifestyle you seek. Do you want a job that consists of longer hours and higher pay, or one with more weeks off but lower pay? Do you prefer jobs with frequent travel? What sort of workplace culture are you looking for?

Networking is probably the most important thing you can do to land a job. For advice on networking, check out "Networking Secrets" in our Workforce1 Resource Library.

II. Tips based on your education

Your level of education may affect the resources you have and the job search strategy you choose. Read the tips under the heading that best describes your level of education to learn how to make the most of your credentials.

1. High school diploma or GED

- Your resume must be outstanding and emphasize your experience, especially what you accomplished and the value you would bring to any position.
- Not having a diploma might make you look worse on paper, but that doesn't prevent you from looking great in-person. Network whenever you can to insure people know about your personality and work ethic before they know that you do not have a college degree.
- Get certified in areas related to the jobs you are looking for.
- Since extensive experience can convince employers to overlook a lack of college degree, take on work-related experiences – paid and unpaid – whenever possible, including volunteer activities, internships, part-time jobs, seasonal jobs, and freelance projects.
- Sometimes, a college degree may be a good investment. Check out local colleges and universities that offer evening classes so you can obtain a degree while working. Some institutions even have online degree programs.



Certifications can usually help you increase your salary, whether you have a college degree or not. Here are some out-of-the-box certifications:

1. Bartending license
2. Massage therapy certification
3. Dog training certification
4. Certificate in ultrasound technology
5. TEFL (Teaching English as a foreign language) certificate

2. College degree

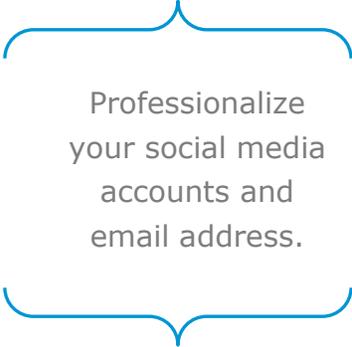
- What's just as valuable as your degree is your college's career center. College career centers have a wealth of resources that are usually accessible to alumni as well as current students. Visit your college's career center for personal counseling, resume help, mock interviews, and more.
- Don't be afraid to apply for jobs that aren't directly related to your major. The skills you acquired during college make just a big of a difference as your major (ie. problem-solving, writing, analytical).
- Join your school's alumni network and build contacts with other graduates from your school.
- Go to your college's networking events. Alumni and fellow graduates are often willing to help each other due to their common alma mater.
- While college degrees typically qualify you for higher-paying and higher-level jobs, remember that in a bleak economy, everyone has difficulty finding work. While looking for the right job, don't be afraid to keep yourself occupied through volunteer activities, internships, part-time jobs, seasonal jobs, freelance projects, and even lower-paying jobs. Who knows what transferable skills you might acquire.

III. Tips based on your stage in life

Your level of experience and career goals affect not only how you go about finding a job, but also the employer's perception of you. These tips help you identify your strengths and weaknesses and allow you to prepare job search strategies based on your stage in life.

1. Advice for recent college graduates

- Get a LinkedIn account.
- When communicating with potential employers, downplay a lack of "real-world" experience by emphasizing skills you may have learned outside the classroom (ie. extracurriculars, campus jobs).
- As you probably have limited work experience, it's okay to ask professors and peers to be your references. Make sure to ask people who know about your work ethic and personal qualities.
- Though internships seem to be a more popular option for people who are still in college, there are many companies that hire college graduates as interns. An internship can lead to a job offer, as there are even companies that make hires exclusively from their pool of interns.



Professionalize
your social media
accounts and
email address.

2. Advice for career changes

- Before changing careers, ask yourself whether you are displeased with your current job or your overall career and industry.
- Research the new career and industry you are pursuing.
- On your resume and during interviews, emphasize transferable skills that make you a versatile employee.
- Consider tweaking your personal brand to be on par with your change in career.
- If you are working in a large company or organization, see if there is an available position in the field you're interested in within your current company or organization. This greatly improves your chance of getting the job, as internal referrals are one of the first methods recruiters use to fill a position.
- Find out what your current and past positions lack and be sure to find a job that satisfies you in those areas.
- View your career change as a new opportunity to do things you have never done before and accomplish your personal mission. You are not leaving your current job because you dislike it. You are finding a new job because it is more fulfilling.

3. Advice for people over 50

- Be up-to-date with current technology. For instance, many occupations require knowledge of social media and Internet search engines.
- Give social media a try. Having a Twitter, Facebook, blog, and/or LinkedIn may signal to employers that you are flexible and open to change.

- Many older workers try to downplay their age on their resume. For instance, some don't list the year of their college graduation. Similarly, emphasize your most recent job experiences and don't be afraid to leave out experiences that took place 15 or more years ago.
- If you haven't networked in awhile, start networking and diversify your contacts.
- Be mentally prepared for a longer job search period, as it takes longer for those over 50 to find a job compared to those in their 20s.