

A Social Job Search Process

An effective job search process is usually based on clear goals and research. Research involves getting out to meet people who are actually doing the job you target and learning from them about industry challenges, employer expectations and working conditions.

While most job search approaches emphasize the résumé and adapting the résumé to get through applicant screening processes, the résumé is **not** central to an effective job search. Placement agencies, College and University Placement offices, Online mechanisms such as Monster and Indeed and companies offering to write your résumé for you for money all emphasize the résumé, since, for them, it is a product that they can manage. You may find that you get a job without finishing your perfect résumé.

A small number of people actually get jobs by responding to job advertisements alone. But this is a difficult and discouraging process. You apply for jobs and rarely get a response or an invitation to an interview. A social process, like the one outlined below, is much better for the morale and, more importantly, is much more likely to put you in a job you fit.



An effective job search probably involves 10 steps:

1. **Set Clear goals.** While you will want to say that you can do 35 things, focus your job search on specific jobs and industries. This will give you a focus to your process.
2. **Develop a Personal Introduction.** Your personal introduction will be your key to meeting people in your job search. Tell people what you are and what you can do for them. Use numbers and examples. Keep it to 30 - 45 seconds. You probably want also to have a simple business card.

3. **Identify Your Career Preferences.** Do you want to work for a large company or a small one? Do you want specific direction or more of a free hand in projects? Do you want a job you can leave at the office? In Ottawa or elsewhere? How far do you want to travel to work? How does your work fit with your family life? This is about the kind of job you are looking for.
4. **Identify Best Fit Companies.** In light of your preferences, identify companies that are likely targets for you. Find out what you can online about these companies and about the general environment: use LinkedIn, visit Sector sites, read business news. As you sign up for LinkedIn, use the search tools only: *Do not complete your LinkedIn Profile at this point. All you need is a headline consistent with your Personal Introduction.*
5. **Identify Professionals to whom you can speak.** Your plan is to have "Research Interviews" with professionals who are actually doing the job(s) you target. Use LinkedIn Advanced Search to find people. Use your connections to get introductions or approach people yourself. You'll find most people are glad to help if you ask for help with job search and fit and don't ask them for a job. As you find people, note how they describe themselves, organizations for which they work, other people who have been found using the same search terms.
6. **Plan your Research Interview.** Prepare questions. Start with your personal introduction and very general questions. Get more specific as the relationship develops. At the end, thank, and be sure to ask if the person you have met can recommend other people to whom you should speak.
7. **Conduct Research Interviews.** You probably only need to plan 5 - 8 interviews in order to get an excellent understanding of your target(s). Review what you have learned. You may find, that someone has already offered you a job as you conduct your interviews. *Do not take your résumé to the research interview. You want the person to talk to *you*, not focus on your résumé. If the person wants to see your résumé, you can easily send a copy afterwards, with your Thank You note.*
8. **Prepare your LinkedIn Profile and Résumé.** In light of what you have learned from your research interviews, you are now in a good position to write a good résumé and LinkedIn profile.
9. **Develop Job Applications.** As you apply for jobs, use the T-table approach in your letter *and* résumé. Left column: What the employer is looking for (using the employer's terms). Right column: Your (specific and concrete) qualifications.
10. **Succeed at your new job.** You will be invited to interviews and you will be successful. Look at all the interview practice you've had with your research interviews!

What's that about résumé help in the diagram? The point there is that adapting your résumé to agree with a job advertisements comes out of left field: it is an attempt to jump into the process without doing the necessary planning and research. Even if you are successful, you're likely to end up with a job that isn't a good fit.

