

Job Search Checklist

Name _____

1. Do you have a professional-looking cover letter and resume? Yes No
2. Do you have portfolio documentation? Yes No
3. Are you professional in your dress and appearance? Yes No

List 7 (+/- 2) companies that you are prepared to contact in person immediately.

_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____

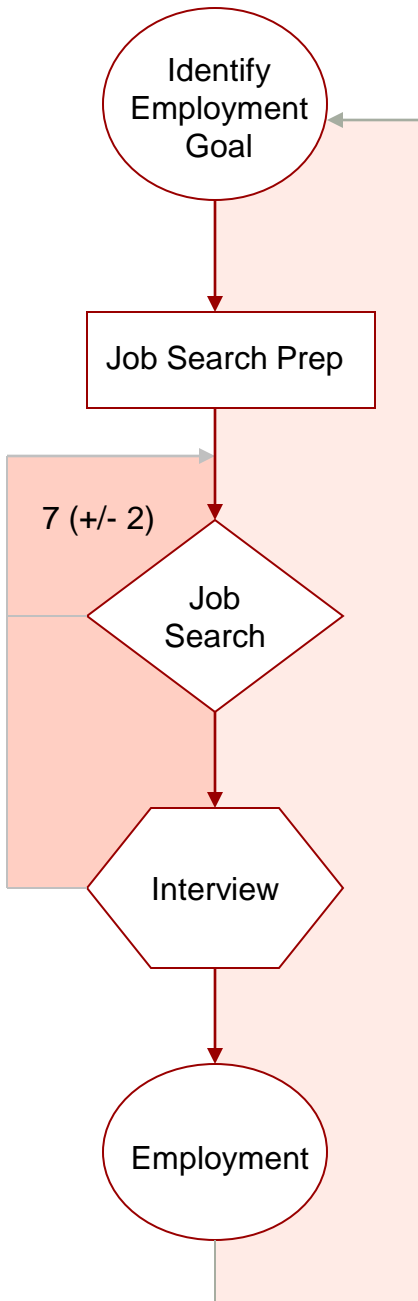
What skills, education and experience do you wish to highlight during your initial meeting and potential interview?

_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____

My best 30 second pitch:

The Job Search Blueprint

The flowchart depicted on this page illustrates the steps in a well-organized job search. This system supports up to a 4 month active job search (based on 100 employers). Research shows that this is average amount of time it takes a person to reestablish employment after leaving a job.



Your employment goal should compliment your career goal. It could be the final stage of your career plan or a step towards your career development in which you are using employment to develop the skills/experience you require.

Job search preparation includes;

- Cover Letter
- Resume
- References
- Portfolio
- Pitch
- Generate a list of 100 potential employers

The shaded zone represents your active job search of 7 (+/-2) employers that you are actively communicating through cold calls, follow-ups and networking. Once they grant you an interview and you are waiting for a call, they are NO LONGER part of your active job search list. Add a new company to your shortlist (from your list of 100 employers).

Prepare for your interview and follow-up with employer. Continue your active job search while waiting for a decision.

Once you are offered the job, the negotiation phase begins (salary, benefits, etc)

The final step in this process results in you being hired. Congratulations!

The cycle restarts once you decide you want to seek a promotion within the company or decide you want a new job.

This workshop will examine each step in more detail.

Job Search Preparation

Before you contact any employers, you need to prepare for your job search.

As was stated on the previous page, many people approach their job search like a fishing expedition. They flood the market with resumes and wait for a “bite” from an employer. Most of the time they are not very discerning and take whatever job comes their way.

Sometimes financial need dictates that people will accept jobs to meet their financial obligations, which is fine provided it is a step in one’s overall career growth. Just don’t settle into a “dead-end” job.

If you want the best job for you, the harsh reality is that you will have to work for it. An effective job search strategy requires a lot of time, preparation and commitment if you want the end result you deserve.

The next few pages will cover the marketing tools you will need to communicate to employers why you would be an asset to their organization and why you are the best candidate for the job.

Job search preparation includes;

- Cover Letter/Resume
- References
- Portfolio
- Pitch
- Generate a list of 100 potential employers

What you will need;

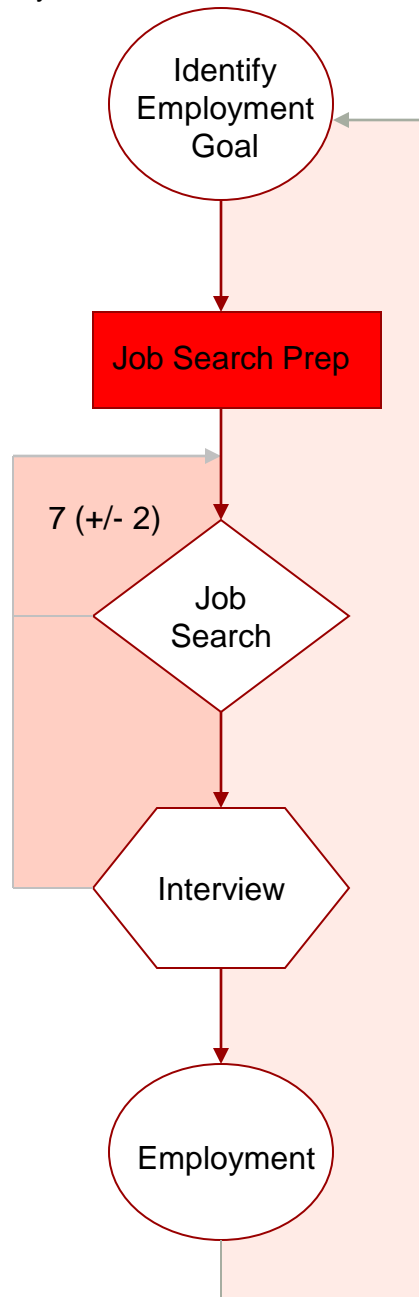
A computer with internet access

Listings of local employers

- telephone book
- local board of trade/chamber of commerce websites

Collect applicable items for your portfolio

- Diplomas and certificates
- Work samples
- Reference letters
- Achievement awards



Cover Letter

Your name
Address

Employer's name
Address

Date

Re: Job position and/or competition number

Dear _____

I am sending you this resume to apply for the position of...

As my attached resume indicates, I have many years of experience in this industry. For the past _ years, I held the position of _____ at ABC Company....

I graduated from _____ with a degree in _____ and I believe with my combination of experience and education I can positively contribute to the ongoing success of your organization.

I would welcome the opportunity to meet with you to discuss this opportunity in more detail. Please feel free to contact me at (555) 555-5555 or email@email.com

Sincerely,

(Print name)

Enclosures (2)

Your full mailing address.

Most effective if you can include the person's name and job title.

Helps to make sure your application is directed to the right people. This is especially important if you are applying to big companies.

The body of the cover letter should contain;

1. An introduction stating the position to which you are applying.
2. A brief outline of the skills you have that make you the best candidate for the job
3. A request for interview or extend an offer for the employer to contact you

Write your signature in pen and have your name printed below if your signature is not legible.

Notifies the employer there are other documents attached.

A cover letter is an excellent way to introduce yourself to an employer. It allows you to personalize the application process and talk to the employer. The cover letter may also provide an opportunity to emphasize certain skills or provide a more detailed explanation of information contained on your resume.

A few key points about creating an effective cover letter.

- Keep it concise. No more than one page and keep your information well organized and to the point. A minimum of three paragraphs and a maximum of five is a good rule of thumb.
- Be very clear on the type of job you are seeking if you are not responding to a specific job posting. **Don't tell an employer you are willing to take any job.** In situations where you are responding to a job posting, indicate where you saw the ad and include any competition numbers that may appear in the ad.

1. **No generic cover letters.** Customize each letter to make it specific to the job you are seeking. It doesn't mean every cover letter has to be completely different, but make sure the information you include matches the company to which you are applying.
2. You could show that you are familiar with the company by finding appropriate information in annual reports, articles and make reference to it in your letter. For example, make reference to the fact you want to work for the company because they have been rated the top place to work in Canada in XYZ magazine.
3. Do not try to summarize your entire résumé in the cover letter. Emphasize only those skills, education and experiences that most directly relate to the position to which you are applying. In instances where it is not readily apparent how your skill sets match the qualifications required for the job, make sure you are very clear in explaining the connection.
4. Don't forget to include key selling points. List your achievements and indicate how these can positively contribute to the success of the company
5. Don't oversell your abilities. Be honest. Confidently present your strong points but do not exaggerate your training, skills or experience.
6. Salary expectations and other benefits you are seeking (medical benefits, vacation, etc) do not belong in a cover letter.
7. There is no need to use special stationary as plain white paper looks the most professional. Many companies scan cover letters and résumés to store them in their electronic databases and dispose of the hard copies. Coloured or textured paper doesn't always scan, fax or photocopy well.
8. Use common fonts (Times New Roman, Arial, Courier) and sizes (10 to 12) in your cover letter. If it is too hard for an employer to read or can't be "read" using computer processing engines, your application will be discarded.
9. If you tell an employer in your cover letter you will do a follow-up to your application, make sure that you do.
10. Proof read your cover letter for grammatical and spelling errors.

Resources

The following websites can provide cover letter samples and links to many free resources on how to create a cover letter.

The Work Room: <http://www.careersthathwork.ca>

Quintessential Careers: <http://www.quintcareers.com/>

Resume

Your name ←
Contact info

Qualifications ←

- Strongest/most job relevant skill you possess
- Second strongest job relevant skill you possess
- etc

Relevant Work Experience ←

Job Title	Company Name	Dates Employed
Outline relevant skills/experiences using action verbs and highlighting achievements.		
"Developed marketing campaigns for a client base of 200 companies. Won regional sales awards for 4 consecutive years."		

Education ←

Degree/Certification	Institution Name	Dates Attended
List relevant programs, courses and training that proves you have the credentials that match the job position.		

Professional Affiliations or Special Accomplishments ←

If applicable

Volunteer Experience

If applicable

References ←

Available upon request

Your name should stand out.

Short bullet list of the skills you want to highlight

Present your job history in reverse chronological order starting most your most recent job first.

Try to relate your work experience to the qualifications required for the job you seek. Work experience does not have to be limited to paid employment.

Present your educational background in reverse chronological order starting with your most recent training experience first.

You may want a separate section to highlight any professional organizations, committees or unions you belong to.

Usually you do not include the contact info for your references on your resume, but if you choose to do so, add 3 professional references.

The résumé is designed to help you obtain an interview. A successful résumé requires many hours of preparation, but it is worth the effort. Also, it is preferable to work on your résumé yourself, as you are better able to personalize it. When you have completed your draft, you may ask someone more experienced to review it.

Everyone needs a résumé that professionally represents who they are. It must be concise and not contain unnecessary information. Generally, two pages are ideal but if it takes an additional page to effectively market yourself then don't exclude important information for the sake of obtaining a two page document.

Preparing an asset inventory (list of all your skills) in advance is recommended to help you design a personalized résumé quickly and easily for every position for which you apply.

Résumé Checklist

General Information:

- ✓ Is your resume up to date?
- ✓ Have you obtained people willing to act as references for you?
- ✓ Has your résumé been reviewed by an Employment Counsellor or someone else?

First Impression:

- ✓ Does your resume look professional?
- ✓ Good use of space/text not too compressed?
- ✓ Information is easily located (ie: job titles are clear)?
- ✓ Errors in spelling, grammar, punctuation?
- ✓ No useless or unnecessary information?
- ✓ Style is simple and direct and preferably 2 pages in length?

Information to exclude from your résumé:

- X Age, sex, race, religion or ethnicity.
- X Marital status, family situation (number of children, their ages, your spouse's name)
- X Social Insurance Number
- X A photograph (unless it is an industry that requires it such as modeling).

Final thoughts:

- When you are designing your résumé, try to relate your past job duties and education to the job to which you are applying to illustrate you are already skilled and ready to perform immediately on the job.
- Résumés should be modified or adapted to each position to which you apply.
- There is no such thing as a “perfect” resume. If you follow these guidelines and produce a resume you are proud to hand out, you will get a good result.

Resources

The following websites can provide résumé samples and links to many free resources on how to create a résumé .

The Work Room: <http://www.careerthatwork.ca>

Quintessential Careers: <http://www.quintcareers.com/>

References

A common concern for job seekers is deciding if they should include a list of references on their resume.

If a person did a little research on this topic they would find advocates that would support the inclusion of references in a resume as well as those who strongly oppose the practice. Basically, it is a personal decision. If it makes sense in your overall marketing strategy, include them.

Here are a few pros and cons of including references with your resume;

Pros

- Some employers request references as part of the application process. Some companies still have a preference for seeing references even if they don't formally request them.
- If you have very influential references or references that work in key positions within the company to which you are applying, it may help you get to the interview stage quicker.
- If you don't have a lot of work experience or skills to include on a resume.

Cons

- You may be unaware that an employer may have a negative impression or past experience with a reference you provide which could unfairly bias their opinion of you.
- You may not want your current employer to know you are looking for other employment.
- You referees may want to have control where their contact information is released and may ask that you inform them ahead of time where you will be applying.
- A referee may change their mind in being a reference for you or may change their contact information without your knowledge.

A few important tips on having effective references;

Ask your referee if they would act as a reference for you. Don't assume they will automatically give you a good reference.

Keep your referee updated as to the places/job positions to which you are applying. It is a good idea to provide them with a copy of your resume.

Your references should know you in a professional capacity and have direct knowledge of your work.

If you suspect that a referee may not be giving you a good reference why not perform a little test? Ask someone to contact them on your behalf to determine if they are giving you a good reference or not and provide you with feedback. Some job placement agencies and employment counsellors will assist you in this process.

Write a 30 second introduction for yourself.

Example:

“Hi, my name is _____. I am contacting you because I am interested in working as a _____ within your organization. I believe I would be an excellent candidate for this position as I have a degree in _____ and the following skill sets; _____, _____ and _____. I have also experience in this line of work in my past job as _____ with _____ (company). I wonder if I could set up a meeting with you to discuss this opportunity further?”

This could be used for cold calls or meeting an employer for the first time. Include the purpose of your contact, job position you are seeking and a couple of skills you have that make you a good candidate for the job. Ask if you can leave a resume or contact information.

Write a 60 second “pitch”. This would be used in an interview setting or a subsequent meeting with an employer. This would include the same information as the 30 second pitch, but with a little more background information on some of your accomplishments and why you want to work for the (what can you do for them).

Benefits;

This helps prevent nervousness when meeting a potential employer for the first time and/or making cold calls. Conveys a confident, professional first impression.

Helps a job seeker narrow down the important skill sets they wish to highlight when talking to an employer.

The job search process is a marketing strategy. The job seeker is the “product” being marketed to employers. Like any product being marketed, it will only generate interest and be purchased if the public can identify with it and perceive that it can benefit them in some way. The pitch is the “ad” by which an employer can quickly evaluate if they are interested in the job seeker as a potential employee. A great pitch can really help encourage the employer to grant an interview.

However...

The pitch must be an accurate and sincere reflection of you. Don't not over hype your skills or exaggerate your confidence in your approach. Just be yourself.

Portfolio

The creation of a professional career portfolios is a very common practice in some industries.

Photography, modelling, architecture, interior design and education are only a small sample of industries that use portfolios as part of the hiring and career advancement process. The benefits of creating and maintaining a professional portfolio are that it provides evidence of credentials as well as showcases the employees skills to a prospective employer.

A portfolio is not a scrap book. It should not be an artistic expression of a person's personal and professional life. A simple binder containing relevant career-related material such as diplomas, certification, references and extra resumes will suffice.

Many job seekers report the benefits of having a portfolio with them when they go for interviews.

- The information immediately available if an employer requests proof of their credentials.
- Boosts confidence since preparing the portfolio has also prepared them for interviewing.
- Adds a professional touch that demonstrates this job is part of the person's career development and they are really motivated to work for the employer.
- In many cases it encourages conversation as an employer may wish to review the portfolio as a supplement to the interview process. This allows the employer to get to know the candidate better.

There is no expectation that a job seeker show their portfolio to the employer during the interview process and in many cases they may not even wish to see it. This is simply a tool/strategy you have ready in case there is an opportunity to use it effectively.

This is a valuable tool if you are self employed or seeking contract/temporary work assignments. Potential clients and employers may request samples of your work and areas of expertise. You may even outshine other candidates by having the opportunity to showcase your work instead of merely describing it.

A portfolio can help you shape your overall career. Periodically reviewing its contents may help you see entrepreneurial opportunities, areas where you may want to build new skill sets and discover how your skills, education and experience may be combined in new ways and towards new career endeavors.

Targeted Employers

The final step in preparing for your job search is knowing where you intend to search.

To encourage the best result from your efforts in the shortest possible amount of time is to target only those places you would like to work.

Start by compiling a list of **100 employers** that you would like to work for. If you live in a rural or smaller geographical area, you may have to expand your potential job search parameters beyond your immediate community.

You may want to use the phone book, local business directories and the internet to start building your list.

The reason for starting with a list of 100 employers is that it will support a 3-4 month active job search. This is the average amount of time it takes a person to secure employment in today's job market. Other factors such as the economy, the job seekers skill set and the type of job being sought can all effect the time frame. If the job search exhausts the 100 employers on the list, find more and/or revisit some of those on your original list.

Once you have your list complete, select 7 companies you will start cold calling. You are able to add or subtract 2 companies from this list depending on your level of comfort in this process but do not exceed 9 or have fewer than 5.

These 7 (+/-2) companies that you have selected are your "active leads". Once you contact a potential employer, you need to determine if you are going to continue following up with this employer to try to get an interview. If you are willing to do that, the employer stays "active".

If the employer indicates they are not hiring, you would designate the employer as "inactive". Cross them off your list and select another.

If the employer does grant you an interview and you are waiting to hear back from them, they are also designated as "inactive" because there is nothing else you can do with this employer until you are hired or informed that your interview was not successful. Select another employer from your list.

At any given time in the process, the goal is to juggle 7 (+/-2) "active leads". This means that you are frequently contacting them to try and secure an interview.

Keep this process up until you have accepted a job offer. Don't forget to keep checking internet job boards and newspapers for job postings. Add applications to job postings as "extras" over and above this strategy.

Hopefully, you will be successful by the time you reach the end of your list of 100 employers. If you are working in a very specialized field or the area in which you live is experiencing an economic downturn, this process may take longer than you had anticipated. If this happens, don't get discouraged and create a new list of 100 employers and repeat the above process.

You will be successful! Have faith and stick to the plan.

Targeted Employers

Employer Contact	Employer Contact
Company Name _____ Address _____ Date visited _____ Job type/position _____ Name/telephone # of contact: _____ _____ Closing Date of competition: _____ Comment/Follow-up: _____ _____ _____ (Eg. I will call to follow up, they are hiring later, they suggested another location,	Company Name _____ Address _____ Date visited _____ Job type/position _____ Name/telephone # of contact: _____ _____ Closing Date of competition: _____ Comment/Follow-up: _____ _____ _____ (Eg. I will call to follow up, they are hiring later, they suggested another location,
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