

CHAPTER 38

SEARCHING AND FINDING JOBS

NETWORKING IS KEY TO FINDING JOBS

The next step in the job search process, as shown in Figure 38-1, is finding job opportunities. Research conducted by Drake Beam Morin, Inc. has shown that networking is key to the job search process. Their research has shown the following statistics on how people find jobs.

Face-to-face people networking	70%
Using search firms	15%
Sending targeted mailings	10%
Answering ads	5%

This data indicates a person is nearly five times more likely to find a job through face-to-face people networking than any other means. So with this in mind, where should you be looking and networking? *Everywhere.*

DEVELOP A 30-SECOND COMMERCIAL AND CONTACT CARD

Before you start networking you need two essential items: a 30-second commercial about yourself and some type of business card you can leave with a potential contact so that they can contact you. You need to have a 30-second commercial that highlights your skills, background, and experience that you can share with people. It should be short and directly to the point highlighting the most impressive features about you. Developing this commercial takes time and a good tip is to prepare and practice many, many, times so that it comes off natural and like second nature to you.

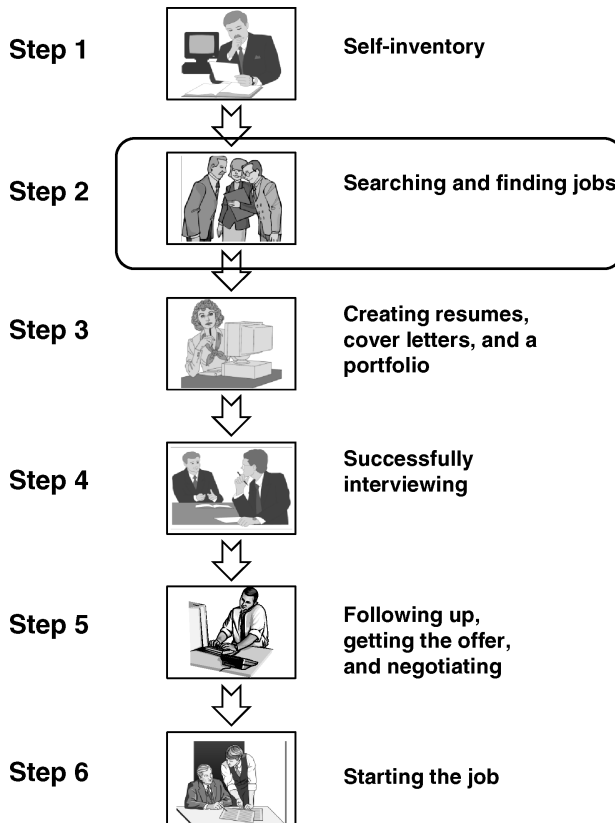


FIGURE 38-1 Job search process step 2—searching and finding jobs.

In addition, you will need a business card with all your contact information. If you are unemployed, create your own business card with your contact information on it. The cards should list your name, title, areas of expertise, and contact information including phone number and email address.

BEST PLACES TO PEOPLE NETWORK TO FIND JOBS

Business Associates. This is the first place you should consider contacting when you start looking for a new job. These people already know you and you have an established line of communication with them. Business associates include your suppliers, vendors, subcontractors, and customers you have worked with. You more than likely already have all their phone numbers and email addresses. It is easy to approach them. All you have to say is that you are looking for a new job and wondering if they have an opening at their company. If they do not know of any openings, then ask who they know that might know of job openings.

► **Career Tip.** Every contact leads to another contact.

Technical Societies Members. Contact any professional societies that you belong to or attend one as a guest to see if you would have interest in joining. Most technical societies allow you to attend their local meeting even if you are not a member. Once at the meeting network and explore the opportunities. Some technical societies even have free job placement services that are available to members and have a job posting website.

College Alumni Association. If you are still living in the community where you attended college then contact the alumni association and, if possible, attend meetings.

Attend Trade Shows. If you live near a major convention center, go online and look up the planned trade shows for the year. Most convention centers will list their planned events and give you contact information about the show and exhibitors. You can use this information in advance to contact companies about jobs even before the show. Some trade shows also have a job posting area. Post your name, technical expertise, and contact information. If companies in the show have job postings, then make contact during the show. Go prepared to discuss your qualifications and bring a complete resume package and portfolio.

Attend Job Fairs. Many technical societies and search firms sponsor job fairs to fill open positions. There is no better place to go than a job fair where employers with jobs are easy to approach and located all in one spot at one time.

Job Placement Center. If the company that laid you off has a job placement center, utilize it. These centers are excellent for picking up leads. They often have a large number of free trade journals and newspapers for you to review. In addition, other people using the center will often share information about who is hiring and who is not. Some job placement centers even provide staff to help you with resume writing and free use of phones. Make sure you take full advantage of this service if it is available to you and network with others using the center.

Contact Federal and State Employment Agencies. During economic downturns this is where many companies send their job listings first. Most agencies have a resume posting capability and update the job posting list weekly. In addition, they have many free career services available for you including counseling.

Your Friends and Neighbors. Don't forget about your friends and neighbors; they are another means to find jobs. Your neighbors and friends may not have the same technical background as you, but their company may need people like you. It doesn't hurt to casually mention that you are looking and ask if their company is hiring people with your skills. Once again, if they do not know, then ask if they could put you in contact with someone who might know.

HOW TO UTILIZE SEARCH FIRMS TO FIND JOBS

Using search firms has the next highest success rate for finding jobs. Your best and safest way to approach selecting a search firm is to find someone who has recently found a job utilizing a search firm. Ask them who they would recommend for you.

If you are left to select a job search firm on your own then you should consider several important aspects prior to selecting one. Here are some questions that are recommended for you to ask prior to selecting a job search firm.

1. What area of technical expertise do they represent? Do they have expertise and clientele in your technical area of expertise?
2. What companies do they have personal contacts with?
3. How many people does the agent represent at any given time?
4. How many people have they placed in the last year?
5. Are they local only or a national firm?
6. Do they charge you a fee? If so how do they charge?
7. How are resumes handled? Online? Can you update your resume for each submittal job ad? How often do they allow you to update your resume?
8. Do they have any job postings they are trying to fill immediately that are directly related to your technical area?
9. Does their company provide any support for resume writing or interviewing?
10. Will they disclose who they are submitting your resume to?

Running through these questions with a job search firm prior to selecting one will give you a much better chance of being successful. Those employment agencies that specialize in your area are the best. You will usually find these agencies advertised in technical trade journals or by searching online. Selecting and posting your resume with two or more job search firms can be a good idea, if the firms service totally different industries. However, you should be careful if you elect to post your resume with several firms since this can backfire for several different reasons. One example is when a company gets your resume from several different head-hunters. This can complicate the situation. The second is that if other head-hunters find out that someone else is pushing your resume around they may drop you.

Once you have selected a job search firm and posted your resume with them, you will need to follow up weekly to keep your resume on the top of the recruiter's pile. Simply submitting your resume and sitting back to wait for someone to call does not work.

SENDING TARGETED MAILINGS

The best response to a hot lead you discovered through your networking is usually to send a targeted email directly to the individual. The target email means that you refer to the person in the email and attach a cover letter and resume that has been updated directly for the position available. This rapid response shows that you are definitely interested and it does not hurt to follow up with a phone call just to make sure the individual's SPAM blocker did not intercept your email or you had a bad email address. The key here is rapid response, custom tailoring your email to the person, and updating your resume for the specific job opening. If you feel comfortable enough, you might want to contact the individual in advance of sending your package and get their input on what to emphasize on your resume.

ANSWERING NEWSPAPER ADS

In a down economy the number of job ads significantly drops. However, newspapers are still a good source to checkout. Contact the major newspapers in the cities you are interested in working in and get a subscription to the Sunday Want Ads only. You can have them mail you a copy or go online and sign up for an electronic subscription. In addition to newspapers, trade journals are another good source for finding jobs but usually these are only published monthly.

INTERNET SEARCHING

There are many venues to finding job postings online. You can post your resume to such websites as monster.com or explore individual company websites for job posting. These methods, according to the data, have the lowest chances of success but are still considered worth doing. When you post your resume to a website, you can be assured that no less than 10,000 others are on the website or in the data bank. When a corporation runs an ad in a newspaper or has a listing on their website, they often receive in excess of 500 resumes for the posting. So your chances of being selected are usually very small unless you have the outstanding qualifications.

In addition, many companies post job openings that are considered "bait" job openings on their company website. This means that companies have these generic positions posted continually on their website and wait for the "golden nugget" resume to be submitted. This is a resume from an engineer that is exactly what they are looking for and has all the highly desirable skills and capabilities plus more.

These are just a few of the avenues available to you to find job opportunities. I'm sure that when you put your mind to it you can think of at least a half dozen more ways to generate job leads. I'm also confident that if you

really put the effort into it, you will quickly find there are more job opportunities than you thought. You will probably have to sort through the listings and leads and prioritize which ones you consider the best. If you get to this stage you are doing all the right things, which brings us to the next tip in doing job searches.

MAINTAIN A CONTACT NOTEBOOK

Once you start your job search in earnest, you will be talking to many different people hopefully every day. You will receive many tips or contacts that you will need to follow up on. To do this you will need to create a contact notebook. A contact notebook contains all the vital information you have about your leads. It should contain the following information as a minimum:

1. Name of contact
2. Company
3. Phone number, email, and website
4. Position(s) you are considering
5. Date you submitted cover letter and resume
6. Adhere their business card to a page
7. Journal of notes on these conversations that transpired with dates and times
8. List of next actions with this contact.

If you are disciplined to record conversations and organized so that you can easily retrieve the information, this is going to save you time and go a long way in shortening your time to your next job. The contact notebook is extremely valuable in the event you are suddenly called and you need to refresh your memory on what has transpired in the past. One final reason for keeping a contact notebook is to share your contact information with others who may be looking. If you have a contact that is looking to hire but your qualification turns out not to be a match, why not share it with someone else whose qualifications may be a better match. You never know when you share a contact with someone they, in turn, might do you a favor and share a contact they have that could be your next job.

KEY JOB SEARCH STRATEGIES YOU MUST FOLLOW

Now that you know how to locate jobs, you will need to decide upon a strategy on how to rank and prioritize the opportunities. The priority ranking strategy will be up to each individual. For instance, some people will want to stay in the local area, so their priorities when deciding will be job

location. So they will rank and sort their job posting on the basis of the following order:

Job Ranking by Location

1. Job in local area only, no relocation required (other technology jobs ok to accept)
2. Job in close-by city, relocation to another city nearby
3. Job is 1 to 2 days driving distance from present home
4. Job in nearby states
5. Across the nation opportunities (relocation required to another state)

This type of strategy will limit your job searches to local companies and, more than likely, local recruiting firms and Internet searches on the basis of company location.

Another ranking criteria may be salary with location not considered important. Or another ranking criteria may be technology and job scope has to be the same as the present job, which means the person does not care about location and is willing to relocate across the nation or even to another country.

If you do not select a strategy for conducting your job search, you will be all over when you consider potential jobs, and more than likely this shot-gun approach will not be successful. The following line describes characteristics involved when considering a new job. Please review the list and rank them from the most important to least important characteristics when you consider finding a new job. This will help you prioritize how to conduct your job search.

Job Title, Salary, Location, Technology, Office/Lab Facilities, Commute to Work, Family

Many engineers start looking for a new job that is exactly identical to the old job, in the same technology, within 5 miles of their home, with a salary increase, and no loss of benefits. This is the ideal case and if you find this opportunity you are very lucky. However the reality is, this rarely happens and we are all forced to compromise. I have counseled engineers who have held tight to the belief they could find a new job that was exactly the same as the old one, only to be unemployed for years. Although quite a noble goal to strive for, the reality is you are going to have make changes and compromises to get a new job. Having a prioritized list of characteristics for selecting your new job helps the process move quicker.

BEST ACTIONS FOR GETTING A JOB

Up to this point in the chapter, we discussed the tools available to you to help with your job search. However, these are only tools and tools do not get you

a job, action does. You need to make sure your job search actions are focused on what is going to land you your next job. Here is a simple list of the best actions you can take to find a new job.

Networking and Work Your Relationships. Smart job searchers realize the best actions are networking and working your relationships. You should be spending most of your time meeting with people—either having coffee, lunch, talking to them on the phone, or emailing them. This also includes attending engineering society meetings at night and other meetings two or three nights a week, reconnecting with people and re-establishing old relationships, as well as developing new ones. Pick up the phone and call someone every chance you have. If they do not know of any job openings, ask if they can give you name of a couple of people who might know of potential job openings. When you network, make sure you have your 30-second commercial, a contact card, and even extra copies of your resume handy.

Job Search Firms. Job search firms are in daily contact with many companies about their hiring needs and help them fill positions. Contact job search firms that specialize in your area of expertise and that have clients. Work with their recruiters to quickly get your resume to the companies that are hiring.

Responding Quickly and Following Up. In the ideal case, a job searcher should be able to respond to finding a job opening and submit a cover letter and resume within hours. Waiting days and weeks to get the perfect resume and cover letter written is not going to land you a job. When ads come out in Sunday papers, or are first posted on websites, the smart ones have their resume on the desk of hiring managers the following morning.

Do Your Homework First. Responding quickly will not get you the job if you send in a cover letter and resume that misses the mark. Do your homework, identify keywords in the ad and skills they are looking for, search online to find out more about the company, if possible, probe your contacts for further information and then update your resume and cover letter.

Appear Desirable. All the experts agree that the best time to look for a new job is when you have a job. Looking while you are employed sends a message that you are a very desirable person to hire since another company has already hired you. If you are unemployed, find a temporary position and work as a contractor or for a temporary job agency. This shows flexibility and initiative. Once you are in a company people will be watching and evaluating your performance and this is the perfect time to excel. With everyone watching it is the time to sell you and your skills, and make them want to hire you permanently.

During the interview, prospective employers will want to know if you understand their business and how you can help them with their problems. It is not only about you being technically capable but also having the potential for making greater contributions to the company. This is the time to highlight how you understand the bigger picture and all the extras you

bring to the job that will benefit the company. It is time to strut your stuff as they say.

Polish and Practice. Anytime you are not networking and have a few spare minutes you should be polishing, refining, and practicing your 30-second commercial and interviewing skills. Practice, practice, and practice is the best thing during your non-networking and spare time. Make sure your resume is clear of mistakes and power-packed with good information. Prepare for the interview by practicing with others and answering the tough questions. If you can, take classes on networking, interviewing, and resume writing.

Get Organized. You should have a plan for each day and keep a calendar of your planned actions just like you would do on the job. Have a notebook to keep track of contacts and actions. Allocate time each day for your different job search activities. You should have a routine each day to follow and should include time for such activities as planning, making calls, networking, attending events, and job searching. Prioritize your tasks each day to make sure the most important ones are always at the top of the list.

Always Be Ready. You never know when a potential employer might call you to discuss your resume prior to setting up an interview or to conduct a phone interview. Therefore you should always be ready. The best way to be ready is to have a copy of their job ad and copies of the resume and cover letter that you sent so you can look at them as you talk to the interviewer. Keeping a copy of the job ad, cover letter, and resume all together in a notebook that you can instantly grab, sets you up for success. Make sure you also have a business suit ready to go. Dress appropriately for the interview.

SUMMARY

The data indicates that a person is nearly five times more likely to find a job through face-to-face people networking than any other means. Every contact leads to another contact. Before you start networking you need two essential items: a 30-second commercial about yourself and some type of business card you can leave with a potential contact so that they can contact you.

Excellent places to search for jobs are with business associates, technical societies members, at industry trade shows, job fairs, federal and state employment agencies, friends and neighbors, job search firms, company websites, newspapers, and journals. Once you start obtaining job leads the best way to get organized is by creating and keeping a contact notebook. Finally, determine what your search strategy will be and what will be the priority ranking for the characteristics of your new job.

Have you identified any career actions you want to take as a result of reading this chapter? If so, please make sure to capture these ideas before you forget by recording them in the notes section at the back of the book.

ASSIGNMENTS AND DISCUSSION TOPICS

- 1 Why is face-to-face networking so effective for finding a job?
- 2 What are the best questions to ask when contacts come up empty-handed?
- 3 What are some of the questions you should ask when selecting a job search firm?
- 4 Write down your prioritized list of characteristics for your new job.