

HOW **2** guide: Job Search

STEP ONE – UNDERSTAND TIMEFRAMES

One aspect of the job search that most upcoming graduates don't realize is that it can take, depending on the field, between 3 – 6 months of active searching (more than 15 hours per week) to find and obtain the job they want. It can be even longer in a tight job market, which we are currently in. With that in mind, here is one way to plan your time:

- **One year from graduation – experience stage**
 - Concentrate on gaining related experience through internships, part-time jobs, service learning, volunteering, or involvement in the student club for your field.
 - Start building your network and developing references.
- **Six months from graduation – preparation and research stage**
 - Get all your job search materials (resume, cover letter, references) in order (see Step One)
 - Determine your job search strategy (see Step Three)
 - Conduct research on the industry, make a list of the companies you want to work for and become familiar with them
 - If you are thinking about moving to another part of the country, conduct in-depth web research on the companies in that city.
 - Start reading trade magazines and newsletters for your field.
 - Talk to people in the field to learn the most effective ways to break into it.
 - Keep building your network.
- **Three months from graduation – application stage**
 - Start applying to active job postings and as well as sending out prospecting letters.
 - Start using and keep building your network.

STEP TWO – PREPARATION

The most efficient job searches are those that have a particular goal in mind. Therefore, the first phase of getting prepared is identifying what type of job you are looking for or what industry you want to work in? If you don't know the answer, consider meeting with an FGCU career advisor to clarify your goals.

Here are some other elements of getting prepared:

- Get all your job search materials in order. Have your resume and a version of your cover letter reviewed by our staff. We also have sample resumes and cover letters, as well as “How 2 Guides” on numerous job search topics. To access these printable guides, check out our Online Resource Center at <http://studentservices.fgcu.edu/Careers/handouts.asp>
- One of the most important yet overlooked, elements of the job search is developing effective interviewing skills - Career Services staff can help you with this!
- Do you have professional business attire for the interview process?
- Put a professional sounding message on your phone voicemail that includes your name. Use a conservative, easy-to-use email address. As for your Facebook page, consider removing all inappropriate content and/or adjust your Privacy Setting to “Only my friends.” Also, make sure your profile picture is professional!

STEP THREE – IMPLEMENT STRATEGY

The job search strategy you utilize may depend heavily on the career or field you are pursuing. Every field – whether it is public relations, hospitality, education, health care, law enforcement, or sales – has aspects of the recruitment process that are *specific to that industry*. Part of your preparation for the job search will be to become more knowledgeable in your field’s recruitment process. Also, if you are conducting out-of-area job searches, your strategy will likely have to rely on more web-based resources than in-person networking.

Below is a list of five common job search strategies. We will start first by discussing online job sites since they tend to be popular. You should realize, however, that those large, commercial job sites, such as Monster.com and Careerbuilder.com, reflect only a small portion of the job openings available. Therefore, the most effective job searches involve utilizing a combination of strategies and resources, which are described in approaches #2 - #5.

1) Online Job Sites

- The appeal of these sites is understandable: everybody knows about them and they are easy to use. That’s also the problem. Since so many job seekers use them, there is tremendous competition. Some jobs postings receive hundreds of applicants. If you want to use one or two large commercial sites, that’s fine, but don’t spend any more than 10% of your job search time with them.
- You are better off using “niche job boards.” These are sites specific to a particular field. If you don’t know of any, simply use Google. For example, if you were looking for a job in sports management, simply Google “sports management jobs” and you should get plenty of options. Pick one or two to use.
- College Central Network, the job board hosted by FGCU Career Services, is a good resource for primarily local jobs. Also, only FGCU students and alumni can use it, so it limits the competition.
- Most fields or industries have a professional association. Almost all associations have a website, and many of them have a section for job postings. Not sure of the professional association in your field? Google it! More companies are starting to post on these sites instead of the commercial sites because they don’t get bombarded with unqualified applicants anymore.
- One of the most helpful resources on the Internet is a site called www.indeed.com. Unlike a job board, this is a search engine that scours the web for job postings based on your search criteria. Since Indeed.com pulls job postings from multiple online sites, it can serve as a nice “one stop shop” and save you from having to use ten different job sites. *Perhaps even more helpful is that it also lists postings straight from company websites, which you otherwise may not have known existed.*
- If you are relocating to another part of the country, there may be some job boards specifically for that area. Some are linked from Chamber of Commerce websites.
- **Strategy summary: Easy to use but relatively low success rate in terms of employer response. However, if you don’t have a specific career goal, these sites can be helpful for you to see what is available. Perhaps you will see something that interests you.**

Many students that rely on online job sites will quickly reach a point of diminishing returns, where they have applied to all the jobs they are interested in and have stopped seeing any new postings on the sites. Spending *more* time on these sites is not going to help. The strategies we will discuss next require you to be more proactive in your search, but will probably yield better results. However, these strategies work best when you know the type of job/field you are pursuing.

2) Targeted Approach

- Instead of waiting to see what positions turn up on job boards, you should “target” the companies where you want to work, and then visit the company website for job postings. To help find a list of companies in your field, try using the “Find Companies” tool at www.zoominfo.com. Once you have identified some companies, visit their websites to check for job postings.
- To find company lists, check the professional association website for the field you are pursuing – these sites often have company membership directories.
- A question we often receive from students is whether they should apply for a job even their qualifications don’t match up perfectly. (For example: The preferred qualifications ask for two years experience. You don’t have two, but completed a couple of good internships. Or, the position asks for a Management Degree and you have a Communication degree, but have supervisory experience.) If you are in the “ballpark” in terms of qualifications, draft a persuasive cover letter expressing why you could be successful in this position, despite whatever qualifications you may be lacking. It may be worth a try. Besides, if you do a good job “selling yourself,” perhaps there is another position they want to consider you for that you don’t know about.
- **Strategy summary: Requires more time and energy, but more likely to access better opportunities**

3) Prospecting

- What do you do if you go the company website and there aren’t any job posted? “Prospecting” employers is the process of presenting yourself to a company as a candidate for employment, even though there may not be any visible job postings.
- When you are on company website, try to identify the most appropriate person in the company to contact. It may be the person in charge of recruiting or human resources, or the director of the department you want to work in. Use your best judgment.
- Email a “prospecting letter,” which is similar to a cover letter. The goal of the prospecting letter is to:
 - 1) Express why you are interested in working for the company
 - 2) Briefly summarize your qualifications
 - 3) Communicate your willingness to further discuss possible employment opportunities
- DO NOT send a generic letter. Customize it to the company.
- The best form of communication is email. A phone call can catch someone off-guard and unprepared to have a discussion. Also, if you send an email to the wrong person, it is very easy for them to forward your email to the right person.
- Include a copy of your resume in the email.
- Again, this strategy really works best when you know the field/occupation you are pursuing.
- **Strategy summary: Highly time consuming. There are no guarantees that you will even get a response from your letter. However, this job search approach has worked for FGCU job seekers. And remember, nothing ventured, nothing gained.**

While not suitable for all careers, you may also want to look into registering with a local staffing agency. Utilize ones where the employer pays the fee, not the job seeker.

The next approach we’ll discuss is networking. You have probably heard the saying, “It’s not *what* you know, it’s *who* you know.” Perhaps there is some truth to that since having a robust network of contacts can be highly beneficial to your career success.

4) Networking

- Networking is basically about meeting people and building and relationships. Once people get to know you, they are more likely to share information that can help you in the job search, such as: the names of companies that may be hiring, actual job openings, contact names within a company, referrals to colleagues or associates, and general job search advice.
- **Employee referrals** are perhaps the number one source for external hires. Therefore, if you know someone well who works for the company you want to work for, inquire as to whether they would be willing to refer you to their company.
- **Warning:** People do not generally like being “used” for their information and contacts. Build a level of familiarity and trust with someone before asking for help. Networking relationships should be mutually beneficial – be ready to reciprocate and help them when needed. And always communicate back to someone in your network that helped you – let them know how things worked out and express gratitude for their assistance.
- **Strategy Summary: Effective networking can be time-consuming and even a little uncomfortable at first. But it is considered the most important strategy in the job search process.**

Who is in your “network”?

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|------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------|
| • Friends/Family/Relatives/Neighbors | • Members of your religious congregation |
| • Classmates/former classmates | • Friends of parents and relatives |
| • Fellow Sorority and Fraternity members | • Parents and relatives of friends |
| • Former supervisors/colleagues | • Current and former faculty |

Networking Tips

- Join the student chapters of professional associations in your field
- Consider joining local “young professionals” networking groups
- Use “LinkedIn” to keep in contact with your connections and expand your network
- Join the FGCU Alumni Association after you graduate
- Volunteer in the community to meet people and gain experience
- Write thank you notes to anyone that helped you
- Set networking goals, such as meet one new contact per week
- Read a local and national newspaper frequently so you are knowledgeable of current affairs

5) “Foot in the Door” Strategy

Many companies like to hire/promote from within. One study conducted on how companies fill positions indicated that 30% came from internal transfers and promotions. This may be especially true during uncertain economic times since it often saves time and recruitment expenses. Here are four possible ways to get your foot in the door of an organization and try to “prove yourself.” Though there are no guarantees any of these approaches will lead to your ideal position, hopefully you will expand your network, gain experience, and meet people who will give you a good references.

1. Volunteer – This is usually most appropriate in non-profits since for-profit companies don’t often accept volunteers
2. Internship
3. Part-Time Job
4. Entry-level Full-Time Position

This is the end of the Guide. We hope it was helpful. Contact us if you have questions!