

FIVE QUESTIONS TO JUMP START YOUR JOB SEARCH

Now is the perfect time to reflect upon what you really value and position yourself for the job or career that enables you to live the life you want. This Job Search Quick Start Guide can help you as you undertake a job search. Remember, *your job is only one component of your career and should be carefully considered as you participate in career planning.*

1

What are my credentials?

Identify your experience, education, training or special skills and the main contributors in each area associated with your success to date. For example, if your experience as a leader or team member in the military contributed to the success of vital missions consider including this as you assess your credentials. Similarly, if you received training specific to improving efficiency that resulted in reduced costs at your organization consider including this as you assess your credentials. **It will be beneficial to understand how you've either saved or made your organization money or contributed to the organization's overall mission.** This type of information can serve as key talking points and areas to emphasize as you develop a plan to prove that your experience, education, or training has positioned you to transition into a new role.

2

What industry do I want to work in?

Acknowledge the distance you are willing to travel prior to identifying industries of interest. Keep in mind this may change as you develop your list of preferred places of employment or you may decide to relocate. Next, identify the industries you want to work in and the employers within each industry. As of this writing, a variety of information specific to industries, [state](#) employment demographics, and general [career tools](#) can be found at [CareerOneStop](#).

Numerous resources exist to help you identify industry trends and careers. Perhaps you have worked a number of years in a particular industry and now that industry is in decline and you need to switch industries. **Being able to identify which of your credentials and skills could transfer to other industries and being market yourself to the right individuals are important to a successful job search.** Today's job market is too competitive for job seekers to rely on inadequate job search methods including exclusively relying on online job boards, newspaper classified ads, or applying directly to an organization's hiring department without knowing of a vacancy.

3

How robust is my network?

Do you have a network of professionals who know you for your ability to use your skills in a variety of roles across industries? **Remember it's not just who you know—it's who knows you and what you're capable of.** If you are currently employed and cutbacks were to occur at your company, would they avoid letting you go? Are you someone who does a "good" job but isn't well known? **Can you really afford not to position yourself for being known for the work you've done and for the work you're capable of?**

Passive networking, e.g., linking up online via a social network or exchanging business cards with someone and seldom talking with them, will most likely not lead to a successful job search. More importantly, such methods should not be relied upon to produce the results you want. It's critical that you develop a variety of networks. **You must also give in order to receive. Be willing to connect others and offer support if possible.** You never know when someone you've helped may be in a position to help you.

Once you have identified the organizations where you prefer to work, identify who you know within the organization and reflect upon how well you know them. Are they in a position to support your applying to a vacancy or could they provide insight about future vacancies? Consider these individuals direct connections in your network – they can directly connect you to your preferred place of employment.

Perhaps you lack any direct connections to your preferred place of employment. Identify who in your network is connected to anyone at your preferred place of employment and engage with them. Consider these individuals bridges in your network. If you lack direct knowledge of who may be a bridge, try using professional and personal connections and online professional networking tools such as [LinkedIn](#).

Lastly, if you lack direct connections or bridges, identify who you need to connect with at the organization. This may be a hiring manager, vice president, or divisional director, manager or supervisor. An [advanced Google search](#) may prove useful to you in this instance or you may be able to obtain this information via the [organization's website](#), from a [professional association](#), or via a local [chamber of commerce](#). Remember to consider the colleagues of your friends and family, alumni associations, and local community members' as potential connections and bridges.

Numerous resources are available online related to networking. Networking is a critical component to every professional's career. You may discover your obligations permit more active networking at times than others and that's understandable. ***What's important is that you consistently focus on staying engaged with your network and not simply focus on increasing the number of contacts you have—it's quality, not quantity that matters.***

4

Am I using my brand to position me for success?

Whether you realize it or not YOU are a brand and a range of aspects represent your brand. Your history, both personal and professional, should be leveraged to help tell your brand story. Consider how often job seekers attempt to match their experience, skills, and abilities with the requirements in a vacancy announcement. If you do this, do not think you are positioning yourself to stand out from the numerous cover letters and resumes received by recruiters. What makes you unique will most likely attract attention so it's critical to be able to communicate through a variety of mediums your compelling value proposition.

- A) What about your history and professional performance make you unique?
- B) What can you do to add value to an organization?
- C) What aspects of your professional history attest to your being uniquely qualified to do what you claim? (Be prepared to prove it.)
- D) Create a [compelling value proposition](#) to consistently communicate your message.
- E) Develop career transition tools to make yourself known within various communities (Selectively use what is relevant to your career plans. Consider if the [Internet](#) can support your brand development).

5

What are my options?

You may have more options than others depending upon your obligations and where you are on your career path. Many must maintain continuous employment with limited resources (time and money) to dedicate to other activities. Again, depending upon your circumstances, you may want to consider *volunteering* or *continuing your education* while maintaining your employment. These are great ways to increase your knowledge and network and position you for future opportunities. For others, it may be time to *start a business* or *change careers*. Your circumstances may position you to participate in *worker retraining*. Understand your options before embarking on the path with the least amount of anticipated anxiety. ***Change can be difficult but rarely is hard work not rewarding in one way or another.***

Tuesday Strong writes on career management using proactive talent development and personal branding techniques leveraged by technology.

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