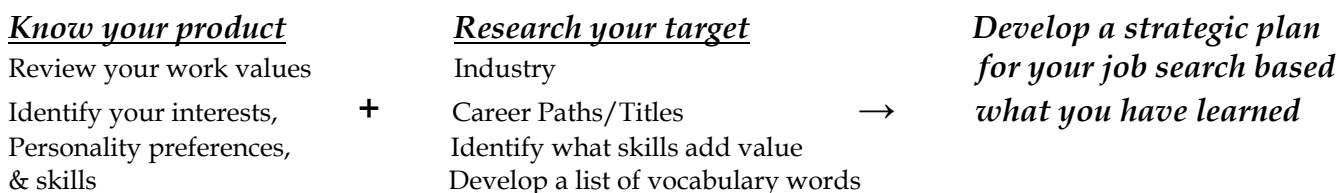


Conducting a Successful Job Search

Regardless of the ups and downs of the job market one fact is clear, individuals who thoughtfully prepare for the job search waste less time and land the best jobs. It is often helpful to think about the job search campaign as a part-time job. Developing a weekly timeline, which commits the job seeker to specific tasks on specific days is often an excellent beginning to launching a targeted search. As we all know too well it is easy to procrastinate, a written timeline keeps one focused on the goal.

It may surprise you to discover that each job search is unique and that what works for your friend/room-mate may not be the answer for you. There are however key components that are shared regardless of your major these components are borrowed from the marketing world after all, in the job search the product is you!



There is no question that the better you know yourself and your target the more successful you will be in landing “the “position.

Thinking like an Employer

Conducting research on an industry, career paths and industry specific employers provides you with insight into the employers thought process. Switching hats allows you to consider how, when and where an employer is likely to advertise a position as well as focus on what strategies an employer utilizes in the hiring process. Remember as an employer, time is key, filling the vacancy with the best possible individual promptly is the goal. In most organizations, the first search for candidates is in-house. Next, people look to their network: colleagues, friends, and associates, both professional and personal contacts, to broadcast the opening.

If the employer still hasn’t found the right individual in the networking process and/or is looking to broaden the pool of candidates then Human Resources (HR) is contacted. In many instances employers are required to work with HR from the beginning, HR works with the manager, advertising the position on the company's website, in the newspaper, and on job boards. HR usually screens the resumes to ensure that they meet the criteria the position requires and then forwards them to the actual hiring manager.

The initial goal is to reduce the quantity of applications to a suitable size for the hiring manager. Please keep in mind that the volume of resumes companies receive is now so large that bigger companies are increasingly entering resumes into databases that are evaluated electronically for keywords, which indicate the match with the job standards. When creating your resume it is a good idea to include both action verbs for the human reader and industry or skill specific nouns for the scanning technology.

Networking

One of the best and often least understood components of a successful job search strategy, is networking. Through networking, you can establish an ever-expanding list of contacts in a specific career field or industry and expand pathways that channel information, recommendations, and possible prospects to you. Here are some guidelines about the process to keep in mind:

- Networking is sharing information and developing trust. Your contacts will not share job leads or new contacts if they do not trust you or your intentions. Also, you are expected to offer information, recommendations, and leads to others.
- Networking is somewhat of a formal activity. It is designed, structured, and has a particular intent.
- Networking is a method to create a unified list of individuals to whom you revisit over and over throughout your career. Contacts are created, nurtured and sustained, not used and discarded.
- Begin by contacting all of the individuals that you feel can assist you in moving closer to the position you seek. Start with faculty members, current/former employers and don't forget to check in with Career Services, friends, and family members.
- Notify every contact you create about the kind of position that you are seeking. You should be detailed and avoid the trap of saying you will accept anything. Your network contact can be of better assistance to you when he or she specifically understands what are your career goals.
- Make sure to follow-up with each lead of information that your contact has provided and maintain a list of all contacts. Keep networking contacts updated on your progress and remember to thank them for their support.
- Become a member of a professional organization and actively participate within the organization. Often times these organizations are completely connected to the network in a profession and people typically know who is entering the field and who is leaving.
- Keep in mind that you may be in a situation to help someone someday, so offer your assistance in any way that you can.

Sources for Leads

The most successful job search campaigns utilize a multifaceted approach. It is a good idea to ask yourself what are the pros and cons of each of the methods you are using. A good rule of thumb is to focus your energies on those methods that put you in personal connection with potential hiring managers. Also, take into consideration what you have learned about the specific hiring methods for your chosen industry or career path. It can be tempting to spend all your efforts on the Internet or on newspaper listings, after all these are methods that are convenient and comfortable. However, both of these methods are also convenient for everyone else as well. As a result, your resume will be one of many which are quickly

reviewed to see if you warrant consideration. Informational interviews, networking, participation in conferences, professional meetings and/or internships are all great ways to make connections that can result in your resume being placed in a smaller pile of known candidates. In some cases, through your contacts, you may actually hear about openings before the position is even advertised.

Search Firms

Yet another avenue to learn about current job openings are search firms also called Agencies, 3rd Parties, and Head Hunters. A search firm receives compensation for their services, typically from the employer. Many search firms work only with experienced professionals because they command a higher salary and as a result a higher commission for the search firm. If you choose to go this route, the first thing you should ask is what fees are involved and who pays for them. If you are required to pay for services, ask yourself what you get in return. In many cases these same services are available for free through the Career Services Office. You may also want to investigate the search firms' track record with the Better Business Bureau or the State Attorney General's Office.

Record Keeping

The reality is that you will be submitting your resume and cover letter for many positions and to a wide variety of individuals. To keep all of your correspondence straight, it is helpful to set up a record keeping system to monitor your job search process. Record leads and contacts as well as how these leads were developed. Save and file job descriptions of positions you have applied for, copies of your correspondence, and document contact with employers including, dates of contacts and the content of the interaction. After all, if you are selected for an interview, something in your cover letter and/or resume has attracted the employers attention. It would be helpful as you prepare for your interview to review your past interactions with the employer.

Company Research

For many people the development of a strong cover letter is one of the hardest parts of the job search. Reviewing the position job description as well as conducting research on the company can go a long way toward creating a cover letter that really speaks to the employer. Employers typically perceive company research as a good indicator of the candidates approach to preparation, work ethic and their enthusiasm for the position. At the very least, inspect the company website. It is also helpful to talk with people who work for the employer or have experience in the industry. On campus job fairs are another great way to gain knowledge and learn more about the company. As you conduct your research, it is important to keep in mind the source of the information. Is the write up an internal document designed as a marketing tool or an unbiased piece written by a neutral party. Your research will give you insight that will allow you to both anticipate questions that are likely to be asked in the interview and to develop questions that you would like to ask regarding the position and/or company. Company research can help you decide whether to apply for a position, to present yourself in an articulate manner and to prepare for the interview.

Timeline

In good times 3 months is a reasonable time to allow for an entry-level job search. If times are tough, you are re-careering or your goal is to enter a very competitive field then it is wise to allow for a 6-month search. In some cases the industry may have their own seasons for hiring dependent on their busy seasons. The key to success in the job search is not to wait until the last minute and to be prepared. A good rule of thumb is to always have your resume up to date and in good shape. That way no matter what the situation you are prepared for unexpected opportunities.

Contingency Plan

Six months has come and gone and your ideal position hasn't come through. Perhaps it's time to reassess your approach. Take a moment to be honest with yourself about your job search and what you have learned about yourself and the industry. Are you missing a key skill needed in this particular field, are you presenting yourself well in the interview, have you truly proactively committed yourself to the job search? While it may feel a bit awkward initially it is perfectly reasonable to ask for feedback as to why you were not included in the interview pool or if interviewed why you were not offered the position. If employers are looking for experience you do not yet have, think about how you might gain this experience or knowledge. Look into temporary, contract, internship or volunteer situations that can provide you with relevant experience. Are you willing to take less money or apply for another position in the field or company to get your foot in the door?

** For more information on the job search, visit the Career Services Office and/or check out our website: www.salemst.edu/careersvs for additional resources.*