



Career Search Strategies In Today's Job Market

Searching for a new job can be a daunting prospect – especially in today's job market where opportunities are scarce. Securing the right position takes hard work, research, persistence and good instincts. There are various strategies that can help you make the most of your job search efforts and increase the probability of finding a rewarding position.

Take control. Appoint yourself the project manager of your job search. Running such search is in many ways like leading a team; you must set targets, plan strategies, and modify your plans in response to changing circumstances.

Network. Have business cards printed and be ready to distribute them at any time. Be thorough and creative in compiling your list of people to contact; fellow alumni and former professors can be especially helpful, but also look to your extended family, former colleagues - anyone who might be of assistance in your search.

Be sure that you follow up with networking contacts after the initial meeting. Someone who could not offer specific help in February may learn of a promising position in June - but given the realities of today's busy schedules, you may not hear this news unless you speak with the contact again. To do this politely, apprise the person at the first meeting of your intention to call again - "I'd love to get in touch with you again in two months or so if that's OK." This gives the individual the chance to say "Yes, please do," or "In three months would be better," or even to tell you he or she would rather not be phoned at all. That way, you will know your follow-up is expected and welcomed.

Make use of your alma mater's resources. Universities are usually well prepared to provide assistance to alumni who are seeking employment. Make sure to take full advantage of these services. Be aware, too, that many placement offices will provide certain types of help to graduates of other colleges. It is certainly worth a call to local universities to find out what kinds of assistance may be available.

Fine-tune your research skills. There are many routes to finding a full-time position. Research is the key to all of them.

As a business professional, your ability to conduct thorough and effective research is priceless; now is the time to use those skills in your job search. Log on to the Internet or a commercial online service and begin searching for information on companies that interest you and areas of specialisation you feel have potential. Which firms in your area of interest are growing? Which are particularly active? Search trade publications, major newspapers, and research databases for any information that can be useful.

Target the businesses that look most promising by seeking a contact within them through your networking efforts. If you cannot find one, use a business directory to find out the name of the firm's human resources director or better yet, the executive in charge of the department for which you are interested in working. Then send that person a well-written (and error-free) cover letter and resume.

Look at smaller firms. Be aware that many of today's opportunities lie within small firms. Don't limit your thinking just because you have always assumed you will follow one particular career path; be open to new possibilities.

Be geographically flexible. If you are determined to remain in one particular city, you may be limiting yourself. Explore the options of other locations within your state; look into opportunities in smaller cities and rural areas as well as more urban locations.

Complete your professional education and training programme in a timely manner. Qualifying as a professional accountant is now more important than ever. Experienced qualified professionals have greater career prospects, opportunities and flexibility in their career paths.

Pursue continuing education. Once qualified, continuing education is mandatory for all professional accountants. Carefully consider and select the courses and programs that are best suited to your current role and career plan. Your Institute offers a comprehensive program tailored to the needs of professional accountants.

Consider an "add-on" qualification. Upon qualification, consideration of other programs offered by a local third level college or university in a "hot" area of specialisation, such as technology, is

smart for a couple of reasons. It gives you greater knowledge of subjects that will make you more marketable, and it allows you to network with others taking the class and with your lecturers / professors. Make sure everyone in your program knows that you are looking for a position, and give each of them your card.

Improving your interpersonal skills is also a wise move. More and more companies today seek professionals with a combination of top-notch technical and business knowledge and “people” skills. Becoming known as someone who has no difficulty communicating a technical message in layperson’s terms will enhance your opportunities for advancement.

Consider Temporary Employment. Many professionals find they prefer this flexible option to full-time work. Professional-level temporary assignments enable you to work for companies of all sizes and across most industries. Temporary employees also are exposed to a much broader range of leading-edge technologies than their full-time counterparts, and they have frequent opportunities for skills enhancement and training on these technologies.

Clarify your career goals. Keep in mind that taking your time with a job search can work to your advantage -- it gives you the chance to clarify your professional and personal goals, which you may not be able to do if you immediately find a position.

As you work through the strategies listed here toward a successful conclusion to your job search, remember that you are building skills and self-knowledge that will serve you well in your professional life - both now and for the long term.

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