

# The Job Search



The job search process requires strong research, communication and organizational skills. Your liberal arts education has prepared you well for this experience. Think about a class research project you've conducted. The steps involved are the same for your job search: You also create a manageable timeline and stick to it. You conduct your research, using books, the Internet and by talking to people. And you present the results in writing (i.e. a resume) and orally (i.e. interviewing, networking).

## Target your resume and search

It's awfully hard to search for any job anywhere. Even though you are open to many options and/or just need a job, research and prioritize at least a handful of options that appeal to you most. You can always expand a search, but it's very hard to look for the "needle in a haystack."

- Narrow your focus by geographic region and/or occupation.
- Revise **every** resume you submit to be tailored directly to the opportunity for which you are applying- a "general" resume is a waste of your time and effort.
- Use words and phrases from the job posting in your resume and cover letter.
- Use "Relevant Experience" and "Other Experience" sections to bring more related info higher on the page.
- Focus on three issues when creating content:
  - Provide enough details (often in the form of numbers) to give a sense of scope of responsibility
  - Focus on accomplishments and results (e.g. exceeded fundraising goals by 100%; helped mentee raise grade from F to B)
  - Focus on transferable skills (e.g. teamwork, customer service, communication) when the experience you're describing is less relevant to your future goals.

## Prepare for the search

You've got a goal in mind and a targeted resume, but there are still several tasks to complete before you're ready to seek positions:

- Develop a "60-second commercial" for short encounters with potential employers as well as a longer "liberal arts story."
- Identify at least three individuals to serve as references.
- Develop interview skills (participate in a practice interview) and obtain interview suit.
- Create a positive image (e.g. [LinkedIn](#), blogs, professional email address and voicemail message) and beware of unprofessional web presence (e.g. on blogs, Facebook, etc.).
- Attend career events to meet contacts and build skills

## Leverage your connections

Spend most of your job search time on talking with people you know and can meet – referral is an employer's preferred method of hire and many positions are never advertised. Consequently networking is the job search strategy with the biggest payoff.

- Brainstorm everyone you know (family, neighbors, professors, coaches, fraternity/sorority members, employers, colleagues, church members, hairdressers, doctors, etc.) and start asking them for advice and leads.
- Visit <http://www.southwestern.edu/gateways/alumni/> for ways to access alumni as resources including the online alumni directory (searchable by name, vocation, geographic location, etc.), local associations (by geographic region) and alumni connection groups (by affinity, like student group, athletics, profession, etc.)
- Take advantage of alumni who come to campus for events, such as Homecoming, Career Connections BBQ and Careers in... events.

- Conduct informational interviews with your contacts.
- Join relevant professional organizations. They're a great source of networking contacts, as well as skill-building.
- Follow up each networking activity with a thank-you note.

## Use LinkedIn.com

[LinkedIn](#) has hundreds of millions of users world-wide and serves as a premier business contact management tool. More and more recruiters are scouting for candidates through LinkedIn.

- Fill out your profile 100%
- Join groups for direct access to prospective contacts, such as the Southwestern University Alumni and Friends,
- Research organizations and career paths through keyword searches of titles, organizations, skills, etc.
- To keep yourself on your contacts' radar, regularly update your status, comment in discussions and recommend others.

## Research and apply directly to employers online

The Internet is a great research tool, but don't spend all your time on third-party job boards, which are much less effective.

- Use your Google skills to search for strings like "Austin television stations" to identify employers who do the kind of work that interests you in the geographic location of your choice.
- Go directly to employers' own sites, where they're most likely to advertise jobs if they do so at all. Look for "About Us," "Jobs," "Careers," "Employment," etc.
- Professional association job boards (e.g. American Marketing Association, etc.) are better than generic boards. You may have to pay to join, but it could be a worthwhile investment.
- Try [Indeed.com](#), a meta-search site which crawls other third-party sites as well as employers' own sites to compile job listings in response to your search criteria.
- Use [PirateLink](#), the password-protected job board for SU students and alumni, to search for part-time (on- and off-campus), full-time and internship positions. Not every job out there will be posted here, but anything we get notice of will.
- Try [Craigslist](#). Since postings are free, more employers can use it. Positions posted broadly, though, generate hundreds, if not thousands, of responses so it's hard to stand out.
- Other third-party posting sites (e.g. [www.careerbuilder.com](#), etc.) are usually limited in scope as to the kinds of jobs you find there. They usually require employers to pay to post their jobs and generate large volumes of applicants, so not all types of employers use them (especially non-profit, government, education). They're free to you, though, so it doesn't hurt to try them, but spend only 5-10 percent of your job search efforts on this tactic.

## Attend career fairs

Job fairs are a great opportunity to meet face-to-face with an employer's representative. Getting face time can set you apart from the competition. To prepare for a career fair:

- Visit the fair's website to see employers who will attend.
- Research employers that interest you by visiting their websites.
- Create targeted resumes for each position that interests you.
- Wear professional attire and carry only a briefcase or portfolio with your resumes.

## Follow-up

Follow-up on every job lead immediately. Contact employers via phone within two weeks of applying to check on your status in their selection process. And send thank-you letters within 24 hours to each person who interviews you.