

From the Editors of
California Job Journal

Getting Your Next Job

*Your Complete Guide for Taking the
Next Step on Your Career:*

Finding A Job You Love

Exploring the Hidden Job Market

Overcoming Obstacles

Excelling in your New Job

Much More...

This guide was created to provide you with an understanding of the employment process and today's job-market trends in the hope that it assists you in developing your job-search skills — allowing you to become more effective in identifying, finding, and succeeding in work you really enjoy.

Using This Guide

If you choose to view the guide using Adobe Acrobat Reader, you may take advantage of Hyperlinks. Simply click on any **blue words** to either access a related section of the book or to a related website.

You may also print out this guide on a standard printer using letter size (8½ x 11 inch) paper.

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Contents

You Need A New Job	5
Finding Work You Love	5
Narrowing Your Focus	7
Keeping a Positive Mind-set	10
Mind Games	10
Establish a Routine	11
Money Matters	13
Basic Tips	13
<i>Focus on Essentials</i>	13
<i>Minimize Household Expenses</i>	13
<i>Control Medical Costs</i>	14
<i>Explore Alternatives for Transportation and Childcare</i>	14
<i>Eliminate Unnecessary Spending</i>	15
<i>Keep Saving</i>	15
What Employers Look For	16
Integrity	17
Likability	17
Stability	17
Adaptability	17
Common Sense	17
Compatability	18
Words of Your Wisdom	19
Resumes	19
Cover Letters	19
References	19
Applications	20
Researching the Market	21
Library Research	21
Traditional Job Leads	23
Informational Interviews	26
Online Job Search	28
Industry and Employer Search	28
Electronic Job Searches	29
Electronic Resume Posting	30
Getting Face to Face	31
Networking	31
Prepare for Chance Encounters	33
Job Fairs	35

Recruiters and Temporary Services	36
Search Firms and Employment Agencies	36
Temporary Services	37
Problem Areas	40
Age	41
Job Hopper	43
Employment Gap	44
Disability	45
Gender	46
Education Deficiency	46
Experience Deficiency	47
Changing Careers	48
Weighing Job Offers	49
Compensation	49
<i>Vacation</i>	49
<i>Health Insurance</i>	50
<i>Paid leave</i>	50
<i>Retirement benefits</i>	50
<i>Perks</i>	50
Opportunity for Advancement	50
Workplace Environment	51
Job Characteristics	51
Finding Answers	51
Accepting a Job	52
Making Your Move	54
Keep a Low Profile	54
Or Keep Quite	54
Confirm References	55
Exit Gracefully	56
Early Departure	56
The Exit Interview	57
Succeeding in Your New Job	58
Start Off Strong	58
<i>Basic Job Skills</i>	58
<i>Company Culture</i>	58
Growing Into the Job	60
<i>Self Promotion</i>	60
Managing Stress	61
<i>Adopt a Healthy Life-style</i>	61
<i>Minimizing Stress on the Job</i>	62
Set Your Sights on Your Next Job	62
10 Tips for Job-Search Success	64
Job Lead Sources	65

You Need A New Job

“Job hunting can be fun — enjoy the challenge.”

If this inspirational affirmation sends you into a fit of hysterical laughter, you probably see job hunting as an impossible, overwhelming task that should be avoided at all costs. Who can see the “fun” in scanning want ads, filling out applications, and suffering the humiliation of repeated rejection? Indeed, a job hunt can take a toll on anyone’s self-esteem.

But consider the cost of not accepting the challenge to find better work. You may stay in a job you’ve been in for years, comfortable with the convenience, but utterly bored. Or you might be so unhappy with your work that you can hardly drag yourself out of bed each morning. Some employees go on for so long in this state of limbo that they become psychologically and even

physiologically affected. Stress, chronic tension, repetitive motion injuries, frequent illnesses, and even nervous breakdowns can ensue. Ironically, it’s not uncommon for a burned-out worker to up and quit his job on the spur of the moment, suddenly finding himself in the very situation he toiled so miserably to avoid — a job hunt.

So perhaps the question comes down to whether you’d rather be in a frantic job hunt under the hourglass of diminishing savings, or learn to take charge of your career and aggressively look for new opportunities to enhance your skills and further your professional development. In most cases, what makes a job search so difficult is not the process itself, but rather our resistance to it.

Finding Work You Love

It’s easy to get caught up in the belief that a job — any job — would be better than the situation you are in now. This rings especially true if that situation is called “Unemployment.” But long after the thrill of a new job has worn off and the increase in salary has been absorbed in your household budget, you still want to feel happy about going to work each day. That quiet sense of contentment comes from knowing that your job satisfies many parts of your life — financial security being the obvious — but also personal growth, a feeling of accomplishment, and intellectual stimulation. These attributes are all necessary for a satisfying career position.

You will begin to see a pattern developing, a broad brush portrait of who you are. Your ideal job should allow you to blend as many elements of this picture as possible into meaningful work.

Embrace Change

The average American has been in his/her job for four years . . . a worker starting out in today’s market will have five separate careers and twelve job changes in their lifetime . . . ten years from now, half of the population will be in jobs not yet invented. In this economy, job hunting is a continuous process. You must remain marketable and keep learning. Focus on what you can control. Plan to be the best at whatever you do. Invest in yourself. Look for ways to update your skills so you remain competitive.

Excerpted from “Overcoming Obstacles in Your Job Search,” by Helen M. Scully. To view entire text, click on Article Archive at JobJournal.com.

The difference between a job and a career position can mean the difference between feeling like just another rank-and-file employee or having a sense of purpose — and passion — about what you do. You don't have to be a doctor, a teacher or a social worker to achieve this sense of purpose and contribution. Some people get tremendous satisfaction from operating machinery, helping customers with their shopping, or driving a school bus. As long as you feel you're providing an important service, you'll be able to take pride in what you do.

If you're overwhelmed by the mere

thought of choosing a career, you're not alone. Just go to any bookstore and witness the volumes of books, tapes, tests, and videos available on the subject. Why has so much been written about career decision-making? Because there's a lot at stake in choosing one's work — money, job security and most of all, happiness. If you're not satisfied with your work, your discontent will spill over into other areas of your life. It can affect your energy, your relationships, your family, and even the way you sleep at night.

“Finding a job I love instead of hate —

If you're overwhelmed by the mere thought of choosing a career, you're not alone.

Transferable Skills Applied

Throughout our lives, we are able to develop and polish our skills by applying them to new situations and environments, by solving increasingly complex problems, and by learning new ways to use those skills. Let's explore an example:

At ten years of age, Randy built a lemonade stand on his front lawn. When he was thirteen, he went door-to-door offering magazine subscriptions. In high school, he took a job behind the counter at a men's clothing store. At nineteen, he worked as an independent distributor for a vacuum cleaner company. After college, he began selling life insurance.

In this example, the functional skill is selling. “Functional” means a com-

ination of related skills which together produce a specific result — in this case, selling or sales. There is a tendency to assume that we don't learn marketable employment skills until we are recognized as adults seeking permanent, full-time employment. As this example illustrates, Randy developed his sales skills throughout his life, *transferring* them from one situation to another.

The point is that if you have been successful in your application of skills in one setting, you can successfully apply them to another setting. This helps explain why people, more and more, are changing careers several times in their lives.

It also explains how stay-at-home

mothers can make successful transitions to careers outside of the home, or how people from a variety of backgrounds make significant contributions in volunteer work by applying their skills to those activities.

Recent high school and college graduates can become successful in new jobs, too, by transferring skills developed in many involvements such as part-time employment, sports, volunteer work, and school activities.

You are the best judge of your skills. Therefore, you must be responsible for conducting a comprehensive inventory of your life experiences in order to identify all the marketable skills you have developed.

Give yourself time to process the emotional impact of a job loss.

what a great idea!” you’re sarcastically mumbling to yourself about now. “But how do I find this oh-so-satisfying job?” The answer lies within. Your individual accomplishments, skills, talents, history, goals and dreams are major components of who you are and what you can become. The best way to start your search is by clearly identifying as many of those elements as you can, putting them down in black and white.

Narrowing Your Focus

Writing down where you’ve been and where you would like to go will help you visualize the direction your job-search plan should take and the types of work you should target. Creating a potential path to your career goals also helps separate reality from wishful thinking.

First, consider the primary reason you’re seeking new employment. If money is an urgent issue, then the most immediate action you can take may be to find a job similar to the one you’ve done most recently. If you’re able and willing to continue working in the same field, you’re probably better prepared than you think to find another position in fairly short order — by networking with colleagues, clients, and even former employers to let them know you’re available.

But what if you’re unable to continue in the same career? Perhaps you’ve been injured, or the job is becoming obsolete, or you’re just going to scream if you ever have to walk back into that work environment again. Then you’ll need to do some skills assessment and explore

new horizons. (There’s always a new horizon, however difficult it may be to see through the haze of job-loss anxiety and impending financial difficulties.)

Make a list of the skills you know you possess. If it’s difficult to think of specific skills, start by listing things you’ve done. Use your resume as a reference, if you have one. Detail duties and responsibilities you’ve handled in previous jobs — even if they seem mundane and unimportant, and even if they were not part of your official job title.

Did you supervise staff when managers were off site? Did you introduce a new filing system that helped organize a disheveled office? Did you suggest an idea for a successful sales promotion? Try to recall everything you did in each position.

As you remember jobs you’ve held, think about the things you learned in those positions — tasks or computer systems you were trained in, business strategies or decision-making you were mentored in. Whether you’re recounting five or 25 years of work, you will start to see how much you’ve learned and how much stronger you’ve become in certain skills.

Add to your list those activities you did outside your work assignments. Include volunteer work, community involvement, internships, training or apprenticeship programs, academic projects, home improvement and repair projects, and even hobbies. Did you ever assist with organizing staff meetings or social events for a company? Have you handled some of the bookkeeping for

If money is an urgent issue, then the most immediate action you can take may be to find a job similar to the one you’ve done most recently.

Did you love baking for that school fundraiser, but hate manning the sales booth? Or did you find that you were miserable in the kitchen, but had a great time talking to people while watching your cookie sales skyrocket?

your local church? Were you involved in fundraising for your child's school? Have you helped your neighbor build a patio and deck? Believe it or not, all these activities are important, because each represents a unique set of skills.

Next, try to cite at least one accomplishment (small or large, it doesn't matter) in each activity. Maybe your double chocolate-chip cookies at the school's fundraising event helped bring in a record amount of money.

As you develop a comprehensive list of your skills and accomplishments, make some notes about which of those activities you really enjoyed, and why. See if you notice any common themes. Did you love baking for that school fundraiser, but hate manning the sales booth? Or did you find that you were miserable in the kitchen, but had a great time talking to people while watching your cookie sales skyrocket?

You will begin to see a pattern developing, a broad-brush portrait of who you are. Your ideal job should allow you to blend as many elements of this picture as possible into meaningful work. Within these elements are a set of skills that can be used in that ideal job — whether it is very similar to your most recent role or something in a totally different field. Career counselors call these “transferable skills.” (See sidebar on [page 6](#) for more on transferable skills.) Knowing your transferrable skills will help you when writing your resume, and later when convincing an interviewer why you are the best candidate for a job.

Think about what you want to achieve

from this job change. It may be another position similar to the one you just had, or a complete career change. Setting and prioritizing your goals is essential to

Consider Career Counselling

Being unemployed is often a frightening experience, and mounting a job-search campaign can be a lonely endeavor — at least in the beginning. Why not get some help navigating those dark hallways of career decision making? Career counselors and job-search coaches can assist you in focusing your career goals as well as mounting a job-search campaign, planning the process, and staying on track. They can also refer you to valuable resources including related services such as resume preparation, image consulting, and credit counseling.

Sometimes employment counseling and career coach services are offered by larger companies as part of an internal career development strategy, or in the form of outplacement services upon organizational restructuring and layoffs. Individuals can pursue these kinds of services on their own as well by checking out local career centers, job clubs, or counseling services. Some career centers require membership to access services such as comprehensive library and industry resources, workshops and skills training, computer and internet use, and professional contacts for informational interviews. It may be worthwhile to check with your current or recent employer to see if the company offers discount memberships to such services.

A career-services professional can help you explore your employment options and prioritize your job-search agenda. He or she will also motivate and challenge you to meet the goals you've set for yourself. Successfully working with a career-services professional requires a commitment of time and personal effort. While a counselor or coach will assist you every step of the way, he or she will also hold you accountable for your own success in finding that next great job.

executing a successful job search that takes advantage of your transferable skills and interests.

In doing so, keep in mind that your next job may have to be a stepping stone to the perfect position. Be realistic in this process. Ask yourself: Do you already have some of the qualifications and skills that would be relevant to that type of work? For example, if most of your recent experience is in telemarketing, it would be unrealistic to expect to be hired as a healthcare professional (unless you already have the appropriate credentials or training). It's

more likely you could make a successful transition to such careers as retail sales, claims processing, or office administration.

Once you have a clear picture of your career goal, you'll be ready to embark on your job search.

Don't underestimate the value of this self-assessment process. When you can envision the characteristics you'd like your next job to have, you can target your job search accordingly. Remember the words of Lawrence J. Peter: "If you don't know where you're going, you'll probably end up somewhere else."

Keeping a Positive Mind-set

If you're prepared to put in a forty-hour week for an employer, why wouldn't you be willing to work just as hard for yourself? The ideal time commitment required to conduct a successful job search is eight hours a day, 5 days a week.

Depending on your level of expertise and the salary you command in the current market, you can expect to be actively searching for at least a few weeks, though several months is more likely. As a general rule, you should anticipate one month of job hunting for every \$15,000 you hope to earn in annual salary.

That's probably longer than you'd like, but committing to the long haul is vital to crafting a realistic job-search plan. If you're currently employed, you'll need to find the time outside your regular work hours to maintain an active job search.

For those who are unemployed, the wait for a job offer can be excruciating. Paychecks may stop, but bills always arrive on time. And being rejected by one employer after another can take its toll on your self-esteem.

Maintaining a positive state of mind is an essential part of conducting a successful and rewarding job search. It can mean the difference between being unemployed for six months or six weeks. Or between settling for a position that doesn't fit at a salary below your value, and landing a job that matches your career goals and compensates you fairly, if not generously.

Mind Games

One of the most important steps in your countdown to launching a job-search campaign is to prepare yourself mentally. If you're apathetic or lethargic in your job-search activities, you can easily become overwhelmed by the weight of such an arduous task. You're also more likely to project a lazy, careless attitude that employers are sure to notice.

Better to feel the satisfaction that comes when you really apply yourself to an important goal. But how does one harness that can-do attitude and embrace one of life's most difficult assignments, particularly if your last job left a bad taste in your psyche?

One way to purge the past is to try writing down all your concerns. As depressing as it seems to think about all this, it's an important part of the process of change: You must first let go of the old before you can commence the new. Give yourself time to process the emotional impact of a job loss. You're bound to feel angry, cheated, frightened — all normal reactions. Allow yourself to acknowledge those feelings so you can move on to the next step: planning what you're going to do about it.

Once you move through some of the emotional turmoil of a job loss, you'll be able to see more of the opportunities for a fresh start. For some people, sudden unemployment is the catalyst for a career change. In most cases, it's a change long desired but never acted upon.

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Establish a Routine

When you lose your job, typically, you also lose the structure that is part of being an employee. But you still have a job to do — for yourself, in your new position of “jobseeker.” It’s time to start thinking of the work that lies ahead as if it were itself a job. You probably had a regular routine in your last position. A job search should be no different. Develop a new routine that will help sustain your momentum and incorporate all the details of a well-managed job hunt.

If you’re used to a certain schedule, try to maintain it in your search for employment. Get up at the same time every day. Dress neatly, even if you have no appointments and your job hunting

when you pick up that telephone to make contacts.

Schedule daily and weekly job-search activities to be completed. Don’t just jot down an idealistic list of things to do. Carefully plan a realistic “work load” for yourself, with assigned deadlines. Just as you would in a paid job, you must meet the expectations of the company. In this case, “the company” is you. When it comes to your job search, you’re the boss!

Some of these formalities may sound silly, but the importance of a strict routine and an optimistic outlook should not be underestimated. “Playing the part” of someone with a job to do helps to make you more effective in that endeavor.

In fact, attitude is by far the single most critical factor in successful job hunts. Studies have shown that half of all successful searches can be attributed to attitude and job-search skills.

Even something as simple as donning a nice, pressed shirt while you make calls from the kitchen table can affect your overall attitude and the level of enthusiasm you project on the phone. Employers will sense your professionalism and positive attitude, which will make you a more attractive candidate.

Finally, don’t neglect your personal routine, especially things like careful diet and exercise. A job search can be stressful, and a healthful physical and emotional state could be critical to your success. Keep that gym membership, if you can. If your financial situation absolutely prohibits it, replace your gym

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Help at Home

Beyond some supportive words of encouragement, how can friends and relatives best help a jobseekers through a trying job hunt? “Give the jobseeker some space. If the person is sincerely looking for work and you are questioning them constantly, all you are doing is raising their blood pressure and aggravating them,” says Tom Sartoris, a Sacramento career and vocational counselor.

Excerpted from “*Be a Job-Hunt Helper*,” by Julia Hollister. To view entire text, click on Article Archive at JobJournal.com.

activities for the day will be conducted from home. When you would normally leave for work, take your place in your home office or whatever temporary workspace you’ve set up. Be mindful of your posture and your attitude, and smile

time with regular walking or workouts at home. Eat right and regularly, and of course, be sure to get plenty of rest. There's a lot of work involved in a job search, and it helps to be in top condition.

Looking for work is a full-time job, and you should expect no less of yourself as a jobseeker than you would as a fully employed professional.

Money Matters

One of the best ways of maintaining a positive state of mind is to keep your financial house in order. If you're constantly worrying about mounting debt, you're not focusing your energy on your job search. But keeping expenses in check allows you to spend the extra time that may be necessary to get your ideal job, rather than settling for just anything with a paycheck.

If you've followed the financial advice you've heard throughout the years, you should have several months' salary saved — enough to support you and your family while you look for a new job. Most people, however, cannot boast of a savings nest egg that meets ideal standards. So while you can now consider yourself "fully employed" in your full-time job hunt, you may need a little underwriting for the position.

The easiest way to keep the bill collectors at bay is to adjust your cost of living. Just like a business does in a financial downturn, one of the first things you must do is cut spending and redirect cash flow. Look for expenses that can be cut from your monthly spending budget until you are back to full employment.

Basic Tips

Consumer credit counseling advisors offer some basic tips:

Focus on Essentials

Consider the must-haves first: housing, food, transportation, and insurance.

Obviously, you need a roof over your head and food to eat. But you also need transportation to get to work and/or to get to interviews throughout your job search. And, you must maintain certain types of insurance, such as auto, health, and homeowner's.

Is Your Job Search Deductible?

For jobseekers, there is some good news when April 15 arrives. Expenses not reimbursed while job hunting are tax deductible for those itemizing on Schedule A.

But before you get out your calculator and start whittling down your taxable income, it's a good idea to take a thorough look at the Internal Revenue Service's Publication 529: Miscellaneous Deductions. You'll find information on what is and isn't allowed for job searchers.

Excerpted from "Is Your Job Search Deductible?" by Stew Magnuson. To view entire text, click on Article Archive at JobJournal.com.

Minimize Household Expenses

- Shop for groceries as infrequently as possible, and buy food in bulk. Plan meals in advance, take advantage of coupons and weekly specials, and use leftovers. Never shop when you're hungry. Buy generics instead of name brands.
- Conserve energy. Adjust your thermostat to use less heat or air conditioning. Lower the temperature of your water heater.
- Cancel luxuries such as cable TV, magazine subscriptions, and memberships to clubs you aren't using. Even

Paychecks
may stop,
but bills
always
arrive
on time.

Before leaving a job, talk to your human resource department about continuing your health coverage after your departure.

cancelling special options in your telephone service and reducing long-distance calls can make a big difference.

- Increase your deductible on homeowner's or renter's insurance. Do your own home repairs whenever possible.

Control Medical Costs

Don't allow medical or dental insurance to lapse. Before leaving a job, talk to your human resource department about continuing your health coverage after your departure. While expensive, maintaining coverage with your current employer is cheaper than getting it on your own or — worse — going without.

- Eat well and exercise regularly to maintain a strong immune system and overall health.
- Learn home remedies for common illnesses. Find out if you are eligible for county health services. Use immunization clinics.

Explore Alternatives for Transportation and Childcare

Both finding new work and keeping a job will require you to arrange for transportation and — if you have young kids — childcare.

- Investigate using government or community center-operated daycare.
- See if you can share childcare responsibilities with a friend, relative or neighbor.
- If you own an extra or expensive car, consider selling it to downsize your expenses.

- Consider carpooling or using public transportation.
- Keep your vehicle in good condition

Unemployment Benefits

For the person who gets a pink slip, there is at least some comfort in knowing the blow to their billfold will be softened, however slightly, by a backup source of income: unemployment insurance (UI). The UI safety net provides biweekly payments to help displaced workers make ends meet until they can find another job.

But beware. Benefits are not paid from the date of the layoff but from the date you file an application for benefits. So the sooner you apply, the sooner you will start receiving assistance. Every day you wait is another day you won't be paid.

"If they want to get their benefits started right away, people should come in the first week they are laid off," advises Suzanne Schroeder, information officer at the California State Employment Development Department.

The first week of unemployment is considered a "waiting period" and is not covered. After that you are eligible to receive a check for every two-week period you remain out of work.

At best, UI payments are a stopgap measure, covering only a part of your working wage - never more than 50 percent. The maximum stipend of \$230 a week is paid to those whose earnings averaged at least \$24,000 per year over the previous 18 months. You must have earned at least \$300 per month for four consecutive months to qualify for the minimum payment of \$40 per week.

Compensation is determined by how much a person earned in the 12-month period beginning approximately 18 months prior to the date of application for unemployment benefits. The four to six-month period before the claim was

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to avoid expensive breakdowns. If possible, do your own maintenance.

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filed is not counted. For example, all claims filed in August or September 2003, would have a base period beginning in April 2002, and ending on March 31, 2003.

Unemployment benefits continue for at least 14 weeks, up to a maximum of 26 weeks if you aren't hired sooner. If you accept a part-time job, you may be eligible to continue receiving a partial unemployment payment, depending on your new income.

Although unemployment is a federal program, it is administered by individual states. To apply, call or visit your local Employment Development Department office or sign up online.

To qualify for benefits, you must be able to work, be actively seeking work, and be willing to accept a suitable job. "Suitable" generally means a position that is equivalent to what you had before, i.e., if you were an account executive making \$45,000, no one would expect you to take a job flipping burgers at a fast-food joint. You might, however, be asked to take a lesser-paid job in your current field.

Generally, unemployment benefits are for people who were laid off. Those who voluntarily quit their job are not eligible. However, if someone is fired, he or she could be eligible depending on the circumstances. If an individual is fired "for cause," i.e., the employee violated reasonable terms of employment, he generally will not qualify for benefits. In making that determination, EDD usually interviews both parties. But, like most government decisions, this one can be appealed.

Excerpted from "Benefits Denied," by Dell Richards. To view entire text, click on Article Archive at JobJournal.com.

Eliminate Unnecessary Spending

Trim purchase for entertainment, gifts and clothes (other than essentials).

- If you need clothes appropriate for interviewing or a new job, shop at thrift stores and discount centers first. Keep in mind you only need one good interview outfit. While you may be tired of it, interviewers are seeing it for the first time. Maximize or vary outfits you already have with different accessories. Whenever possible, do your own mending and alterations.
- Enjoy less expensive forms of entertainment, such as matinee movies and activities in the park.
- Host barbecues or potluck dinners with friends instead of dining out at restaurants.

Keep Saving

While you may need to dip into your savings here and there to keep finances afloat, try to continue a program of regular saving if at all possible.

- Put something aside each month, no matter how small.
- Use savings only for emergencies, i.e. the essentials.
- Budget for annual or periodic expenses, like car registration and taxes.
- Tap into retirement funds only as a last resort.

If your financial situation is truly unmanageable, contact a consumer credit counseling service to help you deal with creditors and organize a strategy — and a budget — to get back on track.

Just like a business, one of the first things you must do in a financial downturn is to cut spending and redirect cash flow.

What Employers Look For

Hopefully by this time, you know what you want out of a new job. But have you ever considered what an employer may want out of a new hire? By looking at the process through a hiring manager's eyes, you'll gain valuable insight into what drives a hiring decision. Employ this perspective throughout the job-search process and you may gain a winning edge.

Consider a hypothetical example. Jeff, a personnel manager, put an ad in the local paper for an accountant, listing the minimum qualifications required. He receives 120 resumes over a two-week period. He'll spend about thirty seconds scanning each resume to quickly determine whether the individual has the basic skills and experience, as listed in the ad. About half will be rejected immediately.

Who Gets Laid Off, Even in Good Times:

Kennedy's Career Strategist, a bimonthly newsletter, polled HR experts to create a composite of the worker most likely to be laid off even in prosperous times. Pinkslip-prone workers tended to resist technological advances; were often "disconnected" emotionally from work; were doomsayers about the company; were often disliked by peers and subordinates; and often had a major work screw-up in their past. "If you are politically disconnected or in political trouble with your boss and/or the grapevine, you'd better mend fences or think about moving – even if your company has just completed a record quarter," the *Strategist* concludes.

Now he is down to 60, but he only plans to interview about ten candidates. Who will he reject? This is when Jeff's job starts to get tough.

He's under a great deal of pressure to hire the right person. Jeff's raises and promotions are based on his ability to hire people who will be productive for years to come. He's already spent hundreds, maybe even thousands advertising the position. Department heads will ultimately judge him on his ability to pick the right person — and let his boss know if he doesn't. The company may invest thousands training the new hire, and really doesn't want to find they've wasted it on a person that fails to pass muster. Or worse, the new hire may gum up the works through incompetence (undetected in the hiring process) that costs the company a fortune. Every day, Jeff reads news accounts of someone who used extremely bad judgment: sexual harassment, embezzlement, industrial accidents, corporate sabotage, business blunders that cost millions. For each story, he knows there is a hiring manager with knots in his stomach, ruing the day he ever hired that moron. It's a wonder he sleeps at night.

How does Jeff whittle the pile of 60 resumes down to ten? And by the same measure, how will he select the ideal candidate from the ten he interviews?

Jeff begins by looking for a set telling traits that every ideal employee has, no matter the position. They include:

By looking at the process through a hiring manager's eyes, you'll gain valuable insight into what drives a hiring decision.

Employees who simply aren't liked will become isolated, disenchanted with their jobs, and may ultimately quit — or have to be let go.

Integrity

Employees with integrity have a moral compass that quietly guides them through the day in making those tiny decisions of right and wrong. They do the right thing even when there may not be a tangible payoff — putting in a few extra hours for the good of the organization, helping out a coworker without expecting anything in return, or knowing when those little distractions — water-cooler chit chats, personal e-mails and calls — get in the way of the job. People with integrity quickly gain their supervisor's trust and are often rewarded with increased latitude in their jobs.

Likability

Even in the most institutional of jobs, people skills play a role. Employees who simply aren't liked will become isolated, disenchanted with their jobs, and may ultimately quit — or have to be let go. They are less likely to be team players, which may cause animosity among others around them. They may have poor communication skills that could cause mixed messages resulting in bad business moves. These scenarios — and countless others — could adversely affect the bottom line.

Stability

Jeff will review a candidate's employment history to help determine stability. Stable employees can be expected to stick with an employer for a number of years, and be clear and predictable in their work. But many factors could affect that steadiness causing the individual to quit.

Common examples include family considerations such as a spouse's careers or child care issues. (Jeff may try to ask questions to determine if these factors may influence a candidate's stability, however direct questioning to a person's marital status or plans to start a family are illegal.)

Instability can also come from within: Some people are simply unhappy wherever they work and tend to bounce from job to job often. Other forms of instability are more lethal — the effects of domestic violence or drug and alcohol abuse can spill over into the workplace. Tardiness, absenteeism, and serious problems on the job often ensue.

Adaptability

With today's constant fluctuations in the business cycle, employees with adaptability can survive layoffs, and thrive during the good times. While major change often negatively affects moral, employees who easily accept it and learn new skills or routines will experience less stress than those who are more set in their ways. Jeff, like hiring managers in other small companies, is particularly fond of workers with adaptability, as job shifts are more common in these organizations. He also recognizes that no matter how well a person does in a job, if they are deemed as unable to accept change, they won't get promoted.

Common Sense

Common sense is more noticeable for its absence than its presence. Employees who lack it miss the "big picture," and

Common sense is more noticeable for its absence than its presence.

make errors when prioritizing projects, managing time or making smart decisions. Jeff looks for clues for the lack of common sense when evaluating job candidates. Are resumes error-free? Does the candidate arrive for the interview on time and dress properly? Are they gracious and professional throughout the meeting? These seemingly minor issues go a long way towards determining common sense.

Compatibility

Every organization has a personality, and it influences everything from the corporate mission to the amount of overtime people are expected to put in. While Jeff doesn't expect candidates to match the corporate culture exactly, he knows that those on a completely different plane will either eventually quit or be cut loose. He looks at the "Objectives" section of a resume to find out if his company can in some way satisfy the candidate's goals. He also asks questions regarding personal goals and working style to help determine a candidate's fit with the organization.

Jeff — and just about every other person responsible for making hiring decisions — will look for these traits throughout the evaluation process and spend a great

deal of effort determining whether the remaining candidates possess these qualities. He reviews the remaining resumes for indications of the traits, rejects some for frequent job changes, others for sloppiness, and so on, until the pile is down to a manageable 20. He then conducts brief phone interviews and notes that some are unfriendly, while others are revealed to have fabricated truths on their resume. After rejecting those, he ends up with the 10 he meets face-to-face. Jeff's interview process includes skill and personality testing, which spotlight candidates who may not fit with the corporate culture. While he doesn't get the perfect person (she may not even exist!), he eventually hires Jill, a young woman that demonstrates she possesses more of the quality and compatibility traits than any other candidate. Jeff sleeps soundly that night.

Take a close look at how you might fair in Jeff's recruitment process, paying particular attention to the areas you might be deficient in. While you can't change who you are, you can "put your best foot forward" in presenting yourself in a way that minimizes these negatives and highlights the strong ones. And then exhibit these qualities every day once you are hired. If you do, your career will go far.

While you can't change who you are, you can "put your best foot forward" in presenting yourself in a way that minimizes these negatives and highlights the strong ones.

Words of Your Wisdom

You know yourself better than anyone in the world — your experiences, skills, strengths, and other qualities, and where you want your career to go from here. But up to this point, this knowledge has been mostly in your head (and perhaps jotted down somewhere). Now it's time to put this wisdom into actual words. Whether it's on a resume, cover letter and reference sheet, or later, on applications, how you convey your attributes on paper can mean the success or failure of your job search campaign.

For more information on preparing any of these documents, obtain a copy of the companion to this guide, *Writing Your Next Resume*, available through JobJournal.com beginning in 2004.

How you convey your attributes on paper can mean the success or failure of your job search campaign.

Resumes

Prepare a resume to reflect your career goal and your qualifications for that objective. You'll need a professional presentation of yourself in your job search, and the resume is a powerful tool for both networking and completing actual job applications. The process of preparing a resume is itself useful, because it forces you to clarify your goals so that you can better focus on your job objective.

If you need help preparing a resume, refer to one of the many resume-writing guides available through your local library or bookstore or see the aforementioned, *HIRE-Level Resumes*. If you do not feel qualified to write your own resume, you might want to hire a

professional resume writer to prepare one for you.

Cover Letters

Cover letters are used to introduce your resume to prospective employers. But simply stating, "Enclosed is my resume outlining my qualifications for this job" is not enough. Cover letters must be individualized for each employer. That means taking the time to address their business concerns specifically and, if possible, pointing out how you could be of help as an employee. A "canned" cover letter format won't do.

If you are unsure how to write effective cover letters, consult a guide or review published samples. You can find some great ideas in cover letter and/or resume writing books, as well as job-search and career websites on the Internet. Be sure the source is credible and the information has been published recently. Cover letters and resumes have both evolved significantly in recent years, and maintaining a competitive edge requires fresh information.

References

Before you commence your job search, you should also prepare a list of character references. References are the names and contact information (addresses and telephone numbers) of people who know you well. It's best to list professional references first — i.e., those people or colleagues you've worked with before. Be sure to include their professional title

Never include someone on your reference sheet without their knowledge.

Jobseekers worried about ex-employers bad-mouthing them are only a few clicks away from a service that will find out the truth. References-etc.com, jobreference.com, myreferences.com, and badreferences.com are a few of a growing number of web services that for a fee (usually under \$100) will pose as an employer checking out a jobseeker's background.

Excerpted from "The Rules About References," by Lacy Salter. To view complete text, click on Article Archive at JobJournal.com.

and current employer, if possible.

Include three to four references on your reference sheet. If you're unable to list professional references (because of a lack of work experience, for instance) put down personal references of non-family members who know you well enough to vouch for your good character. References are used by employers in conducting background checks on prospective new hires.

Be sure to let your contacts know you intend to list them as references. Ask for their permission and confirm that they are comfortable with your listing them. Never include someone on your reference sheet without their knowledge.

Applications

Be prepared to fill out plenty of applications in your job search. To streamline the process and ensure consistency, consider completing a standard application form that you can use as a master as you respond to job

opportunities. Employers may request that you complete an application form prior to interviewing you. While many companies have their own individual application forms, the information requested is almost always the same.

You can prepare in advance to fill out these forms when requested by carrying a completed one with you. Your master application should be a standard form with information on previous positions, companies you've worked for, employment dates and locations, job duties, wages or salary, and so on.

When filling out applications and other company materials, remember that the *way* you complete these forms is itself a reflection of your work ethic and your basic qualifications for the job. If you submit a messy or incomplete application, the employer might assume your work on the job is often messy or incomplete, or that you would be careless about following through on work assignments. The time it takes you to fill out an application is also an indication of your work abilities — another good reason to have a master form on hand.

Remember that employers will usually require a completed application form, even if you have a resume. The application not only gives them additional information that may not be in your resume, it serves as a legal document which they must have before conducting any background check or pursuing you further as a viable candidate.

The way you complete these forms is itself a reflection of your work ethic and your basic qualifications for the job.

Researching the Market

Once you have a job goal in mind and you've begun to mount a job-search campaign, you're ready to get down to business and research the market. While there's a vast amount of information available on pursuing a job — networking, resume writing, interviewing, and even negotiating compensation — little attention is given to the how-to's of finding those hot job leads in the first place. The behind-the-scenes work that can really make a job search successful is *research*.

“Research?! What do you mean, research? Ughh!”

This response is quite normal. However the fact remains, research is key if you want to find the best job opportunities. As Max Messmer, longtime CEO of Robert Half International noted, “Job leads aren't like apples. You don't pluck them or shake them from a tree branch. You have to dig them up.” But where should you break ground first?

Your top priority in researching opportunities should be to know the industry you'd like to pursue. *Research can be found in the written word and — more effectively — human contact.*

Library Research

The library is still one of the best places to learn about careers. It will be especially fruitful if you make the acquaintance of the reference librarian at the branch you will be using.

The real gold nuggets of information that the library (in particular) has to

offer are in the many magazines and journals full of articles, as well as the voluminous directories of corporate data in America — and even abroad. Even if

Don't Judge the Quality of Career Advice by Its Price

“During my job search I paid hundreds for career training that wasn't worth two cents. And I paid nothing for invaluable feedback and services that helped me land a job . . . Don't overlook the excellent free services from city, county, state and federal programs. Just because it's free doesn't mean it's worthless.”

Excerpted from “Lessons Learned from Being Laid Off,” by Rich Heintz. To view complete text, click on Article Archive at JobJournal.com.

you feel you're an old pro after all those research papers completed in school, you might need a little assistance finding your way around all the business, industry and career-related data you'll find in a library.

Government guides such as the *Occupational Outlook Handbook*, published by the Department of Labor, provide projections of employment opportunities in more than 200 industries. While the *Handbook* is revised and re-released every other year, the companion journal *Occupational Outlook Quarterly* gives more recent information on specific careers. *The US Industrial Outlook*, published by the Department of Commerce, presents detailed analysis of

The behind-the-scenes work that can really make a job search successful is *research*.

growth prospects for most industries.

In addition to the researching strategies outlined above, you can find job-specific information on a variety of industries by consulting the Encyclopedia of Associations, found in any library. This directory categorizes national organizations according to general interest and then lists them by specific focus. Detailed indexes help locate the entries in a particular field. You'll find business and professional associations, information about published newsletters, job hotlines and even job listings.

Business directories can provide important facts about all kinds of companies, from products or services and earnings to number of employees. Some

acquire even more information about them by directly requesting copies of their annual reports or recruitment and marketing brochures. A public company's annual report to the stockholders, for instance, tells about its corporate philosophy, history, products or services, goals, and financial status. Contact the company's public relations, communications, or human resources department to request this data.

Directories give you general facts and figures, and company materials provide a positive, promotional image of the organizations you're researching. To get a more objective or even critical view of companies, look to articles in magazines and newspapers. Publications can give

you a broader picture of a business's products and services, successes and failures, and current objectives and strategies. Articles can also explain how the company plays a role in and is affected by important industry trends.

Helpful indexes for periodicals include the Business Periodicals Index, the Reader's Guide to Periodical

directories also include names, titles, and tenure of corporate officers — which can make additional queries for related newspaper or magazine articles a little easier.

Once you identify companies you think you're interested in, you can

Literature, the National Newspaper Index, and the Wall Street Journal Index. InfoTrac is an electronic periodical index where you can enter a standard industrial classification (SIC) code and get the top 100 companies in any industry. To narrow your search, input a

The library is still one of the best places to learn about careers.

Some widely available business directories include:

- *Dun & Bradstreet's Million Dollar Directory*
- *Moody's Industrial Manual*
- *Thomas' Register of American Manufacturers*
- *Ward's Business Directory*
- *Dun's Employment Opportunities Directory*
- *America's Corporate Families*
- *Standard and Poor's Register of Corporations, Directors and Executives*
- *Hoover's Handbook of American Business (or Hoover's Handbook of World Business)*
- *The Job Seeker's Guide to Private and Public Companies*

There's even a directory of directories, called *Directories in Print*, cataloging thousands of — you guessed it — directories.

city and state and you'll get a list of the top 100 companies in that area. Other electronic databases include Dun's Million Dollar Disc and CorpTech CD-ROM Directory.

Your regional *Business Journal* (available in major metropolitan areas throughout the US) is an excellent source of local commerce news, covering everything from key companies and trends to executives and individuals considered the movers and shakers to watch. The *Business Journal* also publishes annual business reviews, previews, and its trademark *Book of Lists*, which catalogs largest or fastest-growing companies and is organized and published by city.

Of course, don't overlook your local newspaper's business section. You should be reading regularly — especially during a job search. Local newspapers sometimes have their own indexes, often kept electronically on CD-ROM. If you're

unsure whether an index is bound in periodical directories or filed electronically, ask your librarian for assistance.

Traditional Job Leads

The most commonly used source of job leads has traditionally been the Help-Wanted section of the daily newspaper. Each year, American businesses spend billions in these sections, swelling them to 40 pages or more as was the norm in the San Jose Mercury News during the dot-com boom. But keep in mind your newspaper's help-wanted section represents only a fraction of recruitment activity resulting in successful job placements.

Consequently, it's not advisable to just read the classifieds with the sole purpose of picking out announcements that sound interesting and responding to those ads. You should be doing more. When you pick up your morning newspaper and turn to the want-ads, highlighter

Don't overlook your local newspaper's business section. You should be reading regularly — especially during a job search.

Plan Your Job Search Strategy

According to the National Association for Counseling and Development, the average person goes through 5 to 7 careers and 10 to 12 job changes. Clearly, an effective job-search strategy influences how people perceive not only the job market, but also their own marketability. Using a single source, such as pounding the pavement in the financial district or scouring the Inter-

net, is a flawed strategy, according to career counselor Helen Scully.

Nine times out of ten, jobseekers stumble because they fail to develop a coherent, comprehensive job-search plan. Instead, they seek work haphazardly.

Where should you be looking? The answer varies with each individual. You can develop a suitable strategy through

various sources, including books (What Color Is Your Parachute is an excellent primer) or by seeking counseling at one of the many private services available (check your local yellow pages under career and vocational counseling).

Excerpted from "Bouncing Back from a Bruised Self-Esteem," by Carol Hartman. To view entire text, click on Article Archive at JobJournal.com.

Even if the jobs you're looking at have already been filled, the ads themselves can tell you a story about employers' staffing needs and hiring activity.

or scissors poised, don't just scan the jobs. Rather, *study* the ads. You're looking at a significant investment: Employers spend huge sums of money in recruitment advertising, and print media is a major, budgeted expenditure. Even if the jobs you're looking at have already been filled, the announcements themselves can tell you a story about employers' staffing needs and hiring activity.

Look for market indications and patterns in the ads. Are certain employers trying to fill numerous positions? Heavy hiring activity could indicate organizational growth or expansion with new products or services. If you notice several announcements from employers in the same industry, look more closely. Significant recruiting in a variety of positions throughout competing organizations most likely indicates industry growth in general, while scads of ads for a particular type of professional (such as software engineer) might indicate a shortage of skilled labor in that field.

You may notice ads for different positions for one employer. Perhaps they are undertaking a major expansion and hiring across the board, but advertising only their hardest-to-fill openings. This employer would warrant more research — and perhaps a well-crafted letter and resume.

On the other hand, frequent announcements for the same position with an organization could mean the company is experiencing high turnover. While a fair rate of turnover is standard in jobs like sales or customer service, be wary of high turnover in traditionally more stable

positions such as middle management. A company's inability to retain a production manager in manufacturing, for instance, could be a sign of financial trouble or unsatisfactory working conditions.

Indications like these can be noted on

Help for California's Unemployed

More than 100 one-stop career centers throughout California provide a broad range of training, education and employment programs. Most centers not only help people find jobs, but also help them deal with barriers to work - from lack of transportation and telephones to childcare and housing.

"The one-stops provide core employment services," explains Suzanne Schroeder of the Communications Office of California's Employment Development Department. "Every one is somewhat different from the others. Some are full-service; some are satellites. Some are even kiosks so you can go online and get the information you need."

Each full-service location provides certain basics:

- Career counseling and assessment
- Automated job postings
- Information on job trends
- Help filling out unemployment insurance and other forms
- Help finding money to cover the cost of training

"The emphasis is on helping people," Schroeder stresses.

"We try to give them options so they can make informed choices."

Most centers have a resource room with computers, faxes and telephones. Counselors provide testing and assessment of skills, while self-help groups polish job-search skills.

For more information on the One-Stop in your area (California only), go to edd.ca.gov and click on 'career centers.'

Excerpted from "Improving on the Job - One-Stop Career Centers," by Dell Richards. To view entire text, click on Article Archive at JobJournal.com.

Focus on the quality of promising opportunities rather than the sheer number of job listings you can turn up.

a local, regional, or national level. Part of your job in reading the want-ads will be to determine the scope of your job search and whether you're willing to relocate. If you are, you may need to acquire the local newspapers for the communities you're considering, or resort to searching national job listings by city. Be sure to pick up regional publications, also, which often cover a broad area. *California Job Journal*, for instance, is a weekly employment newspaper with job leads covering Northern California.

Another important source of printed job announcements that many people overlook is professional journals and trade publications. In fact, some employers will specifically direct their recruitment dollars to these kinds of media as opposed to general-readership newspapers, in the hopes of finding qualified candidates who participate in a regular regimen of professional development and keep abreast of industry news. Their focus with such a strategy is on the *quality* of their job applicants, not quantity.

You should also be focused on the quality of promising opportunities rather than the sheer number of job listings you can turn up. Remember, you're not just madly clipping away at classifieds, you're *researching* opportunities. Once you've selected some ads you think you'd like to respond to, look through them again and prioritize which ones sound like the closest match in terms of what the stated qualifications are as well as *your* requirements for your next work experience.

If the ad is poorly written or the parameters of the job are unclear, try to

find out more about the opportunity before pursuing it further. You might call the company and speak with Human Resources or a department administrator, or you may be able to find another, more detailed announcement and/or additional information on the Internet. In some cases, an ad is written in vague terms deliberately because it's really *not* a popular job, or it's a difficult job to fill. If you think you've come across one of these, skip it and move on.

There's no point going through all the time (and in some cases expense) of applying and interviewing for jobs that just aren't going to suit you or that you would be unlikely to accept. Your time is just as valuable as the money employers spend on all those recruitment ads — don't waste it chasing opportunities that are unlikely to pan out for you.

However, many employers write recruitment ads with the perfect candidate in mind — a person that may not exist. These ads require a certain level of skills, experience and education that may be deliberately optimistic. Employers behind these ads would consider themselves lucky to hire someone with most of the requirements. It is impossible to know which employers are doing this, so assume they all do. Therefore, don't pass up an ad just because you don't fit the profile exactly.

At some point, you'll realize that information gleaned from the web and in print will only take you so far. That is when you'll need to talk to people in your field for more specific answers to your questions.

Many employers write recruitment ads with the perfect candidate in mind — a person that may not exist.

Informational Interviews

Informational interviews are meetings arranged by job seekers and career changers to learn more about a particular industry or occupation. They are *not* job interviews; the primary purpose of these meetings is to collect information, not to discuss employment with the company. To set up an informational interview, there need not be any job opening nor even any interest in working for a particular company. These meetings should be used to discover helpful job-search information and expand your career-specific network. In these meetings, you are seeking to:

- Learn about industry trends and required skills for the career you are considering.
- Develop your one-on-one interviewing skills.
- Gain new contacts for your job-search network.
- Keep in touch with the industry so you will be aware of important developments and possible job leads.

Informational interviews are a great way to clear up career questions and build a network of contacts in the industry — contacts that can help you tap into the “hidden” market of unannounced and unadvertised jobs. The more you know about your field of interest before you go on “real” job interviews, the more successful you will be.

While there is an implied understanding that it is not in any way a real job interview, realize that while you’re

getting information from them, they’re getting information on you: Your skills, experience and career goals. Now that they know you, they may feel more comfortable either giving you names of

Selling Yourself

Like it or not, conducting a job search is much like conducting a sales campaign

‘Salespeople already have a basic belief in themselves,’ says sales guru and author Jeffrey Gitomer. ‘Salespeople are dogmatic and persistent, and tend to take *no* not as *no* but as *not yet*.’ Good salespeople also tend to be self-starters. They are more assertive, more punctual and present a more confident demeanor . . . It’s important to play the numbers. If a salesperson is successful with one in ten calls, he knows he must make 100 calls to have ten successes. The job search can also be a numbers game.”

Excerpted from “Sell Yourself Like a Pro,” by Rich Heintz. For complete text, click on Article Archive at JobJournal.com.

people they know, or passing your name on to their contacts. This is networking at its basic level, and the best way to get the job that fits your career goals.

So, how do you go about conducting informational interviews?

First, find at least two knowledgeable people who are now doing what you want to do. Phone them and introduce yourself as someone interested in the field, and invite them to lunch or coffee to discuss the industry.

Example: *Hello Ms. Smith, my name is John Duncan. I understand that you are the public relations manager for XYZ Company.*

Informational interviews are a great way to clear up career questions and build a network of contacts.

I've been thinking about getting into this field, and I am looking for someone who can give me good information about the industry from the inside. Would it be possible for me to buy you lunch to discuss or share ideas on this subject? When would be a good time for you?

Always give your contact the choice of when and where to meet. An informational session should be at the professional's convenience, not yours. If they are unable to talk with you, don't pressure them. Instead, see if they could suggest someone else for you to contact.

Ask the interviewee for no more than 45 minutes. Keeping your interview brief and to the point will demonstrate professionalism and an appreciation for the value of their time. Your goal is to get information that will help you confirm your professional goals and your interest in the field. Your meetings may also help prepare you for subsequent interviews.

Don't be reluctant to contact key people for information. Your request for advice will most likely be viewed as nonthreatening and flattering to the information giver. Their insights could mean the difference between conducting an informed job search and suffering the consequences of looking for work with blinders on. There's also the possibility that an informational interview could be with someone who may, at a later date, interview you for a job.

The most important part of informational interviewing is being prepared to ask the right questions. Come to the

meeting only after researching the industry and learning as much as you can about the profession. Some of the questions you might ask are:

- What kinds of background or experience transition best into this field?
- Do you see the industry as being in a period of growth or decline? Why?
- What are some of the unique advantages and disadvantages of being in this career?
- What are the requirements to qualify for a (position title) job in your company?

Your line of questioning should be focused on your job search. Questions should be open-ended (i.e. questions that elicit an explanation). Questions that only generate a yes or no answer will not provide you with very much information.

Be a good listener, but make sure you move the conversation along and do not get stuck on any one question. Similarly, do not allow yourself to go off on any tangents in the discussion. Completing your informational interview in a timely manner is a simple courtesy to the person who is volunteering his or her time to assist you.

Before you leave the interview, mention that you are available and request that if the person hears of any job opportunities for someone with your interests and abilities, to please let you know. Thank the person for his or her time and send a thank-you note within 48 hours of completing the interview.

The most important part of informational interviewing is being prepared to ask the right questions.

Your request for advice will most likely be viewed as non-threatening and flattering to the information giver.

Online Job Search

Think of the Internet as an electronic extension of your local library.

The Internet offers an infinite source of business and job market information because it is being updated continuously — even as you read this. Ahah! you exclaim. With such a dynamic conduit to the rest of the world, *this* must be the place to find a job!

And so it is, sort of. While there is a lot of excitement and talk about how great the Internet is for job hunting, it's important to remember that people are not necessarily getting jobs directly from the Net, but they are finding opportunities by *using* the Net. Again, it's a matter of research, effectively tapping electronic information sources to learn more about your industry and the key players in that field.

Industry and Employer Search

Think of the Internet as an electronic extension of your local library (with some really big job boards to boot!). The information you can uncover about industries and companies will probably yield more valuable data on viable job opportunities than the listings themselves, which might be simply more detailed versions of help-wanted classifieds. As noted in the *National Business Employment Weekly*, “the [bulk] of jobs that never make it into the newspaper aren't advertised online, either.” One exception to this has been with high-tech positions, which were some of the first to be represented online in both volume and variety of qualifications required.

As the Internet continues to evolve, the number and industry representation of jobs is growing. In addition, many sites post new positions first in a scroll format, so checking new opportunities on a site you just visited yesterday is a snap.

If you already know the names of the companies you're interested in, you can search for information and/or job listings posted by them. Try search engines such as Google.com and Yahoo.com, or multi-search sites like Metacrawler.com and Dogpile.com. Also check database directories like Dun's Market Identifiers USA, Hoover's and Business Database Plus. Career related websites and even electronic job banks can be useful to learn more about specific companies as

The Internet Trap

“Do not let technology cloud the ultimate goal of getting interviews,” counsels James Challenger, president of out-placement firm Challenger, Gray and Christmas.

“Jobseekers must be careful not to let the technology lull them into a false sense of security — into thinking that you are doing all you can do to get a job. While you now may have access to more job openings, so do thousands of other people. Now you can send your resume with a simple key-stroke, but so can countless numbers of your competitors.”

well as broadening your understanding of the industry in general. CareerBuilder.com, Monster.com, and Jobhuntersbible.com are some sites to check out. Resources like these not only provide information on companies you may be considering (including job announcements), they

Another way to use the Internet to meet people is to check out news groups or chat sessions.

invite you to post your resume or send e-mail messages directly to the employers. Recruiters may call you to find out more about your qualifications, and some sites even feature virtual interviews where you can exchange information on the spot.

One of the best career sites for California job seekers is Jobstar.org created and sponsored by public libraries. It's well organized, up to date, and categorized regionally with lists of local resources such as community career centers and job clubs. Other good sites for national career information are The Riley Guide at rileyguide.com, and the *Wall Street Journal's* career site, careerjournal.com.

If you would like to see more of what's out there in Internet-land, try going to HotJobs, which houses a huge listing of more than 100 job and career related resources. Or, just for fun, type in the word "career" in a powerful search engine like Google.com . . . and see what worlds of information come up!

Besides being a great place to research careers and review actual job listings, the Internet is also a viable networking tool to help you meet people and exchange information. Your research might lead you to professional associations with local chapters in your area. If so, by all means attend a meeting and meet some folks in your field — face to face. Another way to use the Internet to meet people is to check out news groups or chat sessions. These are electronic bulletin boards that invite open discussion on all kinds of subjects. Regular participation in a group related to your

career interests is a great way to interact with other professionals in your field.

Electronic Job Searches

While the Internet is an excellent research tool to learn more about industries and individual companies alike, it's also a great place to view hundreds of thousands of job listings. Sites like Monster.com, [Career Builder.com](http://CareerBuilder.com), and America's Job Bank boast huge inventories of job announcements that candidates can search in hopes of finding that perfect position. What makes job posting sites even more attractive is that their databases are searchable by industry, position title, region, and even by company name — so you can specify exactly what you're really looking for and see what turns up.

Just remember that what does (or doesn't) turn up is not necessarily an indication of what's truly out there. The Internet is only one place to look in getting an overall picture of the job market. If you're looking for a Northern California position as a medical journalist, for instance — the absence of that job's listing in your search results does not mean it doesn't exist. It just means your electronic search didn't turn up anything.

You might try broadening your inquiry, or searching with alternative keywords, or looking in other job listing sites altogether. On the other hand, if you entered "customer service" or "sales" and your inquiry yielded 25,000 jobs, you'll need to narrow your search by defining your criteria more clearly — unless you

Just remember that what does (or doesn't) turn up is not necessarily indicative of what's truly out there.

have the time to sit and read through each and every one of those listings.

Finally, don't rule out the possibility that the job you're looking for simply is not posted on the Internet. Even as more and more employers use online services to announce their career opportunities — and even as they list positions across a broader range of fields — the Internet is never going to be an exhaustive clearing house of all jobs that exist. Bottom line: Like classified ads, using the Internet to find job listings can be a numbers game. In fact, Richard Nelson Bolles, author of *What Color Is Your Parachute*, likens these vast Internet job-listing sites to Las Vegas — calling them “job hunting slot machines.”

Electronic Resume Posting

The same is true for posting your resume online. Once you post it, your resume does not just go “out there” and magically become available to every employer who may be looking for someone like you on the Internet. It goes into a virtual warehouse for the site you've posted it on — and becomes available to any employer who might happen to find it through a successful candidate search of that site's database.

If you are serious about marketing yourself on the Internet, you would be wise to take the time to target your resume not only to the big sites, but to specialized sites and newsgroups particular to your industry or area of expertise. Even then, your job search should not go into neutral once your resume is posted in all the appropriate electronic places you can think of. When used as a sole source (e.g., you post a bunch of resumes on the biggest boards you can find and then sit by the phone and wait), resume posting is just about as effective as clipping classified ads. In fact, job expert Mary Ellen Mort (author of *Reaching the Hidden Job Market*) calls resume posting sites a “flytrap for the lazy.”

The Internet offers no guarantees. You still need to get out there with other job-hunting strategies like networking, going to job fairs, and answering classified ads, and continue to conduct your job search.

Bolles provides job-hunting website descriptions and reviews in The Net Guide of [JobHunters Bible.com](#), his online supplement to *Parachute*. He gives a refreshingly realistic perspective of the Internet's role in the job-search process and how to make the most of it. If you do decide to conduct a portion of your job search online, [JobHunters Bible.com](#) is recommended reading.

People are not necessarily getting jobs directly from the Internet, but they are finding opportunities by using online information.

Getting Face to Face

You know what you're looking for, you're knowledgeable of the market, and you're working on a fantastic resume. Now the real work begins: Getting face to face with people who can positively affect your future. Making contact with prospective employers can be the hardest part of the job-search process — not because they are inaccessible, but because the process of accessing them tends to fill us with fear. Before you'll ever sweat out an interview with an employer, however, you must get noticed — and *invited* for an in-person meeting.

There are a number of different ways you might do this. The standard approach is to send your resume with a cover letter to an employer, often in response to a recruitment ad they've posted. But many job opportunities are never even advertised, and it's common knowledge that many jobs are not found through classifieds.

To be truly effective in a job search — and to get the attention of employers — you must actively utilize a broad array of strategies, rather than putting all your eggs in one basket.

Beyond classified ads there are Internet listings, employment agencies, temporary services, search firms, job fairs, help-wanted bulletin boards . . . even the old cold-calling strategy. And the best sources of job leads: networking.

Networking

Career counselors everywhere agree that networking is by far the most powerful of

all job-search strategies. It involves meeting new professional contacts either directly or indirectly through referrals from the people you already know.

The enormous success associated with networking is based on simple math. If you get just two contact names from each of three friends, then call those contacts and get just two contacts from each of them, you will have expanded your network from three friends to 21 people (with just a few scary phone calls). Imagine how many contacts you would have if you got three or four referrals for each individual you talk to. Before you know it, you will have gone from lamenting about how you can't "network" because you don't know anyone in your field, to struggling to keep all those contacts organized so you can remember whom you spoke to about what.

You could start with a friend or relative — even if they don't work in your field of interest — by asking them if they know anyone who does, or by asking them if they know anyone at all who works for a company you're thinking of targeting in your job search.

There is another way to meet contacts besides calling people you already know. Consider joining an industry association or networking group. Doing so will put you in touch with all kinds of colleagues who may be able to help you, as well as give you access to invaluable information. It's best to contribute to such an organization by becoming

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involved in its activities. At the very least, you should regularly attend meetings, professional development seminars, and networking functions.

Another advantage to affiliating with professional organizations is that they usually distribute some sort of newsletter or magazine. These industry-specific publications are an excellent source of industry news, key trends, and legislation that is affecting the field. Often there are also job listings and highlights of important career moves of local professionals. And, professional associations will be able to tell you about other trade journals to help you stay abreast of additional important information relevant to your field.

Trade shows, computer shows, conventions and new product expos are another great way to connect with local profes-

sionals who could be helpful to you in your job search and overall career development. Even swap meets can be a great place to learn and network at the same time, provided the goods being traded has something to do with your professional field.

Still, networking is difficult for some people because it calls for a little gutsiness. To be sure, a job hunt is no time to be shy. No one will know you need help unless you ask for it. And no one can help you at all unless you can tell them what you need. Because networking requires that you constantly introduce yourself to others, it's a good idea to become comfortable in doing so, and to develop a quick and concise explanation of who you are and what kind of information you're looking for.

One of the best sources of job leads is referrals.

It's Not Who You Know, But Who Knows You're Looking

Networking is crucial to finding a job in today's tough market. You've probably heard the statistics that more than 60 percent of all jobs are not advertised in newspapers. Some say 80 percent. Some job counselors will go as far as 85 percent. Whatever the number, experts agree that jobseekers who only use the help-wanted ads are at a competitive disadvantage.

Virtually anyone can be part of your network: relatives and friends, classmates, co-workers, members of your place of worship, former teachers or even teammates on your softball team.

"The most important thing is that you not be embarrassed to tell people that you're looking for work," says Jerry Simerman, who teaches a job-search workshop at the Oak-

land Career Center. This can be tough if you're feeling down about losing a job. You have to swallow your pride. "Sometimes people feel guilty about not working or they feel ashamed," he notes. "They don't tell family members, they don't tell neighbors and they don't tell friends they need a job, and they slink off to the library to hide."

Many jobseekers also forget that their alma mater is fertile territory for networking. Most campuses let alumni use their career centers. It doesn't matter if you graduated this year, last year or 20 years ago.

Campus career centers may have job postings that don't make it into the newspapers. Your alumni association, former professors and classmates are all potential network contacts.

Excerpted from "The Best Way to Find Work," by Stew Magnuson. To view entire text, click on Article Archive at JobJournal.com.

How much
can you
say about
yourself
in just 60
seconds?

Prepare for Chance Encounters

Job search clubs and career centers host intensive workshops on all aspects of networking and job seeking. One of the first exercises encouraged is often the “60-second me.” Job seekers must plan what they would say about themselves to prospective employers, friends, and professional contacts, given just one minute.

Sound simple? Go ahead, try it. How much can you say about yourself in just 60 seconds? More often than not, a job seeker — especially one who tends to ramble on — is only able to complete an explanation of who he is and what he’d like to do, perhaps including a little information on why he’s looking for work. By the time one minute is up, the employer still knows little about what the candidate could do for him. Likewise, a new networking contact would understand little about what this job seeker’s goals are or how to refer him to opportunities.

Succeeding at the 60-second me requires introspection and careful planning. It’s imperative to be clear and concise. Identify exactly what type of position you’re looking for and what skills, experience, and education you have that qualify you for the job. Then articulate it in a paragraph that will take no longer than 60 seconds to deliver, and practice it until you have it down cold. For example:

“Hello, my name is Joe Sellem and I’m a salesman with over ten years experience as a

field representative in environmental services. I hold a degree in environmental engineering with a minor in marketing from UC Davis. I’ve spent the last three years with ABC firm in Southern California, where I boosted annual revenue by 20 percent and brought in two major clients long pursued by the company. Newly relocated to the area, I’m looking for a similar position with an established environmental-services firm where I can continue to excel in sales and account development. If you know of anyone who might be interested in my qualifications, please let me know or pass on my telephone number.”

Granted, the likelihood that you will deliver such a comprehensive oratory in one single pitch may not be so high. How often are you given someone’s undivided attention — and permission — to go on about yourself? The point is to be ready for any such opportunity, and more importantly, to know exactly what pieces of information you would want to come across about you in conversation with a new acquaintance or professional referral.

Once you master the 60-second me, you can trim your profile to create a more user-friendly 30-second me, which is especially useful for very brief encounters like busy job fairs, social introductions, and even grocery-store checkout lines. You just never know when and where you might meet someone who could help you. You might find that your 30-second me varies from conversation to conversation, as you adapt information from your 60-second

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me and select the most important elements as they may relate to each meeting.

Now, what if you're a new entrant to the job market and you have little

experience, or you just aren't sure what you're looking for? How can you use the 30-second me to state your job-search intentions clearly and concisely?

The very least you can do is to try to focus on how your skills might fit some of the job opportunities that intrigue you.

"My name is Betty and I've been working as an administrative assistant for a computer manufacturer. The product I supported has been discontinued and I will be back in the job market after the first of the year. I'm looking for another administrative position that involves a lot of communications so that I can continue to use my writing skills. While I've enjoyed being a part of high-tech, I'm open to working in other industries as well."

Even if you're in a more exploratory phase in your career, you can utilize the 30-second me to enlist the help of others. You might say a few words about yourself before requesting a referral for an informational interview, for instance.

"Hello, my name is Dale and I'm graduating next Spring with a degree in communications. I'm exploring careers in non-profits, and I'm particularly interested in public relations jobs within such organizations. Do you know of anyone in a position like this who might be willing to talk with me about their work?"

Keep in mind that the less clear you are in describing what you're looking for, the less clear others will be in their understanding of what you're seeking and how they might be able to help you find it.

A job hunt is no time to be shy. No one can help you unless you can tell them what you need.

Always Project Confidence

Imagine meeting yourself for the first time. What would be your immediate impression? From the moment you walk through *anyone's* door, your grooming, demeanor, and the way you talk about yourself communicate your level of self-confidence. Whether you're networking with friends, attending a job fair, or formally interviewing with a company, always be aware of how you are coming across to others.

How can you hope an employer will be confident in hiring you if you don't demonstrate confidence in your own qualifications?

When you do make contact with employers and professional associates, remember to follow up with them. Your expressed appreciation for their time demonstrates confidence, shows professionalism, and is expected. Following up is especially important after interviews (including job fairs), if you want the job. Don't expect the prospective employer to make all the moves throughout the application process. In fact, employers will sometimes refrain from returning correspondence to see how persistent you are, and to see if you're genuinely interested in the company. Take the initiative to write a thank-you note for their time in talking with you, or follow up with a phone call. Be sure the company has all the materials they need from you and ask if you can answer any additional questions.

Don't forget to reiterate your interest in the job. Surprisingly, many applicants are passed over for positions because the employer did not feel confident of their enthusiasm for the job. Remember, you're sure to miss 100 percent of the shots you don't take.

Job Fairs

One place where the ability to network is critical is the job fair. A job fair is a forum where many employers gather for a rigorous day of recruiting. As a job seeker you might find 20 to 100 employers who have set up exhibit areas for the day. (Some companies hold their own on-site recruiting events and call them “job fairs,” which can be misleading because these events represent only the host employer — *not* a variety of firms.)

Employers invest considerable time and money in job fairs and career days, and they take them very seriously. While companies will occasionally use such an event more for public relations and image-building purposes than for active hiring, they always collect resumes in the hopes of finding good candidates for current and future positions. (And yes, they do look at them.)

Your role at a job fair is to get noticed as a viable candidate, and to get your resume into employers’ files of “preferred people” — the first to be considered for jobs as they become available. Job fairs provide a unique forum for employers to meet you in person before engaging in a formal application and interview process. And chemistry does count. This is where strong networking skills — and that 60-second me — come in. At a busy professional event such as a job fair, you’ll have only one to two minutes to meet and impress a potential employer. You must be able to deliver a summary of

your qualifications in a personable, professional and concise manner.

Don’t make the mistake of viewing job fairs as a passive recruiting activity. While job fairs provide a wonderful environment to explore career options, each encounter with an employer is an active, “real” interview. Whether you are interviewed on the spot or asked to return later for a scheduled meeting, take the process seriously.

Always prepare for job fairs by finding out what companies will be represented there and, if possible, learning something about those firms you think you will be interested in. Bring to the event plenty of updated resumes, and of course, dress professionally. Be sure to carry a notebook and pen. Finally, give yourself plenty of time to get the most out of the day. Arrive early, visit all the employers represented there, and talk to each recruiter. Even if you don’t feel you’d be interested in working for a particular company, talk to the recruiter anyway. You can take the opportunity to indicate what kind of position and organization you *are* looking for, with the hope that the recruiter might refer you to another valuable contact. You never know who knows who or what opportunities may present themselves through a “master networking event” like a job fair. So ask plenty of questions — you’ll rarely find a better opportunity to gather so much information in one place at one time.

Even if you don’t feel you’d be interested in working for a particular company, talk to the recruiter anyway.

Arrive early, visit all the employers represented there, and talk to each recruiter.

Recruiters and Temporary Services

Search Firms and Employment Agencies

Researching companies, mounting a job-search campaign, tracking every correspondence you have with employers . . . it's all just too much, you say. Many a job seeker has sighed in despair, "Can't I just hire someone to find me a job?"

One of the great things about living in a democracy is that we have so many choices. As a matter of fact, you can enlist a recruitment agency or headhunter to handle your job search for you. These services are often a haven for employed job seekers who don't have time to look for new positions on their own.

Recruiting firms and employment agencies work with all kinds of candidates — from entry-level professionals to top executives. They do tend to have particular areas of focus or specialization, however. Some firms may place a lot of entry-level or mid-level professionals, while others work exclusively with CEOs, senior managers and other major players. The latter is typical of headhunters and executive search firms, who are paid by the client (hiring) company and typically earn their fee based on a percentage of the candidate's salary and compensation. Some recruiting firms and employment agencies specialize in certain types of professionals or industries — such as those that work primarily with engineers and high-tech workers.

Employment agencies find positions for a broader variety of professionals and secure their fees (upon successful placement of candidates) from the employer or the applicant.

As a job seeker, you should never have to pay a fee for the services of an executive search firm. You may have to pay the fees of an employment agency, however, especially if you're an entry-level professional or if there is no shortage of workers in your field. The fee is typically a percentage of your earnings on the new job once you are successfully placed.

If, on the other hand, you offer skills that are in great demand, the agency is more likely to see you, the highly qualified candidate, as a commodity. Agencies are often retained and paid by their client companies looking for rare talent and strong staff members. The more great candidates an agency can attract, the better selection of professionals they will have to fill their clients' positions.

What a great deal! But alas, as with anything that sounds so easy, there are some caveats to this system. First and foremost, realize that when you put your job search in the hands of *anyone* else — even a professional recruiter — you relinquish control of it to some degree. What if they don't have as many opportunities to place you in the kind of job you're really hoping to find? If this is the case, you can bet they will either put

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"Can't I just hire someone to find me a job?"

The agency you choose cannot do its best to serve you if they don't know what your employment goals are.

their efforts into other, more “in-demand” candidates (dragging out your job search by weeks or even months), or try to mold you into a job that they think you can do, even if it's not quite what you had in mind. In the case of employer-retained agencies, they are paid by their clients (hiring companies), so they are really working for *them*, not you.

If you decide to use an agency, here are some pointers.

- Shop employment agencies or search firms to find the most appropriate one for your type of work. Try to find a recruiter who will emphasize the quality and potential fit of job opportunities they dig up for you, not someone who merely boasts of the sheer number of interviews they send candidates on.
- Keep in mind that this job-search strategy may be less effective when you're changing career fields altogether, because recruiters can do a better job of “selling” you if your most recent experience and skills closely fit the requirements of open job opportunities. If you're trying to make a career transition, you may have better luck with an applicant-paid rather than an employer-paid agency.
- Read the contract. Many agencies will want you to sign a contract, which in some cases can incorporate their application form. Note how, when, and from whom fees are to be collected, and be sure you are agreeable to the terms.
- Never rely on an agency — or even a bunch of agencies — to “handle” your entire job search for you. Use this strategy as a supplement to your own independent efforts toward finding new and more fulfilling work (e.g., soul searching, researching, and networking).

Temporary Services

Another popular option in looking for a new position is signing up with a temporary service. Temp services aren't what they used to be. Today, there's an almost endless variety of opportunities available through temporary agencies, reaching far beyond the traditional secretarial or “Girl Friday” jobs. In addition to sophisticated assignments requiring skills in

Rules to Temp by

Do:

- Ask questions about policy, procedures and office etiquette so you can do your job effectively.
- Accept additional responsibilities and exhibit a cooperative, can-do attitude.
- Ask for input about your performance and be open to guidance and constructive criticism.
- View the assignment as a chance to refine your skills and make valuable professional contacts.

Don't:

- Refer to yourself as “just a temp.” Think and act like part of the team.
- Get caught up in office politics or gossip.
- Refuse to do extra work. If the employer asks you to handle data entry, don't say, “I was just brought in to answer phones.”

business administration, communications, finance, law, and manufacturing, many temporary services fill contract assignments with professionals in in-demand fields like engineering and healthcare. In fact, some general temp services firms have established specialized divisions focused on recruiting and placing high-tech, biotech and other specialized professionals.

In an ever-changing employment market, some even feel there is more job security in working for a temp agency. While many companies continue to downsize, there are more jobs being created through temporary services than ever before. The phenomenal growth in temporary staffing can be attributed to several factors:

- As the changing relationship between employees and employers continues to erode expectations of long-term stable jobs, more people see working as a temporary employee as a way to gain *more* job security and better career options. At least when they are employed by an agency, they can be reassigned if their job is eliminated.
- Business organizations, in order to compete in an interconnected global economy and meet cyclical demand for help with production and special projects, need to be flexible in all of their company operations. Temporary services offer flexibility in staffing.
- Many types of business organizations are having trouble keeping up with the demands of attracting, evaluating,

and recruiting employees on their own.

- Temporary-help services now offer a broader spectrum of staffing arrangements.

Temporary assignments can last from a few hours to several months. But more importantly for many people, a temporary assignment can lead to a full-time job. In fact, permanent placements are occurring more frequently as companies use staffing services as a means to test the waters on proposed new positions within their firms, or to screen workers for compatibility with permanent positions.

Of course, you may be particularly attracted to temporary work because of the variety of assignments and training opportunities offered, or simply because of the flexibility inherent in not having a full-time permanent job. Or, you can't decide on a career direction, and you know that temporary work can give you real-world perspective on a variety of career choices.

Whatever your attraction to the temporary services industry — whether you want a stopgap solution to impending financial disaster or you just like the challenge of constant change in your work — signing on with a service is a great way to achieve your employment goals. And it's an excellent way to network with employers of all types.

The key to making temporary services work for you is to be honest and up front about what you hope to achieve from the

Signing on with a temporary service is a great way to network with employers of all sorts.

While many companies continue to downsize, there are more jobs being created through temporary services than ever before.

experience. If you want lots of short-term assignments in order to learn more about a particular industry, for instance, let your agency representative know that. If you are temping in the hopes of finding a full-time permanent placement as soon as possible, say so. The more clearly you communicate what kind of assignments you think you would really enjoy (as opposed to jobs that are utterly unappealing to you), the more likely it is that you'll be placed in jobs where you can excel. The agency you choose cannot do its best to serve you if you do not let them know what your employment goals are.

Employment agencies and temporary services may appear to operate similarly. A candidate can turn to them for help in finding a job, and the agency handles the business of making contact with potential employers. But there's one big difference every job seeker should know about: Employment agencies and

recruiting or search firms merely screen and refer candidates to work for their client employers, while candidates placed through a temporary agency actually work for the agency.

In other words, a temp agency's client company is not responsible for payroll or benefits or any other administrative concerns of a temporary worker on the job site — all that is handled by the temporary agency. If you get an assignment at ABC Company through Manpower, you work for Manpower, not ABC Company. So interact with a temp agency with the same courtesy and professionalism as you would with any prospective employer.

And don't get too casual with your temp agency representative. For all intents and purposes, he or she may as well be your boss. If you don't make a favorable impression, you won't be placed in your dream-job assignment any time soon.

Interact with a temp agency with the same courtesy and professionalism as you would with any prospective employer.

Problem Areas

This chapter is principally devoted to uncommon “problems” that are not applicable to most jobseekers. If you are comfortable with the way you present yourself both on paper and in person, you may not need to review this section. However, if you feel you may have a problem with your work history or if you know you need to overcome experience or education deficiencies, health-related problems, termination, or even the possibility of gender discrimination, this chapter will be of interest to you.

You may have an “employability problem” which could make it difficult for you to appeal to employers.

Ultimately, the controlling factor regarding any potential problem is the principle of supply and demand. If your type of experience or skill is rare and of high value, employers are more willing to overlook potential problem areas in the evaluation process. Conversely, if the industry in which you are seeking employment has a glut of potential workers (entertainment, for example), problem areas may be extremely difficult to overcome.

The time to address these issues is when you create your resume. An employer’s first impression of you comes from your resume, and how you handle a problem can make the difference between instant rejection and moving on to the interview stage. If handled correctly on your resume, an employability problem may not even be a factor by the time you interview for a job. But to

be on the safe side, plan early how to handle them in the interview as well. How you present yourself could make a problem either a deal-breaker or “no big deal.”

This section addresses the most common dilemmas. Employment experts indicate that approximately 80 percent of all employability problems involve these areas:

Age — Applicant is thought to be too old for the position.

Job Hopper — Applicant has worked too many different jobs in a short period of time.

Employment Gap — Applicant has experienced a lengthy period of unemployment or underemployment (work in lesser positions).

Disability — Applicant has a physical or mental handicap which may be considered to impede performance.

Gender — Although sexism in employment has been minimized through equal opportunity laws, some employers still feel certain jobs require a male or female.

Education Deficiency — Applicant lacks a college degree or the educational requirements necessary to support the stated employment objective.

Experience Deficiency — Applicant has insufficient experience or does not have the specific experience required for the position.

Changing Career Fields — Applicant

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lacks the experience required for the job in a new career field.

If one of these problem areas applies to you, consider the following information and suggestions to develop an effective strategy for deemphasizing your potential obstacle.

Withholding Information

Should you withhold “problem” information altogether from a prospective employer? *Definitely not.* While you do not need to include all details of your work history and education on a resume, there is a time and place to provide additional information. Include it on applications and, when appropriate, volunteer details during interviews. By introducing less-than-favorable details in person, you can neutralize any negative implications as you provide a more complete explanation. Since you can expect employers to thoroughly check your employment history and references, it is in your best interest to volunteer and qualify what might be considered negative information.

Age

Is age still an obstacle to employment? The answer is influenced by two major factors: civil rights legislation and demographics.

You are probably aware of the changing age profile of this country, often described as “the graying of America.” Older persons are becoming a larger percentage of the population, with younger people dropping in percentage. One fortunate effect is that as the baby boomers continue to age, there is likely to be less age discrimination in coming

years due to a shrinking labor pool and the median age of the nation’s workforce. These changes will become evident in the workplace as people take a more positive attitude toward older workers.

The Age Discrimination in Employment Act of 1967 makes it illegal for employers to discriminate on the basis of age when making employment decisions. Although this law has minimized the use of age in employee selection, there is still some covert discrimination. When two candidates present comparable or equal qualifications, many employers hire the younger worker. Since this is an illegal action, the employment manager may scrutinize the experience and qualifications of the older applicant in an attempt to cite the absence of a job-related qualification.

For many employment managers and specialists, the age question now only relates to the level of the job being considered. For example, an individual who is 40 to 50 years of age may not be considered too old for a position as vice president or department manager. It usually takes 20 to 25 years of experience to develop the qualifications for a position at this level. In contrast, a 25- to 30-year-old person may be acceptable over a 45-year-old for an engineering or sales position that only requires a few years of experience. Most firms would question why a 45-year-old with 25 years of experience would be interested in a position which requires minimum qualifications, unless the candidate has made a transition to a new career.

There is still some covert discrimination. When two candidates present comparable or equal qualifications, many employers hire the younger worker.

Traditionally, the following guidelines would indicate progressive levels in a “career ladder” path within a particular industry.

<u>AGE</u>	<u>Position</u>
25-30	Junior-level staff
30-35	Senior-level staff
35-40	First-level management
40-45	Mid-level management
45-50	Vice president-level
50+	Executive-level

But with a rapidly changing work culture — and especially the flattening of organizational hierarchies reducing traditionally intricate levels of middle management — the future career path might include many more professional positions at all levels. For this reason, it may be more useful to consider a certain position to be appropriate if it promises a challenging growth opportunity commensurate with your skills.

While you are not required to identify your age on your resume, be careful that you do not provide other hints to your age, such as graduation dates from high school, college or dates from stints in the military.

Do not list every job you have held since the beginning of your career. Just list your most recent positions and employers, going back about 10 years. Only list sufficient experience to establish that you are skilled and have the knowledge to handle the position for which you are applying. A basic rule to remember is: Since it is not necessary to list *all* past employment experience, omit

work history that doesn't strengthen your candidacy for a job.

However, an employment application is different. Usually a chronological listing of your last six to ten employers is requested. If you are given a choice, try to avoid completing a formal application until after you have been interviewed, at least on the telephone.

Of course, your best opportunity to combat any possible age discrimination is during a face-to-face interview. Before hand, take a hard look at your appearance. Does it scream “old person?” Is your interview outfit something only a senior would wear? Be sure it is up to date and generic enough that you would see it worn by a twenty-five-year-old as easily as someone in their sixties. Be sure your make-up and hair style are current as well.

During the interview, demonstrate that despite your years, you have lost nothing to your more youthful counterparts. Prove you aren't ‘set in your ways’ by mentioning how technology-savvy you are, and any continuing education you have undertaken. Put a positive spin on your age — point out that your life experience gives you wisdom that younger people simply don't have. Be sure to exhibit your energetic nature and enthusiasm for the job.

But don't go overboard and try to be something you're not. By attempting to look or act a generation younger only calls attention to your age, and makes you appear self-conscious about it. You end up making age a bigger issue than it really is in the mind of the interviewer.

Just list your most recent positions and employers, going back about 10 years.

Before interviewing, take a hard look at your appearance. Does it scream “old person?”

There are plenty of good reasons for job changes, but employers tend to frown on an unstable work history.

Job Hopper

Have you held too many jobs in a short period of time? There are plenty of good reasons for job changes, but employers tend to frown on an unstable work history — which in today's economy is not always defined so much by numerous jobs, but by the lack of any long-term commitment to any one employer.

Stability may be defined differently from one field to another. During the dot.com boom of the late 1990's, frequent job changes were not only commonplace among those with technical skills, they were expected. Jobhopping is also common in the sales field as well, and looked at positively if it resulted in increased productivity.

Unless high turnover or contract work is common to an applicant's industry, a candidate can leave a negative impression by chronologically listing numerous jobs held in a short period of time on his resume or emphasising them in person. This job seeker is usually labeled "unstable." It is assumed that his job hopping behavior will continue and that it is not in the best interest of an employer to hire him.

Remember, a business must bear a substantial cost to recruit, hire, and train an employee and, additionally, may risk legal troubles should termination become necessary. Therefore, an employment manager is responsible for controlling recruitment expenses by only considering those candidates who have a reasonable probability of staying with the company for the expected period of time. If you

The Consulting Conundrum

While more and more businesses are completing work through outsourcing, contracting, and temporary assignments, the frequency of acceptable job changes varies by industry. What is common in one field may be unusual in another. Certain professionals may be involved with consulting firms that hire and retain a full-time work force based on a contract, for instance. When a major project is completed, many of those professionals are released. Similarly, someone working for a temporary agency may have many "jobs" or assignments at various firms that contract with the agency. On your resume, list notable contract or temporary assignments under the name of the employing agency or contracting firm, with the dates employed by that firm. While the projects you completed and the companies you worked with may be notable, the agency or firm that brought you on to do the work is technically the employer. Generally, an experienced employment specialist or human resources professional is aware that frequent turnovers may be normal in cases like these.

feel you may be classified as a job hopper, there are some steps you can take to improve your chances.

Focusing on major accomplishments and substantial contributions to previous employers will create a positive image and help deemphasize an inconsistent employment history. Use a resume format that focuses on your skills and abilities.

Generally, providing reasons for leaving past employers is not recommended on your resume. Even if the reasons tend to be things that were beyond your control, it's best to refrain from discussing them until you are interviewed. If you are specifically asked

Do not mention your job-hopping past during the interview unless asked about it.

about this issue, here are some circumstances that may offset the negative impression of job changes:

- **Major Shift in Company** — Company was sold, new management brought in, operation restructured, or company moved.
- **Reorganization** — Department or position eliminated, company dropped a product or line of business, or a change in marketing philosophy resulted in job consolidation.
- **Early Retirement** — Accepted an offer to retire.
- **Budget Reduction** — Eliminated your job, deemphasized the need for your skills.

Although lack of advancement opportunity or health reasons may be viable causes for job separation, use these reasons with caution. Some employers will see such statements as a disguise for discontent with a previous boss or company.

Unacceptable reasons for leaving past employers include absenteeism, chronic lateness, poor performance, dishonesty, incompatibility with the job or company policy, or personality conflict with a boss.

Do not mention your job-hopping past during the interview unless asked about it. If it doesn't come up, obviously it isn't an issue for the employer (or you wouldn't be interviewing in the first place). If you are questioned about it, explain the reasons for it without making excuses. Be sure to point out that you feel confident that, if hired, you expect

to be a productive employee for years to come.

Be prepared for a thorough employment check by your prospective employer. This has become standard procedure due to the high cost of recruitment and employment. Therefore, you can readily understand why it may be important for an employer to discover the reason you left a company, especially if the circumstances could be interpreted as unacceptable.

Employment Gap

A long period of unemployment or underemployment is an issue that must be addressed. Underemployment (working a job far below your skill level or working sporadic part-time jobs) and unemployment indicate to an employer that you have had difficulty finding work in the past.

It is natural for employers to question why a person with excellent qualifica-

One Solution

"After losing my job I had a nasty gap in my work record. It caused me untold grief until I came up with a way to change it. My solution? I had been spending my extra time writing a book, so I put that on my resume. 'You must really like to write,' said one job interviewer. 'Yeah, I really do.' The book has yet to be published – but that point never came up. What they saw was my passion, and that helped land the job. No longer was I an unemployed publisher. I was a journalist pursuing his dream."

Excerpted from "Lessons Learned from Being Laid Off," by Rich Heintz. To view entire text, click on Article Archive at JobJournal.com.

Be prepared to offer a full explanation of your employment history during an interview.

tions has experienced a significant gap in employment. They will likely assume that something is wrong. Here again, you could be identified as a “risk” by potential employers.

Are there ways to overcome this problem? Yes. No law requires resumes to include all periods of employment or unemployment. On your resume, simply do not point out employment gaps in your resume work history. If you were unemployed from March 16, 1998 to August 1, 1999, indicate:

WORK EXPERIENCE

1999 to present: Public Relations
Manager, Delta Corporation

1996 to 1998: Information Specialist,
Gamma Corporation

Regardless of how you treat this information on your resume, be prepared to offer a full explanation of your employment history during an interview. This is your opportunity to put a positive spin on the matter, so be honest and forthcoming. If the employer uncovers your employment gap while investigating your references and past employers, your honesty will be called into question, jeopardizing your candidacy.

Disability

While the marketplace has matured in recent years and provided more opportunity for workers with physical disabilities, it is still an issue that must be considered. Some conditions are physical

impairments that interfere with the performance of life functions (sight, hearing, walking, use of arms or hands, etc.). Others may stem from a disease or medical disorder (e.g., heart disease, cancer, AIDS, MS) or they may be caused by a temporary disabling condition such as allergies, asthma, or migraine headaches.

Federal law prohibits employers from discriminating against candidates on the basis of physical handicaps, where “reasonable accommodation” would enable such candidates to satisfactorily perform the job. Further, the law requires that reasonable accommodation be provided to enable disabled individuals to perform their jobs. Special desks, chairs, ramps, and modified rest room facilities must be available for use.

But the pressing question is whether a person should list a disability in his resume. Generally speaking, no. If it is to be mentioned, it should be handled in the cover letter. Ultimately, this is really an individual issue. If you are the type of person who is comfortable with your disability and not embarrassed when someone reacts awkwardly when they first meet you, then don’t mention your disability prior to the interview.

On the other hand, some people feel it is a courtesy — and reassuring — to inform an interviewer of a disability in advance, especially in cases an obvious disability where there is concern that the employer might assume a candidate is incapable of fulfilling the duties required of the job. If you feel compelled to advise the employer in advance, do so in your

Should a person list a disability in his resume? Generally speaking, no.

cover letter. Provide an accurate account of your limitations, but also include details on how you have performed successfully in previous jobs.

No matter how you elect to address this problem, make sure you don't overdo it. Stress your worth and capability as a prospective employee and discuss why your condition will not prohibit you from meeting all job responsibilities and expectations.

Gender

Many jobs that were once identified as either "male" or "female" positions are now being handled by both sexes. When intelligence or experience is required, discrimination tends to be minimized. When bodily strength is called for, a problem persists, since some employers still consider physical work to be "men's work."

In any event, if you have the qualifications and experience desired in today's more profit-sensitive climate, smart employers will not discriminate. Laws prohibit it and it's simply a bad business decision. Employers still want to hire the best person for the job.

If you feel a specific job may be considered with some gender bias, dispel preconceived notions by stressing your accomplishments, skills, and experience to a prospective employer in your resume and in the interview. For example, if travel is necessary, mention that you are available and capable of handling this requirement. Or, if tools are required, note that you have your own.

When you are seeking a job in an

industry dominated by the opposite sex, establish that you are aware of this circumstance but don't feel it is a problem. If you have had a successful experience working in a similar environment, point this out. Remember, gender will only be a problem if you allow it to be.

Education Deficiency

Many people feel that a college degree is critical to success in today's business world, and without one they will forever be overlooked when applying for jobs. The truth is, a college degree may be quite important at the beginning of your career, but it becomes less so as you gain real-world skills and experience. By the time you reach your thirties, most recruiters are far more interested in what you've done for previous employers than whether or not your name is on a piece of parchment. This issue may be more in your head than the minds of hiring managers.

Still, some employers feel job candidates should have the appropriate credentials (associate's, bachelor's, or advanced degree) they consider "necessary" to handle certain positions in their companies. This is a reality you will have to address if you expect to receive an invitation to interview for a job.

If a B.A. in journalism is required and you do not have one, this could represent a major stumbling block. But if you have a B.A. in communications, the situation may not be so bad, since these degrees are closely related. Or you may have a degree that is not as closely

The education issue may be more in your head than the minds of hiring managers.

Employers still want to hire the best person for the job.

related, such as a B.S. in anthropology. Since an employer is more interested in whether you can fulfill the requirements of the position, you can point to your experience and accomplishments to

are seeking. Your challenge is to convince an employer that your degree has equipped you with an education comparable to the credentials traditionally identified with the job.

If you lack a degree altogether, you may not want to emphasize or include education on your resume at all. You can refrain from “telling the whole truth” until you have a chance to impress a prospective employer with your experience and accomplishments during an interview. At this point you stress the positive: Your career may have started from an entry-level position, but your intelligence and commitment enabled you to advance to a high level in your career field.

Gaining Skills

From taking a computer language course at a local community college to starting an MBA program online at a high-profile university, jobseekers will increase their marketability simply by being enrolled. Human resource executives notice which candidates have taken it upon themselves to update their skills through education. Companies want employees who have the zeal to be lifelong learners.

Excerpted from “Use Spare Time to Make Yourself More Employable,” by James E. Challenger. To view entire text, click on Article Archive at JobJournal.com.

demonstrate that you are capable of handling the job responsibilities. This is particularly true when you have acquired skills that are in high demand. On the other hand, if your field has many candidates with comparable skills seeking the same positions, proper educational credentials will play a more important role in the review process.

The key to overcoming an educational deficiency is to stress your experience and accomplishments at the beginning of your resume and list your educational credentials toward the middle or end. Be prepared to expand on your experience and knowledge in the interview.

If you do not have the degree indicated but can offer a related degree, emphasize course work which complements the requirements of the job you

Experience Deficiency

Employers tend to be more flexible regarding the actual years of experience required than they are with educational requirements.

Sometimes, those with knowledge and training can overcome a lack of experience with motivation and desire. Their drive to succeed may lead them to out-produce experienced counterparts by far. Nevertheless, it is difficult for employment managers to differentiate these qualities when flooded with many employee prospects. It is even harder to convince a manager that a person without the required years of experience can successfully perform the job. So, if there are sufficient applicants who meet the experience requirement, candidates without comparable backgrounds are not likely to be considered.

Those with knowledge and training can overcome a lack of experience with motivation and desire.

Lack of experience is a difficult problem to overcome, but there are some strategies you can employ to improve your chances. Consider using the functional resume style, focuses on your skills:

- In lieu of a career profile summary at the beginning of the resume, use an objective statement that clearly defines your job goal. There is no point focusing attention on the fact that your career does not illustrate the desired experience.
- Instead of “Major Accomplishments,” use a heading such as “Key Qualifications” or “Skills and Abilities” to highlight applicable experience, course work, or personal attributes that help qualify you for the position.

Since you do not have enough directly related experience, consider other qualifications a prospective employer may be looking for in a candidate for the job you are seeking. Even people with little work experience have skills valuable to most employers. Honesty, integrity, a strong work ethic, and good judgement skills are just a few examples. Always keep in mind that your primary objective is to overcome an experience deficiency by redirecting the employer’s attention to qualities that are essential to

successfully performing in the position.

Changing Careers

A change in career fields presents much of the same issues as does an experience deficiency. While you may have a great deal of experience in your old field, the greater the difference between that one and your new field, the more inexperienced you will appear to a prospective employer. Take the same actions you would take if you had an experience deficiency, and be sure to promote transferable skills.

Be aware that some employers might be suspicious of your motives in making a career change — even in a time when multiple career transitions are more common. So, be prepared to provide a logical explanation.

Reasons for your decision should be presented in your cover letter, and covered more in depth during your interview. Avoid stating the negative reasons that may have influenced your decision to make a career change. Instead, concentrate on one or two major reasons why you feel your transitional skills and enthusiasm for the new field will help you benefit the company and its bottom line.

Even people with little work experience have skills valuable to most employers.

Weighing Job Offers

“We’d really like to have you on our team,” the CEO declares from behind his mahogany desk; the San Francisco skyline his backdrop. The Cartier clock the only sound in the room. “And we’re prepared to make a generous offer. Six-figures, corner office, your company car is a Porche . . .” POOF! You wake up; your hands knotted tightly in your blanket. “Aaugh! It was just a dream!” you realize. “If only it were to come true then all my worries would be over.”

Or would they? How would you respond if someone offers you a job tomorrow? Would you have the wisdom to see past the trappings and really examine the job itself? Perhaps you are in a high-demand field or you ran a particu-

larly effective campaign, and you receive multiple offers. Which one do you accept, or should you keep looking for a better opportunity?

You need to make some serious assessments, both of yourself and that potential employer, to determine if the offer is right for you or you should keep looking.

It’s decision time, and the stakes are high: That offer you pass on may turn out to be the best one you’re likely to

get. Accepting the wrong job would essentially waste all the time and effort you put into your job search. You might end up regretting taking the position, and even wishing you never left your old one.

On the other hand, you may make the right decision and be rewarded with a job that satisfies your career goals for many years to come — a dream come true.

While you may never be 100% sure you accepted the perfect job, you can stack the odds in your favor by evaluating job offers based on the following criteria:

Compensation

To a large degree, we base our own self-worth on the annual salary we take home; so it’s incredibly tempting to take the job with the highest pay. But you may find that accepting a job with lower pay to be a wise move if it offers a strong benefits package. Each component of the benefits package should be scrutinized as carefully:

VACATION:

- How much is offered, and does that amount increase over time?
- How is vacation accrued? Weekly? Monthly? Yearly?
- Are there “blackout” periods when taking vacations is not allowed?
- What happens to unused vacation? Some employers have a use-it-or-lose-it policy; others allow it to accrue without limit.

Make the right decision and be rewarded with a job that satisfies your career goals for many years to come — a dream come true.

“The danger in taking a job that is not in line with your objectives is you may further distance yourself from your aims. Such a move not only diverts you from your goal, it can make it difficult for you to return to the right path.”

– James E. Challenger

Do all promotions only go to those willing to put in 60-hour weeks?

HEALTH INSURANCE:

- Does the employer offer a choice in the coverage offered?
- Does the employee contribute to premiums?
- Do you or your dependents have special health care issues that may be covered by one employer's HMO but not another?

Don't reject a job outright if health insurance isn't offered at all — if other elements of the job are appealing, you might justify buying your own coverage.

PAID LEAVE:

- How much sick leave is offered?
- Are there allowances and compensation for other types of absence, such as jury duty, military duty or bereavement?
- What is the maternity leave policy? (California is the first state in the U.S. to pass a law requiring employers to offer paid maternity leave; other states are expected to follow. But employers with fewer than 50 employees are exempt from this law.)

RETIREMENT BENEFITS:

- What type of employer-sponsored package is offered, if any?
- Does the employer match contributions?
- Can your current retirement package be rolled over?

PERKS:

A wide range of other benefits may be offered; assess their value to you. A partial list includes:

- Stock options
- Performance or year-end bonuses

- Employee ownership programs
- Memberships to professional organizations, healthclubs, credit unions, etc
- Continuing education (even for advance degrees)
- Discounts on goods and services
- Free parking or public transportation

Opportunity for Advancement

If career advancement is important, and you plan on staying with your next employer for more than a few years, select the job with the greatest growth potential.

- Does the employer actively promote from within? Is it based on merit, seniority or other factors?
- What is the cost of career advancement? Do promotions only go to those willing to put in 60-hour weeks? Are there other caveats to promotions, such as relocation?

Big vs. Little

The size of an organization may play a huge role in determining the corporate environment. People who enjoy working for small companies thrive on being a big fish in a small pond. They take pride in having a considerable roll in the success of a company and rarely feel they are just a cog in a wheel. They enjoy a corporate structure that is often less rigid and jobs that offer more variety than in larger enterprises.

People who would rather work for a larger company do it for a variety of reasons. The prestige of working for a major player in the industry is a strong incentive, as is the advancement opportunities offered. And despite the headline grabbing-layoffs suffered by some industry giants, large organizations in general offer more job security than small ones.

Workplace Environment:

You want to feel comfortable at work each day, and enthusiastic about the work you do.

Being in harmony with your employer goes a long way towards career satisfaction, and can motivate you to get past some of those early hurdles. Try to answer the following regarding the organization's environment:

- Does the company's mission conflict with your own values?
- Is the organization receptive to suggestions for improvement?
- Are long hours typical? Does management judge employees by the hours worked?
- Who would you report to? Would you enjoy working for him?
- Who would you work with? Are there any individuals that may be difficult to get along with?
- Is the work environment safe, clean and comfortable? Is equipment up-to-date and well-maintained?

Job Characteristics:

How well a job dovetails with your own skills, knowledge and work style are critical to your success and happiness.

Questions to explore include:

- Is the work similar to what you've done in the past? How is it different?
- Are your strengths put to good use? How might your weaknesses affect my performance?
- Is there variety to the work from hour to hour, day to day, week to week?
- On what criteria are raises based? How will your performance be evaluated?

- Are you given latitude to make your own decisions?
- How is learning accomplished? Are you given the necessary training to learn new skills and procedures or are you expected to learn them on your own?
- Will you be *happy* there?

Finding Answers

While you may have the answers to many of these questions (especially if you've done thorough research), others may have to be obtained through the employer. For questions regarding advancement opportunities, work environment and job characteristics, your first interview is your obvious source for answers. Not only do you get the answers you need to make an intelligent decision should you be offered a job, you show the interviewer that you are truly interested in working for them. Of course, tact must be exercised when asking some the questions in these categories.

Remember that actions speak louder than words; pay close attention to how people act and work together when attending interviews. How you are treated by the receptionist? Does it look like the staff is just putting in the time or are people really focusing on their jobs? You may find that the "family atmosphere" the interviewer touts resembles the Osbornes more than the Osmonds.

It is never smart to ask questions regarding compensation during the first interview. Wait until they show more interest in you before you finding out "what's in it for me."

You may find that the "family atmosphere" the interviewer touts resembles the Osbornes more than the Osmonds.

Being in harmony with your employer goes a long way towards career satisfaction.

You might contact the benefits manager in the human resources department to find out some of the specifics of the perks.

Accepting a Job

You've just been offered a job. There's no promissory Porche, but you've done your homework and determined that the compensation package is fair and the work would satisfy your career goals. What now?

Ask for some time to think it over.

Employers understand that this is a big

decision, and generally give you a day or two to mull it over. If they need an answer right a way, find out why. They may have a legitimate reason and would probably reveal it. But anger at your question or evasive responses should be treated with extreme caution.

Negotiate the compensation package. In some cases, there is some wiggle room regarding compensation. Depending on the position and the industry, there may be a salary range of a few thousand dollars. Or nonmonetary benefits, such as vacation time, a flex schedule or

Negotiation Reality Check

by Rich Heintz

You may have read advice on salary negotiations that suggests adopting a hardball strategy for getting the most money possible. This kind of advice is usually written for professional managers or executive-level people who have much more leeway in negotiating their salaries.

But if you're like most people, what you will earn in your next job is determined by what you've earned in previous positions — your salary history.

"When an applicant comes to me and says they want \$40,000 a year — and they have only been earning \$22,000 — I ask them why I should pay them so much more. Invariably they answer 'Because that's what I need,'" revealed Kathy Maser, a former ca-

reer counselor and the publisher of *California Job Journal*.

Need is not the same as market value. It is unrealistic to expect more than a 10 to 20 percent increase over your present salary, and maybe not even that. There are, of course, times when you might find yourself in an unusual situation where such rules do not apply. For a brief time in the late '90s, the dot-com craze saw Internet startups offering astronomical salaries. But in today's real-world employment market, your value is determined by your experience, your skills — and the competition you face in an interview.

"A great deal has to do with the applicant pool," she continued. "If a hiring manager has 25 other candi-

dates, they are not going to put up with your BS (i.e., demands)."

Working Hell

Even successful negotiating has its downside. Let's suppose you indeed were able to coerce more money out of a company than they really wanted to pay. It is not uncommon for someone to win an additional \$5000 a year.

First of all, you run the risk of resentment on the part of the hiring manager who may begin to experience buyer's remorse. In addition, by overselling yourself and your value, you may also create expectations so great you cannot live up to your own billing. Unless you can bowl them over, your days

continued on next page

parking spot may be an option for the right candidate. But be sure you are negotiating from a position of strength before you play hard ball, or you may find yourself tossed out of the game (See Negotiation Reality Check below).

Determine a starting date. Your new employer will probably want you to start right away. But by leaving your current employer in a lurch you might be burning a valuable bridge you may need later. Ask for a delayed starting date and

explain that you don't want to hurt your old boss. They'll see you are a person of integrity — one of the reasons they want you in the first place.

Get it in writing. You can accept a job offer, but don't quit your old job until you have a new employment agreement in writing. Be sure it includes important information such as salary and other forms of compensation such as signing and year-end bonuses, start date, vacation, health and retirement benefits.

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may be numbered. "You can negotiate yourself into a living hell," warned Masera. In other words, you have to be careful what you wish for in the world of hard-ball negotiating.

The Best Advice

So what can an employee do to get the best compensation possible? For one thing, understand your true worth. Conduct your own salary survey by talking to people doing the work you want. But temper what you learn by comparing your findings with some of the many salary survey sites on the web.

Even then, the numbers must be taken in context. An occupation's "average" salary can fluctuate considerably based on the size of the company (larger firms typically pay more), its industry, the local cost of

living, your education and experience, and the benefits and other perks included in a job offer.

A position that pays \$45,000 may actually be worth \$65,000 when you take benefits and perks into consideration. And the cost of living can make a huge difference. Recently, a number of professionals in Silicon Valley (one of the nation's most expensive areas) have opted for lower-paying jobs outside the San Francisco Bay Area because they find they can afford a bigger house and a higher standard of living on their "reduced" salary.

If you want to improve your bargaining power, consider increasing your value by getting another degree or some high-tech training that will enhance your worth.

Finally, when you do find yourself in the middle of job negotiations, there

are some basic tips to employ. First, DO NOT discuss salary until you have been offered the position. Discussing money before then is premature and can short-circuit your chances. Second, if an employer asks how much you feel you should be paid, counter by asking what the pay range is for the position. If the employer says something like "\$35,000 to \$55,000 a year," answer that \$55,000 would work. Then be prepared to bargain from there. Many counselors say you can always negotiate down, but not up - and in most cases, the company's final offer will be in the middle range.

Most importantly, use caution when employing high-powered negotiating tactics. "Three out of five people I talk to are not worth what they think," counsels Masera, "and they do themselves a disservice trying to negotiate more."

Excerpted from "Negotiation Reality Check," by Rich Heintz. To view entire text, click on Article Archive at JobJournal.com.

Making Your Move

For those who are employed, finding a new job and anticipating the transition can be just about as stressful as the search process itself. In the event you are facing a layoff and you know your employment will end by a certain date, you can at least start organizing a job search, and you can even begin dedicating time outside work to your job hunting activities. It may seem like drudgery, especially in the face of dwindling finances, but at least you won't have to worry about your boss finding out you're planning to leave the organization.

Keep a Low Profile...

Depending on your relationship with your current employer, you may be better off informing your supervisor of your desire to change jobs. He or she may be willing to help you by sharing industry knowledge and even contact referrals. Also, you can cooperatively plan a transition that will ensure you and the organization are well prepared for the move.

If you are fortunate enough to have such an open-minded employer, be sure not to push your luck. That means keeping your energies on your current job while you're on the clock. Because even an understanding boss is going to be keeping a closer eye on you to ensure that your focus is with him even though your future is not. Minor indiscretions like using your current employer's stationery or fax machine shows poorly to prospective employers (because it is

essentially stealing) and will likely cause resentment from your current boss. And if he finds out you've been writing cover letters, tweaking your resume or setting up interviews on his dime, you may suddenly find a new reason to find a different job: Termination.

...Or Keep Quite

But more than likely, you will face the challenge of conducting a job search with extreme discretion — actively seeking out contacts while tiptoeing around certain colleagues who might see fit to tell your boss what you're up to. If you want to secure a new position before your employer finds out you're planning to leave, you'll need to take care to conduct your job search with confidentiality. Then, when the time comes, you must announce your plans to your boss.

Whatever you do, don't let your supervisor hear about your intended job change through the grapevine. Be sure they hear it from you first. You may want to start by telling your immediate supervisor, or it may be appropriate to go to a higher-level manager. Before you're ready for that conversation to take place, however, be cautious about discussing your plans with anyone at work. Remember, one of the most difficult things to ask of someone else is to keep your secret!

Whether you choose to disclose your job-change plans up front or keep your search confidential, the day will come when you must prepare to make that move.

Don't let your supervisor hear about your intended job change through the grapevine.

Even an understanding boss is going to be keeping a closer eye on you

Contact your former bosses and verify that they will give you a good reference.

Confirm References

As you execute your job search, don't overlook the importance of getting your employment references in order. It's understandable that you may not want prospective employers to call your current boss, but you should at least be prepared for them to call prior employers. If you have not already done so, contact your former bosses and verify that they will give you a good reference, if they should be called upon to do so. If possible, find out what they will say about you. Because of the risk of litigation over defamation, former employers may not be willing to say anything at all about you, other than verifying your dates of employment and position titles. If you want them to be able to speak freely about your work ethic and professionalism on the job, you may opt to sign a reference waiver, which gives them the legal freedom to disclose more than rank-and-file information.

Once you make your plans known to your current boss, it's a good idea to verify that you will be given a favorable reference from him as well. (Again, if you do not already have a signed reference waiver on file, this would be a good time to ask about it.) Also, be sure to ask for a letter of recommendation upon notice of your resignation.

Unfortunately, there are cases of employers giving bad references without just cause. Perhaps the employee left the company at a particularly inconvenient time, such as in the middle of a critical project or product launch. Or, it might have been a situation where the em-

ployer simply took the departure personally, and responds with bitterness when called by prospective new employers.

If you think you're being given poor references, there are strategies you can take to cease or prevent the behavior. If you have experience checking job candidate references — or if you're just good at sleuthing for information — you might try having a friend call your former boss, posing as a prospective employer, and find out for yourself what your former company has to say about you. Job seekers who are not comfortable with this idea can hire an investigative agency to do such sleuthing for them.

If such an investigation does turn up bad references, the agency can issue a letter to your former employer reminding them of their legal obligation to refrain from making such derogatory remarks which cannot be verified in court with proper company documentation. For instance, if your former boss tells prospective employers calling for references that you were "a lousy worker" and "never showed up on time," they must be able to verify *both* allegations — that you did not perform your job in a satisfactory manner; and that you failed to arrive on time for scheduled shifts.

A simple, formal reminder like this almost always does the trick. There are enough defamation cases in which the offending employer was found liable, often for considerable damages, to be an effective deterrent to such behavior.

If you're receiving a negative reference that can be verified by your former employer, it is perfectly legal for them to

Some employers give bad references without just cause.

share this information. For instance, a former boss can disclose that there were no problems once the individual arrived at work, but the employee did have a problem with chronic lateness. Since 1997, California law allows an employer to provide information like this if it is an accurate reflection of an employee's personnel file. As long as the reference is backed up by appropriate company records, the employer cannot be held liable for defamation.

Exit Gracefully

If you are moving from a current position to a new job, take care throughout your transition to respect the impact your separation may have on your current company. Rule number one is to give proper notice when you do announce your departure. California's "at-will" employment rule states that "employment . . . may be terminated at the will of either party on notice to the other." In other words, neither you nor your boss is legally required to give any advanced notice at all. Yet there is a professional standard defining a minimum of two weeks.

So how much time should you give the organization? That depends on the kind of work you've been doing and the scope of responsibility you've held. While two weeks may be adequate if you're in a support role, managers and professionals who oversee projects autonomously should give at least 30 days' notice. Be wary if your prospective new employer insists you leave your current position sooner. That's a clear indication of

disrespect and insensitivity. How will that lack of consideration affect your new working relationship and your career overall?

Don't underestimate the potential "emotional" impact of your departure. When employees leave a company for personal reasons — such as a spouse's transfer, a decision to stay home with children or a return to school — there's little cause for rancor. But moving to a better job is a more sensitive situation, one that can create mixed feelings on both sides. Some employers take it personally when good workers leave — especially when it's for another similar job with a competitor. Your role throughout your transition will be to preserve professional relationships as best as possible. Remember, the relationships developed with your employer and co-workers will likely play a recurring role throughout your career.

Be prepared for the possibility that your employer may regard your departure as a disloyal act, and your acceptance of another position as a kind of betrayal. No organization likes to lose a valuable employee, and all like to feel they're offering a positive, motivating work environment. Your unflinching graciousness during your final days will minimize those feelings and help assure you depart on a positive note.

Early Departure

Depending on your industry and the nature of your new job, your employer may prefer that you leave sooner rather than later. This could certainly happen,

Be prepared for the possibility that your employer may regard your departure as a disloyal act.

Always give proper notice when you decide to leave your employer for another job.

If you choose to partake in an exit interview, be upbeat.

for example, if you will have a similar role for a direct competitor. If you are asked to resign immediately, keep in mind that this is a business matter, not personal. Focus on maintaining a positive, understanding attitude.

If your company has a history of dismissing employees as soon as they give notice — and offering no severance pay — take that into consideration when giving your notice. You may want to plan financially for a lapse in income. Others may ask you to leave immediately but pay you for the notice time, promoting goodwill and ensuring that the company will not be liable for unemployment insurance. (Employers who don't pay for the notice time open themselves up to liability for unemployment insurance.) Whatever you do, never leave an employer with no notice. Such a move is regarded as extremely unprofessional, and your new boss may get wind of it.

The Exit Interview

As the day approaches to make that final transition, you may be asked to participate in an “exit interview.” The exit interview is an opportunity to openly share feedback you may have about the position you held, departmental management strategies, and the company overall. It's a common program in

proactive organizations that look to their staff — at all levels — for innovative ideas to improve operations.

If you choose to partake in an exit interview, be upbeat. Do not regard this as an opportunity to get everything off your chest. While it's appropriate to shed light on key company issues — and even offer constructive criticism — be sure to also emphasize your most positive experiences.

Resist the urge to reveal all the things that have been bothering you. By speaking too frankly or being overly critical, you accomplish nothing positive and risk burning an important bridge. Your employer may be an excellent source of future references, may refer contacts or business to you in your new position, or may simply reinforce your good reputation in the industry by recalling how gracefully you handled your transition. You may even find yourself re-employed by the same company or former boss in the future!

Be especially cordial and positive on your final day. Avoid the appearance of bragging about your new opportunity, or criticizing your current workplace. Remember: Few will recall your first day on the job, but no one will forget their final impression.

Few will recall your first day on the job, but no one will forget their final impression.

Succeeding in Your New Job

Congratulations! You've landed a job. Whether it's the position of your dreams or the training ground for a future key career move, your most important assignment now is to succeed by becoming a valuable — even indispensable — employee.

Start Off Strong

Of course, no one will expect you to achieve "Employee of the Year" overnight. Your first few weeks and months on the job will be focused on learning all your day-to-day responsibilities and mastering tasks to fulfill them.

Basic Job Skills

Be sure you are clear on the company's expectations of you. You may want to establish a written job description (if there is not already one in place) confirming all that is entailed in your position. Discuss any concerns or questions you may have with your supervisor early on in your employment — don't wait until you've been in the new job six months before addressing potential areas of confusion.

The challenge of mastering tasks initially in any new job may involve brushing up on some technical skills — especially computer systems and application software. Don't expect your new employer to provide extensive training to help you become proficient in the use of standard office equipment and common computer technology. Instead, you should be prepared to take the initiative

in getting yourself up to speed, whether that means spending a little extra time on your own to complete independent tutorials or enrolling in course work at a local community college or adult learning program. In the case of highly specialized systems or customized software used in your new position, it's likely that you will be provided on-the-job training.

Company Culture

In addition to the basic skills required in your day-to-day work, your attention should be focused on learning the general culture of your new workplace. How do people behave on the job? How do they dress and what degree of professionalism do they bring to their work? Is the office formal or relaxed?

Every workplace has a unique environment, and with each new job you will need to adjust your own approach to some degree in order to fit into the corporate culture. You'll notice the biggest differences from one job to another if you change industries or move to a large operation after working in small companies (and vice versa), or if you completely change your job function. For instance, sales departments and administrative areas, such as accounting, tend to have completely different environments and their own subcultures within the overall company culture.

While an organization's mission statement, business ethics, and employment policies all help to define the

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corporate culture, *people* — more than anything else — make the real difference. And a major element of organizational culture is often rooted in

Get Started on the Right Foot

You aced the interview, got the job and start in a few weeks. You're feeling pretty cocky right now. But beware! You're not home-free yet.

The first days, weeks and months are critical periods in the life span of every new employee.

Just because your interviewing is over, your research shouldn't stop. Keep learning about the organization you're about to join. Look beyond the company's PR. Are any of your friends, associates or former co-workers on the inside? A 15-minute chat with them before you start can help fill in many of the blanks concerning the company's current climate and recent activities: hirings, firings, reorganizations, successful or unsuccessful marketing campaigns. Follow up with any sources who helped you before the interview. Now that you're coming on board, they might have additional insight, advice or strategies of which you'll want to take note.

Excerpted from "Getting Started on the Right Foot," by Craig Harrison. To view entire text, click on Article Archive at JobJournal.com.

the interpersonal dynamics of those working for the organization.

Observe who the key players are. In most instances they are the same individuals who are recognized for their achievements within the company and/or the industry. The key players can do more than provide role models. They can give you a feel for how decisions are made within the organization, and how the operation is run overall.

Understanding the politics of an organization and how the key players contribute to decision making will not only help you in your initial "survival" mode, it will be critical to your long-term success with the company.

Conversely, steer clear of office gossipers and complainers. They're usually the ones who will try to engage you right away, and it won't be long before they're telling you about other employees (not to mention telling other staff members what they think of you). Even if you have initial frustrations with the position, refrain from complaining to co-workers, even from other departments. You could be regarded as a potential problem employee if you associate with those who demonstrate a lot of negativity. Besides, it's difficult to stay objective and optimistic if you're hanging around workers whose view of the organization is tainted.

It's standard for all feedback on probationary employees to be given to their supervisor. Skills and job performance are carefully evaluated in the initial stages of employment, as management tries to identify a new employee's strengths, weaknesses, and potential problems that could be solved proactively.

Remember that your attitude and behavior in the first few months on the job will make a lasting impression. Your goal should be to become recognized as a diligent worker who is flexible, adaptable, and *willing* to do what's necessary to get the job done right.

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Key players can do more than provide role models for you. They can give you a feel for how the operation is run.

Growing Into the Job

Depending on the learning curve of your new job, you could find yourself “in the trees” of the position for a few weeks to several months. During this time your efforts should be focused on mastering the basics while learning how the organization operates as a whole.

As you become proficient in the new position, however, your focus should shift from mastering tasks and augmenting skills to taking on new responsibilities and pursuing recognition for achievements.

Your observance and understanding of the organizational culture will play an even more important role here. Specifically, you should be tuning into who the achievers are in your company. While you may not be able to align yourself with them initially, try to position yourself in such a way that you might be able to associate with them more closely as your career within the organization develops.

You’ll invest a considerable amount of energy and pride in your first year or so with a new organization. Your ability to step back and see the forest through the trees will enable you to make the most of it. So keep a keen eye on what’s going on around you. Look for new opportunities to prove your worth while striving to understand how the organization works. And, when you do take on new responsibilities or special projects, make sure the right people notice!

Self Promotion

Never, ever shoot down your own work or discredit your efforts. The initial on-

the-job period is no time to be overly shy. While you’ll want to refrain from trying to initiate company-wide changes until you’ve become stable in your position and established some credibility and mutual respect with management and co-workers, do not allow your role to be ignored. It’s not self-aggrandizing, it’s strategic career promotion. Recognition — and promotions — will come when you fulfill your assignments, meet or exceed goals, and effectively spotlight your achievements.

If you have recommendations for changes, find out how and why the organization operates as it does before voicing your opinions. Companies are resistant to suggested changes from anyone who is not yet familiar with the way they do business and why they do it that way.

It’s natural to be concerned with whether your boss acknowledges your efforts. But don’t allow yourself to fall into the trap of tunnel vision. Without compromising your ability to complete your job duties, maintain a professional visibility throughout the company by readily sharing your expertise with co-workers, helping others solve problems, and developing skills to enhance your job performance. Because your reputation will precede you, your attitude and actions can reach even those superiors and co-workers with whom you have little interaction.

Finally, keep your ear to the ground for any feedback from others on your job performance. You may hear comments from third-party sources that can be

Keep your ear to the ground for any feedback from others on your job performance.

telling of where you really are on the right track. Whether such information comes to you directly or indirectly, tune into any mention of your specific strengths or weaknesses as well as on-the-job shortcomings. Similarly, take note of areas in which you reportedly excel — they may be the same ones you thought you needed to work on!

Managing Stress

One of the most overlooked factors of the job-transition process is the stress it can bring. The physical and mental energy required for a job search can be enormously taxing, to say nothing of the anxiety that comes with the anticipation of the process itself. If you assume that landing your new job will make it any easier, think again. The first several months of a new job can be exhausting, and eventually you will be forced to address the issue of stress management.

Plan to get plenty of sleep during the initial period of a new job. And, don't be afraid to enlist the support of your friends and family. Also, there are some things you can do to effectively cope with the demands of employment and balance those responsibilities with your personal life as well.

Adopt a healthy life-style

It is common knowledge that keeping healthy reduces stress, increases energy and makes you more alert. Studies even show that an active, healthy lifestyle keeps the mind sharp. And who's career wouldn't benefit from those characteris-

tics? Adopting and maintaining a fitness program is an essential step towards a healthy body and mind.

- **Exercise.** Regular aerobic activity is probably one of the most important elements of a good fitness program. As you increase your circulation you'll be strengthening your heart and boosting your metabolism. When you break a sweat you'll not only know you're getting a good workout, you'll feel a sense of relief as you shed some of that pent-up energy and tension from your work worries.

- **Eat right.** As you implement your fitness program your metabolism will begin to accelerate, and your body will need more fuel than it did when you weren't exercising regularly. Eating regularly is especially important if your fitness program includes goals for weight loss. Starving yourself will only fatigue you further, adding to the stress you're trying to combat. You must eat enough of the right kinds of food to sustain energy throughout the day, not only to maximize your fitness program, but to do your best each day on the job.

- **Stretch.** The secret to a good fitness program is to keep at it. If you miss a day of exercise, try to at least take some time to stretch out. Just a few stretches — even if you can only do them while sitting at your desk — will help to increase your circulation. You'll keep your muscles toned and your mind relaxed.

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Minimizing stress on the job.

A new job can seem like one big flurry of business activity, with people and departments to serve, deadlines to meet, crises to handle, and problems to solve — not to mention new skills and responsibilities to learn. It can be enough to give even the calmest employee an anxiety attack.

- **Visualize control.** Try to break down your projects into tasks that can be accomplished within specific time frames. With proper preparation you can keep your workload organized. To keep your thinking organized, take a few breaks throughout the day to walk or stretch. If the stress of your responsibilities becomes overwhelming, close your eyes for a few moments, take some deep breaths, and visualize calm and control in meeting your goals.
- **Plan for crises.** They happen. Expect them and plan for them, using what you've learned from all the times they've caught you off guard. Never leave a project for the last minute, especially if it involves coordination with other co-workers or colleagues.
- **Show a positive attitude.** Even if your company is headed for some major changes that no one is looking forward to, keep a positive attitude. Remember that your optimism and professionalism will be noticed, especially when all else looks bleak.

Once you incorporate a system of stress management, you'll be able to *maintain* control of your personal and

professional life. Taking good care of yourself will give you renewed physical energy as well as the ability to put the demands of work into perspective. You're even likely to see your goals — both professionally and personally — in a whole new way. And that will help you stay focused on the job at hand.

Set Your Sights on Your Next Job

Before you even accept a new position, you should have a clear picture in your mind of where you'd like it to lead. Hopefully, you've carefully targeted your job search so that the position you've been offered will help you develop the skills and expertise you hope to utilize throughout your career.

You may have found a well-established company that offers tremendous career growth potential within the organization. If so, you might enjoy a long tenure with the firm and achieve your career goals the old-fashioned way — through a series of promotions.

In today's fast-paced, global business environment, however, the "traditional" company — and the traditional long-term job — are becoming a rarity. Even big-player multinationals fall prey to mergers, acquisitions, business downturns and bankruptcy.

As you engage in the learning curve of your new job, start setting your sights on what you want to achieve with your new employer. While you can't expect lifetime employment with any organization, make a commitment to stay with your new boss for a *minimum* of two

"To be successful is to achieve a goal. But to be a success is to always have another goal in mind after you've achieved the last one."

years. The company will invest a considerable amount of time and money in helping you become efficient in your new position. Dedicate your efforts to the company's goals first, fitting your career objectives in with that scheme.

Maintaining the network you created for your job search will keep you visible in your industry. Renew your memberships to professional groups, and keep in contact with colleagues and professional associates. Be sure to tell them of your achievements as well as new skills and

functions you've mastered in your new job. When things settle down a bit and you feel less pressured, offer to assist others in your field with their career development or job transitions.

Most importantly, remember to thank the people who helped you during your job search. An initial cordial note is appropriate. But the best way to thank your personal and professional network is to always do your best work, and succeed in your new job.

10 Tips for Job-Search Success

As you prepare for your next job hunt, remember these proven paths for finding the perfect position:

1. Prepare a quality resume.

Develop and refine a focused, well designed presentation of your qualifications.

2. Tell everyone. Enlist your colleagues, friends and family to help you find suitable job openings.

3. Answer ads. Respond to and follow up on all recruitment advertisements that are applicable to your job search.

4. Attend functions. Go to job fairs, seminars, and career days. Be prepared to talk with recruiters and present them with your resume.

5. Look for opportunities. Use every available resource. Read newspapers — especially the business sections — and listen to newscasts to learn about emerging employment fields.

6. Research potential employers. Find out about organizations

through business news sources, trade journals, professional associations, the Internet, or your local library.

7. Contact recruiters. Send letters and resumes to specific individuals — by name. After sending your resume, contact the company by telephone. You will have one good chance to get an interview — make the most of the opportunity!

8. Identify referrals. In your cover letter, include the name of the company employee, manager, or personal contact who told you about the position.

9. Follow up. After interviewing with a firm, always send a thank-you note and maintain contact throughout the hiring process.

10. Persevere. Be persistent. Keep calling. Maintain a positive attitude.

Job Lead Sources

Some of the sources listed are specific to California. Although the names may vary, most states have similar services and organizations.

- Friends, family, and business associates
- Career centers and job clubs
- Job fairs and career days
- Local and metropolitan newspapers
- Your area *Business Journal*
- Free employment Newspapers (e.g: *California Job Journal*)
- Trade journals, industry newsletters, and professional publications
- Professional associations and newsletters
- The Yellow Pages or community telephone books
- Internet career sites and company web pages
- Corporate human resources departments or employment/personnel offices
- Temporary personnel services
- Employment agencies
- Executive search firms
- Employment Development Department (EDD)
- Experience Unlimited job clubs (at many of EDD's state offices)
- College and university career/internship and placement centers
- High school career centers
- Vocational schools
- Local and federal government personnel offices; State Personnel Board
- Military outplacement centers
- Veterans Employment Service or Vietnam Veterans of California
- Trade union offices

California Job Journal has been helping jobseekers find meaningful work since 1982. Our award-winning employment weekly, distributed free throughout Northern California, features a fresh array of hot job opportunities and insightful articles with every issue. As California's premier source of employment expertise, we provide a range of employment services, including job fairs, resume services, and graphic design.

Getting Your Next Job is one of three helpful career-advancement guides researched and written by our knowledgeable staff; the other two are *Acing Your Next Interview* and *Writing Your Best Resume*. To purchase PDF versions of these companion guides, visit JobJournal.com. For further assistance with your job search, call our offices at 1-800-655-JOBS (8:30am - 5:30pm PST) or visit JobJournal.com.