A More Productive Job Search

Are your job search efforts yielding results and moving you towards your ultimate goals? If not, use these tips to become more productive, and get past typical barriers such as disorganization, rejection, and stress.

Plan – Create a solid plan with specific tasks and job search activities, and designated hours to spend on your search. A weekly, or even daily, schedule will help keep you on track.

Daily itinerary – Use a daily to-do list, broken into specific time increments assigned to specific tasks, and include break and meal times.

Accountability – Once you schedule your tasks and time, hold yourself accountable for completing them. Act as if you’re at a job that measures your output.

Peak times – schedule major activities and tasks during the times you’re most alert and energized.

Avoid distractions – monitor how much time you spend on the computer, schedule errands so they don’t take away from your job search time, tell family and friends not to disturb you during search time, disconnect from social media for a couple of hours each day. This will allow you to focus on prioritized tasks.

Productivity tools – utilize online organizational tools such as Teuxdeux, Evernote, and Rescue Time, among others, to help you organize, stay focused, and accomplish your tasks.

Don’t procrastinate – Try tackling your hardest or least enjoyable tasks first; the sense of accomplishment you’ll feel will give you a more positive attitude to face the rest of your day’s activities.

Here’s to a more productive job search!

New: LinkedIn’s Unified Search Feature

LinkedIn has introduced a new relational search feature that shows all results grouped by companies, people, groups, posted jobs, and updates. Based on a member’s profile, this function is designed to interpret a searcher’s intent, and provide more targeted search results.

Unified search offers more relevant results

It also comes with a more advanced autocomplete feature, which provides a list of search options as members type their terms; this feature becomes more member-specific the more it’s used.

Included in this feature are more advanced filters for searching by location, company and school.

The overall goal with this feature is to capitalize on the personalization of its members, so they can be more effective in finding new opportunities, content and groups for their targeted goals.
Experienced, Not Overqualified

It's true – it's often not the best candidate who gets the job, it's the candidate who can best sell him/herself to a prospective company. If you can effectively demonstrate a perfect fit between you and the company, you're well on your way to an interview, or at least to further contact with that company. Age discrimination – real or perceived – occurs in the job market, and is often passed off as “overqualified”.

To help counteract this bias, keep these things in mind when selling yourself to a recruiter. Emphasize your skills – not just the ones that directly relate to the job, but also the transferable skills you’ve gotten from previous jobs and life experiences; communication, leadership and teamwork are always valued. Be open to new opportunities instead of narrowly focused; you may be able to use your skills in a new setting that may be very satisfying. Keep a positive attitude and emphasize the qualities that will be valued by an employer, including loyalty and dedication to the company, a commitment to doing quality work, being reliable in a crisis, a solid performance record, and ability to handle change. Research companies to determine where you can best use your qualifications and provide the best value. Don’t intimidate a hiring manager (who may be younger than you); mirror their behavior to put them at ease. Remember you have a proven history of commitment and maturity that a younger candidate does not. Spin “overqualified” into a positive for the company and they’ll see you as the best candidate!

Help Recruiters Find You Online

Much of today’s job search process has moved online, with candidates and recruiters using the Internet to find that perfect match. Surveys indicate over 90% of companies use social media to recruit, and recruiters spend a lot of time online searching for the right candidates. With this in mind, it’s essential to make it easier for recruiters to find you online; to have a visible online presence. Here are some ways to accomplish this.

LinkedIn – Be sure your profile is loaded with relevant industry key words, and share updates. Join and actively participate in groups; start discussions, comment on other discussions, share your knowledge by offering help and posting articles you’ve written.

Website – Create your own website to showcase your skills and industry knowledge. Include your resume, samples of work, projects, articles or a blog that demonstrate your industry knowledge.

Twitter – Engage and meet people through Twitter chats – a great opportunity to meet new people in your field and connect with recruiters, and again, share your knowledge.

Professional & Industry Associations – Be active in the online sites associated with your industry professional associations; contribute to discussions, submit articles, volunteer.

Google yourself – Always manage your online presence; see what results come back on a search of your name, make adjustments and additions to promote the best possible online image.
The Importance of Failure

No one likes to fail; failure is painful and makes one doubt their ability to succeed in future endeavors. When you fail, the most common reaction is to try and distance yourself from the event, berate yourself, and then try to forget it ever happened.

Failure, however, is an important part of your professional growth and ultimate success. If you can shift your attitude and embrace your failing, you'll be able to use it to your advantage. When you fail, take some time to analyze the situation; forgive yourself, share what happened with a supportive person instead of being ashamed, be honest about what went wrong and take responsibility – determine what was the real cause of the failure, and don’t hesitate to try again.

If you’re in a job search, this soul searching and assessment is vital, because you’ll need portray a confident and positive attitude throughout your search, and especially during interviews.

A commonly asked question during an interview is “tell me about a time when you failed at something professionally.” Too often people respond defensively, unwilling to admit a possible weakness that will be held against them. After all, all the interviewing advice tells you to emphasize your strengths, not your weaknesses.

Other people will discuss a failure, but blame other people or circumstances that were beyond their control, minimizing their role and focusing on insurmountable obstacles.

When an interviewer asks this question, what they’re really looking for is a candidate who has analyzed one of their failures, can honestly take responsibility, and – more importantly – show how they’ve learned from their failures. Be prepared with an example; be able to describe the situation, why it was a failure and your role, and then what you learned from it – how were you able to turn it into a growth opportunity? Also think about what you may have done differently, with the benefit of hindsight. Being able to provide this in-depth analysis demonstrates your problem solving and analytical skills, both highly valued by companies.

So don’t be afraid of failure; confront it honestly and learn from it. Be ready for this question in an interview, and show how this seeming failure was actually an opportunity to grow on your path to success.

If this failure has not stopped you from trying again, you demonstrate persistence, the ability to rise above obstacles, and most likely initiative and innovation. After all, it took Edison 1000 tries to make the light bulb. When asked how it felt to fail 1000 times, he reportedly replied, “I didn’t fail 1000 times, the light bulb was an invention with 1000 steps.”

Discover the meaning in your failure, and use it as another step on your journey to success.
Options for Working at Home

If working from home is appealing to you, options include telecommuting, freelancing, contracting, home-based businesses, and micro-entrepreneurship.

**Telecommuting:** large and small companies, and even the government offer options for telecommuting. This website has information and posted opportunities – [www.flexjobs.com](http://www.flexjobs.com).

**Freelancing:** working independently, connecting with employers for projects and work. Networking with former co-workers, manager, and connections in your field can help you secure freelance work.
- Information and articles on freelancing – [www.freelanceswitch.com](http://www.freelanceswitch.com)
- Information and insights - [www.elance.com](http://www.elance.com)
- Freelance and work at home opportunities - [http://www.free-job-search-websites.com/make-real-money-online.html](http://www.free-job-search-websites.com/make-real-money-online.html)

**Contracting:** working through an agency for assignments and project work.
- To find a staffing or headhunter agency for your field:
  - [www.americanstaffing.net](http://www.americanstaffing.net)
  - [www.headhuntersdirectory.com](http://www.headhuntersdirectory.com)
  - [www.ciett.org](http://www.ciett.org)

**Micro-Entrepreneurship:** marketing your services and specialties, either to supplement your income or get started in your own business. Companies and individuals hire you to complete projects.
- [www.Fiverr.com](http://www.Fiverr.com)
- [www.ODesk.com](http://www.ODesk.com)
- [www.Elance.com](http://www.Elance.com)
- [www.Mturk.com](http://www.Mturk.com)