Steps To An Effective Job Search

Learning to search for satisfying, professional employment is a skill you must master. It is a critical skill since job hunting is an activity you will repeat throughout your life. Students often become underemployed because they have not learned this process. The following information covers the basics of what you must know to become a successful job seeker.

1. Define Your Job Objective
Self-assessment is your first step and it’s absolutely essential. It’s impossible to know where to look or how to market yourself if you don’t know what you’re looking for. Identify your areas of interest and abilities. Determine your interests, from sports or health to environmental or international issues, then take action in that direction. No one will search you out. Opportunities arise and you become focused when you take action. If you are unsure of your interests and abilities and how they relate to careers, make an appointment with a career counselor to assist you in the self-assessment process. In addition to gathering and analyzing information about yourself, it is necessary to learn about the world of work in order to define your objective. Your research will give you a chance to examine the feasibility of your goals. This type of information can be obtained from the following sources, which may be available in your Career Services office.

• Visit Your Career Center
Printed occupational information, such as career books, occupational guides and directories, can be used to clarify and confirm your initial impressions about a career field and to obtain occupational descriptions. Computers are also available to use for your career planning and job search purposes.

• Research Employers in Job Choices
This three-volume publication from the National Association of Colleges and Employers (NACE) contains brief descriptions of employers throughout the country, along with information about the people they hire.

• Use Computerized Resources
The e-DISCOVER program allows you to type in a code for an occupation and get answers to questions regarding position description, skills, salary, etc. A link to the "Best College Student Job Search Sites" is included on the Texas State Career Services web site on the "students" page.

• Network with Professionals
Speaking to someone about the type of work in which you are interested expands on the information you obtained through printed and computerized resources and you will gain a valuable contact. Attend a Job Fair or participate in job shadowing to network with employers.
• Get Experience
The final method of learning about the world of work is to sample various work experiences. This may be done through job shadowing, internships, volunteer activities and part-time employment. Career Services can also assist you in obtaining this experience.

2. Identify and Target Potential Employers
In looking for employment, students will often read a few ads, sign up with an employment agency and then go home and wait. Unfortunately, the wait can be a long one. In order to conduct a successful job search, you will need to take a more active approach and discover where the opportunities are in your occupational field and whom to contact. This information is available in employer directories, professional journals, company literature, and organizational websites. Again, these resources are available in the Career Information Center and the Career Services web site through the Internet Resources links. Use these resources to establish a list of potential employers.

3. Develop Job Seeking Tools and Skills
To effectively market yourself you will need to create a professional resume and polish your interviewing skills. Additional information is provided within this manual to assist you in these areas.

4. Initiate Contact
Since many available positions are never advertised, it may be up to you to initiate contact with a prospective employer to find these "hidden jobs". Employer contact may be passive (responding to an ad) or active (telephoning and introducing yourself). Below are four methods for making contact with employers.

• Look for Job Postings
Job postings can be found in journals, newsletters, newspapers, and on-line. They are useful because they tell you about jobs that somebody wants to fill immediately. To respond to a posting, contact the organization to obtain the name and address of the individual responsible for hiring. Tailor your response to fit the job. Highlight experiences and accomplishments that directly relate to the specific opening. Be sure that your reply sparks the reader’s interest. After two weeks, follow up with a phone call checking the status of your application and inquiring as to possible interview times.

• Personal Contact
It has been well established that personal contacts are by far the most effective method of identifying prospective employers. Contacts may be established through friends, relatives, co-workers, clubs or organizations. The ongoing development of these contacts, sometimes referred to as networking, is an important component of a successful job-search strategy.
1. Developing a List of Networking Contacts
   a. Make a list of all the people you know.
   b. Contact the individuals and ask for help. Gather information about career areas, job openings and referrals.
   c. Advertise that you are job searching and follow up on all leads. Talk with anyone and everyone.
   d. Remember that first impressions are important. Preparation is the key to being articulate and confident.

2. Direct Contact
   a. Probably the most important step in the job-search process is to meet face-to-face with the potential employer. Remember, you cannot market yourself as effectively on paper or over the telephone as you can in person. People are hired as the result of interviews, and the primary goal in all of your job seeking efforts should be to obtain an interview. This is known as job scoping—you are contacting the employer and arranging an interview to learn of opportunities.
   b. Practice explaining your marketable skills. Prepare a brief description of your background and outstanding accomplishments.
   c. Call the company to learn the name of the person who has the power to hire you. Contact them directly.
   d. Ask about future openings and for advice on your job search.
   e. Schedule the appointment at the employers convenience and at the employer's office.
   f. Write a thank you note and continue to check back periodically.

3. Make a Commitment to Your Search
   Be persistent and patient. It is not unreasonable to devote six months to job searching. The person who gets the job today is the one who persists and doesn’t give up. Pursue all possible avenues and be ready to experience rejection. The more “no's” you hear, the closer you are to that one important “yes.” Be willing to commit several hours a week to job hunting and maintain a positive attitude. This shows that you are confident and shows what you can do for an employer. This attitude comes from knowing who you are and what you want to do, having the information you need, and knowing how to conduct an effective job search.