## THE JOB SEARCH



"WOW! I never thought the job search process would be so complicated! I thought once I got my degree or entered my last semester(s) of college the jobs would "fall into place". I never realized that the job search would take so much time. I thought I would just have to check out the Sunday newspaper!"

If you can identify with this situation, don't feel so bad. Many college students are in the same boat. The idea that you go to college, get a degree, and then accept a job is an old and sometimes correct notion. This reasoning breaks down, however, when the economy takes a downward turn and competition for scarce jobs increases. In addition, employers are using different techniques and resources for posting their jobs and recruiting quality candidates. So, what do you do? How can you compete in a competitive market? Where are the jobs and how do you get one?

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### **KEEP THESE THINGS IN MIND!**

Career Development has designed this guide to give you insights on how to seek out employment opportunities. Some of the suggestions will work some of the time, while others will work the rest of the time. First, let's establish some common ground from which to work:

- 1) **Yes**, there are jobs out there. However, you must be willing to take chances and look at all opportunities no matter where they are.
- 2) **Yes**, it is a competitive market place. There are many college graduates looking for jobs just as you are. What's going to set you apart?
- 3) **Yes**, it is true that employers are looking for the "best" candidates. While grades are important, so, too, are your work history, extracurricular activities, and the functional skills you've developed through these activities.
- 4) *No*, there is no one way to approach the job search which is better than another. The best job search tactics are the ones that work for you. Using a combination of tactics usually produces results.
- 5) Know that *rejection* may be a part of this process, but don't take the rejection personally. Remember: employers are not rejecting you as a person; they don't know you. They make business decisions based on many different factors.
- 6) Keep a **positive** outlook! Don't become discouraged by rejections, but remember, each rejection you receive brings you closer to getting the job offer you want! Be positive, be persistent, be confident!
- 7) While you cannot control others, you do have control over *yourself*. This means that you must discipline yourself to maintain and sustain an active job search....it will bring RESULTS!

## IT'S TIME TO GET STARTED!! WHERE DO YOU BEGIN?

## SIX SURE STEPS TO SUCCESS

(is this a tongue twister??)



#### STEP 1

Get to know what you are all about: Identify your values, skills/abilities, and interests. Know just what it is that you want to do (the career field) and where you want to do it (urban/rural area, large or small organization, geographic location). Identify any significant accomplishments or achievements. Detail any special skills you may have (i.e., computer skills including hardware and software; language skills).

#### STEP 2

Before you can engage in any job search, there are two items which are absolute musts: the Resume and the Cover Letter. These are the two essential items in any job search. As such, it is important to do them well. Once again Career Development can provide you with expert assistance. First, you should refer to the "Resume and Cover Letter Writing" guide and various books in the *Career Development* section of our library for help with both content and structure. Don't recreate the wheel! There are plenty of examples to which you can refer. Next, you should take advantage of the Review Service - just drop off your resume or cover letter and I'll look over it for you.

#### STEP 3

Career Development is here for YOU! Attend the various workshops/events offered throughout the semester or view the online presentations on Career Development's website. Schedule an appointment to talk about your career goals and plan of attack. How about scheduling a mock interview to assess your interviewing skills? Also, consider attending job fairs listed on the website and around campus.

#### STEP 4

Other resources you can take advantage of? Check out the Career Development website where you can access our online job database, information on upcoming career fairs and events, general & field-specific weblinks, and much more information which can help you in your job search activities. Sometimes employers are on campus to speak about their companies and employment opportunities. Listen to all opportunities regardless of your perception of an employer or industry. You may be pleasantly surprised to find interesting job prospects in some rather unlikely areas. In addition, it is a great opportunity to practice your networking skills and it's SO CONVENIENT! On rare occasions, these companies will actually hold interviews right here on campus. Make sure to check the website and your emails for notices.

#### STEP 5

In addition to looking at vacancy listings, explore industries, investigate places you're passionate about, research salary information, supply and demand statistics. Visit industry-specific websites and publications and take some time to consider the vast opportunities for your career.

#### STEP 6

NETWORK! Many available jobs are never advertised in any print media. It's called the "hidden job market". The more people who know you are in the job market, the more likely they will tell you about opportunities they are aware of. Friends, family, previous employers, classmates, faculty, and alumni can be sources of information who may lead you to a job opportunity. Spread the word you're looking!

Apply each of these steps in conjunction with the others. It is time well spent...it's YOUR future we're talking about here!

Don't wait! The best time to start your job search is



## The Job Search "Must Do" USING THE INTERNET

Using the Internet as part of your job search, means pushing aside traditional limits to seek the kind of employment you want. The Internet can help you decide on career direction, search listings of opportunities, and even find out about salaries or life styles in different parts of the country. Of course, Career Development will still be available to guide you, but the Internet offers additional resources and increases your chance of finding a rewarding position for you. Realistically, your Internet Job Search Strategies should be limited to about 25% of the total time used to look for a job. Don't neglect conventional strategies such as perusing newspaper want ads and contacting/expanding your network.

#### Where to Start?

There are more than 3 million job-related sites for you to look at on the Internet. YIKES! So that you don't become overwhelmed by the possibilities, here are a few great sites we've pre-selected for you.

#### **Home Sweet Home**

The best place to start when you use the Internet is the VHCC Career Development Home Page (www.vhcc.edu/ career)

VHCC's Online Job Board https://vhcc-csm.symplicity.com/

symplicity

This site is your key to a world of information about the successful job search. Not only will it link you to employment but you can also find out about the workshops Career Development offers (on topics like resume writing and interview skills), plus where and when the sessions take place. There is information about special events such as job fairs and the sources available to you in the Career Development Office. Best of all, career-related links lead you to on-line career centers, resume on-ramps, not-for-profit employers, and much, much more!

## **KEEPING TRACK**



No job search can be successfully completed unless you keep an accurate account of what is happening in the process. It is important for you to know which companies you have contacted, what information you have sent them, who you sent the information to, and when you sent it. Therefore, you need to have an accurate record keeping system. Here is a sample of the information you will want to track which can assist you in organizing your search. Please use this sample or design your own record keeping system. Either way, you need to track your efforts in the job search process.

It is also recommended you keep a copy of the job advertisement. When preparing for the interview you want to remind yourself of what they felt were the important aspects of the job and listed in the job ad. Print a copy of all online jobs you apply to because they may not be listed online anymore when you get the call for an interview.

Job Search Record	Job #1	Job #2	Job #3	Job #4
Job Title				
Company				
Contact Name/Title				
Email				
Phone				
Website				
Date Submitted				
How I found / heard				
about job				
Follow-up call/				
contact				
Interview				
scheduled				
Status of				
Application				
Comments				

# MAKING THE MOST OF JOB & CAREER FAIRS

#### Why Attend a Fair?

- Increase your chances of receiving an interview.
- Expand your network of contacts/get that resume of yours out there!
- Investigate positions, occupation, and career fields you could go into with your specific major and background.
- Learn more about the employers and for what they're looking.
- Take advantage of so many employers all under one roof!!

#### What to Expect

- Employers expect candidates to be prepared (ex. Professionally dressed, ask thoughtful questions, have a polished resume and perhaps know something about their company.)
- Most recruiters aren't authorized to hire candidates the day of...your goal should be to land a quick interview and get your resume around.
- Employers enjoy career fairs because they can meet MANY candidates in one day.
   Consequently, you will have a short time to sell yourself and make a positive impression on the recruiter.

#### Before a Fair

- Prepare your resume & make plenty of copies. No cover letter is needed.
- Learn to sell yourself...create YOUR "60-second commercial" which includes a firm handshake and introduction, your objective (why you're there & what you're seeking.) and a brief summary of your education, experience, strengths.
- Prepare a list of questions to ask and be prepared to answer many.

#### During a Fair

- Target/prioritize those employers with whom you want to meet and plan on approaching them first.
- Speak with the recruiter even if they didn't specifically request your major. New positions open daily and it is possible that they had a position become available after they initially registered.
- Be confident, Persistent & patient (you may experience long lines.)
- Communication is critical! Introduce yourself and offer a firm handshake. In a few sentences tell them about you! Listen carefully.
- Be aware of your non-verbal communication do not fidget, rock from side to side., play with your hair, etc. Keep your shoulders back and maintain good eye contact.
- Offer your resume last and collect business cards.

#### After a Fair

- Follow-up is essential, send thank you letters to employers.
- Observe the follow-up procedures suggested by the employers.
- Write down notes/conversations from the day for future reference.

## NETWORKING DEVELOPING YOUR NETWORK



Ok, you have heard *the term*; you have read about *it,* you hear people talk about *it,* but what is *it* and why is *it* so important? It's called *networking*!

Networking is, perhaps, the least understood yet most effective job

**<u>strategy.</u>** It is a vague term, and hard to define because it has so many different forms. Still, professionals will tell you that **Networking** is one of the most effective tools that you can employ in your job search.

#### What is networking?

So just what is meant when someone says you need to *network*? Networking is the process of developing a list/collection of people you can call on for help with various aspects of your job search. Your network should include people who are willing to give you information about their specific career field(s) and people who can give you information about job opportunities within their organization. Your network should also include people who can refer you to others within the profession who can give you additional information. Remember, you never know who knows whom!

#### **How difficult is it to network?**

Networking is something you have been doing for a long time, but you never thought about it as networking. Have you ever asked a classmate if they knew of any good place to eat in "The Town"? If so, you are networking. Networking is tapping your connections for helpful information and advice. So, you do have experience networking. Now you need to reframe this experience and place it in the context of the job search.

#### **How important is networking?**

In the current economic environment employers will tell you that they receive hundreds of unsolicited resumes each month. How can your resume stand out from the crowd? Networking can help in that you can cite the individual in your cover letter thus giving your resume some added advantage. In other instances, your contact(s) may give you information about positions that haven't even been posted. Thus you get a head start on

the application process. Also, there may be the occasion when one of your contacts will even call you on your behalf and encourage an employer to give you some additional consideration.

Another important aspect of networking is that you can gain valuable insight into a profession. Learn the pros/cons of a specific career field, job function, and or employer. Learn from your network how they started their career and the steps it took to get to their current position. Networking can be a valuable asset to you as you decided what it is that you want to do and you search for positions.

#### How to get started?

**Getting started** is the toughest part of the networking process. Most people will say that this is just too much work and not even attempt to develop an effective network.

Make lists – who do you know? A great starting point is to begin making lists. Who do you know? Group your contacts: previous employers, faculty, classmates, alumni (especially recent grads ... those who graduated within the last 10 to 15 years), members of professional associations to which you belong, fraternity/sorority brothersister, family friends, relatives, friends of friends, neighbors, etc., etc. Make sure you have full contact information about each person in the network: title, organization, mailing address, phone number, fax number, email address. You may want to add some additional information about each person (i.e. met him at the Marketing Club Networking Night; VHCC class of '90 who now has her own firm; friend of my cousin; etc.). The key is to keep all the information about a specific individual in the same place: A place where you can access the information with little effort.

Define the purpose for contacting individuals. You need to define the purpose for contacting these individuals. This may vary and will, in large part, depend on where you are in the career development process. Is your purpose to let them know that you are actively looking for a full-time position? To let them know that you know about a specific position within their organization and that you are interested in that position? Is it the case that you need more information about the career field prior to deciding which option(s) are best for you? Do you want experience, in the form of an internship? Is it the case that you are seeking information about a specific company? All of these are legitimate reasons to tap into your network, but you need to decide, in advance, what it is that you will expect from these contacts.

What do you have to offer and what are you seeking? Before you can engage someone in conversation about your career, you need to understand what you have to bring to the table. What are your strengths/weaknesses? Can you identify your skills, interests and values? Think about those things that are important to you. Why are they important? What have been your greatest accomplishments? Why do you consider these and not others to be the most important? What interests you personally and professionally? Why?

Develop those all-important "networking tools". Do you know what to say when you first meet one of your contacts? Have you developed your "one-minute commercial" or your "sound bite"? What about that all-important "letter of introduction"?

#### Decide what you want from each person in your network

Each time you plug into your network you will need to decide why you are contacting various people. Is it to let them know that you are looking for a job/a new job? Is it to let them know that you are aware of a job opening that may interest them? Is it to get information about a specific company?

If you are tapping into your network because you are looking for a job then you may be calling them for the following reasons:

- 1. You are interested in scheduling an informational interview a great way to get in the door and talk with the people who can hire you. This is a very non-threatening method to talk with people about what they do and about their business. You can gather information, get advice, show them your resume, and get the names of other contacts. In the future, they may think of you when they have an opening.
- 2. You heard they have/know of a job opening you would like to know more about the position, the name of the person to send your resume to. You could also ask if you might use their name in the cover letter.
- 3. **Ask them if they know of any job openings** not the best option because if they don't have any openings then you essentially have nothing to talk about. Instead use the informational interview option. If they have a job opening they will surely let you know at that time.

#### Making contact with your network

So, how I do you make that initial contact? Generally there are three ways to make that initial contact: phone, letter, or email. In all instances it is important to follow-up and confirm your appointment. Be respectful of their busy schedules. If you are trying to schedule a time to meet with them, give them several dates and times. Remember to keep track of all your contacts and don't forget the all-important "Thank You" after you have met/talked to your network contact.

#### **Asking for information**

Ok, I scheduled an appointment to conduct an informational interview with one of my contacts .. what should I ask them? This is a fair question and an important question to ask. Here are some suggestions:

#### Dialogue for a networking meeting

<u>Introduction</u>: "Hello. It is a pleasure to meet you, and I really appreciate your taking time to see me or speak with me." (Always check whether the person has time to talk to you, so you have their attention. Offer to call them back....don't expect them to call you)

<b>Purpose:</b> " As I indicated in my letter, I am exploring different career fields and opportunities	es. I
will be graduating in, and am especially interested in learning more about the	
field. I am not looking for a job at this point, but am researching the field. (orI a	am
researching possibilities for summer internships to gain experience in the field, and	t
would appreciate your perspective)	

#### **General Questions About the Career Field:**

- 1. What are the various jobs available in this field?
- 2. What is the employment outlook? How much demand is there for people in this career?
- 3. What are the typical entry-level job titles and functions?
- 4. What skills or personal characteristics do you feel contribute most to success in this industry?
- 5. What entry-level jobs offer the best opportunities for learning?

#### **Questions About the Employer:**

- 1. What products or services are in the development stage now?
- 2. What kinds of assignments might I expect in the first six months/one year on the job?
- 3. In what ways is a career with your company better than one with your competitors?
- 4. Given the dynamics of the industry, how do you see the company evolving over the next five years?
- 5. What types of training does your organization provide?

#### **Questions About Your Contact's Job:**

- 1. What specifically do you do? What are your duties and responsibilities?
- 2. Describe some of most challenging situations you have faced in this job.
- 3. What do you find most satisfying? Least satisfying?
- 4. Which other departments, functional units, or levels do you regularly interact with?
- 5. What projects have you worked on have been particularly interesting?

#### **Questions About Preparation for the Career Field:**

- 1. What educational preparation do you recommend?
- 2. Is prior experience necessary and, if so, what kind?
- 3. If you were a college student again, what would you do differently to prepare for this job?

#### **Questions About Your Contact's Career Path:**

- 1. In what way did this type of work interest you and how did you get started?
- 2. What jobs and experiences have led you to your present position?
- 3. What are related jobs for which your background would prepare you?
- 4. Where do you go from here in your career?
- 5. If you could do it all over again, would you choose the same path for yourself? Why? What would you change?

#### **Questions About Organizational Culture:**

- 1. What do you like most about this company?
- 2. What kinds of behaviors are rewarded?
- 3. How would you describe the atmosphere at the company? Is it formal or more laid-back?
- 4. What values are most treasured here; what is the company's vision statement?
- 5. How does the company recognize the contributions of outstanding employees?

#### **Questions About Opportunities for Advancement:**

- 1. What are the advancement opportunities?
- 2. How long does it take to move from one step to the next?
- 3. What is the typical career path for someone in this field?
- 4. Where could I expect to be in three years/ five years?
- 5. What is the highest position that someone can hold in this career?

#### **Seeking General Advice and Referrals:**

- 1. Do you know of other people whom I might contact who have jobs similar to yours?
- 2. What do you wish you had known before you entered this field?
- 3. What kinds of experience, paid or unpaid, would you encourage for anybody pursuing a career in this field?
- 4. How would you assess the experience I've had so far in terms of the requirements for this field?
- 5. If you were conducting a job search today, how would you go about it?

#### **Questions You May Be Asked**

In an information interview, it is not uncommon for your contact to reverse roles and ask questions of you. Following are some basic questions for which you should be prepared.

- 1. Tell me about yourself.
- 2. How did you become interested in this career field?
- 3. What do you know about this field or about this organization?
- 4. What skills can you bring to this field/job?
- 5. What have you learned from your work experiences or coursework that leads you to this field?
- 6. Closing the Information Interview

#### **NETWORKING: A Final Note:**

Be considerate of your contact by being careful not to go over your allotted time without encouragement. You may say something like, "Well, it looks like I have time for one last question." Your interviewee can then either end your interview with the question or invite you to ask additional questions. One of the last questions you should always be prepared to ask is to request the names of additional people you can add to your network of contacts. This is especially important if your goal is to obtain more job leads and contacts in the field. Also, ask for a business card and inquire whether your contact would mind if you stayed in contact with him or her. **Finally**, thank the interviewee for his time and always follow-up with a thank-you letter, either by mail or by e-mail.

#### What is a 30 Second Commercial?

Also known as the 30 second elevator, here are the key components to this statement in which you describe yourself and your goals:

- 1. Introduce yourself.
- 2. Discuss your experience. This would include your major field of study and any relevant volunteer/internship/work experience.
- 3. Describe a key strength or skill in which the employer would be interested and that sets you apart from other candidates.
- 4. Follow up with an accomplishment (or two) that proves you have that skill. It can be related to school, work, a volunteer experience, an activity (like SGA or Enactus), etc.
- 5. Describe your employment goal. What are you looking for now and/or in the future?
- 6. Most importantly, tell how you can immediately benefit the company.

Now Try it for Yourself!	
Hi, (name)! Nice to meet you. My name is  I am a student at Virginia Highlands Community College majoring in  My experience (describe)  I am (strength), which I demonstrated when I (accomplishment)  I'm looking for a position where I (goals)  I can be of immediate benefit to your company because (how?)	
Enter Your Personalized 30 Second Commercial Here:	

### JOB VACANCIES OUTSIDE OF THE AREA

How to Get Employment Information When You Don't Live Near the Place You Want to Work



Today or at sometime in the future, you may want to expand your job seeking horizons beyond where you currently are. There are several ways for you to find out about vacancies in other states...most of these resources can be purchased or viewed (for free) on-line!

- 1. Internet
- 2. Newspapers
- 3. Telephone Book
- 4. Chamber of Commerce Directory
- 5. Better Business Bureau Directory
- Job listings from other university Career Services offices
- 7. Job fairs in that area
- 8. Professional Associations
- 9. VHCC Alumni in that area

## **EMAIL CORRESPONDENCE**



Be aware that email is often the preferred method of communication between candidate and employer. Email can be a powerful tool in the hands of a knowledgeable job-seeker. Use it wisely and you will shine. Use it improperly, however, and you'll brand yourself as immature and unprofessional. When you are communicating with prospective employers there is no such thing as an inconsequential communication. If you are sloppy and careless, a seemingly trivial communication will stick out like a sore thumb.

Follow these general guidelines when emailing cover letters, resumes, thank-you notes, and replies to various requests for information:

- Use a meaningful subject header for your email one that is appropriate to the topic and includes your name.
- Address recipient as Mr., Ms. or Dr., and always verify the correct spelling of the recipient's name.
- Be brief in your communications. Don't overload the employer with a lot of questions in your email.
- When sending a resume and cover letter, it is best to cut & paste into the email document. Because of possible viruses, an employer's company may have a "no-opening-attachments" policy.
- Ditch the emoticons. While a © or an LOL (Laughing Out Loud) may go over well with friends, do not use symbols in your email to professionals.
- Do not use strange fonts, wallpapers, or multicolored backgrounds.
- Stick to a standard font like Times New Roman, 12-point.
- Sign your email with your full name and contact information.
- Avoid using slang.
- Be sure to proofread, spell and grammar-check your email before sending.
- A professional tone should <u>always</u> be maintained.

## **JOB OFFERS**



Congratulations, you were offered a position! Before you accept, there are several factors to assess. Some will weigh more heavily than others, but all should be considered.

#### **Job-Related Considerations**

Job responsibilities
On-the-job training
Promotion & advancement potential
Supervisor & co-workers
Degree of autonomy & teamwork
Quality of higher management
Professional development & growth opportunity
Support for continuing education/advanced degree
Philosophy & reputation of the organization
Stability of organization/industry
Evaluation of your work
Transferability of skills/experience from job

#### **Geographic Considerations**

Location/Community type and size Availability/cost of housing Cultural/recreational opportunities Proximity to family/friends

#### **Monetary Considerations**

Starting salary
Potential salary
Benefits package
Cost-of-living
Bonuses/commissions
Company car/expense
account

#### **Life-Style Considerations**

Working conditions
Work schedule
Travel requirements
Commuting to work
Social life (singles/couples)
Dress code

#### **Other Tips**

- If an offer is extended verbally, ask for it and the details in writing, including job title, starting date, salary, location, and any other important information. If anything appears vague, ask for clarification before accepting the offer.
- If it sounds too good to be true, it probably is...investigate!
- Make your acceptance in writing, restating the important details.
- If you are going to reject the offer, do so in writing as soon as possible. Thank them for their confidence in you...don't burn any bridges!
- Accepting or not, always follow up with appropriate "thank you's".

<u>Is it ethical to accept a job offer and continue actively seeking until a better offer comes along? NO!</u>

## **COPING WITH REJECTION**

9 have not failed 10,000 times,
9 have successfully found 10,000 ways
that will not work, ~ Thomas Edison

Some say failure or rejection is like a rite of passage. You can't really get on with your life unless you have experienced a setback <u>and</u> learned to overcome it. Your job search may be the first time you've experienced rejection or major disappointment. This isn't unusual! But we know this doesn't mean that it will be easy to accept or that you have to like it!

#### Keep These Things in Mind:

- Sometimes rejection has nothing to do with you, but more to do with the employer (the interviewer/the organizations needs), so don't be overly critical of yourself and take it personally.
- Don't just accept an employer's negative response without looking at the reason(s). You may want to ask him/her the reasons behind it. Also ask yourself...was there a poor fit between the position and my background? Did I fail to present myself well in the interview? In my resume and/or cover letter? How can I present myself better?
- Try to gain something from every failure or rejection...use it as a learning process.
- Law of Averages: The more "no's" you receive...the closer you're getting to a "yes!"

THE JOB SEARCH
No, No, No, No,
No, No, No, No,
No, No, No, YES!