

Job Search Strategies

UNDERSTANDING AND MARKETING YOUR SKILLS

You may be concerned about how to effectively communicate what you have to offer potential employers, especially if you have limited job-related experience. However, you probably possess many of the skills that employers are seeking, so it is imperative that you be able to identify and articulate your skills in order to be competitive in the job search process. Your skills can be divided into three main categories:



Self-Management or Adaptive Skills

Self-management/Adaptive skills are skills that show how you react to various situations. They are essentially your personality traits. Being enthusiastic, punctual, creative, and able to work well with others are all self-management/adaptive skills.

Transferable or Functional Skills

Transferable/Functional skills are skills that you develop or learn in one environment that can easily be used in another. Organizational skills, communication skills, analytical skills, and writing skills are all examples of transferable/functional skills.

Job-Content Skills

Job-content skills are skills related to a specific job. Laboratory skills and programming skills are examples of job-content skills. These skills can come from not only paid positions, but volunteer work, hobbies, extracurricular activities, etc.

Becoming very comfortable providing examples of each type of skills can be very helpful in both answering interview questions and preparing your resume. How?

Consider many common interview questions:

- What is your greatest strength?
- Tell me a little about yourself.
- Why should I hire you?
- What did you learn in your internship?

Each of these questions can be beautifully answered using a well-developed example of one of your skills. For example:

Interviewer: “What is your greatest strength?”

Candidate: “My greatest strength is my attention to detail. For example, in my internship, I managed a set of detailed spreadsheets involving our office’s purchases and budgeting. When I was audited at the end of the semester, our accountant found my work to be error-free.”

This concept applies particularly well with Behavioral Interviewing (see page 49), where interviewers ask you to relate stories that give specific details surrounding your past behaviors.

Similarly, your skills should be clearly reflected on your resume. Consider this sample entry:

RELATED EXPERIENCE

Peer Counseling Intern (January 2013– May 2013)
Community Youth Organization, Charleston, SC

- **Counseled** teens on the pitfalls of dropping out of high school
- **Marketed** group discussions at four area high schools
- **Wrote** detailed reports regarding student participation levels

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Use the worksheet provided below to compile examples of your skills! For each skill type, list three of your own skills. Then in the space provided, jot down a quick story or example describing how you have demonstrated that skill.

SELF-MANAGEMENT OR ADAPTIVE SKILLS

Skill

Your Story

TRANSFERABLE OR FUNCTIONAL SKILLS

Skill

Your Story

JOB-CONTENT SKILLS

Skill

Your Story

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NETWORKING

Networking is the #1 way to go about finding a job because approximately 80% of all job openings are never advertised anywhere, and most employers tend to prefer hiring applicants referred by a colleague or acquaintance.

Networking refers to the process of interacting with people who can give you information about jobs or occupations. The purpose of networking is to get as much information as you can about the job market and occupations and develop job leads.

1. **BEGIN BY MAKING A LIST OF ALL THE PEOPLE YOU KNOW.** This can include relatives, neighbors, fellow workers, former acquaintances, bankers, doctors, ministers, professional colleagues, etc. These people do not have to know about job openings – but they may know people who know about job openings!

Tip: Use the College of Charleston's Alumni & Student Career Network in LinkedIn to identify C of C alumni to include in your network.

2. **SYSTEMATICALLY ASK THESE PEOPLE IF THEY CAN REFER YOU TO SOMEONE** who works in an occupation of interest to you, or if they can provide you with advice in conducting your job search.

Before you begin contacting people on your list, decide what information you want from the contact, such as:

- Information about the company
- Information about the line of work
- A referral to someone who may help you
- Advice on conducting your job search

Remember, an informational interview is NOT a job interview....but may bring you a job lead.

3. **CALL THESE CONTACTS TO ARRANGE A BRIEF MEETING, OR INFORMATIONAL INTERVIEW** by phone or in person. Tell them who referred you and ask for about 20 minutes of their time to gather information on your chosen career. If the contact agrees to talk with you, try to arrange an appointment time. If the answer is no, ask, "Could you recommend someone else that I could contact?" Then repeat the process. ***Begin by calling the people who you can talk to most easily. It does get easier with each call!***

Hello, my name is Laura Scott and _____ suggested I speak with you because I am interested in finding out more about the public relations field. Might you have some time to meet with me and provide me with some information on the industry?

4. When you go to your informational interview, **ARRIVE EARLY AND DRESS PROFESSIONALLY.** Write out questions you will ask in advance.

Questions to ask during an informational interview:

- How did you get started in this business?
- What are the positive aspects of being in this business?
- Where do you see the industry heading in the next few years?
- What are the current career opportunities in the industry?
- Who would you recommend I contact regarding job opportunities?
- Is there anything else I should know about the industry?

After an informational interview:

- Stay in Touch!
- Send a brief thank-you note.
- Mention that you'll be in touch with a career update.
- Be persistent, but not annoying.
- Ask your contact if s/he can recommend anyone else in the field you may contact.

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OTHER SOURCES AND METHODS

Direct Contact



Conduct research (both online and through print resources available at libraries), in order to identify companies of interest to you. Then, contact the Human Resources Department (or the person in charge of hiring). Have a script ready of what you want to say. For example, *"This is Jane Doe. I am a recent graduate of the College of Charleston, and I am seeking entry-level jobs in laboratory research. How (or where) do you list your job vacancies when they occur?"* If the person is helpful, ask more questions. If not, get the basic information on how/where to send a resume, and thank the person for the assistance. When appropriate, take your resume to the company in person. Use every opportunity to become a real person applying for a position, rather than to be represented only on the basis of a piece of paper (your resume).

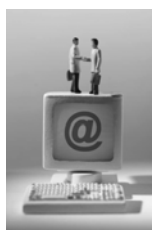


Newspapers, Journals, and Trade Magazines

Don't overlook these traditional sources of job listings. Most of these sources are now available online.

Contract Staffing Firms/Third-Party Recruiters

These organizations can be very helpful for finding temporary or permanent employment, particularly when you are moving to a new area. Be cautious when utilizing these agencies. The Career Center advises that you only register with agencies that **do not** charge you a fee; rather, the fee is paid by the employing company. Also, discuss your career plans with agency representatives so that both you and they are clear on your objectives. If possible, ask for recommendations from acquaintances regarding reputable agencies.



Internet Resources

Internet resources provide an important method to utilize in looking for job openings, researching companies, and finding career information. Don't use this method exclusively, though; it should not replace more traditional job search methods. The Career Center has compiled a list of job search links at:
<http://careercenter.cofc.edu/helpful-web-links/>.

Internal Campaigning

Take a volunteer position, internship, or part-time position to "get your foot in the door" to prove your abilities to a company of interest.

THE REALITY OF THE JOB SEARCH

- There are always jobs out there waiting to be filled.
- Whether you can find these jobs or not usually depends on what method you are using for your job search.
- If you are not finding any jobs, you probably need to change the method you are using.

FOR BEST RESULTS

1. Decide just exactly what you have to offer the world and what you want to do.
2. Decide where you want to use your skills and do your work.
3. You must go after the organizations that interest you the most, whether or not they have a vacancy.

From What Color is Your Parachute?- Richard Bolles

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RESOURCES AVAILABLE THROUGH THE CAREER CENTER

CISTERNonline

CISTERNonline is an internet-based program designed to help you connect with potential employers. Advantages of registering with CISTERNonline include:

- Ability to view full-time jobs, part-time jobs and internships listed with the Career Center on-line, 24/7
- Opportunities to participate in on-campus interviews for full-time jobs

To participate in on-campus interviews or publish your resume to a resume book, you must have your resume approved by the Career Center and sign the **Consent to Disclose Information** form. Contact the Career Center for more information.

Events

Each semester, the Career Center organizes events designed to assist you with your job search and career planning. These events include Career Fairs, which offer opportunities to meet with recruiting organizations regarding job openings and graduate school programs. A campus-wide Career Fair is held each fall semester, in which you can meet graduate/professional school representatives and employers looking for interns, full-time and/or part-time employees. For details on programs, dates, times, and locations, watch the Career Center Home Page at <http://careercenter.cofc.edu>, read your campus-issued e-mail for updates, or contact our office for information.

Resume Critique

A member of the Career Center staff will be happy to review your resume and provide suggestions for improvement. Make an appointment to see a staff member, or come by during our drop-in hours.

Practice Interviews

The best method of preparation for interviews is to practice answering questions in an interview setting. The Career Center offers practice interviews by individual appointment. Replaying your recorded interview enables you to view yourself as employers see you. Practice makes perfect!

Credential Files

A credential file contains documents that may be used in support of your job search or application to graduate schools. You may use this file to collect relevant materials, such as your recommendations, which may be sent to employers or graduate schools upon request. Students who are planning to teach typically initiate a credential file. Ask for a Credential File packet at the Career Center for complete details.

Career Resource Center

The Career Resource Center contains resources to help you in researching careers of interest, developing network contacts, researching graduate schools, and exploring a variety of other career related topics. **Job Choices**, published by the National Association of Colleges and Employers, is a free publication you can take with you that covers many of these topics. Personal copies of **Job Choices** are available on a first-come, first-served basis in the Career Resource Center.

Find a Full-Time Job

The job search can feel overwhelming, so it's helpful to break it into manageable steps. The good news is you don't have to do every step in order. Just start checking off as many of these activities as you can, and you'll find yourself on the way to a great opportunity.

Tip: *It usually takes a minimum of 3-6 months to conduct a successful job search, so you should begin your search 3-6 months in advance of when you expect to begin a job.*

You can receive assistance for every one of these steps through the Career Center. Contact us for an appointment to discuss your questions and concerns.

STEP 1: KNOW YOURSELF.

- I have identified my personal strengths, skills, interests, and values.
- I have made a list of possible job titles/fields of interest.
- I can name two or three careers/jobs I plan to pursue.

STEP 2: KNOW WHERE YOU WANT TO WORK.

- I have researched organizations or companies that might hire someone with my skills, interests, and background.
- I have researched potential career fields: typical entry-level jobs, typical salaries, best geographic location for jobs, etc.
- I have identified the top three geographic areas where I'd like to live and work.
- I have identified 10 potential employers for the type of work I'm seeking.

STEP 3: GET READY FOR THE SEARCH.

- I have registered with the College of Charleston Career Center on CISTERNonline.
- I have created a LinkedIn profile and have requested to join the Alumni & Student Career Network group.
- I have prepared my targeted resume and cover letter(s), and have had them reviewed by a professional in the field or a staff member at the College of Charleston Career Center.
- I have prepared a portfolio or work samples to highlight my experience, skills, and talent.
- I have developed my "30-second speech" for short encounters with employers.
- I have analyzed my education and can articulate the value of a liberal arts education.
- I have identified three individuals who will serve as references.
- I have developed my interview skills.
- I have prepared for interviews by practicing my responses to typical questions and/or doing a mock interview.
- I have an interview suit that is appropriate for the field in which I plan to work.
- I have a professional-sounding answering machine/voice mail message in case an employer calls.
- I have a neutral/professional e-mail address to give to employers.

STEP 4: START SEARCHING.

- I have uploaded and received approval to publish my resume(s) in CISTERNonline.
- I regularly check the Career Center's web site for career opportunities. I read the appropriate job-search resources for my field(s) of interest.
- I have a system for keeping track of my contacts, interviews, and other job-search activities.
- I follow up on every interesting job lead immediately.
- I have developed a list of potential networking contacts and keep in touch with them.
- I keep a copy of my resume next to my phone in case I receive a call from an employer.
- I follow up each cover letter with a phone call or e-mail to the employer requesting a job interview.
- I send thank-you letters or e-mails to every person who interviews me.

Adapted with permission from Liberal Arts Career Services/UT Austin.