STRATEGIES FOR YOUR JOB SEARCH

NETWORKING

Although there are many job search engines online, networking is the number one recommended way to go about finding a job. Approximately 80% of all job openings are never advertised anywhere, and more 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 possible about the job market and occupations and develop job leads. This does not have to occur at a formal networking event. Rather, use the contacts and connections you already have to learn about potential opportunities.

1. **Begin by making a list of all the people you know.** This can include relatives, neighbors, fellow coworkers, former acquaintances, bankers, doctors, ministers, professional colleagues, etc. These people do not have to know about job openings, but they may know other people who do know about job openings.
   - **TIP:** Use the College of Charleston’s Alumni Association group on LinkedIn to identify CofC 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 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, and/or advice on conducting your search.*

3. **Call these contacts to arrange a brief meeting on 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. Example – “Hello, my name is Laura Scott and (so and so) suggested I speak with you because I am interested in finding out more about the ______ field. Might you have some time to meet with me and provide me with some information on the industry?” 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 you can most easily talk to. It does get easier with each call!

4. **When you go to your informational interview, arrive early and dress professionally.** Write out questions you will ask in advance. Remember, an informational interview is **NOT** a job interview, but may bring you a job lead.

5. **Questions to ask in 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?

6. **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.

DIRECT CONTACT

Conduct research 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 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 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).

INTERNET RESOURCES

Internet resources provide a convenient 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.

Join Handshake, CofC’s job and internship board. The Career Center has compiled a list of additional job search links.

CONTACTING 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. However, be cautious about 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 they and you are clear on your objectives. If possible, ask for recommendations from acquaintances regarding the most reputable agencies.

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.

Keep in mind that there are always jobs needing to be filled. If you are having trouble finding jobs, try utilizing a different job search method. Decide just exactly what you have to offer the world and what you want to do. Decide where you want to use your skills and do your work. You must go after the organizations that interest you the most, whether or not they have a vacancy. Keep in mind that it usually can take up to 3-6 months to conduct a successful job search.