

JOB SEARCH STRATEGIES- Tip Sheet

CREATE A JOB SEARCH PLAN

Know Yourself

First, think about your career goals when setting your job objective. Ideally, your career goals are based on an assessment of your interests, skills, and values. Being clear about who you are will allow you to effectively communicate your skills and worth to a potential employer.

CPDC Resources:

- See the Career Resource Guides with sample options and job titles for your major/concentration.
- Take an interest inventory to assess your interests.
- Review informational videos on hundreds of occupations in Vault. A link for Vault is available on the CPDC website and through Handshake.
- Meet with a career coach to discuss how your interests, skills, and values relate to career choices.

Research Your Field

Begin by researching the job market in your field of interest and in the geographic area in which you wish to work. Identify employers that meet your criteria, ideally 20 or more! Learn about what types of recruitment strategies are most often used in your field. Set aside considerable time each week to devote to your job search. The more time you invest, the sooner you are likely to achieve your desired goal. Informational interviews are a wonderful method to gather job market information as well as to identify potential employers in your field of interest.

CPDC Resources:

- Refer to the Informational Interviewing Tip Sheet.
- See the ReferenceUSA Tip Sheet: The RMU Library provides access to ReferenceUSA, a database that contains detailed information on over 16 million U.S. businesses.

Prepare Your Job Search Communication Tools

With a defined job objective and your list of preferred employers, it is time to perfect your job search communication. Your goal is to impress a potential employer, whether it is in writing through a resume or cover letter, or in person through a networking contact, interview or job fair. Supportive materials such as reference sheets and portfolios can enhance your ability to make an impression.

CPDC Resources:

- See your career coach for resume and cover letter critiques, and to conduct practice interviews.
- Refer to these Tip Sheets: Resume Writing, Employment Letters, Networking, Job Fair, Interviewing.
- Review related resources on Vault, a comprehensive career website, linked to the CPDC home page.

Compile References

In addition to an effective resume and cover letter, employers frequently request a list of references who can be contacted to provide feedback about you. Prepare a list of three to five professional references that know you well and can speak specifically about your professional qualifications and work style. Professional references do not include family members, friends or clergy. Here are additional key points to remember when preparing your references:

- List professional references on a separate sheet of paper.
- Include your contact information at the top, using the same heading as your resume.
- For each reference, include their name, job title, address, phone number and email address. If unclear from the job title, indicate the nature of your relationship to them.
- Always ask permission before listing someone as a reference.
- Ask if your references would prefer to be contacted at work or home and via phone or email.
- Update your references throughout your job search.

- Provide your references with information about jobs for which you have interviewed, so they can offer more relevant information to the employer, if contacted.
- Send your references a thank you note when you know they have given a reference for you.

Portfolios

While optional, creating a portfolio adds another good strategy to demonstrate qualifications and experience to employers. Your portfolio is a tangible method to show employers skills and accomplishments, and typically includes writing samples, desktop publishing pieces, photography work, design work, computer programs, website pages, PowerPoint programs, database projects, strategic plans, marketing plans, etc. Portfolios can be created in hard copy or electronically. Like resumes, portfolios should be tailored to the specific position for which they are being used.

CPDC Resource:

- See the Portfolio Tip Sheet.

LinkedIn Profile

Social networking has a major role in today's job search strategy. Among social networking sites, LinkedIn has remained one of the best developed to include in your job search strategy. Your career coach can assist you with creating a clear professional profile and advising you how to network effectively with your job search. See the section on Networking Online – Social Media Sites for more detailed information on creating a LinkedIn Profile for networking.

STRATEGIES TO IMPLEMENT YOUR JOB SEARCH PLAN

Once you are clear on your job objective, knowledgeable about your field of interest, and prepared to communicate your strengths as a candidate, you are ready to actually begin the search for positions. The following strategies are important to include when implementing your plan.

Networking

Although one of the most effective job search strategies, networking is often one of the least used strategies. Networking requires a commitment of time, but it is time well spent. Develop a group of contacts who can assist you with your job search. This network of contacts will not get you a job; however, these contacts can help you in many ways and with levels of involvement:

- They can let you know about jobs that have not been advertised or advertised widely, known as the hidden job market.
- They can provide helpful information in terms of who is handling the search, specifics about the position, and knowledge about the culture of the organization.
- They can also assist you to get noticed by personally forwarding your resume to the employer or discussing your strengths with the employer.

Networking In-Person

- Networking can happen anywhere...at the gym, on an airplane, at a wedding reception, etc. When meeting people, don't just mention that you are deciding on a career goal or looking for a job. Be specific about the options you are considering or the type of job you are seeking. Being specific may reveal connections with that person or help them connect you to others they know in your field(s) of interest.
- Informational interviews are a great way to obtain career information and job search advice. At the conclusion of an informational interview, always ask if the person you interviewed can recommend others they believe would be helpful to you. Doing so helps to expand your network.
- For job searching, incorporate networking opportunities into your job search. Attend alumni events, job fairs, networking receptions, local/regional networking group meetings, and professional organization events/meetings.

Networking Online – Social Media Sites

There are numerous social and professional networking sites available online. Below are three of the most popular:

LinkedIn.com is the largest online professional networking site, and has become an essential strategy in the job search. You can find profiles of professional contacts and also establish a connection with them. LinkedIn is a great tool to find people for informational interviews. Employers and recruiters use LinkedIn to find potential candidates for job openings. Here are the essential steps to get started:

- Develop a Profile – Create a detailed and complete profile, including a headline, professional summary, current and past employment experience, educational background, recommendations, and any related websites.
- Add a Photo – A professional photo (headshot is recommended), no larger than 80x80 pixels.
- Skills & Keywords – Include relevant skills and keywords to ensure your profile will be found by employers.
- Expand Your Network – Connect with other members and continually build your network.
- Increase your Online Presence – Blog Link allows you to link your blog post to your profile; every time you post a new blog, your LinkedIn profile is updated. It is imperative that all of your communication is professional in nature.
- Request Recommendations – Ask people you have worked with to post recommendations. Strong recommendations have a significant impact on employers and recruiters who are viewing your page.
- Search Jobs – Use the job search section to browse job listings. Visit: <https://students.linkedin.com/> which features internships and jobs for entry-level candidates.
- Get Connected – The LinkedIn mobile application can be used to access LinkedIn from your phone.

*** The **Robert Morris University Career Network** is a LinkedIn group that provides RMU students, alumni, faculty and staff the opportunity to network with each other about career-related topics: www.linkedin.com/groups/4547738

Twitter.com is another social networking and microblogging service that uses instant messaging, SMS or a web interface, and is also an excellent resource to help you build connections, find job listings, and develop your personal brand. To use Twitter:

- Prepare Your Account – Be sure your public Twitter account is professional and represents you in an appealing way to employers. To help employers learn more about you, include a bio in your profile as well as helpful links such as your LinkedIn profile and your blog URL, if you have one.
- Increase Your Visibility – Be thoughtful in the messages you tweet and be sure to use keywords and phrases employers may be searching for.
- Follow the Industry – Follow companies and professionals in your field to learn of trends and news.
- Make Connections – Search for contacts in your field or at a specific organization.
- Demonstrate Your Knowledge – Tweet about information, links, and articles related to the industry/job title you are interested in pursuing.
- Search Jobs – Many employers and job sites post on Twitter.
- Tweet Cautiously – Once the hiring process has begun with an employer, be careful what you share publicly about the process and employer.

Facebook.com is one of the largest social networking sites developed for personal networking. Facebook, while not ideal for professional networking, does provide opportunities to build connections and can be helpful for specific groups such as military transitioning to civilian jobs, career changers or alumni. Job seekers must consider the amount and type of information they are sharing if using Facebook for job search purposes.

- Examine Your Profile – Review your profile and decide what you want networking contacts and potential employers to see. Edit your existing profile to create one that is simple with minimal photos, graphics and widgets.
- Post Relevant & Appropriate Content – Post information that relates to your career field, industry and job search.
- Use Email – Utilize the email function to build or renew relationships with your friends.

- Be Careful – Remember that your Facebook friends can see information about your other Facebook friends. Be careful when accepting friends and, of course, be cautious in what you post.

CPDC Resources:

- Refer to the Networking Tip Sheet & Informational Interviewing Tip Sheet.
- Review networking advice, including articles, videos, guide books and blog posts, on Vault under the “Tips & Resources” section. Vault is a comprehensive career website, linked to the CPDC home page.

RECRUITING ON CAMPUS

Employers frequently contact college and university career centers to locate candidates. Employers who contact the RMU CPDC most often choose one of two options to post their positions:

On-Campus Recruiting: Employers schedule a visit on campus to interview candidates in the CPDC. Most on-campus interviews are posted as preselect schedules in Handshake. (Click “Jobs” on the menu bar and then “On-Campus Interviews.”) Interested students/alumni submit their resume online before the deadline date. After reviewing resumes submitted through Handshake, the employer then picks or preselects the students/alumni they wish to interview when they visit campus. Selected students will then choose an interview time slot online through Handshake. Occasionally, on-campus interviews are posted as open schedules, for which interested students/alumni may sign up online on a first-come, first-served basis.

Job Postings (Off-Campus Recruiting): The majority of employers who contact the CPDC opt to enter their vacancy in Handshake as a job posting. (Click “Jobs” on the menu bar.) Students and alumni may submit their resume online through Handshake before the deadline date set by the employer. Some employers may also prompt applicants to apply directly on their company website. If the employer decides to interview any of the candidates who submitted a resume, they will contact the student or alumnus directly to arrange an interview at their company/organization.

JOB VACANCIES/POSTINGS

One of the most traditional methods of job searching is to apply to positions advertised on internet job listing sites, professional association sites, and employer home pages. When applying, it is recommended to tailor your cover letter and resume to the position and employer, rather than sending “generic” correspondence. After sending your materials, follow-up with the employer to show initiative, confirm receipt of your materials and obtain information about the status of the position. Job seekers should certainly apply to known vacancies; however, the effectiveness of networking cannot be overstated. A large number of positions are never advertised. It is, therefore, important to use a variety of job search strategies.

CPDC Resources:

- Career Resource Guides (include internet job listing sites for specific majors)
- Tip Sheets: Internet and Pittsburgh Career Resources
- Handshake (RMU’s online registration, job posting and event management system)

JOB FAIRS

Job fairs provide employers a forum to meet briefly with large numbers of candidates in a short time. Employers may attend job fairs for several reasons:

- to find candidates for current openings,
- to collect resumes for anticipated or future openings, and
- to maintain visibility of the organization on campus.

One advantage of a job fair is that it provides the candidate an opportunity to meet the recruiter in person and make a strong impression. However, recruiters often meet hundreds of candidates at one event. Therefore, it is important

to prepare well for a job fair in order to make a strong and favorable impression. The CPDC hosts multiple career fairs during the fall and spring semesters of each academic year.

The CPDC also belongs to several area consortiums that organize job fairs throughout the year. In addition, the CPDC posts information about other job fairs held regionally and nationally. For more information, refer to the “Events” section of Handshake.

CPDC Resource: Job Fair Tip Sheet

DIRECT EMPLOYER CONTACT

Rather than wait to see what vacancies might be posted, another successful strategy is to be proactive by contacting employers that interest you to inquire about openings. This contact can be accomplished in several ways:

- **Phone:** Call the employer to inquire about available positions and then follow up by sending a cover letter and resume. Making “cold calls” to an employer can be intimidating. It is recommended to plan out what you will say before calling. Your telephone plan is similar to the format of a letter and should include the following:
 - Introduction-** tell the person who you are
 - Statement of Interest-** make a brief statement that will get the person’s attention (include information you researched about the organization, a networking contact’s name, etc.)
 - Body-** state your reason for calling
 - Closing-** complete your goal for the call (ask for information, schedule a meeting, etc.)Also, plan what you will say if you reach voice mail. When leaving voice mail messages, make sure your message is enthusiastic, clear, polite and professional. It is best to keep your message less than 30 seconds.
- **Writing/Emailing:** Send a cover letter and resume, then follow up with a phone call to confirm the employer received your materials and to ask if the employer has any openings. It is best to write to someone specific. You may need to contact the organization to identify the appropriate person, research the organization’s staff on its website, or utilize information received from a networking contact. In the last paragraph of your cover letter, mention the time frame in which you plan to call to follow-up (next week, the week of..., etc.)
- **In Person:** Visit the employer to drop off your resume and cover letter in person. This strategy is the most assertive and also requires preparation. Be aware that, due to security and other reasons, many organizations do not permit non-employees to enter their worksite without invitation. If you do choose to pursue this option, you should research the organization before your visit. Make sure you dress professionally. Similar to contacting an employer by phone, you should plan what you will say. Be clear and respectful of the person’s time. The person you wish to speak with may not be available when you visit. Be polite and courteous with everyone you meet at the organization. The impression you make on receptionists, co-workers, etc., will certainly be conveyed to the person you had hoped to meet.

EMPLOYMENT AGENCIES

Employment agencies work to match job seekers with an employer’s vacancies. These firms can be private, public, profit or nonprofit. Temporary and contract employment agencies specialize in finding candidates for a designated period of time. Some employers use temporary and contract agencies to find employees for short-term and seasonal openings; other employers may hire temporary employees in order to evaluate their abilities before hiring a full-time employee.

Issues to Consider When Working with Employment Agencies:

- Research the firm’s reputation, placement rates and services through the Better Business Bureau and former clients.
- Verify if any fees will be charged for services before you accept or sign anything.

- Determine if the firm is a good match for you. Some firms specialize in filling positions in specific fields or geographic locations.
- Find out how the agency employees are paid, whether it is salary or based on the number of placements they make.
- Evaluate how the job matches your interests, skills and values before accepting.
- If you are receiving unemployment benefits, research how accepting jobs with short-term wages or turning down job opportunities may affect your benefits.

FINAL THOUGHTS

Create an Effective Strategy

- Network, network, network! This strategy is the most effective, but is often underutilized.

Apply Time Management and Organizational Skills

- The job search process has often been described as a full-time job itself. It takes time and planning to conduct an effective search. To avoid becoming overwhelmed or stressed, plan a list of realistic and effective tasks to accomplish each week.
- Keep active and stay focused on your plans.
- Keep detailed and accurate notes about all contacts you make and correspondence you send.

Maintain a Positive Attitude

- To maintain enthusiasm and a positive attitude, build incentives into your weekly plans to reward yourself for completing job search tasks.
- Maintain a support system of friends, family, CPDC staff, faculty, advisors, networking contacts, and community groups who can encourage you throughout your job search.

Utilize CPDC Services and Resources

- Meet with your career coach to learn about the services available to you, review your job search communication materials, conduct a practice interview and develop an effective job search strategy.
- Update your Handshake profile and resume; frequently check the “Jobs,” “On-Campus Interviews” and “Events” sections.
- Attend advertised workshops and programs presented by employers and CPDC staff.
- Contact the CPDC if you have any questions about your job search.