

JOB SEARCHING DURING COVID-19 - Tip Sheet

Due to COVID-19, the economy and job market have changed significantly. Some organizations have had to lay off employees or freeze hiring while others may still be hiring or even have an increased need, depending on the field/industry. Other employers simply may not know their hiring plans at this time due to the unprecedented situation we are all facing.

The Career and Professional Development Center (CPDC) staff understands these changes can lead to confusion and stress for students and alumni who are seeking an experiential learning opportunity, internship, or job. Please know that we are here to help! The Career Coaches are available via email or through Google Hangout phone or video appointments to facilitate the process of exploring academic major and career options; developing resumes, cover letters and other professional communication tools; preparing and practicing for interviews; and conducting an internship or job search. For an individual appointment, please [contact us](#).

In addition, this tip sheet was developed to outline strategies and resources to assist you during your search. Some of the resources listed may reference fee-based products and services. Please note: including these resources/references does not indicate the CPDC's endorsement of any employer or fee-based product or service. Keep in mind, the CPDC provides free career coaching and career development resources for RMU students and alumni.

Sections of the Tip Sheet:

- CPDC Online Resources
- Local and Federal Government COVID-19 Resources
- Job Market: Who's Hiring?
- Job Search Communication Tips
- Search Strategies

CPDC Online Resources

The RMU Career and Professional Development Center (CPDC) encourages students and alumni to use the following online resources:

CPDC Career Guides

[Career resource guides](#) are available for most RMU majors/concentrations. The guides are an excellent starting point for career exploration and include information on sample career options, related professional associations, career and employment websites, relevant student groups, and a selection of internship and/or full-time employers.

CPDC Tip Sheets

The CPDC offers [tip sheets](#) on a variety of career-related topics including everything from resume writing to job search strategies and graduate school planning.

Handshake

Handshake is the CPDC's job posting and event management system. The online career development tool uses technology to connect students and employers, streamlining the job search and recruiting process. For access, select "Handshake" on the [CPDC website](#), and then follow the "Students" or "Instructions for Alumni" link.

Vault

Vault is a comprehensive career resource that includes industry and profession overviews; rankings and profiles for employers and internship programs; a job and internship database; career articles, blogs and videos; sample resumes, cover letters and interview questions; and an online library. RMU students and alumni may access Vault through the "Career Center" > "Resources" section of Handshake. The [Vault Tip Sheet](#) provides additional details.

Local and Federal Government COVID-19 Resources

Local and federal government resources are available to assist you during this national pandemic. Several resources are listed below to aid with the challenges you may face as you navigate your way through this difficult time.

Resources:

- [National Coronavirus Information and Resources](#) (CDC/White House)
- [National COVID-19 Disaster Assistance](#) (U.S. Department of Agriculture)
- [Information about Your Student Financial Aid](#) (U.S. Department of Education)
- [Who's Hiring Immediately in Pennsylvania](#) (Pennsylvania CareerLink)
- [Pennsylvania Services for Individuals with Disabilities](#) (Pennsylvania Department of Labor and Industry)
- [Pennsylvania Pandemic Unemployment Assistance](#) (Pennsylvania Department of Labor and Industry)
- [COVID-19: Resources for Businesses; Workers, Job Seekers, and Youth; Partners](#) (Partner4Work)

Job Market: Who's Hiring?

COVID-19 has not stopped companies from hiring. Even as mass layoffs affect workers, some employers are ramping up hiring to keep up with the unprecedented demand that has been brought on by the COVID-19 crisis. As a candidate, you may need to cast your net wider than previous years; there are still jobs out there.

Resources:

- [500 Companies Hiring Students on Handshake Right Now](#) (Handshake)
- [Are Companies Still Hiring During the COVID-19 Crisis?](#) (Jobscan)
- [COVID-19 Employment Opportunities](#) (Pennsylvania Department of Labor & Industry- CareerLink)
- [Here's Who's Hiring Right Now](#) (LinkedIn)
- [Who's Freezing Hiring from Coronavirus?](#) (Candor)
- [9 Job Search Tips for International Students in the Age of Coronavirus](#) (Vault)

Top Job Search Websites:

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|-------------------------------------|---------------------------------|--------------------------------|
| • Handshake | • Idealist | • Monster |
| • ImaginePittsburgh | • CareerBuilder | • ZipRecruiter |
| • Indeed | • Snagajob | • SimplyHired |
| • LinkedIn | • USAJOBS | • Glassdoor |

The CPDC's [Internet Career Resources Tip Sheet](#) includes additional job posting sites as well as resources for career planning, diverse populations, and salary information. General job search tips are available on the CPDC's [Job Search Strategies Tip Sheet](#). If you are interested in government positions, refer to the CPDC's [Government Jobs Tip Sheet](#).

Job Search Communication Tips

- Communicating with Employer about Tentative Situations
- Polish Your Job Search Communication Tools
- Prepare for Virtual & Phone Interviews

COMMUNICATING WITH EMPLOYERS ABOUT TENTATIVE SITUATIONS

In the process of conducting a job or internship search, follow-up correspondence is common. The unprecedented changes in the world of work due to COVID-19, however, have left both employers and job seekers in a state of flux. Following are examples to communicate with employers regarding situations specific to COVID-19 circumstances. Because most organizations have non-essential employees working remotely, correspondence should be conducted by email versus mail.

Email Templates:

1. Ask about the status of a job or internship

Dear Hiring Manager [preferable to address to a specific person, if that information is available]:

I am excited to begin my position as {name of position} with {name of organization}. Given the current situation with COVID-19, I am writing to confirm my scheduled start date of {date} and further details regarding the position. Has {name of organization} made any changes to the normal operating schedule or location of work (on-site or remote)? I am looking forward to becoming a member of {name of organization}.

Thank you for any information you can provide. I look forward to hearing from you.

Sincerely,

{your name}
{your phone number}

2. Inquire about the status of an interview

Dear Hiring Manager [preferable to address to a specific person, if that information is available]:

I am excited for the opportunity to meet with you on {scheduled date} regarding the {name of position} position with {name of organization}. With current workplace changes due to COVID-19, I wanted to confirm if the interview will take place at {name of organization} or if it will be conducted virtually.

I appreciate any information you can provide and look forward to hearing from you.

Sincerely,

{your name}
{your phone number}

3. Request options for remote work for an accepted position

Dear Hiring Manager [preferable to address to a specific person, if that information is available]:

I am very excited for the opportunity to work for {name of organization}. Given the current situation with COVID-19, I am writing to inquire about possible options for remote work for my {internship/full-time position} beginning on {date}.

Thank you for any information you can provide. I look forward to hearing from you.

Sincerely,

{your name}
{your phone number}

POLISH YOUR JOB SEARCH COMMUNICATION TOOLS

Polishing your communication documents and profiles for the job search is crucial to capturing the attention of employers and connections. The following information summarizes the key goals of effective resumes and employment letters. When reviewing your documents, determine if you have met these goals, communicated your skills and experience, and tailored your content to the posting/employer. Tips are also provided on how to maximize your Handshake and LinkedIn profiles and communicate your professional brand.

Resume

Your resume is a vitally important document designed to demonstrate how you would be an excellent fit for the position you are applying to. It should be tailored to each position that you apply to, error-free, easy to read, and, in most cases, ATS-friendly (designed/tailored for an applicant tracking system).

Review the guidelines, checklist, and sample resumes in the CPDC's [Resume Writing Resources](#). It is also recommended that you have your resume reviewed by your Career Coach before beginning your job or internship search.

Employment Letters

Typical letters for the job search include the cover letter, thank you for the interview, acceptance and decline of offers.

Cover letters

Cover letters serve to introduce your resume to an organization. They must be tailored for each position that you apply to, highlighting your specific interest in and qualifications for that position. Employers also review cover letters to evaluate a candidate's written communication skills, so be sure to vary your sentence structure, be grammatically correct, and proofread to ensure there are no errors.

Thank You Correspondence

Thank you letters or emails show appreciation for the opportunity to interview with an organization. Ideally, you should create a unique thank-you for each person at the organization you spoke with, relating something specific to that conversation. Thank you letters should be written within 24 hours of the interview and, in addition to showing appreciation, indicate your interest in the position and provide any follow-up information requested. Although thank you correspondence can typically be sent via email or through a letter or card, email is recommended during this time period since so many organizations are working remotely.

Acceptance letters

Acceptance letters provide a documented form of confirming an offer and related details (start date, salary, etc.). They also serve to express your appreciation and excitement for the opportunity to work for the organization.

Decline of offer letters

Decline of offer letters are submitted when you have made the decision not to accept an offer. They are a professional courtesy and can help keep the doors open for future employment. It is unprofessional to "ghost" an organization in the job search process and can affect future employment opportunities, not only at that organization but in general. (You never know where the people you interviewed with will be working in the future!)

Additional details and sample job search correspondence letters are available in the CPDC's [Employment Letters Tip Sheet](#).

Handshake Profile

Handshake is the CPDC's job posting and event management system. It is a recruiting platform for employers to provide information about their organization, post positions and events, and recruit students and alumni for available positions. Through Handshake, students and alumni can research organizations, apply for positions, connect with other students and alumni, and register for events. Students and alumni have the opportunity to market themselves through the Handshake profile that can be set as viewable to employers only or to the entire Handshake community, including employers as well as students/alumni from other universities. The resources below provide additional information about Handshake and tips to enhance your profile.

Resources:

- [The 3 Must-Haves on Your Handshake Profile](#) (Handshake)
- [The 10-Day Handshake Profile Challenge](#) (Handshake)
- [Handshake Registration & Overview](#) (RMU CPDC Tip Sheet)

LinkedIn Profile

LinkedIn is a professional network for students and alumni to develop an online professional profile, research and apply for positions, and create a network of like-minded professionals. In the COVID-19 era, creating and developing a network is critical to gaining valuable information about positions and companies, enhancing a professional brand, and helping others. Please review the resources below for tips on creating a great profile or enhancing an existing profile.

Resources:

- [20 Steps to a Better LinkedIn Profile in 2020](#) (LinkedIn)
- [Build Your Personal Brand on LinkedIn](#) (LinkedIn)
- [How Do I Create a Good LinkedIn Profile?](#) (LinkedIn Video and Article)
- [Maximizing Your LinkedIn Profile](#) (RMU CPDC Tip Sheet)

PREPARE FOR VIRTUAL & PHONE INTERVIEWS

Due to COVID-19, many employers are shifting from in-person interviews to other types. You may be invited to participate in a phone interview or a form of virtual interview. There are two types of virtual or video interviews. A synchronous (two-way live) interview is conducted with the candidate and employer using video conferencing software. An asynchronous (one-way) video interview is recorded by the job candidate; the hiring manager is not present. The job candidate responds to preset questions displayed by the video interview platform.

Resources:

- [3 Tips for Acing Your Virtual Interviews](#) (Forbes)
- [4 Strategies for Nailing the Video Interview](#) (Vault Video)
- [Prepare for a Virtual Interview](#) (Monster)
- [Video Interview Guide: Tips for a Successful Interview](#) (Indeed)
- [Phone Interviews Tips](#) (The Balance Careers)
- [Tips for a Successful Phone Interview](#) (Vault Video)

General interviewing tips are available on the CPDC's [Interviewing Tip Sheet](#).

Search Strategies

- Explore Remote Work Opportunities
- Attend Virtual Career Fairs & Recruiting Events
- Expand Your Network & Conduct Informational Interviews
- Increase Your Marketability

EXPLORE REMOTE WORK OPPORTUNITIES

During the time of COVID-19, job seekers may want to consider remote work opportunities. As when searching for any type of position, carefully research opportunities and organizations. Below are some resources to help you find opportunities, prepare for the “work from home” environment, and become aware of potential scams.

Resources:

- [25+ Best Sites for Finding Remote Work Online in 2020](#) (Skillcrush)
- [How to Find and Get Hired for a Remote Job](#) (Zapier)
- [The 18 Best Remote Job Boards in 2020](#) (Career Sidekick)
- [12 Common Job Search Scams and How to Protect Yourself](#) (FlexJobs)
- [Work from Home Scams | How to Detect and Avoid Them](#) (ZipRecruiter)

ATTEND VIRTUAL CAREER FAIRS & RECRUITING EVENTS

Virtual career fairs, expos, and networking events are becoming more and more important as a way of connecting with employers. There are a number of ways to prepare for a virtual career fair to get the maximum benefit, many

of which are similar to preparing for a virtual interview. It is important to have an up-to-date resume, know which employers seem to be a good fit for you, dress the part, be sure your internet connection is good, have your elevator pitch ready, and be organized. That way, you'll make a great first "virtual" impression.

Resources:

- [Handshake- Events Section](#) (RMU CPDC / Handshake)
- [How to Create an Elevator Pitch with Examples](#) (The Balance Careers)
- [How to Rock a Virtual Job Fair](#) (CareerCast)
- [How to Succeed at Virtual Job Fairs](#) (LiveCareer)

EXPAND YOUR NETWORK & CONDUCT INFORMATIONAL INTERVIEWS

To understand the employment environment during COVID-19, it is vital to expand your network of people who do what you want to do, who know your skill sets, and who have an interest in your success. Your network can provide valuable information about the hidden job market, position descriptions, and recent hiring decisions. The resources below include templates for how to request informational interviews through email or LinkedIn messaging as well as tips for conducting informational interviews and networking.

Resources:

- [4 Tips for Writing Networking Emails](#) (Vault Video)
- [10 Best Templates for LinkedIn](#) (The Muse)
- [Informational Interviewing](#) (RMU CPDC Tip Sheet)
- [Networking](#) (RMU CPDC Tip Sheet)

INCREASE YOUR MARKETABILITY

As the Coronavirus epidemic continues to affect employment opportunities, it is important to increase your marketability. Consider the three strategies outlined below.

1. Add New Skills

The current employment environment requires that a job seeker be more creative, mobile, and practical in their approach. Identify skills in demand for the type of position you are seeking. Explore opportunities to build your skills through free online tutorials, webinars, and courses.

Quick Tip:

- Be aware that some people may be using emails about free resources to promote products, services, and potentially scams. When considering options, research organizations to ensure they are reputable and verify links before clicking.

2. Gain Experience

Attain additional experience to build your resume and increase your marketability. Consider short-term employment opportunities such as gig positions, micro-internships, temporary positions, and contract work. Some short term opportunities may lead to full-time positions as well. Jobs listed as "temp to perm" may be a good way for you and the employer to determine if working together is the right fit.

Resources:

- [What is the Gig Economy? Definition, Pros & Cons, Jobs](#) (FlexJobs)
- [10 Best Gig Economy Jobs for Extra Income in 2020](#) (Millo)
- [20 Best Gig Economy Jobs](#) (DollarSprout)
- [Micro-Internships: Parker Dewey](#) (Parker Dewey)
- [Virtual Student Federal Service](#) (VSFS)

General tips for finding experiential learning opportunities are available on the CPDC's [Experiential Learning Tip Sheet](#).

3. Volunteer

Consider volunteering with a nonprofit organization to give back to your community during this time of need. Volunteering is also a great way to develop soft skills, build your network, and possibly gain experience and skills related to your field.

Resources:

- [9 Ways to Help Others During the Coronavirus Pandemic](#) (Idealist)
- [You Can Still Find Volunteer Opportunities During Coronavirus Using These Tips](#) (Refinery29)

Organizations:

- [American Red Cross](#)
- [Greater Pittsburgh Community Food Bank](#)
- [Pittsburgh Cares](#)
- [Points of Light](#)
- [United Way](#)