

Companion Document: Job Search Essentials –

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Job Search 101 Understand the Basics

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Some Context: Job search situations range from a part time position at the movie theater to senior positions at Fortune 500 firms. The points below are most relevant for post-college professional job seekers and situations where multiple individuals are competing for a single opening.

Key Changes in Job Search

#1 Resumes and Interviews Focus on Accomplishments

Hiring managers typically know the responsibilities of your past positions. It is critical that you focus on skills and the accomplishments you achieved with these skills.

#2: Applicant Tracking Systems (ATS)

- ATS systems do the first sort on your resume.
- Highlight key words or your resume will never be seen by a human!
- Recruiters don't read your resume – they spend about 10 seconds skimming, so make it reader friendly!
- Actions: Create an ATS ready resume.

#3: Employee Referrals

- Medium and large firms are getting overwhelmed with resumes created by AI tools.
- Many firms are largely turning to internal referrals to fill openings. Networking with someone on the inside can get you hired.
- Actions: Network! Network! Network!

#4: Online Video Interviews

- Very common, especially as a first-round interview.
- Actions: Practice and learn what makes for a good video interview.

#5: Use of Social Media

- LinkedIn is your best resource to build relationships and networks.
- Recruiters/HR professionals use social media to screen applicants.

- Actions: Become a proficient LinkedIn user and clean up your Facebook page. For up-to-date LinkedIn advice.

#6: Many companies are hiring white collar workers that can demonstrate AI skills.

If you are targeting positions in management, marketing, finance or accounting, it is critical that you demonstrate knowledge of and ability to use AI Tools like ChatGPT, Co-Pilot, Claude, and others. Some firms only hire individuals with AI skills and others are firing workers that cannot adapt to AI powered work teams. The good news is that you can become an active AI user in a matter of weeks and this skill can help you in your job search.

You need to demonstrate this knowledge in the accomplishments listed in your resume and during the job interview. For example, in the interview, you need to have powerful answers to the following two questions:

- 1) "How have you used AI Tools during your job search. Be specific."
- 2) "If you are hired for this role, how would you use AI Tools to accomplish great things. Be specific."

Mid-career job applicants run the risk of looking outdated if competing job applicants are familiar with AI and Data Analysis tools.

#7: Artificial Intelligence Tools Can Assist Your Job Search

Artificial intelligence tools including ChatGPT and Claude can be used in a variety of ways to help with job searching, including:

- Resume and cover letter writing
- Interview preparation: AI can help you prepare for interviews by answering common interview questions and role playing.
- Job matching: AI can help you find jobs that match your skills.
- Company research: AI can help you gather insights about potential employers by analyzing company websites and news articles.

Common Job Search Mistakes

- Networking the wrong way
- Spending all your time applying online (Do it after 5 PM)
- Neglecting LinkedIn
- Resume Errors: Including irrelevant jobs and focusing on job responsibilities more than accomplishments.

Key Job Search Strategies

- Know what you want & your added value!
- Networking is the key to many successful landings, see suggestions below.
- Target the right positions at the right companies.
- Use the job requirements/posting as guidelines for your resume.
- Prepare for both the phone & face-to-face interviews.

Key Steps in Job Search

1. Understand and be able to articulate your strengths with concrete examples.
2. Define target opportunities by position and industry.
3. Develop written documents – resume and handbill.
4. Line up references.
5. Network, network, network
6. Execute plan.
7. Interviews – prepare for phone, video and/or face-to-face interviews.
8. Evaluate & negotiate job offers.

Highly recommended book: *The Unwritten Rules of the Highly Effective Job Search*. Orville Pierson, McGraw-Hill Education; 1st edition, 2006

Key Pieces of a Job Search Project Plan (Items 1-3 from above)

- A. Determine your professional objectives.
 1. Identify what YOU want.
 2. Include in your handbill (but not in your resume)
- B. Create positioning statement.
 1. Elevator Pitch
 2. Handbill with your photo, capabilities, and target companies
- C. Determine target markets/geography.
- D. Develop a list of specific competencies for your handbill and resume.
 1. Best as a skill or certification (examples: supply chain, P&L, project management PMP, strategic planning, LEAN/Six Sigma, or Mass Data)
 2. In your resume, avoid adjectives and overused terms like: results driven, team player, hardworking, and versatile. However, these skills are important to highlight during the interview.

Summary of Resume Advice

- A two-page maximum and strive to make it compliant with the Applicant Tracking System (ATS) technology and guidelines.
- Strategically prioritize your “space”. Drop the “Career Objectives” section and use this space for sections on “Capabilities” and “Key Achievements”.
- The “Professional Experience” section should highlight skills and achievements at each position rather than a listing of responsibilities. State or restate your skills/capabilities as some ATS ignore the “Skills” section.
- Modify your resume for the position sought and keep track of the version you sent.
- Take advantage of the many offerings for resume review

Elevator Pitch

- The elevator pitch is a 30-second statement of the position you seek and the added value you bring to your next employer.
- A powerful elevator pitch conveys your capabilities and achievements. This theme carries forward to your resume, networking and interviews.
 - Consists of: your name, a clear statement of the position sought, a brief statement of your added value, and a short request for advice.
- A job seeker needs at least two different versions, one for a general audience and a second for an industry knowledgeable person.
- **Examples:**
- “I am Amy Smith, and I am seeking a position as a sales executive in an information technology firm. I hunt for and win major deals. I would welcome any advice for my job search.”. (It has a brand statement but could be stronger.)
- “I am Amy Smith, and I am seeking a sales executive position in an information technology firm. I hunt for and win major deals by bridging the gap between executive objectives and technical team capabilities. I would welcome any advice for my job search.” (The 11 extra words give this elevator pitch much more power.)

Networking

- In many industries, networking is by far the largest source of landed jobs. The longer you are in your career, the greater the importance of networking.
- Your first task in job search is starting a list of people you have worked with in the past.

- Many job seekers are hesitant to contact friends and strangers to seek help. You need to overcome this fear as many people are willing to help you.
- Cast a wide net. Seek out people you worked with 5 and 10 years ago. Do not limit yourself to people in the Chicago area.
- Networking is more about listening and learning than selling yourself. Network to:
 - Learn current industry trends
 - Current job skill expectations
 - Gain new name to network with
- You need to prepare for and execute a powerful 20-minute networking meeting, where the person you are meeting with does most of the talking.

Highly recommended book: “The 20-Minute Networking Meeting” – Professional Edition by N. Perez and M. Ballinger. © 2016. This book will give you great insight on planning and executing a powerful networking meeting.

Interview Issues

Your goal is to position the capabilities you can bring to the job. Hiring managers typically know the responsibilities of your past positions. It is critical that you focus on accomplishments and skills.

- In many cases the hiring manager talks to four candidates that appear to have similar skills. The winning candidate is typically the one who demonstrates both skills and accomplishments.
- For many questions, give a concrete example of past behavior. Use S-A-R format:
 - Give the SITUATION you were involved in.
 - Give the ACTION or actions you took to address the situation.
 - Give a specific RESULT of your action.
- Remember: past behavior is the best predictor of future behavior.
- Read your audience: do they want the 60 second answer or the 90 second answer? Be concise.
- Understand potential issues and concerns behind questions.
- Be specific on why you are in job search. Be brief, be believable and bridge to your future success.
- Be prepared to answer the question: “What have you been doing since your last job: good answers include:
 - Upgrading my skills
 - Volunteering
 - Working a survival job

- Understand what makes for a great video interview. Google: “video conference tips”

Partial List of Available Resources

- College placement offices and alumni associations
- Temp agencies/contract work
- Professional organizations (great for networking)
- Libraries – research, job search tools
- Illinois WorkNet Center (Arlington Heights) - www.worknetncc.com/
- Barrington Career Center www.thebarringtoncareercenter.org
- Holy Family Job Support Ministry (Inverness) – www.hfjobsupport.org/
- St. Huberts Job Support (Schaumburg) – www.sainthubert.org/job-networking
- Willow Creek Employment Service (S. Barrington) - www.willowcreekcarecenter.org/

ABOUT EUGENE FLYNN

I spent my career in sales and marketing positions at large and small technology firms, including Lucent Bell Labs. After retiring, I taught half-time at Harper College for seven years. I have led over 75 interview skills workshops at non-profit Barrington Career Center. I have a master's degree in Sociology from NIU and an MBA from the University of Chicago Booth School of Business.