



Job Search Guide

Starting a new job can be exciting and challenging. Almost overnight you have new opportunities to develop skills, meet people, pursue your purpose and grow professionally. **But having a new job usually requires finding a new job, and that process can be stressful.** Nevertheless, there are steps you can take to demystify the process and set yourself up for success.

For Christians, the Job Search Process is an Opportunity to Pray, Trust and Act

Proverbs 3:5-6 says, "Trust in the Lord with all your heart and lean not on your own understanding; in all your ways submit to him, and he will make your paths straight."

A job search is a natural way you can put your faith into action. While networking and applying to jobs, continue to read the Bible and apply it to your life, pray for wisdom and guidance, listen to the counsel of people who know you well, **reflect on how God has gifted and prepared you**, and walk in confidence as God opens and closes doors.



Perfect Your Personal Pitch

Embarking on a job search is the perfect time to practice and polish your 30-second sales pitch. A brief introduction explains why a hiring manager should grant you an interview by highlighting the most important and relevant

aspects of your candidacy: the "something" that sets you apart from the competition. **Focus primarily on what you want to do next and why you're qualified to do it, rather than summarizing your resume.**

“Lead with your destination, explain your backstory in terms of relevant experience or transferrable skills, and connect the dots. And remember that adding a short personal story or vivid illustration makes you memorable.

-Jodi Glickman, corporate trainer and speaker

Know Who You Are and What You Want

Before you launch a job search, be clear on your job search goals and strategy. **You must articulate who you are and the top skills and experiences you want to bring to a future role.** While you may think that flexibility and the willingness to do any kind of work are strengths, employers may see them as liabilities. They do not want to hire someone they must coach into finding the right fit. Instead, they want candidates who know the specific role they want to fill and can prove their qualifications. Therefore, narrow down your search to:

- (1) the specific type of organization you want to work for,
- (2) a shortlist of positions you would be happy to fill, and
- (3) only a few geographic areas.

➤ Do More Than Apply Online

Too many people think that the job search involves sitting in front of your computer, applying for jobs online, and hoping to receive a call. People who take this passive approach rarely hear anything back because **80% of jobs are filled before they are ever posted online.** These never-posted jobs comprise the “hidden job market,” and your strategy should involve finding them.

Hiring managers would rather promote from within, retain an intern for a full-time role, reach out to their personal contacts, or hire the friends of their employees. And if they don't have an open position at the moment, if they like you, they may be willing to create a position or remember you when a current employee leaves.

Bottom line: Do not stop searching and applying for positions on online job boards, but realize that you are competing against the largest proportion of job seekers for the smallest proportion of available jobs. Pair this effort with the more effective job search strategies described below.

1. Develop a Target List of Companies

Keep a list of all the organizations that are doing good work in areas of interest to you, and push yourself to grow your list to 20 to 30 companies. :

- A. Search for the most up-to-date lists of best workplaces or fastest-growing companies.**
- B. Check the employment pages of the companies on your target list often to see if new jobs are posted.**
- C. Read the companies' mission and vision statements to identify aspects of their company culture that you appreciate.**
- D. Utilize LinkedIn to research target companies.**
Follow your target companies on LinkedIn so their

job openings come through your news feed. Also, click on “Pages people also viewed” in the right-hand column of a company's LinkedIn profile to find similar organizations to add to your target list. Search by people within a particular company to uncover any networking potential and to learn what career paths these connections took to get where they are today.

- E. Most importantly, identify people who work at your target companies and find ways to meet them.** Do your friends know people employed there? Have any of your LinkedIn contacts worked there previously? You are more likely to receive an interview if you know an insider.

2. Present Your Most Professional Self

- A. Make sure your application materials show the skills and experience that set you apart.** Refer to the Compass Center toolkit guides on our website for tips on creating excellent application materials. Then ask a Compass Center staff member to review your resume, cover letter and reference sheet so they are error-free.
- B. Attach or upload your resume and cover letter to a job application.** Make sure that your resume highlights your most relevant experience and skills for the position. If possible, refer to the job description when writing your cover letter, addressing the desired qualifications for this role and including information about the company so they know you've done your homework and can explain why you're a good fit.
- C. Create compelling online professional profiles on places like LinkedIn and Handshake, and then maximize them in your job search.** Refer to the Compass Center LinkedIn Profile Guide and the Compass Center Handshake Profile Guide for tips on creating a standout profile and using it effectively in a job search.
- D. Record a new voicemail message on your phone that provides a professional introduction.**
- E. Take down any social media posts that reflect poorly.** Employers are quick to Google their applicants, and many will reject candidates after seeing what they've posted. In contrast, a positive digital footprint can reveal a welcoming personality, professional image, creativity, attention to detail, and strong communication skills.

3. Include as Many People in Your Job Search as Possible

You will need lots of people helping in your job search—and in various ways. Identify people to fill the following roles:

- A. Connectors:** According to Hubspot, networking alone is responsible for filling up to 85% of all jobs. Reach out to everyone you know—whether they work in your desired field or not—to let them know you are looking for a job.
 - i. Ask people in multiple fields and industries to serve as your eyes and ears for job opportunities.** 90% of employers prefer to hire the friends of their trusted employees. Sometimes hiring managers will even award a recruiter's fee to their employees who help them find their next hire.
 - ii. Reach out to all the people you know who are working in your desired field or occupation.** Ask if these contacts would forward your resume and cover letter to a hiring manager and put in a good word for you.
 - iii. Consult the Compass Center Networking Guide for more information on how to build your contacts through networking.**
- B. Decision-makers:** After spreading the word widely that you are looking for a job, zero in on making contact with actual decision-makers.
 - i. Conduct as many informational interviews as your schedule will allow.** For every corporate job posted online, a hiring manager may receive 250 applications—and only extend an interview to 2 to 6 people. A more successful approach involves having informal conversations with decision-makers before a job is ever posted. By conducting informational interviews, you will stick in someone's mind when an open position comes available in their company or field. See the Compass Center Informational Interview Guide for more tips on how to initiate an informational interview.
 - ii. Learn successful job search strategies from decision-makers in your field.** Every company and industry has its own culture, and you will need to adapt your job search approach to fit your industry's protocol. For instance, in academia you will need to submit a curriculum vitae, or CV, in place of a resume. Small, family-owned businesses may never post an open position, whereas governmental agencies may be required to post jobs publicly for a specific amount of time.
 - iii. Ask decision-makers to recommend other employers with whom you can connect.**

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3. Include as Many People in Your Job Search as Possible (cont.)

C. Pacesetters: In the context of a job search, pacesetters are the people you aspire to emulate. They are the ones in professional roles you would love to obtain.

i. Follow and request to connect with your pacesetters on LinkedIn. Take note of their LinkedIn activity, degrees earned and professional journey. If you do not have a mutual contact who can introduce you, then explain that you are growing your network and have found their professional trajectory inspiring. Ask to have an informational interview with them. Do not inquire into a job at this point!

ii. Consider turning pacesetters into connectors. If a job opens up at a pacesetter's organization, ask if he or she would be willing to put in a good word for you and forward your materials to the hiring manager.

D. References: As you apply for jobs, some applications will require that you list or upload your references. Other hiring managers may request a list of your references at a later stage of the application process. Regardless, do the work ahead of time to have a reference sheet ready to submit at a moment's notice.

i. Format your reference sheet to match the header on your cover letter and resume. You will immediately come across as someone who goes the extra mile to make your materials look like a packaged whole.

ii. Receive the permission of your references before listing them. You cannot just type someone's name on a job application or add them to your reference sheet without asking their permission first. They may not appreciate hearing from a hiring manager about your candidacy when they did not even know you were applying for jobs.

iii. Only include references who will provide strong recommendations. If you know your previous boss would have negative things to say about your work performance, find someone else to list in his or her place. Also, always ask your references for the phone number and email address they want you to provide in your applications. They may not want a hiring manager calling their cell phone rather than their work phone.

iv. Provide a "cheat sheet" to everyone you list as a reference. People who have agreed to serve as your references will appreciate a copy of your resume and any reminders of the work or projects you did for them or the classes you took from them (and the grades you received).

v. Identify one or two personal references as needed. A professional reference is someone who knows you in a professional context, perhaps as your job or internship supervisor, professor, or coach. Professional references should be able to speak to your strong work ethic and your top skills and character traits. Personal references may include a friend, pastor or someone who knows you in a social context rather than a professional context. It is fine to provide a personal reference when asked, but these people should not be included on a list of professional references.

E. Accountability partners: These are the people who help you set goals for your job search and ask the hard questions about what progress you've made.

i. Reach out to a Compass Center staff member if you don't have someone to fill this role. They are often willing to meet with students or alumni on a weekly or biweekly basis to review their progress and identify next steps in their search.

ii. Form a job search club with friends or fellow students in your major for increased motivation.

F. Encouragers: These are the critical support people for your job search! Because challenges will inevitably arise—sometimes in the form of rejection emails—you will need friends and family members who can walk alongside you through the difficulties and celebrate with you in the victories.



4. Challenge Yourself to Step Outside Your Comfort Zone

Successful job searchers are usually the ones who take an active approach. Which of these activities are you willing to do to super-charge your job search?

- A. Ask someone in the Compass Center to connect you with members of the Northwestern Network working in your field.** Fellow alumni and friends of Northwestern are happy to assist you in your job search! Also, wear your NWC attire when traveling. You never know when you'll cross paths with people who can help.
- B. Reach out to five new employers each day.** Schedule informational interviews, send a personalized message to someone on LinkedIn, or ask a friend to introduce you to a professional in your field.
- C. Follow up on submitted applications.** If it has been two weeks since you submitted your application materials and you haven't heard anything back, pick up the phone and reach out to the hiring manager. Taking the time to introduce yourself, ensure they received your

materials, and highlight your top skill or experience could be what sets you apart from the competition.

- D. Send inquiry emails to people at your target companies.** Working from your target company list, identify the person at each of these organizations who is most likely to hire you. Then send this person an email with your cover letter and resume attached. Keep the inquiry email brief: address the individual by name, introduce yourself in one or two lines, inquire into the possibility of an internship or job with the organization, refer them to your attached resume and cover letter for additional details, and request an interview. Then follow up with a phone call two weeks later if you don't hear back. Even if no position is currently available, you could express your interest in working there and ask that they keep your materials on file for future positions. If someone recommended that you look into this company, be sure to mention this person's name in the opening of your email.

Sample Inquiry Email

Dear Mr. Hernandez:

I am a Northwestern College student graduating in May with Bachelor of Arts degrees in biology—health professions and Spanish-English translation and interpretation. Joseph Jones, a member of the Northwestern Network, recommended that I look into opportunities at Partners in Community Health as a bilingual family support specialist. I am impressed by your organization's focus on addressing the health needs of our Spanish-speaking community members. While you don't appear to have any open positions currently, I would be grateful if you would keep my attached cover letter and resume on file for future opportunities. These materials elaborate on my educational background in biology, biochemistry and medical laboratory science; the translation and interpretation skills I honed as an interpreter at Sioux Center Health; and my previous volunteer work with underserved and minority populations. I would love to share more about the contributions I could make at Partners in Community Health in an interview or even an informal conversation. Thanks for reading this email and considering whether I might be a welcome addition to your team.

Sincerely,

Rachel Raider

4. Challenge Yourself to Step Outside Your Comfort Zone (cont.)

- E. Attend a job fair and practice your personal pitch with 10 employers.** Career-related events happen regularly on campus and virtually on sites like Handshake.
- F. Apply to jobs for which you're overqualified and underqualified.** It's great when a job description requests the exact experience and education you bring, but it is acceptable to apply for roles that ask for a few more years of experience or an additional degree than you have. If the hiring manager doesn't receive as many candidates as desired, you might be a viable option. Also, if your personality and passion are a perfect fit, then many hiring managers are willing to provide on-the-job training. On the flip side, you may want to apply for some roles for which you feel overqualified, especially if the job could help you get your foot in the door at a target company.
- G. Consider submitting additional job-related information not requested in the job description.** Be sure not to inundate employers with unnecessary materials, but in some cases, employers may appreciate a writing sample or evidence of successful work projects alongside your application. If you have a strong online portfolio, include a link on your resume.
- H. Volunteer to gain experience and build connections in your desired field.** If you need to gain entry-level experience, volunteering is a great way to grow your network and boost your resume. If you'd like to grow your leadership skills, serve on the board of a non-profit or community organization or assume a leadership role with a professional association.
- I. Work for a temporary employment agency to boost your experience while searching for a job.** If you do a good job, people notice. Even if you don't receive a permanent job offer, you've secured valuable references from your supervisor and coworkers.
- J. Strike up conversations with everyone.** This step isn't for the faint of heart, but the more you talk to people at games, after classes, in the waiting room or on planes, the more chances you have to meet someone with decision-making power.

5. Track Your Job Search Goals and Accomplishments

Being organized in your job search will keep you from making errors, like forgetting the name of the person you talked to at a specific company, reaching out to the same person twice, or not remembering if you followed up on an application. Save an updated version of the following lists or spreadsheets:

- A. Target companies:** Make sure your list includes the company name, its location and a link to its employment webpage.
- B. Contacts:** This list should include everyone you know who can open doors for you. For each contact, include a name, job title, phone number and email address. Log details about how you met, dates you reached out, and any scheduled meetings, connections or introductions provided.
- C. Applications or resumes submitted:** This list should help you track all the jobs to which you have applied, as well as any people to whom you have sent your resume. Include the job title applied for (if applicable), company name, contact name and title, and date submitted. You should include at least three additional columns: your follow-up on applications or resumes approximately two weeks after you submitted them, interview requests you received (and the dates/times/locations of those interviews), and thank you notes sent to your interviewers.
- D. Job search websites:** It can be helpful to keep a list of all the websites you use in your job search, especially if you have a different user name and password for each site.

Practice, Keep it Positive, Persevere and Pay it Forward

It can take a while to hear back after applying for jobs and putting your networking contacts to work. Make the most of this time by engaging in the following activities:

1 Practice your interview skills.

For tips on sharing the experience and skills you would bring to a specific company, review the Compass Center Interview Guide 1 (Prepare, Prove & Follow Up) and the Compass Center Interview Guide 2 (Practice). Then take the next important step to practice your interview skills by doing at least one mock interview, if not more, with a Compass Center staff member.

2 Only speak positively about past supervisors.

If asked about a difficult work situation or negative relationship, try to put a positive spin on how you grew from a challenging experience.

3 Don't get discouraged.

Even if you've already received a series of rejections, don't succumb to self-pity. This season will not last forever, and God has a plan for you! Reframe the situation in a positive light, and use any feedback to become a stronger applicant.

4 Strike a balance between confidence and humility.

Don't oversell your experience or abilities, but share boldly about the ways you have prepared for a professional role and the strengths you have to offer.

5 Thank everyone who offered a helping hand.

Sincere appreciation makes a great impression, so send a thank you note to anyone who let you conduct an informational interview, introduced you to a friend or colleague, provided a reference, or interviewed you for a job.

6 Stay in touch.

Make a point of keeping in touch with people before you need their help. Send periodic emails or texts to past faculty members, previous supervisors or mentors so that when you reach out for their assistance, they already feel well-connected. And when you accept a job offer, follow up with them to share the good news!

7 Share your job search wisdom with others.

The day will come when Northwestern students reach out to you for informational interviews or job leads. Remember the help you received, and pay it forward. In fact, go ahead and join the [Northwestern Network](#) today.

Our Creator God designed us for work. While work will never be perfect this side of heaven—and the job search may not be simple or pain-free—God invites us to join in his redeeming work in the world. Our calling is to be courageous and faithful in our pursuit of Christ-centered work for the common good in all industries, fields and locations. Trust God in this process, and view the unknown as an opportunity to learn more about yourself, the God who made you, and your unique place in his world.

