

Tips for Organizing Your Job Search

In today's job market, it is common to submit applications for a number of positions. Many times, it can be weeks or even months before a company gets back to you. It is important that you are organized in order to keep track of your efforts. You want to be prepared when you get a call for an interview, without confusing companies, positions or interview times. The following are tips to help you organize yourself so that you can be more successful in your job search.

1. Designate a clutter- and chaos-free, central location to work on job search.

Whether you have a computer desk or use your kitchen table as a home office, you will be more productive if you have a specific place from which to work. Try to make this space free of books, bills, mail or general junk that piles up. All of that clutter can be distracting, confusing and discouraging. Alternatively, use the Career Center as your temporary space.

2. Develop a system to track your job search.

Utilizing an organizational system in one place can be helpful to easily track and recall all you have been doing. A simple Microsoft Excel spreadsheet or Word table can be an effective way to keep a record of your job applications, resumes, letters and other activities involved in your search. Alternatively, there is a free online option in JibberJobber.com. This site can help you manage, organize and track your job search, and help you follow up on applications and interviews. It does not need to be complicated, but should include key information such as:

- **Company Name**—the name of the organization to which you are applying.
- **Position**—the job title & description for the position.
- **Pay Rate**—if the pay and benefits are given, otherwise express as “not listed” or “DOE” (Depending on Experience).
- **Contact**—Your point of contact at the company; probably the individual addressed in your cover letter.
- **Email**—The email of your point of contact, or a phone number, or both.
- **Date Applied**—When you submitted your application.
- **Application Summary**—What you submitted: a letter, resume, and additional materials, (ie: a portfolio, statement of qualifications, business card or reference list). Include required documents (licenses, credentials, etc.)
- **Referral**— if you found this position through networking, identify the name connecting you to the opportunity.
- **Interview**—When your interview is scheduled.
- **Interviewers**—Keep notes on the names of those people who interviewed you, at each level.
- **Follow-Up**—Did you send a thank you email or letter? If so, indicate here.
- **Status**—Were rejected, offered the job, asked in for a second interview, etc.
- **Next steps**—If there is something you need to do next, list it here with a date by which to get it done.

3. Organize your copies of job descriptions and applications in a binder, file box, or online.

Unfortunately, some companies take months to reply to your application. When they do, you want to know just what you applied for and when. Save a copy of the job description, your resume and the cover letter you sent with the application. Write the date they were sent on the copies so you know when you applied. Rather than keeping piles of your resumes and paperwork around the house, purchase an inexpensive binder or file box to store them all in one place. Organize them by date, by company, or whatever makes sense to you and your individual job search. You can keep track of networking activities in this same way. Again, JibberJobber.com is a great tool and also has a smart phone app for easy access.

4. Save electronic files of your cover letters and specific resumes by company name and date.

It is important that both your resume and cover letter be targeted to each job for which you apply. You also want the hiring manager to be able to find your documents easily. To help keep them straight, save the resume and cover letter files with your first name, last name, the company name and job title in the file name. This way, you will be able to find them easily when it comes time for your interview, and you will help hiring managers organize their files as a bonus.

5. Keep a schedule.

Looking for work can be a full-time job. Do something each day to move forward. Commit to a block of time every day to work on your job search. This can be at home, at the Career Center or out networking. Look back on the day and the week and evaluate the success of your schedule, making changes to the time blocked and/or activities if that seems the right thing to do. Do NOT evaluate daily or weekly success based on emails received or not, interviews offered or not. Do your part diligently and wait for the employers to do theirs. If none come this day or week, don't assume you messed up and get discouraged. If you fear your letters, resumes or applications are flawed somehow, ask for feedback and help. A job center or Career Center is the perfect place for that.

6. Schedule Activities.

It's been said that looking for work can be a full-time job. It helps to map out a schedule for your job search activities so you get done what needs to be done. If you don't set aside specific time for specific tasks, there's a danger that you spend too much time on the internet looking at jobs from one site to another, and not enough time on other activities. Before you know it, the day is gone and you feel frustrated. Try to be disciplined without obsessing over it. Consider having a specific time for:

- Searching for opportunities online;
- Researching companies for your resume, letters, networking and top 10 lists;
- Tailoring your resumes for specific jobs;
- Writing cover letters;
- Following up on applications;
- Perfecting your LinkedIn profile;
- Visiting the Career Center, local job connection groups, or the library;
- Attending free workshops on job search strategies;
- Reaching out to staffing agencies and recruiters;
- Reaching out to professional organizations;
- Attending job fairs;
- Setting up informational interviews;
- Networking and conducting informational interviews;
- Attending local job clubs and networking groups; AND
- Exercising, listening to music, reading a book, or other nurturing activities to balance the work.

7. Pace yourself.

Try to remain calm during your job search. It is easy to get overwhelmed with all that you need to do. Concentrate on one thing at a time as you are doing it. Putting a timeline on your job search will give you focus, but don't put an unreasonable timetable to your efforts. Landing a new job won't happen overnight, and you don't want to get burned out or overly frustrated with the process. You need to be OK with that. Intentionally and reasonably pacing yourself will help. Also, it's important to take care of yourself physically and mentally—so strive to achieve some balance in your life.

8. Get up and out from behind the computer.

Take your job search offline. By recent reports, a relatively small percentage of jobs are landed through online applications. The vast majority, 85% by some accounts, are found through networking. Thus, you need to get out from behind the computer screen and meet people face to face. Informational interviews are a great way to network in a non-threatening environment. Make time for this in your schedule. *(See our Networking/Informational Interview Tip Sheet for help.)*

9. Target 10-15 companies.

Do you know where you want to work? Do you have a list in your head of your dream companies? Put that list on paper and start researching them. Determine the types of jobs they have open. Find people who work at these organizations on LinkedIn or through networking. Find hiring managers in the departments that could use your skills, experience and knowledge. Those are people you want to know. Set up informational interviews with them so they get to know you. They can give you information on the company and may know of open jobs that aren't advertised. You can also gather information that can help tailor your resume and cover letters. *(See our Networking/Informational Interview Tip Sheet for help.)*

10. Take advantage of online tools and apps.

The first place any job searcher turns is usually to the internet. You could search for hours on these sites, or have them search for you. Websites such as CalJobs, Indeed.com and Simply Hired have underappreciated virtual search alert tools that will email you results of your pre-programmed search on a regular basis. There are online project management systems that can help organize your tasks. JibberJobber is an online resource dedicated to helping you organize your job search. Additionally, many of the top job search sites, including CalJOBS and JibberJobber, have free apps so you can take your search "on the go." The website/app called Jobaware allows you to synchronize all your job-search activities. *(See our Job Search Resources Tip Sheet for more suggestions.)*