

Conducting an Effective Job Search

The job search can best be thought of as a sales campaign. You are searching for someone who will buy your “product,” or in other words, hire you. The following is a step-by-step outline of the general process.

Develop Your “Product”

If you consider yourself a “product” that you plan to eventually sell to employers, you will want to keep in mind the four areas that employers consider when evaluating job candidates. These include:

- Experience
- Education
- Skills/Attributes
- Activities

Some of the most common qualifications employers look for include: initiative, experience working on teams, and co-op or summer employment in your field.

Know Your “Product”

You must be knowledgeable about your skills, values and interests before you can convince employers that you fit their profile of the ideal candidate.

The following is a list of basic questions you should be able to answer:

- What skills do you have to offer? What experiences can you present to demonstrate or prove that you have such skills?
- What do you value in work (e.g., variety, good income, flexible hours, etc.)?
- What makes you stand apart from the other applicants?
- What tasks interest you, and why?
- Can you name some of your major accomplishments?

Identify Potential Buyers

Assess the type of employer and position that would suit you then conduct research to identify those that fit your criteria. You may find that you need to narrow or expand your scope depending on the number of employers that fit within your target group.

There are two approaches to the job search: passive and active. In an active approach, you seek to identify openings before they are advertised. In the passive approach, you wait for an employer to express a need or post an opening. While the active approach is the most successful, you should use both.

The Active Approach:

Networking

- Contact all the people you know and let them know that you are looking for a job. Specify the type of position you are seeking and fill them in on your

background and qualifications. A list of possible networking contacts can begin with family, friends, former co-workers/supervisors, professors, members of groups or clubs that you belong to or classmates.

- Rensselaer alumni make valuable contacts. You share a common background. Try to connect with alumni through the Rensselaer Alumni Association or through LinkedIn.
- Professional associations can put you in touch with other people in your field. If you need help identifying a good professional association in your field, ask your contacts who are in that field.
- Informational interviewing is another valuable tool in networking. See the “Informational Interviewing” handout for more information.

Direct Contact with Employers

- Making direct contact with an employer before an actual opening is announced will provide you access to “the hidden job market.” This is the term used to describe the almost 85 percent of positions that are filled without ever being advertised.
- Develop a list of employers to target. A “mass mail” campaign is not recommended. Select employers whose needs match yours and concentrate your efforts on them.
- A follow-up phone call is an important step in this process. Call about one week after you have sent a cover letter and resume to be sure it was received and to ask more questions about positions available.
- You may contact an employer by sending a resume and cover letter, by phoning or by contacting a company by email. Remember that no matter how you send your resume, it should always be accompanied by a cover letter.
- Attend information sessions – usually held the evening prior to a company’s recruiting date, they provide an opportunity to meet employers in an informal setting and learn more about the company and positions that may be available. Be sure to bring copies of your resume with you and ask for an interview.

The Passive Approach:

On-Campus Interviews

Over 300 employers come to campus each year to interview students. To learn more about participating in on-campus interviews, activate your JobLink account and check out our Job Search Workshop.

JobLink/Advertisements

Try looking beyond the usual sources. In addition to newspapers, many professional association journals and newsletters contain listings of open positions. There are also many job listing services on the web as well as specific employer pages which list current job opportunities. The Center for Career and Professional Development lists open positions through JobLink on our web page (<http://www.rpi.edu/dept/cdc/>).

CareerShift

CareerShift is a job search resource available to RPI students. In order to use the service, login to your JobLink account, where you will find a link on the dashboard. Search by key word and/or geographic location for a list of job opportunities from a company's human resource/careers page and other job search engines. Select the position/s you are interested in applying to and apply directly to the individual company.

Employment Agencies

Employment agency representatives work on a commission basis. This contractual arrangement is set up in one of two ways: either the employer pays the fee or the job candidate pays the fee. Be aware that if you, the job seeker, are paying the fee, you are probably paying for some services that you could get for free through CCPD. You are strongly encouraged to work only with agencies where the employer pays the fee. You can look in the Capital District Book of Lists located in the Lounge for a list of local employment agencies as well as in the yellow pages and on the internet.

Career Fairs

There are two major career fairs held on campus each year. Look for announcements on our website, in The Poly, and in our office. NSBE/SHPE sponsors an annual career fair, which is usually held early in the fall semester; The Center for Career and Professional Development coordinates an annual Career Fair early in the spring semester. The School of Architecture also coordinates an Architecture Career Fair each spring. In addition, other departments at Rensselaer, in conjunction with **The Center**, will periodically hold career fairs or

virtual events throughout the year. Do some research ahead of time on the organizations expected to attend so you can concentrate your efforts on a targeted few.

The Sales Pitch

Each and every time you contact an employer, make sure that:

- You send correspondence that it is neat, error-free and professional.
- When speaking on the phone, be polite and professional.
- Make a good first impression on interviews by dressing neatly in a professional, conservative style and color.

Remember that each situation is unique and requires a unique approach. Do not use generic cover letters or provide generic answers to questions. The individualized approach is best.

Also, you must prove through specific, concrete examples that you have the qualifications they seek. Whenever possible, quantify your examples using numbers and percentages.

Closing the Sale

Following through on all leads is essential to an effective job search campaign. Establish a system for tracking job leads and contacts. Failure to do this could mean missed job opportunities.

Send a thank you note within two days of the interview. Be persistent but not annoying in calling to check on job leads. If the person is not there, be sure to leave a clear, understandable message including your phone number.

See everything as an opportunity. If you are rejected for a position, ask for feedback so that you can improve your approach. Also, ask for additional contacts from anyone you meet.

An Added Note

Rejection is inherent in the job search. The effects of this can be minimized by having a realistic view of the job search. The average job search for a professional position takes from six months to a year. Start looking early and don't be too hard on yourself if you don't find a position right away. Consider seeing a counselor in the Center for Career and Professional Development - that's why we're here!