

Executing an Effective Career Search Strategy

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In this sluggish economy that slowly rebounding, looking for a career can be long and stressful. However, career seekers that implement quality methods into their career search strategy will have better results. Methods of an effective career search strategy include applying in person, applying online and networking.

Applying in person is a method that should be included in an effective career search strategy. When applying in person, career seekers should always wear business professional attire, be well groomed, and practice good hygiene. Furthermore, career seekers should be prepared to thoroughly and accurately complete a career application. This includes providing the **CORRECT** name, address, phone number, dates of employment as MM/YYYY – MM/YYYY and supervisor's name for all previous employers. Not knowing or being unable to provide this information is unacceptable and can negatively impact a career seeker's candidacy for employment at the company. Career seekers should know this information (or have it readily available) prior to visiting a company and not be "Googling" companies while trying to complete an application. Lastly, be prepared. Career seekers should have multiple copies of their updated resume (which matches the information listed on the application) as well as come prepared with a pen in hand.

Applying online is an alternative method that should be included in an effective career search strategy. Applying online includes completing applications on a prospective employer's website, emailing a resume and cover letter directly to an employer, and applying on career boards. When completing an application on an employer's website, career seekers should thoroughly and accurately complete the application, answering all questions and completing any assessments. When emailing a resume and cover letter to an employer, send the resume as an attachment, the cover letter as in-message text and place the position of interest in the subject area of the e-mail message unless given other instructions. Some employers do not open attachments, so thoroughly read a career announcement to see if the application instruction states to send the resume as in-message text rather than an attachment (this does not happen often). Lastly, use internet career boards to apply to careers. CareerBuilder (www.careerbuilder.com), NPO (www.npo.net) and Craigslist (www.craigslist.org) are a few that have a reputation for being resourceful.

Networking is perhaps the most important method that should be included in an effective career search strategy. Good places to network include events and mixers hosted by professional associations, alumni associations, professional seminars, community events and career-related events. When career seekers are networking, they should always be professional and not presumptuous. Do not just walk up to anyone and hand that person a resume or go on about not being able to find a career. Instead, career seekers should provide a sound introduction, identify what the person does, exchange contact information and follow-up with an email or phone call (only call if you were given permission to do so). Develop and nurture these relationships. Don't expect something in return right away. Keep in contact with your new contact. There is a lot that goes into networking. Also, don't forget about networking with family and friends – they too can be a valuable resource. Let everyone in your network know you are looking for a career, but don't ask for a career! Use this as an opportunity to explain to others (casually) what you are doing in your career search, what types of positions you are interested in securing and showcasing your skills.

Executing an effective career search strategy will make a career seeker's search for a new career efficient, effective and successful. Developing and executing an effective strategy will decrease the likelihood of a long and stressful career search.