# Searching for the right job

Searching for a job is like shopping for that perfect outfit. You want the right fit—something that matches your personality, flatters your figure, or just works. There is no right or wrong way to conduct a job search. It takes consistency, patience, motivation, and often a little luck. The rest is just plain hard work.

Treat your job search like a job. Make a plan for the day/week. I will call x number of employers to find out about jobs or getting an informational interview, I will send out x number of resumes, I will research trends in my field etc.

Set a schedule you can reasonably stick to, don’t overwhelm yourself or set unrealistic expectations. You might set yourself a daily goal to check your inbox for email responses to applications, visit preferred job sites for new listings. Create a document noting the people and companies you have contacted, any responses, and places and people you want to contact in the future, spreadsheets are good for this kind of data collection and working with them can help with work readiness.

Many local and central government agencies, district health boards, professional services firms, hospitality, retail and large corporates generally have a “vacancy” tab within their website which job seekers can register with. Identify organisations you would like to work for and create an account within their vacancies portal which will alert you to opportunities that come up matching your professional profile, preferred location and job type, this is a really useful tool and can save hours of time trolling through job sites.

# Tools for the search

You will need access to the internet and a working email address, and reliable means of receiving phone calls or texts. Most vacancies today are posted online, and employers prefer to communicate electronically.

For your job search, make sure you have a working email account, but more importantly one you will check frequently. Job related correspondence are time sensitive. Most of the time, an employer will contact you via telephone to set up an interview; however, there are occasions—especially when submitting applications online, when you will need to check email to get confirmation of the application, resubmit if it didn’t go through, or submit further documentation related to the vacancy.

It is critical to ensure that your email address and voice message are professional and appropriate for your age and the impression which you want to project to a potential employer.

Good example for an email address:

John.smith@gmail.com

Good example of a telephone voice message;

“Hello you’ve reached John Smith, I’m not available to take your call right now, please leave your name, number and a brief message and I will return your call as soon as I am able. Thank you”

Social media offers a wealth of online job leads, job assessment sites, and other tools related to employment. First impressions are lasting impressions. This is especially true when dealing with potential employers where you may have 30 seconds or less to make that first impression. This includes face to face interaction, over the telephone, and yes through email or social media. How we present ourselves in these various situations can make the difference between getting an interview and being relegated to the bottom of the CV pile. It may seem unfair, but it is reality: especially now when employers can be extremely picky about who they choose. Employers want the best candidate, professionally and personally.

So, what does all of this have to do with social media? What does what I put on Facebook, Twitter and even my email address and signature have to do with anything? Isn’t what I do in my private life, post in my private life private? The answer is yes and no.

In the world of social media, there is no true privacy. Once you hit the post, Tweet, or send button, it is out there, and will be out there for a very long time.

And yes, employers and other professionals do look at your profile. So, before you start actively job hunting, take stock of your social media presence, and ask the question is there something here I don’t want a potential employer to see or hear?

Some job seekers will set up a separate email address from their personal one to manage job related inquiries. There are many free email services, and the advantage of these is all the job-related correspondence are organized in one central locale. Just remember to check it. If you are an iOS user, you can add separate accounts such as Gmail and Yahoo which will send push notifications to your phone.

When signing email correspondence, less is better. If you have qualifications—MA, MFA, LCSW, or Ph.D. nothing wrong with putting this after your electronic signature, but keep the quotes, jokes etc. For some other time.

You are What You Tweet. Twitter is fun, fast and a great way to immediately follow news and events and publically interact with likeminded individuals. Unless you protect your tweets, anyone can see your Twitter timeline. Employers do look on social media sites. It isn’t hard. A Google of a candidate’s name will easily pull up their Twitter profile, FB picture, Instagram, participation on listservs etc. etc. Employers do look at what people Tweet, retweet, and how one interacts with others. You can also search for certain keywords on Twitter. Remember if you are dissing someone or something it could reflect negatively on you. Be kind. It is alright to disagree with an individual or organization but be professional and try to stay away from flaming others.

Facebook is more private and personal than Twitter. On Facebook, one can control what audience sees one’s posts—public, friends, and even a select group of friends. But there are risks with Facebook as well. Again, once you post something, it is out there, and people can share or copy and paste it, their friends can share it and so on and so on. The best policy is to remember that nothing is private these days and many organisations now employ staff to investigate potential employee’s social media and digital footprint, you don’t want something you posted at 16 years of age to trip you up when you are applying for jobs at 22.

Social media can be extremely helpful when actively seeking employment. It is a great way to get your name out there through services such as Linked in, listservs etc. If you are interested in particular jobs or companies, follow Twitter accounts or like pages related to these jobs or companies. They will notice. Don’t be afraid to strike up a conversation. HR and PR personnel do monitor these accounts and often post jobs before they are advertised on the company website.

# Networking

You may think you don’t know anyone who could possibly help you find a job, get your CV before an employer, help you with interviewing skills etc., but you are wrong. Tell everyone you are looking for a job - friends, family, especially those in the field you are interested in.

You have probably heard that adage—“It’s not what you know, it’s who you know.” This is as true today as ever with an estimated 70% of job seekers obtaining employment through connections, networks, friends and friends and so on. Many jobs aren’t even advertised and having an in with the employer can be to your advantage. A friend, friend of a friend, family member may be able to talk to their hr people, boss or whoever about your qualifications, tell you about soon to be posted vacancies, upcoming retirements, or be able to forward your CV to someone, bypassing the online method or recruitment slush pile. You may still have to do the song and dance routine of applying online and filling out page after page of applications, but at least they might recognize your name and be looking for your CV.

There are also a multitude of career specific professional organizations dedicated to networking and professional development. They are usually membership based, meaning they charge a fee for joining, but many have tiered levels of memberships from those just entering in the field to experienced professionals. They are worth checking out as another opportunity to circulate your CV and yourself.

# Social networks

We discussed a little in the section on social networking how useful such networks can be to a job seeker. Let your FB friends and Twitter followers know you are looking for work and what kind of work you are interested in. You have doubtlessly seen the hashtag #this #that. Hashtag is a word or phrase that groups messages of a similar subject together so they can be easily tracked or searched via the web. The word or phrase is always preceded by the number sign—shift three on your computer keyboard. Users who aren’t following you can track hashtags—such as during a big sporting event like #americascup #blackcaps and interact with you on the subject.

HR people and PR people cruise the net looking for mentions of their companies, products, and issues related to the services their businesses provide. For example, if you are interested in teaching, you might want to have a Tweet that sounds something like this Yay, just graduated! Looking for work as a #ElementarySchoolTeacher #teaching #teacher #education. Follow companies and professionals you admire. Most every company, business, non-profit, council, or government department have some sort of social media presence—Facebook, Twitter, YouTube, Instagram and whatever else is out there now. Even if they don’t follow you back—many have hundreds of thousands of followers—retweet them, comment on their posts or tweets, don’t be afraid to interact with them. This is all part of networking.

# LinkedIn

LinkedIn is a professional networking site where you can create a profile listing your skills, employment history and invite others to add you to their networks. Others can also search this service to find similar interests.

# Cold calling

It can be anything from walking into an office to ask if they are hiring to calling their HR department to inquire about jobs. Can’t you just go on their website; you ask? Yes, that would probably be better for an individual seeking employment. You don’t want to come across as a bother and there is a fine line between pushy and eager. However, there are some advantages to this method. Rather than strolling into a place you want to work, research the company first and send a polite email to the hr person asking if you can come in to discuss what types of jobs might be available in their company. The email could read something like this

Dear Ms. Smith,

I am a marketing specialist with ten years’ experience with fundraising and communications with a non-profit agency. I am very impressed with the work your company does and would love to schedule a time—at your convenience, to come in and learn more about the work you do. I realize at this time you may not have any job openings, but I would like to learn more and possibly be considered for any future vacancies. I have attached a copy of my CV.

I look forward to hearing from you.

Sincerely,

Xenia Y. Zoo.

In this email, you are introducing yourself—like you would in a cover letter. The difference is that you aren’t applying for a specific job. You’re seeking the opportunity to come in and speak with someone in the company. Requesting an information interview allows you the job seeker to learn what is expected from certain jobs, and what working in certain companies might be like. For the employer, hopefully it gives them the opportunity to spread the message about their company and meet an enthusiastic individual who they hopefully will remember when a vacancy does become available. All part of the networking process.

# Job sites, company vacancies and more

Today, you can use most job sites as your one stop place for searching for jobs, uploading, or creating resumes and cover letters, setting up job alerts, and reading an extensive library of articles on everything from interviewing to salary negotiation. The most popular ones in New Zealand seem to be Trade Me and Seek—both very accessible. The NZ government’s job site is jobs.govt.nz which is also very user friendly. All these sites allow setting up job searches that will email you when closely matching jobs are posted.