

JobStart Part 7: Job-Seeking Strategies¹

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Introduction

JobStart is a series of publications that contain information about the skills and attitudes needed to find and maintain employment. This is the seventh publication in the eight-part series outlining the steps required to achieve these goals. The series includes the following:

JobStart Part 1: Getting to Know Yourself (FY345)

JobStart Part 2: The Right Job Just for You (FY346)

JobStart Part 3: Marketing Yourself (FY347)

JobStart Part 4: Preparing Your Résumé (FY348)

JobStart Part 5: Writing the Cover Letter (FY349)

JobStart Part 6: Planning the Interview (FY350)

JobStart Part 7: Job-Seeking Strategies (FY351)

JobStart Part 8: Staying on the Job Once You Are Hired (FY352)

Job-Seeking Strategies

Every day, thousands of jobs are filled in this country; some are advertised and some are not. There is no single method that will guarantee you will find the job you want. You will have to use every method available to you. Just as a fisherman would not set out to sea on a fishing voyage and only take 70 percent of his nets with him, you should not enter into a job search and only use 70 percent of the job-seeking methods available. The job you want may just be hiding in the other 30 percent.

The best way to go about finding a job is to incorporate every resource available to you and organize these methods so that you cover the greatest amount of the job market. This usually begins with networking and works its way to résumés and cover letters, letter writing, using the telephone, using the internet, scanning help-wanted ads, employment agencies, temporary employment services, and filling out applications. You should keep a record of your search to help you stay organized.

Planning is the key to finding the job that is right for you. Preparation is the key to carrying out the plan. This section will help you to prepare the plan and gather the information you will need to fill out an application for employment.

Answering Help Wanted Ads

Help wanted ads can give you an idea about the kinds of jobs that are available in your area and possibly the starting pay range. This is good information for your job search plan. If most of the jobs in your area are service-related rather than industry or agriculture, this information can help you prepare your plan. For example, if you are looking for secretarial work and you live in an area where most of the jobs are in the service industry, then you might focus your search on hospitals, consulting firms, and other businesses that provide services instead of focusing on manufacturing businesses. The help wanted ads can also tell you how much of the job market in your area is government related as well.

It is important to remember that tenacity is a requirement for the person using newspaper want ads to look for a job. Richard Bolles, author of *What Color is Your Parachute? A Practical Manual for Job-Hunters and Career-Changers*, lists several tips for answering ads.

- Keep your answer very brief and to the point.
- If there are requirements in the ad that you don't meet, list something that is related to the requirement.
- Be cautious about stating your salary requirements. Give a range of your expectations or leave this information out of your response. If the ad doesn't call for salary information, do not include it.
- Make sure your letter responds to the ad and your résumé is without error. Check all spelling, addresses, and punctuation. Include a phone number where you can be reached.
- Make your last sentence a request for an interview or a call.

Bolles cautions that answering help wanted ads in the newspaper is a time-consuming process that frequently does not work. As a job hunter, you should be aware of

this, but do not overlook any good possibilities. With preparation, you can make this strategy work for you.

When responding to help wanted ads, you will find that some companies do not reveal their identity or their address. If the ad gives a phone number or a name of the company, always try to make contact by phone to find out the specifics of the opening. What you should try to do is to separate yourself from the rest of the applicants by talking to someone within the organization, tailoring your résumé and cover letter to the position, and making follow-up contacts.

If the ad gives only a post office box to which you must send a résumé and a cover letter, this can be very frustrating because it gives you no way to follow up on your response. Typically, most companies do not acknowledge the receipt of your résumé and cover letter. Another risk is that it might be the company you are currently working for, and you would never know it. This could lead to a very uncomfortable situation. If possible, respond to ads where the company reveals their identity and address. This will allow you to research the company and decide if it is the place for you. When responding to a help wanted ad you should take into consideration the timing of your response. A good rule of thumb here is to time your response to arrive two to four days after the running of the advertisement.

In recent years the use of the internet for online computer searching has become very popular. Career focused sites allow you to put your résumé online as well as find vacancies listed by employers. If you put your résumé online, be sure to exclude any information such as Social Security number, driver's license number, etc., that can be used by an unscrupulous person interested in his/her personal gain at your cost. Although companies have a presence on the internet, some are reluctant to list job openings. Finally, the most frequent use of the internet for job searching is the contacts you will make through bulletin boards, chat sessions, and career counseling and general information about promising companies.

Employment Agencies

When going through job listings, you will find that a good number of positions are advertised by employment agencies. An employment agency can save a company time and money by handling all the preliminary duties that are involved in the hiring process, such as advertising, sorting through hundreds of letters and résumés, conducting screening interviews, and arranging employment interviews. In fact, many businesses pay for the services of these employment agencies.

Employment agencies can benefit you, the job seeker, as well. They can save you time if you begin using them at the beginning of your search. They usually represent many

companies that use them exclusively in the hiring process, thus exposing you to more openings. They can get you quick interviews and help coach you on what to say and do at the interview. Another advantage is that they keep your application on file, which means you don't have to fill out dozens of applications for the many openings that are available.

Most employment agencies are free, meaning that their fees are paid by the employer. However, some do require that the applicant pay a fee, either due before services are rendered or as a portion of the first couple of months' salary.

Employment agencies also have counselors that can give you personal attention with your résumé and cover letter. These counselors usually work on a commission basis and are paid by the number of positions that they fill, so you should be cautious of being talked into a position that may not be suited to you.

If an employment agency asks you to sign a contract, be very cautious about signing any document that you have not read thoroughly and completely understand. If you sign a contract, it becomes binding, and this may not be what you really want. Read it all, especially the fine print, and if you do not understand and accept every word of it, don't sign.

The way to find the agencies in your area is to either find them in the help wanted section or to look them up in the yellow pages. If at all possible, get some information about the agency before using them. Ask friends or employers that might have used them before. Call the agency and get more information about their success rate in your field.

If you are going to use an employment agency, it makes good sense to use them at the beginning of your search, especially if they do not charge a fee. It can save you countless hours of knocking on doors in search of work.

It should be mentioned that every state has its own public employment agencies or services. They are usually operated by the State Department of Labor and are always free. Most are located in or near the Unemployment Compensation Office and offer most of the services that private agencies provide. They have Employment Counselors, massive job listings—both government and private—and they offer vocational testing services. Veterans of the military can usually receive preferential treatment in these offices.

Once you have located an agency you feel will represent your employment needs, follow up with them on a frequent basis. Do not assume that they will necessarily think of you whenever a job comes across their desk. Call at least once a week. Agencies deal with many people and some of these people will want the same job you do.

Temporary Employment Agencies

One of the biggest trends in any industry is the use of temporary employment agencies. These agencies have been growing at a phenomenal rate for the last fifteen years, and as companies look for ways to cut costs, they are turning more and more to these agencies. Temporary agencies provide such services to the employer as screening and doing background checks on employees, providing training when needed, and preparing employees for the work environment associated with the company.

There are many instances when a temporary job will lead to a permanent one. If you go into a company as a temporary employee and show the manager or supervisor that you are a capable and professional worker, it is good cause for them to hire you when a permanent opening arrives. Indeed, many companies use the temporary employee process as a way to find new permanent employees.

The temporary agency can also assist you in many other ways. By offering you a variety of work environments, it can help you expand your network, while at the same time giving you the opportunity to try out different companies to see if they are suitable for you.

Temporary employment agencies used to focus primarily on clerical and secretarial positions, but today these agencies offer positions in everything from drafting, cooking, facility maintenance, and nursing to computer technology and interim executive management. The assignments can vary greatly.

The single most important thing to keep in mind when working for a temporary employment agency is that it is not a permanent set-up, unless you want it to be. If you get an assignment that really does not suit you, ask to be reassigned. You can make contacts with the job market through your assignments that you would never have had the opportunity to do otherwise.

If you work with an employment agency for temporary services, you become an employee of the agency, not the company you are working for. This means that there is no up-front fee for a temporary job. It also means that the company may choose to employ someone else when the job opening becomes permanent. Look at these kinds of employment as opportunities to learn more about a certain job or to supplement your income while you are looking for a permanent job. Keep in mind that you can earn money and gain experience while searching for a permanent job.

Employment Scams

Unfortunately, mixed in with the many legitimate job opportunities that are advertised every day are those advertisements that make false claims or are just gimmicks created to swindle you out of your hard-earned money.

These advertisements offer everything from privileged job information to lists of hidden federal jobs. Some of them offer high paying jobs for little or no work that you can conduct in your home. The best thing to do when you encounter an advertisement that claims to offer something extraordinary is to keep in mind that rarely do these offers ever live up to expectations. These advertisers will promise you the world for a small fee but typically produce little real value.

Other scams involve offers of huge amounts of money for minimal work at home. When encountering these types of claims, you should ask questions about how, when, and at what rate you will be paid. You should also be leery of commissions for recruiting other persons into the program; these typically indicate some sort of pyramid scheme.

You should always get all promises in writing when dealing with such a claim. You should also inquire about a refund if you are unsatisfied with the program. Check out the company with your state agencies that investigate such scams. In Florida you can call (800) 435-7352 to reach the Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services in Tallahassee.

In general, you should always be on the lookout for advertisers that use extraordinary claims and offers to get your attention and then use the hard sell to get you to pay for something that won't be delivered, or pay for something that you could have gotten free anyway.

The Employment Application

The employment application is much like the résumé in that it gives the employer a picture of your abilities and accomplishments, but, unlike the résumé, the information that goes on the application is determined by the employer. It is a better tool for employers to use to compare applicants against each other, and it allows employers to ask questions to get the information you normally wouldn't put on a résumé.

The employment application is a very important step in the hiring process; it could determine whether you win the job or not. You should always be neat and accurate, and fill out the sections of the application as completely as possible. When making in-person contacts you should always carry a sample application already completed, just in the case the employer requires you to complete the application at the place of business. Also, having a completed sample application will save you from having to look up dates,

addresses, phone numbers, and other information every time you are asked to complete an application. A sample application is shown below. Fill it out and keep it in your file for future reference when you fill out an application for a real job.

Remember that if you are given the application to take home, it is best if you can type in the information. If this is not possible, be as neat as you can with a black or blue pen.

Sample Employment Application

Date _____ Social Security Number _____

Name _____ Last _____ First _____ Middle Initial _____

Street Address _____ City _____ State _____ Zip _____

Phone _____ Own Home _____ Rent _____ Board _____

Are you related to anyone within the company? _____ Name _____

Position Desired _____ Date you can start _____ Salary _____

Are you presently employed? _____ May we contact that employer? _____

Have you applied to this company before? _____ Where? _____ When? _____

Middle School Attended _____

Address _____

Years attended _____ Date Graduated _____

Subjects studied _____

High School Attended _____

Address _____

Years attended _____ Date Graduated _____

Subjects studied _____

College Attended _____

Address _____

Years attended _____ Date Graduated _____

Subjects studied _____

Other _____

Address _____

Years attended _____ Date Graduated _____

Subjects studied _____

What foreign languages do you speak fluently? _____

In what activities or clubs do you participate? _____

List below your former employers, starting with your most recent or current employer.

Dates: From _____ To _____

Name _____

Address _____

Salary _____ Position _____

Reason for leaving _____

Dates: From _____ To _____

Name _____

Address _____

Salary _____ Position _____

Reason for leaving _____

Dates: From _____ To _____

Name _____

Address _____

Salary _____ Position _____

Reason for leaving _____

Dates: From _____ To _____

Name _____

Address _____

Salary _____ Position _____

Reason for leaving _____

References

Name _____

Address _____

Business _____

Years Known _____ Phone _____

Name _____

Address _____

Business _____

Years Known _____ Phone _____

Name _____

Address _____

Business _____

Years Known _____ Phone _____

List any licenses and their numbers below. _____

List any special skills you might have that can be used in your work. _____

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