INTRODUCTION

The job search is one of the most personal and most nerve-racking activities that we face in our professional adult lives. For Americans the average employee tenure at an organization according to the Bureau of Labor Statistics is 4.6 years.1 If you have not been in the job market since then, a lot has changed, and that is the exact reason I put together this job search guide in its first form three years ago with over 5,000 downloads strong!

My goal for this free job search guide isn’t to replace a resume writer, career coach or outplacement service. Whether you use services such as the aforementioned really depend on your job seeker’s comfort level with technology, marketing and personal/professional networking.

In my corporate role as a human resources director I interviewed and hired thousands of job candidates over the course of my career as well as had the unfortunate task of laying off a number of employees. The job of hiring, selecting talent and delivering the message of a workplace termination or reduction in force was part of my job. Sometimes I delivered good news and other times I did not. It went along with the job of being in human resources.

One of my biggest frustrations working in the human resources field as well as being a hiring manager was that I was not able to provide job seekers any suggestions or recommendations to help them get their next job. Being a job seeker myself in the past, there is nothing more frustrating then not wanting but needing a job and not have a plan to improve for the next round of interviews. Feedback good or bad is crucial in order to improve and learn from your mistakes. Feedback is also something that most hiring managers don’t provide. In 2006 I went so far as voice recording my own interviews.

I fundamentally believe that people want feedback to improve especially when it comes to finding a job. I started Blogging4Jobs and Secrets of the Job Hunt as resources for job seekers, HR, hiring managers, and recruiters. The way in which we do business, network and build relationships is changing nearly as fast as the technology and tools that help job seekers.

For this guide, I combined a number of popular blogs, templates and best practices to give you, the reader, a jumping off point for your own job search wherever it may lead.
The key to jump starting your job search is starting six to eight months before your job search actually begins. In doing so you’re able to build relationships, attend business networking events and create a solid personal brand and reputation to stand out when applying for a job opening at prospective companies. Is the company billed per employee for the software?

Fine-tune your marketing materials like your resume, cover letter, and social media profiles. Recruiters and hiring managers are increasingly going online to source candidates. They’re using background checking tools as a way of qualifying job seekers prior to their job offer by visiting social profiles like Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn, blogs, and industry specific sites and communities.

The job search is a long-term strategy where job seekers ideally begin planning for their exit by starting to marketing themselves 6 to 8 months before your actual job search begins. I can’t say this enough.

The key to an effective job search is planning, building trust, contacts and connections before your job search begins. This makes the physical act of the job search less work in the short term because of the amount of planning and preparing before you even apply for your first job.

Perspective is extremely important when planning your overall job search strategy. Research tells us that 1,000 candidates will view an online job opening with 200 actually applying for the job and only 4-6 will receive interviews before a single candidate is offered and accept the job offer extended.2

Since 80% of jobs are unadvertised professional networking should be your number one job search priority. Professional business cards can leave a lasting impression especially for in person events and those hiring managers who value in person networking versus just online or social networking. For under $25.00 you can visit an office supply store and have professional looking business cards made quickly.
Don’t forget to include your professional blog or LinkedIn profile on your business cards. Keep business cards in your car, purse and suit pocket as every in person interaction is a potential business networking opportunity. I’ve recruited candidates especially nearly everywhere from the local Chamber of Commerce networking events; birthday parties to the Wendy’s drive thru.

SOCIAL MEDIA CHANGES THE JOB SEARCH GAME

Today, over 92 percent of recruiters use social media as part of their recruiting and hiring.³ Forty-nine percent of recruiters surveyed said that social media improved their applicant quality. Social media is a job search and hiring game changer that is offers job seekers not only a way to connect with company and recruiters directly but to also demonstrate their expertise and build a personal brand.

This means using tools like a blog, forums, Twitter, LinkedIn and Quora to connect with professionals and demonstrate your experience and expertise. Doing so effectively takes planning, strategy and a great deal of effort that goes well beyond the 45 minutes on average it take as to complete an online job application.

BLOGGING AS A PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT & MARKETING TOOL

Blogging is a great tool to demonstrate your knowledge in a subject, build a community, and market yourself for current and future opportunities. Your blog is a living resume that goes beyond the standard online application or two-page resume you include when you apply for a job. Blogs demonstrate your expertise, interest and your ability to communicate whether it’s a written or video blog.

While there are some experts who believe a blog is not a great resource for job seekers to obtain a job, I disagree.⁴ Your blog serves as an opportunity to meet hiring managers by serving as a member of industry media. I have successfully used my blog to attend conferences, networking events and subsequently reach out to hiring managers and CEOs to interview them for an article on my own website or other online publication. Who doesn’t like good old-fashioned media attention to get you, some face-to-face time with a company business leader and possibly hiring manager?
Build relationships and continuously be marketing yourself for that rainy day when you need them. You are only as good as the contacts, relationships and networks you keep. This means constantly working to maintain relationships and building new contacts to help you for when you transition into a new role, position or start a job search. Never stop marketing yourself because as professionals, we are always in the job market.

Websites like Facebook, LinkedIn, Eventbrite, and Meetup.com provide a listing of often free networking events around your metro area. Commit to connecting to 2 people by phone and 2 people for in person meet ups like coffee or attending professional networking events each and every week starting six to eight months before you begin your active job search. Don’t forget to connect with those same individuals you have met on LinkedIn. I also recommend following up again with a personal hand written thank you note as well as a follow up email to truly stand out and make a lasting impression.

Because of the unpredictability when it comes to our employers as well as the economy, it’s safe to say that we should always be working towards and planning for our next job. The planning, strategy and work should really never end which makes creating a strategy and personal brand extremely important for your professional career, which is likely to span 20-40 plus years.

Aside from your business cards, blogs and social media profiles you will need a series of marketing documents in order present yourself as a qualified candidate for job openings. Employers expect that job seekers have a number of marketing documents at their disposal to showcase their skills and qualifications effectively in addition to the standard job application, which includes a resume and cover letter. I’ve included two templates to guide you in developing your own.
<<Your page margins so be no smaller than 1 inch. Your font should match your resume and be 12 pt.>>

Your Street Address
City, State xxxxx
Date

<<Hit enter 4 times after date and then include the following information.>>

Hiring Manager Name
Company Name
Company Street Address
City, State xxxxx

Dear Ms. or Mr. Smith, <<Use the name or Director of Human Resources.>>

I am interested in being considered for the position of _________. I have _____ years of experience in the areas of ________, ________, and ________ with an interest in _________. Explain your recent relocation or job gaps here or other information not covered in your resume.

List your first qualification-the position you were in, the company, and for example, how you grew sales by 15% in 2005 by focusing on specialized sales training for your team, restructuring incentive programs, and building a strategic marketing plan for each geographic location. Try to use work examples that are not included in the resume. No need to repeat and waste the Hiring Manager’s valuable time.

List your second qualification following the same setup for qualification number 1.

List qualification number 3 also using the same format.

Your final paragraph should include your strong interest in the position, recap the qualifications you listed above (List a total of 3 qualifications) along with a passion for ________ (List fourth qualification here). Please contact me at xxx-xxx-xxxx at your earliest convenience to set up an interview to learn more about the __________ position. I look forward to meeting with you.

Sincerely,

Your signed name <<Hit enter two times after this>>

Your typed name first and last
YOUR FULL NAME
2122 YOUR STREET, CITY, STATE 12345
PHONE: 918-867-5309
EMAIL: FIRSTNAME.LASTNAME@EMAIL.COM
WEBSITE URL OR LINKED IN PROFILE ADDRESS

QUALIFICATIONS

• 3-5 bulleted list of qualifications go here.
• Experienced in quality one and quality two.
• Make sure to include common keywords and specific qualifications listed in job description.
• Include years of experience and special areas of expertise.
• Use action words like experienced, skilled, proficient, focused, and strong to describe your skill.

WORK EXPERIENCE

Your Most Recent Job Title. Company Name. City, State. Month/Year–Present.
List a short description of your responsibilities and what you did. This should be no more than 2-3 sentences and include a short list of your position areas of expertise.
• List 3-4 specific achievements below. When possible focus on numbers like increased sales by 45% in 2010
• Include targeted keywords in this area as well to describe your position highlights.
• Less is more. Use bullets to draw more attention to your highlighted skills.

Your Next Most Recent Job Title. Company Name. City, State. Month/Year–Month/Year.
List a short description of your responsibilities and what you did. This should be no more than 2-3 sentences and include a short list of your position areas of expertise.
• List 3-4 specific achievements below. When possible focus on numbers like increased sales by 45% in 2010
• Include targeted keywords in this area as well to describe your position highlights.
• Less is more. Use bullets to draw more attention to your highlighted skills.

Your Next Recent Job Title. Company Name. City, State. Month/Year–Month/Year.
List the 3-4 for most recent jobs and responsibilities you had. If you have had many jobs in a short time period, use a condensed version.
• List 3-4 specific achievements below. When possible focus on numbers like increased sales by 45% in 2010
• Include targeted keywords in this area as well to describe your position highlights.
• Less is more. Use bullets to draw more attention to your highlighted skills.
Least Recent Job Title. Company Name. City, State. Month/Year-Month/Year.

<<List jobs and titles to show you do not have work experience gap or to provide additional experience. Explain this area in your cover letter if necessary>>

EDUCATION

Bachelors Degree in Business Administration. University, College, or Technical School Name. City, State. (List the most recent education or prominent)

Add any additional training you have had in the above format. Think about Six Sigma Training, a corporate customer service program, or vo-tech class that is applicable to the position you are applying for.

<<Your resume should be no more than 2 pages long. Only provide references if requested in the application or by the hiring manager. You will list these on a separate sheet in the same format.>>

<<Remember, white space and bullets are your friend. Stick to traditional but different fonts to stand out like Arial. Avoid Times New Roman. Make sure your margins are no smaller than 1 inch. >>