

Stuck?

1. Focus on your selling points: why employer should hire you, what you like to do, what you do well, what you want to learn.
2. Look for “I can do that” ads. Create a list of “I can do that” statements. Focus on your past results, focus on employer needs.
3. Focus on one position in one target industry:
e.g. “Events coordinator for chamber of commerce in NE area”
“Online researcher for law firm specializing in patents.”
“Auditor for health related nonprofit organization in _____ County.”
4. Develop a list of targeted employers; write a keyword list describing your target industry and search for companies that match your focus.
5. Use your network: tell people what you need. Seek advice, leads, information, and referrals.
6. Networking for introverts: role play, practice with friends; create a structured plan and stick to it, develop a script, make calls when your energy is highest, take time out to replenish yourself.

Tips for a tough Market

1. Remember that volunteering for community projects is an excellent means of networking. You may be working next to a hiring manager from one of your target employers while working on a Habitat for Humanity construction site.
2. Contact the Alumni Association to see how they can help you meet people in your field.
3. Investigate the organizations in your city for young professionals.
4. Always write targeted cover letters. Never send generic letters. Be sure to relate your qualifications to the specific opening in which you are interested.
5. Explore opportunities in non-profit organizations. Often their positions mirror those in businesses—they just have different titles.

What to Do When Nothing Happens

1. Re-examine and revise your resume.
 - Does my resume focus on a specific job or career path?" (You can't hit a target you don't aim at. Revise or remove anything that doesn't prove you're the best choice for the exact job you want.)
 - Does my resume contain errors in grammar, spelling, etc.?" (When in doubt, show your resume to at least two friends for proofreading.)
 - Is my resume concise and to the point?" (You won't bore anyone into hiring you. Limit yourself to two pages of tightly focused text.)
2. Redouble your efforts. Try to talk to at least three people every day about your job search, and ask them to pass your name along to anyone who might be able to help.

Questions to Ask Yourself

Where else can I apply my skills?
Am I expanding my search?
Do people think of me first?
Will people remember me?

1) Where else can I apply my skills?

If your industry is in trouble now, don't sit around waiting for things to improve. Transfer your skills to another industry. If you performed marketing duties in the construction industry, try seeking a marketing-related position in health care administration, which has added jobs recently. If your small employer is cutting the hours of its sales staff, look at competitors that could benefit from your expertise. If your airline is laying off, shift your focus to an opportunity in tourism PR or hotel concierge services. The idea is to think of at least three to five ways to apply what you know to a totally new line of work and then go after them.

2) Am I expanding my search? Even though one or two job postings might scream your name, do not rely on too few applications. You need many, many leads because you never know which ones will pan out. Even if one opportunity looks promising, don't put your search on hold until you receive a firm offer. Apply to positions on your own, post resumes on multiple job boards, and register with employment agencies in your area. Remember, the agencies don't work for you; they work for the company that's paying them for the best find.

3) Do people think of me first?

Make a list of the people who know that you're looking for work then, make a list of the people who should know that you're looking. That second list should be your primary focus because it should include decision-makers at the employers you're targeting. Make sure they know who you are. You can accomplish this through internal referrals, alumni contacts, professional associations, industry blogs, online social networks(LinkedIn), local career fairs, peers within the same field, and even old-fashioned cold calling.

Am I ready to interview?
Do I need the perfect job?
Do I only depend on the web?

4) Will people remember me?

Standing out from the crowd in a positive way will improve your chances for being considered. Skip the clown suit or silly gimmick. Take a look at virtualcv.com to see if that approach might work for you, with its colorful, dynamic web resume format. Photos and reference letters can help. Don't wait to be asked—be proactive about producing something that's neat and brings your passion, your personality and your professional skills to life.

5) Am I ready to interview? In the past, you might have interviewed with one or two people and gotten an immediate offer. Today, you should expect to go through more interviews with more people than ever before. Treat each one as if it's the most important because even one person in the process can ruin your chances by raising doubts about your candidacy. Be nice to secretaries! They report their impressions of you to the boss. Practice every possible question you think you may be asked by using a mock interview, and research the employer and its competition thoroughly.

6) Do I need the perfect job?

Don't hold out for the perfect opportunity if it means passing up one that could work well for you right now. Freelance or contract work could get your foot in the door. You can also negotiate working from home part of the time. Having some money coming in and preventing a gap in your work history are important benefits by themselves.

7) Do I only depend on the web? You may find yourself frustrated from submitting dozens and dozens of resumes online—and getting no response. Don't rely on applying online and waiting for the phone to ring. Cold call to find out who the decision-maker is and then use all of your connections, and make new ones, to figure out how to get your name in front of that person. Be ready to make a smart, strong, case for why you deserve to be considered for that role, that is, be ready to answer the question “Tell me about yourself.” before it is even asked.