



WMRC

JOB SEARCH STRATEGIES

Useful strategies to help you find your dream job

- 1 Planning your job search
- 2 Engaging job search channels
- 3 Staying positive and motivated

1

Planning your job search

Finding a job is an important mission which deserves careful planning. Instead of jumping head on to any job opportunity that comes along, you would help yourself more by taking a step back and evaluating your priorities in your job search.

1. Start by asking yourself what is your Dream Job?

Is there a role you have always thought of doing; one that you aspires to become? All of us have childhood ambition to grow up and become somebody. Some aspires to be a physician, a lawyer, or a banker and as we grow older, it is natural that our priorities shift and our interests change.

The reason for that is because the experiences we have as we progressed from childhood to adolescence and to adulthood constantly shape our views of ourselves and the world we live in. Depending on our exposures and influences, we began to develop interests in particular areas and from the education and training we receive, we start to acquire skills pertaining to those areas we chose to focus our minds and energies on.

A child who aspires to be a physician could grow up to become an accountant, just as someone who aspires to be an accountant could end up as an entrepreneur.

The decisions that we make on our career also depend to a great extent, how economically attractive our chosen field is. In Asia where practicality is a virtue, it is not uncommon for someone to give up his childhood interests to pursue a more lucrative career in other areas.

2. Know what you can offer to secure your Dream Job

As you begin to accumulate skills and experience in your desired career field, you will find yourself moving closer and closer to getting your Dream Job.

Most professional jobs require someone with a basic degree and some may require additional qualifications which are specific to the industry or job function. As you progress to more senior roles, your soft skills and managerial experience become key considerations as you will be utilizing more of those skills, compared to the more technical skills you use in the early part of your career.

As you research on your Dream Job, you should carefully scrutinize the requisites for the role and weigh your own skills and experience to ascertain how well you can contribute to the role.

1

Planning your job search

It is much easier to contribute to a role which you are already familiar with or have prior experience in and if you have done the same role previously with another organization, there is a high chance you will do well in it.

3. As much as possible, resign only after you have secured a new job offer

As you progress in your job search, you will undoubtedly be tempted to hand in that resignation letter especially when you are totally frustrated with your current job or boss.

Other reasons why you would resign before getting a new job could be wanting to have more time to focus on your job search; wanting to take a break from a tiring work routine; and being very confident of securing a new job offer quickly due to favorable market conditions or scarcity of your skills/ experience.

Whatever reasons you may have for wanting to resign early, it is advisable to consider your financial commitments before handing in the letter. Competition for jobs is becoming keener and as you become more experienced, the number of senior roles available in the job market becomes fewer.

Even if you are currently in the job selection process, it could take weeks or sometimes months for you to clear all the interview rounds before getting the final offer. Hence, you need to ensure you are able to cope financially during the period between your resignation and receiving your new pay check.

Another practical consideration is you will have less bargaining power if you have already resigned from your current job, when negotiating for a new job offer.

Employers usually do not take advantage to pay an unemployed person less than what he deserves, but it is not uncommon to see an unemployed candidate accepting a salary offer that is on the lower range for a job role.

Human psychology is such that a potential loss of a job offer is viewed more devastating when you are unemployed rather than employed, as the opportunity cost of losing the job offer is much greater in the former state.

Hence, you will less likely to want to negotiate on the salary offer compared to someone who has a job and does not have as high opportunity cost as you do, as he can afford to wait for a job offer while still holding on to his current role.

1

Planning your job search

4. Network extensively and get close to the hiring managers

Hiring decisions are typically made in companies by people who have both the need and the authority to approve hiring. Every company works and approaches hiring differently. Sometimes, you will find the HR Manager taking an active role in presenting a hiring need and approving it. In other firms, the HR Manager takes a backseat, taking on a supporting role rather than being a main driver of hiring decisions.

Whatever the approach, it is important to identify who the hiring manager is for a job role and plan your job search such that it consistently gets you closer to the attention of the hiring manager.

You should speak with as many people as you can, who could get you closer to the hiring manager. It could be an ex-colleague, an ex-classmate, or a relative working in the firm of interest. It could also be an executive recruiter whom you have worked with in the past or known to you as being trustworthy and professional.

The idea is to extend your 'tentacles' to get you maximum reach so that you can be under the radar screen of the hiring manager.

Once you become one of those in the shortlist, your chances of success increase rapidly as you are no longer one of the many unknown names in the pool of applicants.

In your effort to network, do consider the amount of confidentiality you want in your job search. It is advisable not to 'float' your CV around as you never know where it could surface – the last thing you want is to have your CV appear on your supervisor's table. Not only is it a bad surprise for your boss, it also reflects badly on you in front of your boss.

If you are concerned that your job search would be unfavorably deemed in your organization and could have adverse consequences on your current position, you should be fully discreet about your job search and only work with people whom you can trust.

However, if your organization and immediate superior are aware and supportive of your plans, and you want to quickly gather as much traction in your job search as possible, you will be less concerned about confidentiality and might even openly deposit your CV in the various job search portals with the hope of soliciting phone calls from prospective employers or executive recruiters.

You would however, still want to practice some level of discretion to prevent embarrassing situations or be inundated with calls from unintended parties.

2

Engaging job search channels

With the explosion of media reach and the proliferation of the Internet over the last ten years, job seekers can engage a great variety of job search channels to get the results they want. Every channel however has its pros and cons and depending on the job role you are seeking, certain channels can be more effective and superior compared to others.

We have outlined here five key job search channels which you would find useful.

1. Print media

A popular channel among job seekers as it is widely available and is a relatively low-cost, print media includes newspapers, magazines, trade publications, etc.

In the case of newspapers, the Career section typically offers a wide variety of job openings available in a diverse mix of industries and sectors. Besides job advertisements, newspapers often feature editorials on jobs and career management tips which are very helpful in your job search.

Magazines and trade publications have similar attributes as newspapers though they are often more targeted and could feature prominent movers and shakers in the industry which would be useful information for any job seeker.

Although a popular job search channel, print media suffers from a lack of focus and a flood of competition from other job seekers. Employers can receive hundreds of CVs from placing a job advertisement on a mass publication and your application would be just one out of the several hundreds, which might not even get past the HR executive's table.

It is not that the HR executive is not doing his job. It is just that print media job advertisements typically invite high hit rates and applications, requiring a great amount of time and effort to sieve through the heaps of CV letters. With that, it is not surprising that good CVs or profiles could sometimes be missed.

2. Internet job portals and career websites

In recent years, Internet based job postings are gaining wide popularity as professionals become more savvy with web based technology and applications.

With the proliferation of personal digital assistants (PDAs) and Blackberries, job seekers enjoy 24x7 access to job postings in websites which could include specialized job portals such as www.jobsdb.com and www.efinancialcareers.com as well as career websites of hiring companies and recruitment firms.



WMRC

2

Engaging job search channels

Web users love online jobs because of the convenience and interactivity they get – by keying in a search criteria, you would be presented with your desired job opportunities. Furthermore, most websites offer automated job agents that send you periodical emails on suitable job opportunities.

Online job search engines also make job searches across geographies easy, as most of them feature job postings in various countries. If you're aspiring for an overseas job, they are a good source of opportunities in those countries you wish to relocate.

The main disadvantage of online job portals is the lack of exclusivity and the potential breach of personal information. Job portals typically collect your personal information and job history, which are stored in their databases. Cyber crimes have been known to occur whereby such confidential information is divulged unknowingly to undesirable parties without permission from their owners.

Although recent crackdowns have resulted in tighter web security, posting your CV online still runs the risk of exposing your identity to undesirable visitors who happen to browse the website for information.

3. Contacts and job referrals

Establishing good contacts is a great way of inching yourself closer to the hiring manager as we have discussed in the section above.

Job seekers nowadays are relying more and more on word-of-mouth to understand more about prospective employers and their work cultures. Employers themselves are using internal referrals as they perceive strong benefits for having a staff recommend someone he knows for a job role.

However, building up a good network of contacts does take time and internal referrals could suffer from a potential conflict of interest between the internal staff and the organization. Employers typically reward their staff for putting up a successful candidate for a role, and at times, the rewards could be attractive enough to distract them from their main work.

Employers realized they cannot overly rely on internal staff for candidates as it is after all not their main task to find good candidates.

Another consideration pertains to job seekers. They might feel obligated to accept a role or to stay on in an unsuitable role, if their objective is to save face or protect their friend's interest in the company.

2

Engaging job search channels

4. Self-initiated calls or write-ins

You might come across occasions where the job opportunity is just so attractive that you decide to take personal action to make things happen. You might have heard of a potential job opportunity through a friend working inside the firm, or you just feel the urge to introduce yourself to a particular firm which you have been an avid fan of.

Self-initiated calls or write-ins are not common but they can be a very effective channel for job search, especially if you are very sure and clear about what you want to get out of it.

Taking personal action to make things happen shows you have a high level of initiative and confidence, and it also signals to prospective employers your seriousness in wanting to work for them.

If you have drafted a good CV and have presented yourself well during your introductory calls, you stand a very high chance of being invited for an exploratory meeting. Do be well prepared for this meeting, however, as the interviewer will expect you to be different from other candidates and you must have a good story to tell why you have chosen this route of selling yourself.

The outcome is 50:50 and assuming you perform very well in the interviews, your job offer would still much depend on whether there is a real need within the organization for your talent.

Let's face it – there is no solid job role advertised and the hiring need in this case is unknown. If you're lucky, they could come back to you after considering how you could fit into the existing team and offer you a role.

If there is no ready role for you and you still very much like to work for them, it is advisable to indicate your openness and flexibility to wait for a future opportunity to join them.

In any case, you would have created a strong impact and left an impression on the interviewer so there is a high chance you could be called back for a more serious discussion if a vacancy arises.

2

Engaging job search channels

5. Engaging executive recruiters in your job search

Most professionals know of executive recruiters but not all are fully aware of their role or sure of how to work with them in the job search process.

Working with executive recruiters should form a key part of your job search strategy as they open doors for you and provide their service free of charge to you.

Executive recruiters, such as WMRC have the ability to make your job search more efficient and rewarding. To work well with executive recruiters however does require some effort from you.

First of all, it is good to understand the objective of executive recruiters. Executive recruiters pretty much function as their client's outsourced recruitment division and are paid by their clients. Invariably, you can expect them to work based on adhering closely to their client's requirements for a job role.

Secondly, help yourself by helping the executive recruiter to understand your CV better. Very often, what a CV portrays does not convey a full picture of your background, experience and skill sets.

By spending time to sit down with an executive recruiter and discussing on your strengths, weaknesses and career aspirations, the executive recruiter could be a very useful resource for you in presenting you with suitable job opportunities and speaking with their clients on your behalf.

A meeting session with an executive recruiter should equip you with the necessary information needed to boost your confidence in your job search. Treat it as if you are attending a real job interview with a prospective employer. Not only should you dress yourself appropriately for the meeting, you should also take the opportunity to practice interview skills and answer questions from the recruiter as you would in an actual interview.

Ask relevant questions and find out more about the recruiter's areas of expertise or specialization. The trend is moving towards recruiters with a specialized practice as they are typically seen as possessing deeper network and stronger mandates from their clients, compared to the general recruitment agencies.

Thirdly, it is good to be upfront with executive recruiters on the progress of your job search. You don't want to be surprised to speak at length with a recruiter only to find out later on that it is the same role you have explored a month ago with another search firm. To prevent this, it is advisable to keep a list of job roles and search firms you have spoke or met with and be open with your executive recruiter.



2

Engaging job search channels

As executive recruiters work on behalf of their clients, it is common for them to maintain their client's confidentiality at the initial stage of the selection process.

Cooperate with them by first highlighting firms which you may have an issue working with. That way, it would save everyone's time by not discussing on job roles which you are not likely to consider anyway.

Most executive recruiters work professionally and respect your rights as a job seeker. They would typically consult you for a specific job role and obtain your consent before presenting your profile to their client.

Again as mentioned above, you need to keep a clear record of those roles which you have been presented and make sure there is no duplication among the recruiters you work with. Duplication is bad as it doesn't reflect well on your professionalism and worse, could even be perceived as being desperate in your job search.

Choose your executive recruiter carefully and you will reap the rewards of having a trustworthy friend who cares about you and your career development.

A good executive recruiter should have the ability to provide you with objective and well-researched advice on managing your career, as well as discuss useful topics such as salary benchmarks in your industry, and insider views of job roles and corporate organizations.

They are like your ears and eyes to the organizations which you aspire to work for and can add significant value to your job search over extended time periods.

It is common for an executive recruiter to call on a candidate 3 years down the road after he has first placed him, to discuss with him on a new exciting job opportunity which matches his experience and career aspirations.

Just as it has happened with others, you can likewise derive a positive and rewarding experience with an executive recruiter if you are motivated to make things happen.

3

Staying positive and motivated

A key strategy in your job search process is to stay positive and motivated, even if your search efforts are not met with initial success.

Re-evaluate how you might have gone wrong or areas in which you could do better in order to secure that job interview. Useful questions you can ask yourself are:

- Are you targeting the right jobs or employers? Are your skills and experience interesting to prospective employers in this field?
- Are you utilizing your job search channels properly? Are you getting the kind of results you should be expecting?
- Is your approach appropriate to the role you are applying for? Should you be working with someone more knowledgeable about the role or having connections with the decision makers?
- Is your CV well presented or does it require further refinements? If you're unsure, you might consider using professional assistance to improve or redraft your CV.
- Are you making yourself easily available to employers and recruiter? Have you provided them with accurate and clear information on how they might contact you?

Never resign yourself to fate if things do not happen your way. If you do, you will only become negative about things and your energy level would sap as a result of your negativity.

You do not want to project an image of low self-confidence or having low energy level when you go about your job search, as the last thing you want is to finally secure a job interview and yet not being able to pull yourself together to do well in it.

A good method to remain positive and motivated is to surround yourself with friends and family members who understand your situation and able to provide you with constructive advice.

Other ways of releasing negative emotions include exercising and pursuing a hobby. Life after all is full of endless possibilities and opportunities present themselves in the most unlikely circumstances – just remember Never Give Up!

