

Information Bulletin - Understanding a Proactive Job Search

Everyone knows that when you are looking for a new job role, you need to be proactive. What many people don't really know is what exactly being proactive means or if they do know what it means, how to go about doing it.

Being proactive means you need to look at your job search as though you were launching a new product or starting a business. You're the shiny new product that's going to market. The employer is the buyer and the job search is the sales and marketing process. So you need to start asking some questions:

- What do you do? What problems do you solve? Why do people want to have you on their team? What is your value proposition?
- Who needs you? Who has the kind of problems that you solve? What's your target market?
- Where do you want to do this? What are your geographic parameters?
- What type of company do you want to work for in terms of size, industry, etc.?

Once you know what you're looking for, it's a lot easier to find it.

The most successful job seekers select the kind of job they wanted (e.g. buyer, entry-level professional, senior executive), the industry (e.g. manufacturing, retail, healthcare), and then the local employers that they liked best. Once they determined the target employers, they focused most of their job search efforts on those specific organizations.

What have successful job seekers done?

1. They learnt as much as they could about the target employer.

Checked out the employer Website for information on the products, services, officers and senior staff, internal organization, benefits, and any other information they could pick up.

Leveraged their LinkedIn networks for current (and former!) employees to connect with, and used the Company follow function to stay up to date on what's going on with the employer.

Checked the various Web resources for information about the employer's financial health (e.g. [Yahoo! Finance](#), [CNN Financial](#), etc.).

2. Read and applied what they learnt from the 'Using Google in your job search' bulletin on Selection Partners website and implemented Google Alerts, in the way they learnt from the bulletin.
3. Learnt the process used by the target employer to fill job openings.

4. Got a contact on the "inside" to help them in their application process.

Tracked down LinkedIn and Twitter contacts, friends, family, neighbours, former colleagues who worked at one of the target employers or who knew someone who worked at one of the target employers. Then, they worked with these people, providing as much support as possible, to identify appropriate job opportunities and get their resume submitted.

Hiring managers don't want to make mistakes - it's expensive for the employer to recruit an employee and a few "bad hires" can definitely be career-limiting events for the person doing the hiring.

Employers LOVE "employee referrals" - potential employees referred to the employer by current employees. Many often have "employee referral programs" which reward employees who refer someone who is ultimately hired and becomes a successful employee because someone who is referred into the company by another employee is usually a successful hire.

5. Stayed in touch with their internal contact, if they had one, the HR department, and/or the hiring manager.

Nicely, politely, *relentlessly* following up...by phone, in person, by e-mail, or even by Twitter. Whatever works best for them is most effective in reaching a person at the employer's office.

You probably don't want to be doing another job search in a year or two, so use this job search as an opportunity to find a job with an employer who will be around (and keep you around) for a while. The research you've done in selecting your target employers should help you avoid the ones that will disappear or disappoint - although no one has any guarantees in life or work.

So, How Does a proactive Job Search Work?

1. Focus the job search -

- Determine the target job and industry so that search efforts can be focused and the resume can be effectively polished and tailored specifically for those target jobs (not more than 2 or 3).
- Select the preferred target employers – ask around: check the local chamber of commerce, join networking groups, scan the yellow pages, use Google, ask friends and colleagues, and keep researching.
- Research the employers and visit the employer Websites regularly looking for postings there and news about new projects, products, services, and employees and Senior Management.

2. Expand network and knowledge:

- Join or at least visit local business or professional organisation meetings. Volunteer to help in some way. Attend meetings as a way to learn and keep up-to-date with best practices, news, technology, people, growing businesses, and more
- Volunteer for the local school fund raiser, where local movers-and-shakers tend to hang out, or for another favourite cause or charity.

- Visit industry trade shows and local business expos to see what new businesses have appeared, what the latest news and trends are, and who seems to be doing new and/or interesting things.
- Collect information. Ask for information, NOT a job! And, the more information; the better! Talk with people to collect information on good employers in the location and industry or field. Look for trends, news, new people to meet, and new ideas to consider and discuss.
- If you have attended a university, regardless of graduation status, the uni's career centre may help alumni. Check the alumni directory for other alums who work for one of the preferred potential employers or in the preferred career field.

3. Leverage LinkedIn and other social media -

LinkedIn is where recruiters are looking for people now! Let them find you!

- Be sure the LinkedIn Profile is 100% complete (including a photo + 5 LinkedIn recommendations).
- Add contacts to expand the reach of the network.
- Use the advanced People search to find people working for the preferred potential employers and the target job/job function.
- Join relevant and appropriate industry, professional, and location-focused Groups.
- Participating in the Group Discussions can be important personal reputation building. Also check each Group's Job postings to find more employers and opportunities.
- Respond thoughtfully and thoroughly to the questions and carefully post a few well-considered questions yourself.

Hundreds of employers skip the cost of job boards and use Twitter to Tweet their latest hot job postings, and they also have company pages on Facebook where they recruit new employees.

Note: Use the same "avatar" image, preferably a headshot, on all the social media so your friends will recognise you no matter where they find you.

4. Monitor your online reputation.

Google your name often to see what is attached to it in Google, because *80% of the time* employers will Google you before they respond to your email or ask you in for an interview.

I have heard about someone *with the same name* really mess up a job seeker's job search, and it took the job seeker months to find out. They waited way too long before they finally Googled themselves to see what was going on.

MONTHS were lost because of confusion around the job applicant's name!

Set up a [Google Alert](#) to monitor your name so you know when trouble appears – someone with the same name is accused of sexual harassment or robbing a bank. You need to know so you can respond!

Bottom Line

A proactive job search, largely disconnected from traditional job boards, is more effective and less competitive. If you are in a job search right now, try it for a week and see what happens.

What is wrong with using job boards?

A job board-centric job search is a “reactive” job search because you are only *reacting* to the jobs you find posted, and, thus, missing most of the job market.

Sometimes a job board-centric job search works, but often it doesn't. You could end up with the perfect job. Or could miss that perfect job (because it wasn't posted where the you were looking or because *it wasn't posted at all*), and end up taking *more time* to find a less-than-ideal job.

Less than half (some estimate only 20%) of the total jobs available are posted online, but with most candidates focused on applying for those jobs, this is the toughest place to land a job.

In light of the above, think about how you allocated your time, and perhaps spend less time on the job boards and more on proactively searching for a job in a company or industry of interest. Once you have done your industry research ensure you are skilled and competent in calling organisations to network and are confident and able to sell your self at the meeting or interview.

Selection Partners offers coaching in all areas of job search from interviews to tapping into the hidden job market. If you feel you need support to help find your next role, connect us on info@selectionpartners.com.au