



Job Search Strategies

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Introduction

HRAM is a nonprofit organization, established in 1948 and is located in Omaha, Nebraska. It is dedicated to the advancement of human resource professionals and serves the Omaha, Council Bluffs, and surrounding areas. Our membership consists of over 1000 members in the Omaha vicinity. HRAM promotes a comprehensive understanding in the field of human resource management by providing a forum for the education and professional interaction of its members. HRAM is a local affiliate of the Society for Human Resource Management (SHRM), the leading voice of the human resource profession, which provides a wealth of services and programs to broaden your skills and make you more valuable to your organization.

Job Search Strategies

There is no way to predict how effective your job search will be. One thing is for certain; it will require focus and a persistent effort, on your part. Patience and a positive attitude are very important in keeping the big picture in perspective. Your goal, obviously, is to obtain a position within a company, but the process is quite involved and time-consuming. There are many areas to consider when developing your strategy.

Developing a Job Search Strategy

- ◆ Set realistic objectives and priorities. Identify how much time you can realistically spend on your search, and don't expect to find something immediately.
- ◆ Reward yourself for every goal that you achieve, not just for the final goal of finding a job.
- ◆ Establish a routine and develop a schedule to meet your goals. This is very important. Keep a date book to be sure you don't miss any appointments, and develop a weekly action plan with specific goals for job search activities. This will help to keep you "on task."
- ◆ Take care of your self-esteem. See people and do things that make you feel good.

Self-assessment

Before you evaluate specific career opportunities, it is important to know your job-related preferences. This understanding increases the likelihood that the job you accept will be a good match for you, and will help you to prepare a list of questions to ask during interviews.

- ◆ What aspects of my job do I find most satisfying? Least satisfying?

- ◆ What personal qualities are needed to be successful in my field?
- ◆ What special skills, education and/or certifications are necessary?
- ◆ How much social contact is there with others-employees and clients?
- ◆ What is the normal pattern of advancement in my job?
- ◆ What is the normal salary progression?
- ◆ How much physical activity is required?
- ◆ What activities do I perform during the day?
- ◆ What geographical restrictions exist in this type of job?
- ◆ What is the long-term employment outlook in my field?
- ◆ What part of my job do I find to be the most difficult?
- ◆ Is there travel involved in this type of work?
- ◆ How much overtime am I willing to work?
- ◆ If I were in charge of hiring someone in my profession, what experience, skills and personal characteristics would I consider most important?

Networking

Many people stress the importance of networking. Networking is the most effective method of finding a job in today's market. Networking is enhancing the contacts you already have and working through those contacts to make new contacts. Talk to family, friends, business associates, former co-workers, and others in your personal and professional field. These individuals are an excellent source for leads because they know you and they know potential employers. Most importantly, networking increases the possibility that you will find a job that is a good match between you and a company.

FACT: 70% of all jobs today are obtained through networking.

Networking is a planned process, which includes the following objectives:

- ◆ Letting people know that you are ready for hire
- ◆ Opening channels of communication to increase your knowledge of companies and industries
- ◆ Talking to people to discover unadvertised or "hidden" jobs
- ◆ Impressing people, especially those with the power to hire or create a job for you
- ◆ Practicing and improving your interview skills.

Develop a List of Contacts

A majority of jobs are found through both personal and professional contact. Professional contacts are people you may or may not already know. They can be found in:

- ◆ Professional journals
- ◆ Annual reports
- ◆ Membership directories
- ◆ Direct calls to a company
- ◆ Job Fairs

Personal contacts can be developed by making a list of people you know such as:

- ◆ Family members
- ◆ Friends
- ◆ Neighbors and community contacts
- ◆ Social organizations
- ◆ Professional associations
- ◆ Co-workers
- ◆ Current or past employers
- ◆ Vendors, service people and suppliers
- ◆ College or educational institutions you have attended
- ◆ Church
- ◆ Any other sources

Approach your networking in an organized manner. Make a list of networking contacts, their addresses and phone numbers, and keep a record of your discussions with them.

Informational Interviews

An informational interview is much different than a job interview. On an informational interview, your goal is to gain additional information about your chosen occupation. On a job interview, your goal is to gain employment. Ask to speak with someone working in the same professional field in which you are job searching. Try to arrange about a 30-minute meeting in order to gain more insight into the profession. The following is a list of good informational interview questions:

- ◆ Tell me about your background: How did you get started in the field?
- ◆ Where do you see someone like me fitting into this field? Company? Industry?
- ◆ How should I prepare for a job interview in this field?
- ◆ What professional societies or associations should I join?
- ◆ What's a typical career path for someone at my experience level?
- ◆ What are the largest obstacles I will face in this job?
- ◆ What professional publications do you recommend?
- ◆ What skills will I need most in this field?

- ◆ What additional training can I get and where?
- ◆ How is hiring done? Through the grapevine or by direct application?
- ◆ May I keep in touch with you?
- ◆ Who else should I contact for further information?

Be sure to take notes during your meeting, so you will not have a tendency to forget any valuable information. Thank the person for his/her time and information. Follow up with a thank you note, within 24 hours after your meeting.

Researching Companies

Now you have some leads, additional people to contact, meetings to set up, and research to do. As you pursue this information, you'll start to see companies and specific opportunities that are of interest to you. Before formally pursuing an opportunity, you will want to thoroughly research the company to insure it is a good match for you. Consider the following:

- ◆ What is the company's philosophy and culture?
- ◆ Is the company financially sound and economically stable?
- ◆ Is there opportunity for growth?
- ◆ Are employees encouraged to use personal abilities/talents?
- ◆ Does the company value and encourage opportunities from within?
- ◆ Is there adequate recognition for achievement? What types of recognition are there?
- ◆ How does management deal with change?
- ◆ Do employees have control over job decisions and the freedom to share ideas?
- ◆ What is the company's primary business?
- ◆ Where is the company headquartered?

Resources available to research such pertinent information:

- ◆ The Internet (www.careerlink.org)
- ◆ Nebraska Job Bank
- ◆ Moody's Manual
- ◆ Wall Street Journal
- ◆ Who Owns Whom
- ◆ Directory of Corporate Affiliations
- ◆ Annual reports
- ◆ Business periodicals & trade journals
- ◆ Occupational Outlook Handbook
- ◆ Public library
- ◆ Midlands Business Journal

- ◆ Omaha World-Herald
- ◆ Career planning offices
- ◆ Government/State employment offices
- ◆ Union halls
- ◆ Professional organizations
- ◆ Nebraska Administration (Labor Market)
- ◆ Job fairs
- ◆ Service professionals (insurance agents, physicians, attorneys, etc.)
- ◆ Chamber of Commerce-Labor Availability Council

Update Your Resume

Before you contact anyone from your networking list, make certain you have updated your resume. Your contacts may want to review it or send it to an associate on your behalf. Remember that your resume is a first impression of you. You will want to insure that it communicates quickly, clearly and accurately your objective, qualifications, experience, and accomplishments.

The Interview

Your resume is not guaranteed to get you the job, but it can get you an interview. There are lots of excellent books that have been written about the interviewing process. An excellent way to prepare is to role play the interview process with someone who will be objective and provide you with constructive feedback. Remember to send thank you notes to each person with whom you interview. Don't overlook receptionists and other people in supporting roles. These individuals are frequently asked to provide their impressions of you.

Why Applicants Don't Get the Job

Sometimes we don't get a job simply because there was a more qualified applicant. However, there could be other reasons. Prepare yourself so that none of these apply to you!

- ◆ Qualifications - Lack of required qualifications, inability to relate qualifications to employer's needs
- ◆ Personality - Poor communication/interviewing skills, lack of poise, poor presentation of self, lack of confidence, arrogance, no leadership potential
- ◆ Attitude - Lack of clearly-defined goals and ambition, does not demonstrate interest in the job, no evidence of initiative, what-can-the-company-do-for-me attitude, lack of maturity, late to appointments
- ◆ Appearance - Poor grooming, inappropriate clothing
- ◆ Salary - Unrealistic requirements, more interest in salary than

- ♦ opportunity, unrealistic about promotion to top jobs
- ♦ Grades - Poor performance in school, without a reasonable explanation

Follow Up With Contacts

The words “follow up” are the key ingredients to an effective job search. Make sure you follow up with contacts on a regular basis. It is important to:

- ♦ Make sure you have the correct spellings and pronunciation of everyone’s name with whom you spoke.
- ♦ Follow up each meeting with a thank you letter expressing gratitude for the specific help received. If the interview went well and the individual agreed to keep you in mind regarding future opportunities, remind him/her that you appreciate the assistance.
- ♦ Keep detailed records concerning with whom you have interviewed, date of the meeting, what transpired and any additional contact names.
- ♦ Maintain copies of all correspondence.
- ♦ Maintain contact in the future. This step is often the most neglected. During the interview, establish the ongoing nature of your acquaintance by mentioning that you would like to get back to this person to let him/her know the progress of your exploration. Future contact can be made by phone or letter. You may take advantage of these contact times to ask new questions, in light of new information you have learned.
- ♦ If your contact directed you to call someone else, follow up and let him/her know the result. Many people have expressed frustrations in never hearing back from an individual they have helped.

Keep Yourself Motivated

Job searching and networking is a full-time job! There are bound to be highs and lows. Treat your job search as though it is a full-time job. Make a schedule and stick to it. Organize your days so that there is some kind of structure. Establishing a routine is important while you are job hunting. Schedule certain hours of the day to make phone calls and set a goal for the number of calls to make daily. Try to schedule networking appointments outside of regular work hours. Books on job searching and motivation will help you get reenergized. Make time for recreational activities. Stay involved in your hobbies and outside interests. Get out and meet people who share similar interests. Keep a schedule and maintain your focus.

Job searching and related tasks are skills that can be learned and improved upon, throughout your career. No matter what your talents, experiences or abilities, your accomplishments won’t mean much if you can’t sell them to potential employers. Gaining new contacts, maintaining old ones and keeping

resumes updated are just as important as staying current in your profession. By continuing these activities, even as you are happily employed, you maximize the opportunity for personal growth, have a chance to help others in their careers and increase the likelihood that wonderful opportunities will find you. Good hunting and good luck!