

10 Steps to Finding the Right Position

When an individual sets out to find either their first opportunity, or their next, it is a daunting step. Questions like “Where do I start?”, “How do I find the hidden job market?”, “What are my skills worth in the market?” are just a few of the many questions that arise.

Finding a new position is best handled methodically and, like it is, a job. There are a few steps that, if followed, will ensure you find the right opportunity. The steps that an individual should take are as follows:

- Step 1 – Identify your dream job
- Step 2 – Prepare your resume
- Step 3 – Establish a timeline & preplan
- Step 4 – Register with a recruiting firm
- Step 5 – Research
- Step 6 – Contact the company
- Step 7 – Network
- Step 8 – Prepare for the interview
- Step 9 – Conduct the interview
- Step 10 – Evaluate and accept a job offer

The 10 Steps

Step 1 – Identifying Your Dream Job

Outline what you envision your next opportunity to be. Areas to consider are:

- Job description
- Industry
- Location
- Culture
- Management team
- Compensation
- Size of company
- Vacation
- Benefits
- Hours

Once your list is complete, rank them in order of importance. This will be very beneficial at a later time when you are evaluating a job offer. Be realistic when thinking about your next position. For example, if you were in a junior administrative position, don't expect your next position to be Office Manager. Set your expectations in line with what your abilities are.

Step 2 – Prepare Your Resume

Your resume should be completed before you embark on your job search; you need to be prepared for when you are asked to provide it. Review your resume for spelling errors many times before you give it your final stamp of approval. Have others read it to give you feedback before it is put into action. It is better to identify challenges and fix them before it is too late.

Critical components of your resume:

- A chronological history of your experience
- Your objective for your next position
- Education
- Volunteer experience
- Technical skills – hardware, software, databases
- Contact information

Do not include:

- Personal information – i.e. Birth date, SIN, marital status
- References
- Your contact information at your current job
- Salary information
- Reasons for leaving a position

Step 3 – Establishing a Timeline & Preplan

Establish a length of time that you will spend on a daily/weekly basis searching for your new job. For example, if you are already working, you may have limited time to dedicate to searching for your new position. However, you may set aside time every evening to search job boards and review the newspaper. If you are not working, establish how many hours a day you are going to focus on your job search.

Preplan where and what you are going to do for your search. Areas to consider are:

- Job boards
- Networking
- Recruiting firms
- Newspapers
- Applying directly to a company
- Career fairs

Establish the frequency in which you will perform each task, and assign times/days in which you will complete them.

Step 4 – Register with a Recruiting Firm

Recruiting firms are a great way to identify your next opportunity. They have contacts that would take you years to build up, and recruiters are trained to find the right opportunities for the right people. It takes very little of your time and effort to have them work for you.

Choosing the right recruiting firm:

- Ensure they specialize in your area of expertise.
 - Recruiters who specialize have a much better understanding of what your skill sets are, what the market has to offer and how to properly match you to the right company.
- Get referrals from friends.
 - The easiest way to find the best recruiters is through referrals. It is important to know their customer service, their follow up and their success ratio.
- Inquire what their process is.
 - Understanding what their process is and what their expectations are is imperative to ensuring that you work successfully together.

Choose two to three recruiting firms to work with. Registering with more than two to three firms may create duplications in representing you to the same opportunities – creating more challenges than successes. Do not pay a firm to find you an opportunity! There are many very reputable firms who do not charge the job seeker a fee.

Remember that the relationship you forge with a recruiter can and should last through your entire career and through a number of positions.

Step 5 – Research

Once you have a list of ten to fifteen companies that you would like to work for, begin your investigation of who you need to speak with to have your resume reviewed by the proper individual, along with details of the company.

Facts you should know about the company:

- Size
- Industry
- Location
- Private vs. public
- Products and/or services it provides
- How long have they been in operation
- Size of market share they have
- Recent success/growth of company

How do you identify this information and who do you contact:

- Calling reception
- Company website
- Speaking with friends/family members
- Their competitors

Once you have compiled the majority of this information, you are armed with enough information to take the next step.

Step 6 – Contacting the Company

Once you have identified the individual that does the hiring for the area that you are interested in, proceed to contact them. Be prepared to state the reason that you are calling and asking if they are currently searching, or plan to be searching, for someone of your skill sets. The conversation may go something like this:

“Hello. My name is John Smith and I am currently seeking a new opportunity in (state the type of position). I was hoping that you could tell me if you are searching for someone in that area or plan to in the near future?”

Do not become discouraged if you do not find an opportunity right away. If there isn't an immediate opening, ask if you may send your resume to them for future reference and if they will give you permission to follow up at a later date. Add them to your networking list. It is also acceptable if you ask them if they know any companies or have referrals

that may be hiring someone of your talents. Managers network amongst themselves when requiring new talent and you can never underestimate the power of referrals.

Step 7 – Networking

Creating a strong network to help identify an opportunity is a great way to uncover the hidden job market. The ‘hidden’ job market is only hidden to those who do not search to find it. Most companies will use their own network first to find an employee before they advertise or use a recruiting firm for assistance.

Create a list of everyone that you know (family, friends, classmates, colleagues, and new contacts within a firm) including:

- Where they work
- The industry they work in
- The type of position they hold

Contact all the names on your list and provide them with details of what you are looking for and a copy of your resume – preferably an electronic copy so that they can pass it on with ease.

Follow up is imperative to the success of networking. Keep a log of your conversations and a calendar to keep track of when the next follow up should be.

Step 8 – Preparing for the Interview

Preparing for the interview is just as important, or may be more important, than the actual interview. Having answers prepared for common questions will allow you to be more confident in answering any questions asked and will decrease the amount of anxiety that you may feel.

Questions to be prepared for:

- Tell me about yourself.
 - Have 2 – 3 sentences prepared on what your background and personality is.
- What are your weaknesses?
 - Have an example prepared of an area that you are trying to improve. Follow it up with an explanation on what you have been doing to change this.
- What are your greatest strengths?

- Be prepared to discuss one or 2 keys areas that you feel will contribute to the success of this new position. If these areas have been identified in a prior review, reveal this to the interviewer.
- What interests you about our company?
 - Through your research, identify some of the key areas that have impressed you or interested you.
- Where do you see yourself in 5 years?
 - Most importantly, be honest on what you see as your next logical step in your career. Avoid comments like “I want to be the CEO”.
- What are your salary expectations?
 - This is always a difficult question to answer. The best way to deal with this question is by letting them know that once you understand better what the details of the position are, you will be better equipped at solidifying the salary. If they pressure you, give a range that you have discovered in your research.

Step 9 – Conducting the Interview

Confidence is key in the interview. Companies want to hire people who are confident and sure of their abilities, without being arrogant.

Interview do's:

- Show up 10 minutes early.
- Dress professionally. Now isn't a time to show your fashion sense.
- Be well groomed.
- Verify the address beforehand. If you are not familiar with the area, drive by the office prior to your meeting.
- Be prepared to ask questions about the company.
 - I.e. Greatest challenges in the position? What is the team like? What are the company values?
- Keep eye contact with the interviewer.
- Be sincere and truthful while communicating your experience.
- Close the interview with why you feel you would be a good fit for the position and company.
- Thank both the interviewer and the receptionist for their time upon leaving

Interview don'ts:

- Don't arrive late or too early.
- Don't use slang words.
- Don't answer with one word answers – always be prepared to elaborate.
- Don't make negative remarks about your current or prior employers.
- If you don't understand a question do not proceed until you have clarified it with the interviewer and you have a full understanding.
- Don't inquire about salary, vacation, benefits or bonuses.
- Don't state a salary when asked – always give a range and focus more on your interest of the opportunity.

After the interview, always follow it up with a hand written note to the interviewer thanking them for their time and again stating your interest in the position. If you are unable to deliver a hand written note within 2 days of the interview, at least follow up the interview with an e-mail.

Step 10 – Evaluating and Accepting a Job Offer

Receiving and evaluating a job offer is an emotional experience. While there are feelings of excitement, there are often feelings of uneasiness. Questions arise regarding “Is this the right opportunity?”, “Are they really the right company?” and “Are they offering the right salary?” The questions are endless. This is the time to refer back to Step 1, where you outlined what were the most important aspects that you needed in your next opportunity. Do a comparison to determine how close of a match the position is to what you set out to find originally. Now is not a time to reevaluate the importance of the details that you stated in the beginning. If the offer doesn't satisfy the qualities that you evaluated in the beginning of your search, your best option is to continue searching. The areas that do not match will later become a problem and maybe the same reasons why you are leaving your current opportunity.

If the opportunity is a match with all the important qualities that you set out, then your decision is easy. Congratulations – you have a new job!