

# JOB SEARCH STRATEGIES

A job search is a job in itself. A typical job search can take three to six months at a minimum. You should do something to advance your job search on a regular basis rather than going for weeks at a time without doing anything. As Tom Jackson notes, **“it is not the most qualified persons who get the best jobs; it is those who are most skilled at finding a job.”** A job searcher without career goals tends to have a longer, more frustrating search and may end up in a position in which she is not happy. If you are not sure about your career goals, make an appointment with a career counselor in the Academic & Career Advising Center.

**Advertisements.** This is one of the most popular methods and certainly worth using. However, you must remember that not all positions are advertised! Sources of job advertisements include **listings on the Academic & Career Advising Center web site**, [www.longwood.edu/career/](http://www.longwood.edu/career/), under the LancerTrak, **job notebooks** in the Academic & Career Advising Center Library, **professional and trade journals and newspaper classified ads** (most have web sites), and **employer web sites** (employers like for prospective employees to have visited their sites). Since many people may be responding to these advertisements, it is essential that you do an effective job targeting your resume and cover letter for the available position and to the organization.

**Personal Contacts.** Although this method is not initially appealing to most people, the reality is that many professions operate through informal “networks.” Because of the “hidden job market” of positions that are never advertised, it is helpful to make contacts with people who might know of position openings. Remember that these people will not be giving you a job, but may be able to give you valuable information and job leads. Research shows that many jobs are found through this technique. Some guidelines for using personal contact include:

- 1. Develop a list** of possible contacts. These should be people who are in your field of interest or who may know someone in your field of interest. These contacts can be professors, internship supervisors, past employers, friends, contacts through professional associations, and Longwood alumni.
- 2. Initiate contact** through e-mail, phone call or letter. It is more comfortable to start out with easy contacts—people you know! You should introduce yourself, say how you got their name and state your purpose (career information and job search advice—not a job). Then you can determine with the contacts the best time to talk with them about their career field.
- 3. Prepare for meeting** by researching the employer that the person works for, and by planning questions to ask. Since this is not a job interview but a time for you to gather information, it is your responsibility to guide the conversation. You will want to ask questions both about the field and the job search process. Review materials in the Academic & Career Advising Center Library to assist you.
- 4. Make a good first impression** by being punctual, dressing appropriately and being prepared. Take a copy of your resume with you to have them review or to

leave a copy with them. Do not make the person feel like you have trapped them into a job interview!

5. **Send a thank-you note** expressing your appreciation and indicating something specific that you learned.

**Internet Job Links.** Many web sites have formed to list employer openings. You can find employer openings for a variety of fields on the Internet through **mega sites** such as *MonsterTrak* or through **specific listings** such as *USA Jobs*, official site for the **federal government jobs** (<http://www.usajobs.opm.gov/>), *Access*, for **non-profit jobs** (<http://www.accessjobs.org/>), etc..., check the Academic & Career Advising Center web site for an extensive list of job listings by career field.

**Career Fairs.** Career Fairs are a great way to talk directly with recruiters from organizations about your interests and their opportunities. Walk up to the recruiter and give a 60-second commercial on introducing yourself and the types of jobs in which you have an interest. The Academic & Career Advising Center is involved with several fairs during the year including: **Challenge Job and Internship Fair** in November and the **Diversity Career Day** in October.

**On-Campus Recruiting.** Each year employers will come to campus to give information and to interview for positions with their organizations. Other organizations will send job listings for you to review and/or will ask us to collect resume of interested students. These opportunities are advertised on the Academic & Career Advising Center web site and through email, register on CareerConnect to get email messages on employer recruiting Longwood students.

**Targeted Mailings.** This technique involves marketing yourself to employers when not responding to a specific advertisement. It requires research and planning, but can be an effective search strategy. The steps to take in employing this method include:

1. **Develop a prospect list.** Through the use of professional directories, professional associations, yellow pages, newspaper articles, etc..., make a list of organization where you would like to work.
2. **Research the employer.** Find out as much as you can about the employer (clientele, industry trends, etc...). Some sources for research include: Organizations' web site, Academic & Career Advising Center Resource Room, and articles from papers and journals. Most employers have annual reports and promotional literature on their web sites and in hard copy.
3. **Call for the name and title of the person who heads the department in which you want to work.** The receptionist most likely will not put your call through to that person, but may give you the person's name, title and address.
4. **Write a targeted cover letter to the department head/contact.** By writing an individualized letter to the person who could hire you, you are increasing your chances of getting a positive response. Your letter should emphasize your relevant skills and your research about the organization.

- 5. Follow-up with a phone call.** Wait until the person has had time to receive your letter, then call to see if you can arrange a time to talk with her/him about your skills and qualifications. Although there may not be an opening at that time, at least you will be able to express your interest, know the status of your application, and elicit more information about typical positions, how often they become available, where they advertise positions, etc.... It is helpful to plan what you will say and to get organized before the call.

**Employment Agencies.** Employment agencies do much of the work for the job seeker. Some agencies work with only one type of job so may not have jobs that you will be interested in. You may only want to work with those agencies that are “Fee Paid” meaning the employing organization will pay the employment agency. If you use an employment agency, you may want to consider the following:

1. be sure they work in the area you are interested in (they may specialize),
2. be sure you are aware of any financial obligations on your part before you sign anything and
3. be assertive about the kind of positions you want and do not want.

Registering with a temporary agency (assignments with these can be for a short or long period of time) may be one avenue for making some money while looking for a permanent job. Some people have actually gotten jobs with an employer where they temped.

**Academic & Career Advising Center  
Lancaster G08-A  
434-395-2063  
career@longwood.edu  
www.longwood.edu/career/**