

# Planning a Job Search Strategy

## **Thoughts about a job search**

The metaphor of a journey comes to mind when planning a job search.

*Traveling the whole world may be desirable but can this journey be accomplished in 2 weeks? Absolutely not! However, with careful planning, perhaps in a lifetime much territory can be explored.*

When approaching a job search, to be most effective, focusing and careful planning are essential.

## **It's alive!**

Believe it or not, the job search has a mind of it's own but, you will not fully realize this until you are actively engaged in the process. A job search can take you to amazing places and introduce you to interesting people while teaching you a lot about yourself, as well as, your chosen profession. When you are actively engaged in your search, the process will reward you with hints regarding the right direction to take. First you must begin the journey; begin the process of researching, interviewing and talking with potential employers.

Unfortunately, the job search is not all fun and the waiting can be very frustrating. The search can take you on a roller coaster ride with lots of ups and downs, but at the end of the ride awaits success.

## **Process work**

People who are most successful with their searches approach the process with eagerness and enthusiasm. They have a well-developed plan that allows the flexibility of "keeping their options open".

## **Get it together**

Goals for your search

Target your audience

A strategy for success

A well crafted resume that is appropriate for your targeted audience

Samples of your work if appropriate

Communication skills- good writing, Telephone and interviewing skills

Patience and persistence

Resourcefulness and creative problem solving

Ability to follow-up; thank you letters

A well developed portfolio for interviews

Appropriate interviewing attire

Appropriate salary or wages for your field and geographical locations?

## **Planning a strategy**

- Set your professional career goals
- Assemble your tools: resume, cover letter, references and portfolio samples if appropriate for your field.
- Determine geographical areas of interest and narrow your search to 2 or 3 cities.
- Research potential employers: look for firms/organizations whose work you admire. (Read the section on Researching Prospective Employers).
- Do consider posting your resume on Websites of professional organizations in your field!
- Consult your calendar and plan a good time to interview in a specific city; spring break often works well for many students
- Work back from your targeted date allowing time to research employers, contact firms and arrange interview times. It works best to have a specific date in mind for interviewing when you make your initial employer contact.
- When you have targeted a geographical area, place a map of the city on the wall or

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- floor or use Map Quest. Identify the location of firms of interest. Arranging interviews with firms that are near each other will save a lot of time and effort.
- Send a letter, resume, samples of your work to firms that you have researched. Include in your communication that you are visiting the city and would like to schedule an interview.
  - Don't be afraid to get on the telephone and initiate a conversation with a firm; be prepared and ask appropriate questions to demonstrate interest about the firm

### *Applying to advertised **positions***

- Often positions have deadlines for application so check your resources on a weekly basis for new listings.
- Be sure to follow any application instructions carefully.

### *Identifying unadvertised **positions***

- Most design related jobs and internships are not advertised. They are obtained by directly contacting the firm and arranging an interview. Many firms will say, "We do not have current openings however, we are always interested in seeing resumes of talented people."
- Do not ask, "Are you hiring?" This indicates little knowledge of job search etiquette. Please refer to the **Communications** section.
- Knowledge of many firms will assist you in learning what you do and do not want in a firm.
- Do a thorough search and cluster interviews with several firms within a city to save on travel time and expenses. Flying or driving some distance for one interview does not demonstrate wise planning. Be prepared to make the most of your travels by visiting several organizations during one trip.

- There is no magic number of interviews that will guarantee the perfect job for you; however, having 3-5 interviews will provide you with adequate information for making a good decision about your career.

### *The rest of the story*

Getting interviews is a big step in your search but there is more work to do. Please read the sections under Interviews, Salary, Letters and Communication.

If you have done a thorough job search, after several interviews, the final steps include: deciding which job offer is best for you; negotiating the job offer and salary; and formally accepting the position.