

Stuck?

1. Focus on your selling points: why employer should hire you, what you like to do, what you do well, what you want to learn.
2. Look for “I can do that” ads. Create a list of “I can do that” statements. Focus on your past results, focus on employer needs.
3. Focus on one position in one target industry:
e.g. “Events coordinator for chamber of commerce in NE Ohio”
“Online researcher for law firm specializing in patents.”
“Auditor for health related nonprofit organization in Cuyahoga County.”
4. Develop a list of targeted employers, write a keyword list describing your target industry and search for companies that match your focus.
5. Use your network: tell people what you need. Seek advice, leads, information, referrals.
6. Networking for introverts: role play, practice with friends; create a structured plan and stick to it, develop a script, make calls when your energy is highest, take time out to replenish yourself.

Tips for a tough Market

1. Remember that volunteering for community projects is an excellent means of networking. You may be working next to a hiring manager on a Habitat for Humanity construction site.
2. Contact the CSU Alumni Association to see how they can help you meet people in your field.
3. Investigate the Cleveland 20/30 Club as a means of meeting other young professionals.
4. Always write targeted cover letters. Never send generic letters. Be sure to relate your qualifications to the specific opening in which you are interested.
5. Explore opportunities in non-profit organizations. Often their positions mirror those in businesses—they just have different titles.

What to Do When Nothing Happens

1. Re-examine and revise your resume.
 - Does my resume focus on a specific job or career path?" (You can't hit a target you don't aim at. Revise or remove anything that doesn't prove you're the best choice for the exact job you want.)
 - Does my resume contain errors in grammar, spelling, etc.?" (When in doubt, show your resume to at least two friends for proofreading.)
 - Is my resume concise and to-the-point?" (You won't bore anyone into hiring you. Limit yourself to two pages of tightly focused text.)
2. Redouble your efforts. Try to talk to at least three people every day about your job search, and ask them to pass your name along to anyone who might be able to help.

Questions to Ask Yourself

Am I looking in the right places?
Am I top of mind?
Am I memorable?
Am I casting a wide net?

Am I interview-ready?
Am I being flexible?
Am I actively following up?

1) Am I looking in the right places?: If your industry is in trouble now, don't sit around waiting for things to improve. Transfer your skills to another industry. If you performed marketing duties in the hard-hit construction industry, try seeking a marketing-related position in health care administration, which has added jobs. If your small employer is cutting the hours of its sales staff, look at competitors that could benefit from your expertise. If your airline is pink-slipping flight attendants, shift your focus to an opportunity in tourism PR or hotel concierge services. The idea is to think of at least three to five ways to apply what you know to a totally new line of work and then go after them.

2) Am I top of mind?: Make a list of the people who know that you're looking for work. Then, make a list of the people who should know that you're looking. That second list should be your primary focus because it hopefully includes decision-makers at the employers you're targeting. Take the necessary steps to make your name and interest known to them. You can accomplish this through internal referrals, alumni contacts, professional associations, industry blogs, online social networks, local career fairs and open houses, peers within the same field, and even old-fashioned cold calling. Map a strategy that includes three different ways of reaching out to each person on that list.

3) Am I memorable?: Standing out from the pack in a positive (not hokey) way will improve your chances for being considered. Showing up dressed like a clown or mailing inappropriate gimmicks to catch the attention of an employer will likely backfire. One college student created a magazine about herself that caught the attention of a recruiter who hired her. That tactic would work for a professional at any age—creativity shouldn't be limited or defined by age. An event planner could put together a packet with photographs of her best functions. A sales professional can bind copies of reference letters from impressive clients who can vouch for his or her expertise and service. Don't wait to be asked for such collateral—be proactive about producing something that's neat and brings your passion, your personality and your professional skills to life.

4) Am I casting a wide net?: Even though one or two job postings might scream your name, do not rely on too few positions. You need many, many sticks in the fire because you have no way of knowing which will catch. Even if one opportunity looks promising, don't slow down the search until you receive a firm offer. Apply to positions on your own, submit resumes through multiple job boards, and register with placement agencies in your area (big ones and boutique firms). Remember, the agencies don't work for you; they work for the company that's paying them for the best hire. This means you must treat agencies with the same professionalism and respect as you would a direct employer.

5) Am I interview-ready?: In the past, you might have gotten away with interviewing with one or two people and shaking hands on an immediate offer. Today, you should expect to go through more interviews with more people than ever before. Treat each one as if it's the most important because even one person in the process can nix your chances by raising doubts about your candidacy. Practice every possible question you think you may be asked, and research the employer and its competition thoroughly.

6) Am I being flexible?: Offer to freelance or accept contract work if that's what it takes to get your foot in the door. You can also negotiate working from home part of the time as a benefit to both parties. Don't hold out for the most perfect opportunity if it means passing up one that could work well for you right now. Generating an income and closing a gap in your work history can be benefits on their own. Be selective about the kind of work you want, but not unrealistic, given the current economic conditions.

7) Am I actively following up?: You may find yourself frustrated from submitting dozens and dozens of resumes online—and getting no response. Don't rely on applying online and waiting for the phone to ring. Cold call to find out who the decision-maker is and then use all of your connections (or make new ones) to figure out how to get your name in front of that decision-maker. Be ready to make a smart, strong, succinct case for why you deserve to be considered for that role.