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# **JOB SEARCH GUIDE**

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## **THIS GUIDE CONTAINS INFORMATION FOR YOUR JOB SEARCH ON THE FOLLOWING TOPICS:**

- THINGS TO REMEMBER AS YOU SEARCH
- BEFORE YOU START
- JOB SEARCH STRATEGIES
- WHERE THE JOBS ARE
- RESEARCH YOUR PROSPECTIVE EMPLOYERS
- INFORMATION TO RESEARCH ON PROSPECTIVE EMPLOYERS
- THE JOB OFFER
- TIPS FOR THE JOB HUNTER

### **THINGS TO REMEMBER AS YOU JOB SEARCH**

- Only you can be hired - your degree can't. You must persuade an employer that you'll do things better than other candidates who have college degrees.
- The job seeker does ALL of the work. Courteous, considerate, persistence is a must.
- There is no uniform code of employer behavior. Most employers don't know each other and those who do seldom agree. Don't be confused by conflicting advice; pick your strategy and stay with it.
- Show commitment to the career. Education does not show commitment to a specific career or employer. Obtain career-related paid or unpaid experience and contact with people in your career to your resume.

## **BEFORE YOU START**

### ***DEFINE YOUR JOB SEARCH CRITERIA***

- Know your career plans - You must have a defined career plan and a strong sense of direction for the positions you are seeking. Know and research the career field and industry that interests you. If you are unsure of your career goals, stop by the Career Planning Center, visit one of the counselors, and utilize the tools available to you. A multitude of resources are available to help you decide the career fields you can enter with your background, skills, values and interests. Do you have a particular geographic area where you are looking to relocate? If so, this will be additional criteria you will need to consider when job searching.

- Salary. Determine your salary expectations. Tip: Prepare a "bottom line" salary by calculating all of your expenses. Use newspapers from the place where your search is centered. Price apartments, auto insurance, food, clothing, and anything else you believe will affect cost of living. Add any other items you feel are vital, including health expenses, travel home, etc. This salary is your bottom line - you cannot afford to take a job that pays less than this. But you can afford to take a job that pays this amount even though another offer is much higher. The job with the greatest potential for your career won't always be the one with the highest starting salary.

Job application forms may ask for salary requirements. A new graduate will be using the same form used by someone with 10 years experience. Don't reveal your bottom line here. Say Open or Negotiable. Information on salaries, employer characteristics, cost of living in various areas can be found using resources in the Career Planning Center as well as Career Planning Web Pages.

- Employer Characteristics. Consider size; location; management philosophy; people employed and served by the organization; and whether the organization is profit-making, tax supported, or privately supported non-profit.

### ***THE RESUME AND COVER LETTER***

- Resume. Before you begin your job search be sure to have a professional looking resume. Remember this is your sales and marketing piece. Pick up our RESUME GUIDE. You should, also, pick up the appropriate RESUME SUPPLEMENTS for Teachers (there are two - one for music and one for all other fields), Science majors and Summer Resumes. Attend one of our regularly scheduled resume workshops. We do not file resumes with your references, so you should keep those ready to mail with a cover letter when you apply for positions.

***Note: You should target your resume for each job you are seeking and highlight the skills you possess that the employer is seeking. For teachers: You must have a resume ready for student teaching. Get a preliminary one completed prior to your student teaching so when your student teaching is just about finished you can easily complete it.***

- Cover Letter. This should be sent with a resume or application form that introduces yourself to employers. It serves as a bridge between the job and your resume. This letter should capture the employer's attention and follow a business format. See our LETTER GUIDE. The cover letter should contain the following information:

- Be addressed to a specific person (not to whom it may concern) with their business title and address.
- The reason you are interested in the position and/or employer.
- Your main qualifications for the position and what you have to offer that employer.
- A request for an interview with information about where you can be reached.

### ***REFERENCES***

- Establish your references. You must start the reference file yourself. Files should be started in your Junior year. There is only one form but it must be completed and turned in by you. This form is available on Career Planning Center web.

- Letters of recommendation. The file should contain reference letters from faculty, staff, employers, and extra-curricular advisors (for teachers: sponsor teachers and supervisors). We have forms for you to give to faculty and staff. For employers, ask for a “To Whom It May Concern” letter on their stationery. Be sure to have at least three reference letters in your career planning file before you apply for jobs (we recommend that you have 3-5 letters in your file with 10 as a maximum).

- Check your files. Call us or stop in periodically to check the status of your file. Occasionally references don’t arrive immediately or people might forget you had asked them to be a reference. If the references don’t arrive in time for your interview, tell the interviewer to telephone our office and we’ll Fax the references, or read them over the phone if necessary. Everything in your file at the time you request it to be sent will be included, unless you specify only certain references sent.

- Student request for references. When you need to have your file mailed, send us a note with your name and class year, and the name and address to whom you want the file sent. Please print or write carefully; we get many requests and have little time to check spelling. Enclose a check for \$4.00 (or 5/\$15.00) payable to SUNY College at Potsdam. Request form is available on internet. Please do not telephone us with mailing requests unless it’s an emergency. If you have an emergency and a mailed request will delay your references beyond the employer’s deadline, call us and tell us of the emergency. Also, you can request that we Fax your file; the charge for that is \$5.00. We’ll take your request and you can send the appropriate fee separately.

- Employer request for references. If an employer asks us to send your file, we will send it right away and send you a bill for \$4.00 (if the employer requests that we Fax your references, you still pay just \$4.00), with the name of the employer receiving your file.

***Note to teachers: Some schools want you to have your file sent at the same time you send your application. Some request it later, if they're interested in considering you further, and they usually contact us directly.***

- Married students and Alumni. Some, or all, of your references may be in your birth name. Advise us if your name changes when you marry, so we can find your file when it’s requested. Also, it’s a good idea to put your birth name in your resume in parentheses, so the employer will make the connection with your references when they arrive. For example, Mary Westville would have Mary (Smithers) Westville on her resume.

## ***INTERVIEWING SKILLS***

- The Interview. You may be able to get the interview, but it will be the interview that will make or break the decision of the employer to hire you. An interview gives you the best opportunity to show an employer your qualifications.

It is of utmost importance to have your interview skills well-established before embarking on your job search. You will need those skills for both interviewing career professionals and on the actual job interview itself. The Career Planning staff is available to counsel and conduct “mock”

interviews with you to aid your preparation. Pick up our INTERVIEWING GUIDE in the office or on the internet.

### ***JOB SEARCH STRATEGIES***

Develop a referral network. You should begin your professional referral network during your Sophomore and Junior years. However, it is never too late to start and you will find your network will grow throughout your professional career. Identify people you already know and the people you could meet who would be able to refer you to open positions. This network will include friends, professional contacts and family members. A personal face-to-face impression means more and lasts longer than any letter, phone call or resume. The people you meet will be more helpful in referring you to open positions than any agency or newspaper. Note: The majority of job openings are not well advertised.

Conduct information interviews. Sit down and make a list of people you already know who might be potential references. Call or write these people and make them aware of your skills and the job search you are undertaking. Inquire as to whether they know of leads to job openings; or if they know of other people you could contact that may have information. Remember, your goal is to obtain information. They are not getting you a job but rather contacts. You will need to follow up on any leads that are developed as the result of this process. See our NETWORKING WITH CAREER PROFESSIONALS HANDOUT for more information on how to go about this process.

Reply to Job Announcements. Here you respond directly to advertised positions. Check resources in the Career Planning Office, the Internet, Journal subscriptions, Newspaper ads and Trade Journal ads. In most cases you will send a resume, cover letter and possibly references.

Broadcast letters. During your research process, you might discover some specific employers and jobs that you would like to pursue. Send a cover letter and resume to these organizations. These are organizations who don't necessarily have advertised positions. Your cover letter should state your career aspirations and ask the employer to send or call with information of any possible openings.

### ***WHERE THE JOBS ARE***

Only about 20% of vacancies are announced which means that 80% of all jobs are in the "hidden job market"

#### ***Resources in the Career Planning Library.***

You will find a wealth of resources available in our library with job resources books including: Job Hunter's Source Book, Job Hunter's Yellow Pages, Encyclopedia of Associations, Dunn's Employment Opportunities Career Guide Directory, Directory of Public School Systems in the U.S and many others. Check out the reference section in the Career Planning Bibliography.

The Internet. Visit our Career Planning Web Site. The address is [www.potsdam.edu/career](http://www.potsdam.edu/career) and you will find a vast number of links to job-search services and employer information. Most sites have search engines that allow you to find jobs by geographic area, major and position title.

Vacancy notices sent to the Career Planning office. Some are mailed, faxed, e-mailed, or telephoned directly to us while others are listing services we buy. In Sisson 128 you'll find job vacancy notebooks to your right as you enter. These vacancies are available on the career planning web site.

Subscriptions. The Career Planning Office subscribes to approximately 20 job announcement publishers. Some of these include: "Current Jobs for Graduates with a Liberal Arts Degree", "Federal Career Opportunities", "Human Services and Liberal Arts Careers", "Current Jobs in Writing, Editing, and Communications"; "Management and Business"; "Science".

Newspaper ads. Specific requirements (3 years' experience, etc.) usually mean a "replacement" job. They want to duplicate the person being replaced. These are the most difficult jobs to get and keep. General requirements or "preferred" experience often mean new jobs and the willingness to train you. These are usually easier to get and keep.

- Some ads are placed by employers and some by employment agencies.
- If the ad sounds too good to be true, it probably is. Be leery.
- Use ads for research. Which employers are hiring? What types are hiring (size, nature of service or product, etc.)? Hiring for jobs you don't want can spill over to jobs you do.
- Sunday papers have the most job listings (you can link to classified ads through [www.thepaperboy.com](http://www.thepaperboy.com)).

Campus interviews. Less than 1% of the nation's employers still recruit on any college campus at any time. Employers and schools wishing to recruit at Potsdam screen candidates by first reviewing letters, resumes, and any other materials they request. The employer may request that you send the materials to them yourself, or that you give them to Career Planning for forwarding in a group. We announce the requirements through our bulletin boards and vacancy lists and e-mail. Announcements include date deadlines and any materials to be sent in addition to your resume (letter, reference files, transcript).

Trade journal ads. Special interest magazines often have want-ads as a part of each issue.

Job Fairs. During the Spring of every year, the SUNY Career Development Organization hosts a SUNY-Wide job fair that is open to all SUNY graduating seniors and alumni. Also, we co sponsor Employment Connections Job Fair with other area colleges, TRD, as well as several virtual job fairs. There are many other job fairs held throughout the state and country and some are targeted to certain majors and industries. Stop by the Career Planning Office for more information or visit our homepage for web sites listing job fair information.

Department of Labor and other tax-supported employment services. The State employment service, sometimes called the Job Service, operates in coordination with the U.S. employment service of the U.S. Employment Department of Labor. There are about 1,700 local employment centers. Stop by a center and register with these agencies.

Private employment agencies. These are businesses and good resources if used intelligently. See the Job Hunters Yellow Pages in our library. Don't confuse "placement" agencies with "career development" ones:

- Placement agencies collect a fee from you or the employer when you're hired. No job, no fee. Many only collect from the employer. Check policy before registering.
- Career development agencies charge you a fee at the outset and keep it whether or not you get a job. Approach these with caution. Intelligence is an inadequate defense against an artful salesperson.

Join professional groups in your field. This will provide opportunities to meet other professionals and to network through conferences, correspondence and publications.

### ***RESEARCH YOUR PROSPECTIVE EMPLOYERS***

Researching employers will provide you with information about positions they hire for, the number of positions, products and services they offer and working conditions. You want to be sure the company is right for you and that the job will fit your career goals. It is wise to get a complete picture of business conditions in your location of choice from a variety of sources.

#### **To research employers utilize the following resources:**

**Annual Reports.** The first source you should seek is the annual report of the company or organization because it offers a summary of all the operations for the year, products lines, highlight of events, names of key personnel, plus budgetary data you may want to see. You can call any public held company and select private companies to request a report. Clarkson University's Library has a computer available to students which provides on-line Annual Reports for public companies. Many are also available on the individual company web sites.

**Organizational Chart.** This chart shows all the departments and how they report and relate to each other. If it does not appear in the annual report or any of the other company publications, call the public relations office of the company and ask if one is available. If not, ask one of your personal referrals to see whether he or she can get you a copy.

**Stock Reports.** This is a more unbiased source of information and is available at any stockbroker's office for an organization that is sold by shares to the public. Several research services provide the brokers with data that can help you analyze the company's potential for growth, stability, and other relevant factors. See the Value Line periodical available at the SUNY Potsdam Crumb Library reference desk.

**Library References.** The Reader's Guide, the New York Times Index, and the Wall Street Journal Index can help you locate quickly and easily stories that have been written about an individual company, government agency, or other employer, provided the employer is prominent enough to rate news space.

The organization's newsletter and other in-house publications. When you request a company's annual report, also ask for copies of their in-house publications and marketing pieces.

**Public Relations Office.** Ask this office for any other printed materials about the company.

Local Newspapers. Get in the habit of reading the local paper each day to see whether your prospective employer is mentioned. Also, if you are looking to relocate to a new area, subscribe to that area's local newspaper or see if it is available on-line.

\* Source: The Complete Job Search Handbook: All the Skills You Need to Get Any Job and Have a Good Time Doing It by Howard Figler, 1979, Henry Holt and Co., Inc, N.Y., N.Y., p.141

### ***INFORMATION TO RESEARCH ON PROSPECTIVE EMPLOYERS***

- Relative size of firm in the industry and potential for growth
- Percent of annual sales growth during the last five years
- Array of product lines or services and potential for new markets, products or services
- Various price points in the products or service line
- Who is the competition
- Age of top management
- Organizational structure - by product line, function, etc.
- Geographical locations - Number of plants, stores, or sales outlets
- Short-term profit picture
- Structured or unstructured training
- Average time in non-management training
- Recent items in the news
- Structure of assets
- Relocation policies
- Percent of annual growth in earnings per share
- Present price of stock
- People you know in the firm
- Formal versus on-the-job training
- Typical career path in your field
- Location of home office
- Name of recruiter

\* Source: C. Randall Powell, Career Planning and Placement Today, Second Ed. Kendall Hunt Publishing Company, Dubuque Iowa.

### ***THE JOB OFFER***

When a job offer is made, you are faced with a difficult decision and must evaluate each offer carefully. Most organizations will give you a week to make up your mind.

There are many issues to consider when assessing the offer, think about the following:

- Is this business or activity in line with your philosophies, interests and beliefs?
- Does the work match your interests and make good use of your skills?
- Do you like the location and geographic area of the employer?
- Is the organization in an industry with favorable long-term prospects?
- Are you comfortable with the supervisor?
- Do the other employees seem friendly and cooperative?
- Does the work require travel and irregular hours?
- How long do most people who enter this job stay with the company?

- Does the employer offer opportunities to learn new skills and acquire training, increase your earnings, and have positions where you can advance?
- The salary and benefits. Wait for the employer to introduce these subjects. Most companies will not talk about pay until they have decided to hire you. In order to know if their offer is reasonable, you need a rough estimate of what the job should pay. You may have to go to several sources for this information. Talk to friends who were recently hired in similar jobs. Ask your teachers and the staff in the Career Planning office about starting pay for graduates with your qualifications. Scan the help-wanted ads in newspapers. Check out internet sites such as salary.com.

If you are considering the salary and benefits for a job in another geographic area, make allowances for differences in the cost of living, which may be significantly higher in a larger metropolitan area than in a smaller city, town, or rural area. See the “Relocation Salary Calculator” listed under Career Information on our homepage or check out homefair.com.

Find out how many hours you will be expected to work each week and whether you receive overtime pay or compensatory time off for working more than the specified number of hours in a week. Also, take into account that the starting salary is just that - the start. Your salary should be reviewed on a regular basis and many organizations do it every 12 months. Benefits can also add a lot to your base pay, but they vary widely. Find out exactly what the benefit package includes and how much of the costs you must bear.

Detailed data on wages and benefits are also available from:  
 Bureau of Labor Statistics  
 Office of Compensation and Working Conditions  
 Division of Occupational Pay and Employee Benefit Levels  
 2 Massachusetts Ave. N.E., Room 4160, Washington, DC 20212-0001  
 \* Source: Bureau of Labor Statistics - Howard N. Fullerton, Jr.  
 URL: <http://stats.bls.gov/oco/oco20043.htm> - 12/96

### ***POSSIBLE PROBLEMS***

I have two offers and can't seem to decide. I was sure that my top priority employer was going to reject me, so two weeks ago I accepted an offer from somebody else. Today I got the offer I really wanted! It isn't fair to go back on my word and tell the first employer I don't want the job now, but how will I be able to do a good job for them, knowing that I don't really want to be there? How can I pass up this opportunity?

A career search is a highly individual thing and most problems can't be solved for everyone in general. When these or other problems develop, it's best to discuss them with the Career Planning staff, friends or family. They can help develop alternatives, so you can reach the best decision for yourself.

### ***TIPS FOR THE JOB HUNTER***

**KEEPING RECORDS.** While you are job searching, be sure to keep detailed records. How would you feel if you couldn't remember who you

sent resumes and letters to and who you didn't? Keep records of all of your search efforts. A log is an excellent way to keep your search organized. Records will also serve as a handy reference and allow you to respond quickly to employers inquiries. You should fill out a log sheet for every contact you make.

Be sure to keep copies of ALL letters and correspondence you send. Here's a sample log set up (feel free to tailor your own):

Employer Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Contact Person: \_\_\_\_\_  
Title: \_\_\_\_\_ Address: \_\_\_\_\_  
Phone: \_\_\_\_\_ Fax: \_\_\_\_\_  
E-mail Address: \_\_\_\_\_ Web site address: \_\_\_\_\_  
Research conducted and information obtained: (make notes and attach information)  
Position applying for: \_\_\_\_\_  
Letter and Resume Sent: (date) \_\_\_\_\_ Notes: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
Reply from employer: (date) \_\_\_\_\_ Action required: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
Interview requested: (date) \_\_\_\_\_ Notes about interview: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
Thank you letter sent: (date) \_\_\_\_\_ and notes \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**THE DETOUR JOB.** You graduate from college on the college calendar. Employers don't plan their work around graduation dates. The national average time for graduating seniors from all colleges and universities has consistently ranged from six months to one year from graduation to career entry. You may need time for your search and income to finance it. A detour job is one you use to pay the bills while you're looking for the real career.

This job must provide time for you to look for your career job. Avoid anything that ties you up from 9 to 5 Monday through Friday. You need at least one entire weekday or a large portion of several weekdays free. However, a job with enough freedom to take a weekday off when needed to keep an appointment would be satisfactory. Some frequently used jobs are waiter/waitress, temporary job agencies, and work for previous summer employers who know you well and are willing to give you time off when needed.

It's helpful, but not necessary, that the job be a step in the direction you want. For example, if you're headed for a retail buying career, any retail job would be helpful, even if it's in a totally different product line or type of store.