



JOB SEARCH STRATEGIES FOR TODAY'S JOB MARKET

THE COLLEGE GRADUATE CAREER LAUNCH GUIDE



More Than A Resumé

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Are you graduating from college this spring? Did you already graduate, but haven't yet found your first professional job? Or, perhaps you are looking for an internship to gain experience. Do you know what makes you a better candidate than all the others who have applied for YOUR job?

Think about it: What makes you stand out from all other job seekers like you—savvy, college-educated, impressive GPA, and leadership activities? Why are you better than everyone else who's applied for the same job?

College teaches you many things—but not who, what and how to search to land your first professional job. **When you identify your relevant and marketable talents and can succinctly convey why you best fit a specific job in a specific company, you will get noticed.**

You're making an important transition from college student to new professional, beginning with setting new goals for yourself. Goals are the building blocks of adulthood. And new goals require new knowledge, tools and behaviors. Once learned, these will last a lifetime.

In today's job market, achieving your goal can be challenging when you don't know how to create a job search strategy.

More Than A Resumé created this guide for college students. Jane Horowitz has championed college students in their job searches from colleges and universities across the country, and with majors from engineering to fine arts, from computer design to banking. Jane has made a measurable and lasting difference in college students' lives.

As you start your job search, take this advice to heart: Manage your expectations. **Don't take it personally. Be persistent, and be a master of the new rules of job searching.**

More Than A Resumé can show you how.

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Prepare to market yourself. Know what you are you good at and what you love to do. Know your talents and qualities. Be certain about how you want to be perceived.

YOUR VALUE

Ultimately, your resumé has one purpose: to get someone to contact you. Whether that person is a recruiter, hiring manager or HR generalist depends upon the job you applied for and the structure of the organization. So, how do you get someone to contact you? What is the one question you must answer?

For every position you apply for, you must answer the first question an employer has: What make you a better *candidate than all others who have applied for YOUR job?*

If you can clearly paint a picture of why you're the best fit for a specific job within a specific company—you will get noticed.

Know your value

Key to a successful job search is identifying what makes you a unique candidate, and then communicating this effectively to employers, both verbally and in writing.

- Identify your unique character and enhance your own understanding of your natural strengths, motivations and growth areas.
- Translate your major/degree and experience into developed and motivated skills. Motivated skills are those skills you use well or very well and involve actions and situations which you find interesting.



S.T.A.R. for accomplishments

Using the S.T.A.R. approach—situation, task, action, results—is a helpful way to get to your skills and how you've used them. You will identify your accomplishments and learn the structured manner of responding to interview questions.

Situation: Describe the situation that you were in or the task that you needed to accomplish.

Task: What goal were you working toward?

Action: Describe the action you took to address the situation. Actions relate to your skills.

Results: Describe the outcome of your actions. These are your accomplishments.

You don't need to put everything you've done on a resumé. Your resumé can be tailored to the position and employer to show your unique value, highlighting the information, keywords and phrases that are relevant for the position and employer.

Your natural talents and passions—the things you love to do—last a lifetime.
Discover and develop your strengths now.

A resumé is part of the nuts and bolts of a job search. Although your resumé represents you on paper, a resumé is about the employer.

Your resumé represents you on paper. It needs to be well-written. No typos. No gaps in your education that are not explained. No missing dates. Include your GPA if over a 3.0, honors and awards, but not your courses. **Employers are hiring a professional, not a student.** You can include links to your LinkedIn Profile and your website if you have one.



- I've used action verbs to describe responsibilities and accomplishments.
- I've emphasized my value to the employer throughout.
- I've projected myself as someone who can easily adapt to change, has a willingness to learn, and has the potential to be a contributor to the employer's goals.
- I've included the appropriate skills.
- I've given concrete examples of my accomplishments (using specific examples to back them up).
- Past employer/company names are accurate and the job tasks/duties are listed clearly.
- I've reviewed the job description and other jobs the employer has posted, and have customized my resumé using the applicable and important true-to-me keywords and phrases.
- I've included dates for each employer: months and years.
- I've included a brief explanation of my school and previous employers. (Not everyone reading your resumé will know every school and certainly not every employer. It's also another way to demonstrate relevancy.)

With a resumé you can now:

Set up your LinkedIn page and profile.

This is a professional profile that complements your resumé. Use your resumé to build your profile and add other relevant information.

Input into the school's career services database.

Employers, particularly those that are active in on-campus career fairs and have internship programs, will look for candidates in the school's database.

Send to your contacts.

Let family, friends and other contacts know you have started your job search. Ask for feedback on your resumé. Be specific about what you are looking for, and how they can help you.

A cover letter matters. It works in synergy with your resumé. It is to the point, fits with the tone of the employer, asks for the opportunity, and engages the reader to actually read your resumé—not toss it.

Your job search is a focused marketing campaign and you're the brand. Your targets are employers where there is a good fit. Fit is affected by two things: personal factors and cultural factors. Personal factors include having the skills to perform a job, combined with the drive to use those skills effectively. Cultural factors include your qualities or character, and how these fit with the manager and the organization.

Know your short- and long-term goals.

Start your job search by identifying what is important to you in a job and in the workplace. Determining what you want and need will help you formulate criteria for identifying employers that are a good fit for you—places where you will succeed.

Develop a targeted list of employers.

Applying for any job you see that looks interesting is not an effective job search strategy. Based on your goals, identify a robust list of employers in your career field that you are interested in researching and potentially pursuing for a job. Learn everything you can about these companies. Find people in your network who work there, or know people who do, who can help you understand the company.

Evaluate criteria to determine fit.

With goals, you can start to determine if the company is a good fit for you and you for it. It helps direct your networking efforts, and when you interview for jobs you will be able to show the interviewer you researched their company, are interested in the position, and that you really want the job.

Tailor your cover letter and resumé for each job and employer.

You have a strong master resumé. You have your targeted list of employers and you've researched each one. Now, you can write a cover letter and resumé that speaks directly to the job and company, and tells the employer what makes you the best candidate. The best cover letters identify a pain point—a problem to be solved—and demonstrates how you can help to address it.



Apply directly to the companies that interest you.

The most successful job searches start by applying to the company online, not through job boards. Closely watch the websites of the companies you've identify as a good fit. Once you've submitted your application, the hard work of getting your resumé into the hands of a person in the company begins.

Apply for jobs you are qualified for and fit your skills.

You have a better chance of getting interviewed when your skills are relevant.

Participate in career fairs.

On-campus career fairs are the best opportunities to have employers come to you. Go with a strategy to meet employers on your target list.

Join professional organizations.

If there is a professional organization in your career field, join it. Start participating in meetings and in its LinkedIn group to get to know people in your area of interest. It's an easy way to get comfortable networking.

A job search is a numbers game, but not in the way you might think. Sending out hundreds of resúmes does not increase your odds of getting an interview. Targeting employers is the way to increase your chances of getting an interview.

You are part of the most networked generation. With every status update on Facebook, you are marketing yourself to your audience. Networking is marketing: It's communicating, building and maintaining relationships, listening more than talking, and it's about being helpful to others. You do this instinctively with friends. Now, translate those skills to your job search.

It's time to put your relationship-building skills to use in your job search.

Your goal when networking is to have meaningful conversations with the people who can help you, or are connected to people in the profession/career or job you are interested in or actively pursuing.

Who are the most likely people?

1. Make a list of a dozen or so key people.
2. Rank your top six "must-connect-with-people."

Get and stay connected

Family and friends

- Family and friends who have graduated and are working
- The parents of your friends
- Family friends

College

- Connect with alumni
- Make appointments to talk with professors, faculty advisor, school administrators
- Career services center professionals

Organizations

- Professionals you've met at events or LinkedIn groups; these are like-minded people

Career Fairs

- Recruiters you've met



Networking Activities

People do want to help. But, they expect you to be prepared. You will also need to help people think about other people who can help you.

Letters and emails are fine for introductions. You then want to meet people face-to-face when possible, or by phone.

Conduct informational interviews:

- Ask questions about people's career paths.
- Ask about entry-level titles.
- What key factors led people to their career decisions; what would they do differently.
- Ask who they feel comfortable connecting you with.
- What organizations do they belong to; what do they read.
- Ask if you can send your resumé.
- Always ask how you can help them.

Stay connected. Let people know what you are doing. When you land a job, let them know.

Don't network with the objective of finding a job. Instead, focus your networking activities on connecting, making friends, and starting relationships.

LinkedIn has 200 million+ professionals and 1 million+ groups, representing more than 150 industries and 2 million+ companies, as well as 60,000+ alumni groups and associations. It's a primary tool for hiring managers and recruiters searching for talent.

Why LinkedIn?

- Builds a professional online presence.
- Connects you in a meaningful way with alumni and other contacts.
- Gives access to information to research companies and industries.
- Provides an easy way to stay current on your career issues.

Student LinkedIn profiles

Here are the simple guidelines to create your online brand:

1. Include a professional photo or a good headshot.
2. Write a headline with your area of study and/or career field.
3. Write a keyword-rich summary that includes the type of position you are looking for.
4. Inclusion of work experience, internships, extracurricular activities, volunteer work, and other categories to show a complete picture of who you are.
5. Seek recommendations from professors, supervisors and advisors.
6. Personalize your LinkedIn email address.

Getting started

- Join your school's group (a new LinkedIn feature) and alumni groups, and professional groups in your career field.
- Make connection with your contacts. But, it's quality not quantity.
- Start participating in group discussions.
- Connect with people in your field who are LinkedIn Open Networkers (LION).
- Connect with recruiters.



LinkedIn etiquette

LinkedIn is a professional/business site and you are transitioning from college student to professional.

- LinkedIn provides a basic introductory message, "I'd like to add you to my professional network on LinkedIn." It's a good idea to customize your requests. When individuals connect—say thank you.
- Not everyone will want to connect. Wait a month to send a second request. Still no response; move on.
- Be aware of and follow group rules.
- Not everyone will agree with a point you've made; do not take it personally. And don't be nasty in your responses.
- Only ask people you know to connect you with other people.
- Control which updates and activities you want people to see.

An interviewer has just one objective: to decide whether or not you're a good fit for the company and, if so, to make you a job offer. For you, the interview allows you to gather more details about the position and the company so that you can make an intelligent decision about the job.

Everything you've done to this point has prepared you for interviewing—which is presenting your brand to the hiring manager.

Have successful interviews

- An interview is a two-way conversation. Prepare questions. Ask questions of the interviewers throughout the interview.
- Listen carefully and respond accordingly.
- Keep your responses concise and to the point.

Telephone interviews

- Your voice personifies everything about you.
- Eliminate background noise.
- Speak directly into the mouthpiece.
- Avoid sitting in a hunched position.
- Pay attention to the interviewer's voice patterns.
- You don't have the benefit of using your body language. Use your voice instead; modulate and sound upbeat.

Video interviews

- Rehearse using a 1 count pause after each question before you answer to compensate for the delay.
- Dress appropriately. Wear solid conservative colors (but not bright white).
- Control your presentation by knowing and controlling the equipment.
- Be natural and confident.
- Minimize the background movement and noise.
- Put up a solid sheet as your backdrop.
- Look directly into the camera if using a webcam, and just over the interviewer's right shoulder when on Skype.



In-person interviews

Your job interview starts the moment you walk into the company's office. It includes the receptionist and the administrative assistant who escorts you to the interview. All eyes are on you, observing how you conduct yourself.

- Greet people with a firm handshake and maintain eye contact throughout the interview.
- Dress the part: avoid fragrances, limit jewelry, keep hair neat and clean, fresh breath, keep makeup natural and wear polished shoes.
- Body language is important. Sit upright. Be judicious in using your hands. Do not cross your arms.
- Avoid jargon and watch catchall phrases: "ummmmmms," "like," "okay," "you know."

Avoid:

- Talking about compensation.
- Asking how many hours a day you are required to work.
- Using "I" when talking about accomplishments of the team.
- Being negative about a previous job or supervisor.

An accurate predictor of future performance is past performance in similar situations. Employers use the behavioral interview technique to evaluate a candidate's fit with the company and potential for success.

Behavioral interviews are based on S.T.A.R.—
situation, task, action, result.

In a behavioral interview, you should:

- Use stories to share experiences that illustrate your skills, strengths and accomplishments.
- Describe the experiences reflected in your resumé.
- Focus on the positives of all your past experiences.
- Use the interview to learn more about the company.
- Relax, be yourself, and help the interviewer get to know you.

Use your time wisely; it's your time, so make sure you get your points across. Be specific: Give specific examples of how you had an impact and made a difference.

Behavioral questions explore your:

- Background
- Motivations
- Personality
- Future
- College and academics
- Job satisfaction
- Past performance



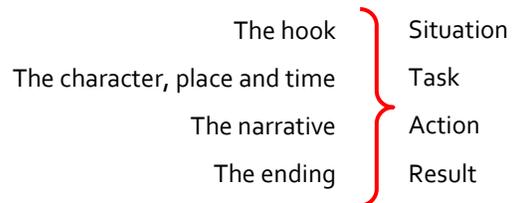
Why stories matter

Stories serve two critical purposes in the job interview. First, stories are engaging, entertaining, and help position you, as a person who would be great to work with. They allow you to show some personality.

Second, when you talk about yourself in the interview, you want to talk about your behavior, qualities and competencies. Stories give you a vehicle to do that.

Stories are constructed with the following components; each relates to the S.T.A.R. method.

Have at least five two-minute stories you can use in interviews.



In closing the interview

Ask about next steps and try to set up the second round of interviews. Let the interviewer know you are interested in the job.

After an interview

Thank you emails provide an opportunity for you to make the case one more time on why you are the right fit for the job and the company. Clarify any responses you felt you didn't answer well or need further explanation.

Hire for attitude. Train for skills.
Being able to demonstrate that *you are* likeable and a good fit is critical to a successful job search and getting hired.