

NAVIGATING YOUR JOB SEARCH

Professional Development Workshop Series

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There are eight important steps to take when navigating your job search. The better you understand and follow this process, the more successful your job search is likely to be! This packet includes the steps, along with worksheet space for you to think critically about your own search. Good luck and remember that the Career Development and Internships Office staff is here to help!

The 8 steps to landing your first job:

1. Know Yourself
2. Decisions and Priorities
3. Resume
4. Searching
5. Networking
6. Cover Letters
7. Interviews
8. Thank You

1. KNOW YOURSELF

How do you like to spend your time? What chores, tasks, or activities do you dread or avoid doing? What are your strengths? What are your weaknesses? Do you like working with people? Do you like to work in long, quiet, uninterrupted stretches? Do you like to interact with and work with others most of the time? In class, do you prefer group projects or individual papers? Do you like analyzing and thinking hard to solve problems with data? Or do you like to think freely about artistic things like painting, nature, or fashion? The better you know yourself, the more likely you are to pick a job that fits you. Ask yourself the following questions to start thinking about the best career fit for you:

What are my hobbies? _____

What are my favorite classes, the ones that feel more like fun than work?

What am I good at? _____

What jobs sound fun or exciting to me? _____

When I was little, what did I want to be when I grew up? _____

Visit CDIO to take a Skills Inventory test to learn about your strengths and weaknesses and personality; this can help you make an educated career choice!

2. DECISIONS AND PRIORITIES

This is the step that involves making some hard choices. You have to think critically, and be honest with yourself about what is important to you and what you want out of a job. This is a set of question to help you think about priorities and help you decide where to look for a job, what kind of job, what kind of work, and what kind of people you want to work with.

- Do you like to be inside or outside?
- Do you like to work in long stretches or do many different short tasks?
- Do you like to work on computers or paper?
- Do you want to live in a city or the country or in between?
- Do you prefer to be in a laid back or faced paced environment?
- Is money the most important measure of success to you?
- How do you measure success?
- Are you ambitious and driven to succeed to a high level?
- Do you like to travel frequently?
- Are you comfortable convincing people of your opinions?
- Do you want to commute by car, foot or train and for how long?
- Is it important to be near your family?
- Do you adapt well to change and new surroundings?

Think about these questions as you're considering your job search.

3. RESUME

Your resume is a very important tool in your job search. It tells the reader the highlights of your education and work experience, and helps them understand how you can help them. Your resume should be well written and represent you well. Here are some points to consider when writing or updating your resume:

- Is the formatting consistent?
- Is it easy to read?
- Have I checked the spelling, and reviewed a printed copy for visual mistakes?
- Am I proud of this?
- Do I feel confident letting this piece of paper represent me?
- Is it one page? (yes, it must only be one page)
- Is it free of any lines?
- Is it all true and accurate?
- Have I removed all mentions of high school and pre-college activities, grades, and awards?
- Does it have my name in a big type size at the top?
- Does it list my address, phone number and email?
- Have I included locations for every school, company or organization I attended or worked for?
- Is it printed on resume-quality paper?

Come to CDIO for help with your resume—we help make it perfect!

4. SEARCH

Your job search can be challenging, but with a positive attitude and some good tips, you can be successful. Here are tips to try, once you know what kind of job you want:

- Search Google to find out what industries are popular in your area, as there are often jobs in other industries you didn't think of
- Enter your address into Google Maps and Search Nearby for the type of organization. For example, searching "Hospital" would tell you about nearby hospitals if you're interested in nursing, customer service, or human resources.
- Use North Park's alumni office to connect with other graduates in your field and your geographic region. They will likely want to help a fellow Viking!
- Post a polite message on Facebook about what you are looking for—let your friends and family help you search.
- Use careerbuilder.com, monster.com, indeed.com, craigslist.com, but beware of scams and that these postings may be hard to interview for without a further connection—see step 6. Networking!
- Be open to jobs or companies you have never heard of—you never know what you're missing if you don't consider it.
- Set up a LinkedIn account; it's like a professional and job-focused Facebook.
- Customize your resume to each and every job you apply to. Yes, it is more work, but it shows and if you aren't willing to do this work, do you really want the job?
- Research the organization or company heavily. What is their mission statement? Are they growing or investing or building? Are they conducting layoffs or furloughs or reductions or closing plants or offices? Check the website for information about their ideal employees, or for any employee bios.
- Have a professional greeting on your voicemail message. Answer your phone in a professional way, especially if you don't know the number.
- Clean up an online pages or information about you, including pictures, status postings, personal web pages, twitter, myspace and Facebook. Recruiters will Google your name—do it and see what comes up.

Your search will take a lot of hours—if a job falls into your lap, that's great, but you can't wait for that to happen!

5. NETWORKING

Networking is the art of using conversation and relationship building skills to your advantage, and in this case, to get a job. Be polite, considerate, and appreciative. You should make sure you really know what you want to do, and be willing to talk about it. You can network with anyone—your professors, your dentist, your mom’s dog’s vet, your next door neighbor, your elementary school principal, the bus driver, the cafeteria lady, the grocery store cashier, the person trying on jeans in the fitting room next to you, the guy on the El. All of these people might know something or someone to help you, but if you don’t ask or start conversation, you’ll never know. Think of networking like playing a video game in which you aren’t sure where the final battle or test will be, but you know you should gather things and learn new techniques along the way. These new contacts and relationships might not help you in this job search, but they could help you later or you could help them!

- What do you want to tell a new contact about yourself and your job search?
- What kind of job are you looking for?
- What industry are you looking in?
- What region or location are you looking in?
- What is his or her educational and professional background?
- Who does he or she suggest you contact for more information?
- Where should you go or look for more information?
- What advice would he or she give you about your job search?
- Does he or she suggest a tactic or search method that is particular to the industry?
- What does he or she see happening in the industry right now?

To learn more, see our Networking 101 Handout in the CDIO!

6. COVER LETTERS

Cover letters are your chance to say things that aren't on your resume. You should highlight the experiences and roles from your resume that best apply to the job, but also use this as an opportunity to show your personality, like your passion, or creativity, or organization. Use the cover letter to give a fuller picture of you as a person. The tips below will help to you write your cover letter:

- Include the date that you are applying.
- List your name and address along the left margin.
- List the addressee's name, organization, and address along the left margin.
- Address the letter formally and respectfully.
- The first sentence should say how you found the opening.
- The second sentence should say that you believe you are a good fit for the role and organization.
- In the next paragraph, reference the mission statement. This let's them know you've researched them.
- List your experiences that best relate to the job.
- Show how your skills match the skills needed in the job.
- Say why you want to work for them.
- In the next paragraph, show your knowledge of the company—tie details back to the job.
- Express your wish to add value to their organization and help support their mission statement and goals.
- In the final paragraph, say that you are very interested in the position.
- Express your enthusiasm and that you have attached or included or posted a resume for their review.
- State that you hope to hear from them soon and would enjoy speaking in person about the position.
- Close with Sincerely, and then your name, and preferably your signature also.
- This should not take a full page.
- Spell Check.
- Check the person's name and spelling twice.
- Read aloud to make sure the sentences aren't awkward and sound concise.

Come to CDIO for more help on your cover letters—we're happy to proofread them with you!

7. INTERVIEWS

You should practice interviewing. Interviewing is a skill and you can get better at it with practice. As this is the primary tool organizations use to measure you for a job, you should want to get very good at it! Think through and plan your answers to standard questions, so you are prepared ahead of time and can answer intelligently and with confidence. You should practice interviewing with a friend, roommate, or CDIO staff member—have the other person ask you questions in a serious tone of voice, and you should answer as if its an interview. The more seriously you take the practice, the better prepared you will be. You can practice with multiple people to get better each time. Make sure to ask for their feedback of what you could improve. Prepare answers to questions like these:

- What is your greatest strength?
- What is your greatest weakness?
- Why do you want this job?
- How did you find out about this position?
- Tell me about yourself.
- Tell me about a time you worked in a team and what you accomplished.
- How do would you handle working with someone you didn't like?
- How do you respond to feedback?
- What is your long-term career plan?
- Would you accept this job if it didn't pay you as much as you hoped?
- Where else are you interviewing?
- What are your hobbies?
- Tell me about a time you failed at something.
- Tell me about a time you were in charge or something.
- Tell me about your college and why you chose it.

Remember to prepare questions for the interviewer. These should show your research, and your interest in the organization. You can think about asking questions like these:

- What characteristics or skills would this new hire ideally have?
- What do you need a new hire to accomplish in the first 3 months of the job?
- What are you struggling with right now?
- What are your favorite and least favorite parts of your job?
- What is your management style?
- What is the culture and pace of the organization?
- How do you feel your job relates to the mission statement?

8. THANK YOU NOTES

It is VERY important to write thank you notes after an interview. After a telephone interview, you may send an email thank you. Make sure that it is carefully written and has the same effort and attention as a hand written note.

After a live interview, you must write thank you notes by hand to every person you interviewed with. You should ask for their cards in the interviews if they aren't offered, or ask the person who coordinated the interviews for names and title afterward. He or she will understand that you want to write thank you notes. You should write the notes by hand in blue or black ink on professional stationary. They should be mailed as soon after the interview as possible.

This is your final chance to make a positive impression and will likely be your last communication with the organization before they make a yes or not decision about extending you an offer. Use the note to express your enthusiasm and interest in the role. It is wonderful if you can mention a piece of the interview conversation, to show that you remember them specifically. Also restate your qualifications and the value you would bring to the role. Close it with Sincerely or Best Wishes, and sign your name. Make sure you write neatly and that the envelope is properly addressed. You can always look up the address on the Internet and send multiple thank you notes to the same general organization address—the mailroom staff can sort them to the right places.

Come to the CDIO for help writing thank you notes so you can make a great last impression!