How To Construct A Job Search Strategy

Often times it is hard to get started on your job search and too many students wait until graduation to start the process. In order to create an effective job search strategy, considerable thought must be used to identify your interests and goals. There are a few questions you should ask yourself before constructing a job search strategy.

What industry appeals to me? There are various industries to choose from and having an interest in one or two can get you started with your job search. Types of industries are listed below and within these industries are thousands of job opportunities:

- **Energy** (oil/gas, alternative fuel, utilities)
- **Consulting** (management, IT, marketing)
- **Education** (primary to post-secondary, training)
- **Financial Services** (investment, banking, mortgage, credit cards)
- **Healthcare** (insurance, hospitals, medical supplies, records)
- **Manufacturing** (automotive, chemical, defense)
- **Not-for-Profit** (NGOs, charities, cultural)

What companies are you interested in working for? Research companies you would like to build a career with then you are ready to seek out the positions that can best utilize your experience and skill set.

Constructing your Job Search strategy:

1. Determine career targets (identify different career options within your field of study). This information can be obtained through your Career Planning and Placement Center (CP&P).
2. Review job descriptions from the company of interest to determine qualifications (skills, experience, attributes, education, etc.) and apply for those you can at least do the essential job duties required and/or review for what skills/experience you will need in order to qualify and build the skills/experience with a lesser position.

“Making strategic decisions now will pay off in the long run.”
3. Participate in internships/co-op programs to assist you with acquiring work experience and building skills in your field of study. In addition, internships often lead to full-time employment opportunities.

4. LEARN what you need to know (knowledge) in your field of study and things that will give you a competitive edge (i.e., certifications, strong GPA, study abroad, academic competitions, volunteer work, participation in organizations, etc.).

5. Network! Network! Network! Utilize professional groups, student organizations, school events, Corporate Information Sessions, luncheons, and conferences to meet people in your career interest or people who can connect you with other people.

### Types of Student Work Visas

There are several options used by U.S. employers to hire international students for either internships or after graduation. Below is some information on student visas:

**F-1 Optional Practical Training (OPT)**
- Is the most common non-immigrant visa for students in degree programs at U.S. universities
  - Allows the student to work for any employer in a job related to their field of study for a total of 12 months or 29 months if the student is in a STEM (science, technology, engineering, and mathematics) degree program
  - Allows the student to use for internships, part-time while school is in session, or after graduation. Any time used before graduation is subtracted from the time available after graduation
  - Allows the student to work in full-time employment during school breaks (summer, holidays). After graduation, the student can work full or part-time, no less than 20 hours per week

An **undergraduate** student is eligible for OPT only upon completion of one academic year and **graduate students** are eligible immediately upon enrollment. Employment can only begin after the student receives an Employment Authorization Document (EAD) through the school's International office. The application process and receipt of the document can take a few weeks up to 90 days.

An OPT can be acquired after the completion of a degree program and the student can apply for the EAD up to 90 days prior to completion of the degree program or within 60 days after completion of a degree program.

**J-1 Academic Training**
- J-1 students are not eligible for F-1 OPT
- Students are eligible for “academic training” during or after completing their education in the U.S. (18 months for most J-1 and 36 months for post-doctoral research)
- Students do not have to obtain an Employment Authorization Document (EAD), but instead they will need a written offer letter noting that the employment is directly related to their field of study

**H-1B Visa**
- Only an employer can file an H-1B petition for an employee
- Valid up to three years and can be extended an additional three years for a total of six years
- Candidate must have a four-year college degree or foreign equivalent

**Other Work Visas**
- TN (Canadians and Mexicans via the NAFTA Treaty); E-3 (Australians); O-1 (extraordinary ability); Q-1 (cultural exchange workers); L-1 (multinational companies); E-1/E-1 (companies owned by citizens of countries with treaties of trade of commerce with the U.S.).

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Sponsors for Educational Opportunity (SEO) is the nation’s premiere summer internship program for talented underrepresented students of color that can lead to full-time job offers.

Since its inception, SEO’s Career Program has placed over 5,000 students in internships that lead to opportunities in exciting and rewarding careers in the most competitive industries worldwide. Since 1980 SEO has provided underrepresented students of color with summer internships leading to full-time jobs.

More than 30 years later, Blacks, Hispanics, and Native Americans are still underrepresented in many top entry level jobs.

Internships with the following industries are offered:

- Corporate Financial Leadership
- Investment Banking/Research, Sales, Trading, and Transaction Services
- Media and Communications
- Healthcare
- Real Estate

For more information, please visit: [www.seo-usa.org](http://www.seo-usa.org)

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In addition to one-on-one résumé/career counseling, the Career Planning and Placement Center (CP&P) provides 24/7 access to its online Career Services system – TigerConnect.

TigerConnect offers an array of resources:
- Five (5) Job/Internship Databases
- Career Insider – Company Research/Career Research/Career E-Books
- Online Campus Career Coach
- Career Spots – Informational Videos
- Online Resource Library
- Online Events/Programs Calendar
- On-Campus Interview Schedules

**EMPLOYMENT NEWS**

**How to utilize Staffing Agencies to fill in the Employment Gap**

Staffing agencies can be a strategic way to let employers know you are in a continuous mode of strengthening/building your skill set and experience.

Too often students graduate without a job and registering with a staffing agency can put you in a better position to acquire work until you find meaningful employment.

Most staffing agencies are employed by Fortune 500 companies to provide human capital for special projects and temporary assignments. This also gives the employer a chance to see if the candidate is a good fit for the company.

**Staffing Agencies:** Manpower * Accountemps * Office Team * Robert Half * Aerotek

**What are you Worth?**

It is important to understand your “market” worth, along with other variables to avoid taking the low end of a salary offer. Negotiation is something everyone should understand and utilize when deciding your future salary potential. Below are some tips/suggestions to consider:

- Take a look at the growing industries and salaries when determining a field of study
- Consider the entire package. Understanding the worth of benefits (health insurance, perks, stock options, etc.) is important. Also, don’t ignore the location of the job, along with the cost of living for that area
- Avoid asking the salary question on the first interview. If you get to round two this will be the time to ask about the salary, but it doesn’t stop here...utilize your value and the fact that the company is interested in you to negotiate, if applicable
- State a salary range when asked by an employer (i.e., $35,000 - $45,000). Salary ranges will allow for flexibility if you have to negotiate. Normally the amount in the middle will be what you are striving for based on everything mentioned above

**CAREER TIPS**

- Update your information with your Career Center
- Revamp your résumé and revise/tweak for each job
- Identify growing industries and career interests
- Research companies and network with people who are in your field of interest
- Practice presenting yourself in an interview, networking event, and within the community
- A firm handshake, smile, and eye contact is your first impression
- Know what sets you apart from the average candidate
- When filling out an application and the salary question is asked, put the range or simply put “Negotiable.”
- Utilize salary resources in TigerConnect – Career Insider and websites such as www.salary.com

THE MASTER’S DEGREE AND YOU!

Burning QUESTIONS! – Should I pursue a master’s degree?  When should I pursue a master’s degree?  Will I get a return on investment with a master’s degree?  How much will I be worth with a master’s degree?  What type of master’s degree should I obtain?  All of these questions are valid and considerable thought should be utilized when making a decision to obtain a master’s degree.

Questions you should ask yourself

1. What does my current experience and education landscape encompass and will a master’s degree add to that value (work experience, post-secondary degree, career target/direction, internships, etc.)?
2. What makes sense as to the direction I want to portray on my résumé?  Often times we pile on education and forget about the picture/direction we are painting on our résumé...this is what employers look at even before you arrive to plead your case.
3. Can I really afford the cost and time associated with obtaining additional education if it will not propel me to the next level (promotion, career advancements, and/or to compete effectively in my current field of study)?
4. What types of companies hire post-graduate candidates and in what fields (areas of study/experience) are realizing the biggest return on investment?
5. Should I look at those companies that offer continuing education for post-graduate education?

Tips/suggestions to consider

1. Strategically look at your career options and be HONEST with yourself on if you need a master’s degree to obtain your goals.
2. Talk with a Career advisor and know what your options are before you sign-up for an added expense.
3. Work experience is more relevant after receiving a college degree than anything else.  Master’s degrees require work experience for balance.  Work 2-5 years and then consider getting a master’s degree.
4. Most companies will consider your post-secondary degree along with your experience and match it with your master’s degree to make sense of what you have to offer.  If it doesn’t make sense to them, then normally they will pay you based on your post-secondary degree.

Remember, getting a master’s degree is almost the same as buying a car, luxury items, or traveling around the world.  It is an investment that may not give you the expected return, so take time to strategically and effectively make a sound decision.

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