

# JOB SEARCH ADVICE FROM CAREER SERVICES DIRECTORS AROUND THE COUNTRY

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Career services directors from a wide variety of colleges and universities offer their best tips for finding a job, particularly in a difficult market.

## Positive/Constructive Attitudes

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- **If you want a job, you have to look for it.** New openings are posted every day. Apply!
  - **Make the job search your #1 priority.** Make a plan, schedule your time.
  - **Execute your search** as if you were working for yourself.
  - **Keep focused on what is in your control** versus beyond your control.
  - **Start to apply early**, at least a 6-9 months before you plan to graduate.
- **Pay attention!** Read (and act on) the email notifications you receive from the Career Development Center. Utilize all resources available to you.
  - **Be prepared to work hard and intentionally** at securing employment rather than working casually and randomly. Finding a job is one of the hardest jobs you'll ever have.
  - **Do your research** to learn about entry-level positions and the hiring process for the industry or organization in which you want to work.
  - **Understand that job searching and transitioning** from college to work takes time and energy. Plan to work harder than you thought.

## Marketing Yourself

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- **It is critical that your [resume](#) (288 kb pdf), [cover letters](#) (36.5kb pdf) and [interview preparation](#) (49.4 kb pdf) are stellar and highlight your strengths, results and accomplishments.** Use the services and online tools provided by the Career Development Center.
- **Emphasize job specific knowledge AND [transferable skills](#) (34.5 kb pdf).** Employers are looking for people who can make an immediate contribution. Transferable skills such as communication, problem-solving and analysis are always in demand but your job specific skills might distinguish you from other candidates and be regarded as a way to make an immediate contribution.
- **When applying for jobs, be prepared to talk about a school project, internship or volunteer experience in which you put forth tremendous effort and succeeded in accomplishing the task.** Grades aren't everything, but if you have a good GPA, be sure to market it too.
- **Be prepared to tell stories which focus on specific examples** of you performing a skill/personal strength or an accomplishment.
- **Hone your [professional etiquette skills](#) (86kb pdf)** such as dining etiquette, thank you notes for all who have helped you, respect and kindness for people at all levels of an organization. Display interest and enthusiasm for opportunities.
- **Be clear about what you are offering an employer.** Not just the skills you have but how these can be adapted to fit positions that may be on the periphery of the field in which you are searching. Try not to limit yourself to only searching for the ideal job but keep in mind that everyone starts somewhere and builds from there!
- **It is more important than ever to focus on your strengths and not just what jobs are available.** Look for opportunities to leverage your skills.

- **Prepare for competition:** Put yourself in the employer's shoes, then ask yourself, what do you want to see, how do you want to be approached? Think like the employer and then evaluate yourself, your resume, your approach. How are you going to present yourself so you are the one they pick?
- **Dress to impress** for all appointments or encounters with potential employers.
- **Hiring decisions are based on your ability to do the job, how well you mesh with the team, how likable you are, and your interest in the organization**, so put your best foot forward.
- **Attend and learn how to work career/job fairs** – have your elevator pitch and your resume ready to go.

## Networking

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- **Networking is still a critical part** of how most people find jobs, and in a tight market it becomes particularly important. Take advantage of every opportunity to meet and interact with professionals in your fields of interest, extend your knowledge of preferred career fields, find out who is hiring and get personal referrals to hiring managers.
- **[Network for information](#)** (64.5 kb pdf), not just job leads. Valuable information might include trends, skills, names of other contacts, etc. Spend the majority of your time doing this. The most effective strategy for landing a job is networking (78%) and employee referrals (65%); a direct result of networking.
- **Let everyone know in your ever-growing network** that you are looking for a job and be specific about what assets you can offer and your interests.
- **Build connections to employers**, and be as direct and personal as possible. Do not just apply online.
- **Put yourself out there** to meet people and build your network.
- **Get over your reluctance to ask people you don't know for help.** Alumni are often more than willing to help even though they don't know you. Use Binghamton's [Alumni Career Network](#).
- **Networking is the key to finding a job in today's marketplace.** Someone has to take an interest in you and you need to create that interest.
- **Meet 'real live' people in your field.** Attend professional association chapter meetings and rub elbows with professionals in your field of interest at these networking events.
- **Use your contacts.** Contacts are anyone you know - ANYONE. When first creating your list, do not choose to leave someone off that list because they aren't working in your field of interest or because you think they may not know anyone of interest to you. You don't know their network! Let your contacts know what you would like to pursue and ask if they know of anyone you might talk with related to your interests.
- **Register and participate in the online tool, [Linked In](#).** It is a very productive way to identify employers, alumni groups, industry affinity groups, etc. You can use it to identify potential contacts for a job search, even create a job search group of your own. Just as with your resume, you should spend some time creating a very well-written Linked In profile and include links to an on-line versions of your resume, your own blogs if appropriate (professional), examples of work, etc.

## Consider All Options

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- **Consider alternative work sectors** and organizations that could relate to your career goals. For example, finance major may want to consider government or health care organizations rather than or in addition to corporate finance.
- **Think outside the box!** Cast a wider net! Keep an open mind about options and employers. Get creative in how you think about your job search and expand your search outside of traditional settings for your field.
- **Consider relocation.** Be willing, even for awhile, to relocate to gain experience with a longer-term goal of working in your first preference area. Are there locations where the job market is not feeling the effects of the recession as drastically as others? Are there cities that are doing more hiring in your specific career field? Use the Internet to research job opportunities, industries and livability of different locations. Be sure to keep in mind cost-of-living adjustments. Go where the jobs are.

- **In order to earn a living**, you may need to temporarily consider jobs that may not utilize your college education. For example, find an evening and/or weekend job to make money or pay off loans, then volunteer during the daytime hours for organizations where you can enhance your job-related skills, make connections and position yourself for job opportunities. For example, community service agencies often need volunteers who have communication (written and/or verbal), marketing, computer, event planning, or research skills. Also, leaving weekdays open for full-time job interviews will be helpful, especially as the economy begins to improve.
- **Attending graduate or professional school** is certainly an option for some, but not for everyone. Several key things to remember: (1) because more people are considering this option, the competition is likely to increase (and possibly at a time when graduate school programs are neither growing nor have funds to support graduate students); (2) historically, the number of employment vacancies requiring bachelor degrees is greater than the number of employment vacancies requiring graduate degrees (i.e., having a graduate degree may not make someone more competitive); and, (3) the choice of a graduate program should include consideration of the successful employment track record of previous students of the program (i.e., ask for information to see where graduates found jobs and general salary ranges).
- **Apply for 'temporary' positions.** Don't overlook an opening that is labeled 'temporary' because you want something more permanent. Temporary jobs can be extended longer and can lead to other opportunities within and outside the organization.
- **Check out temporary agencies** as a gateway into organizations or fields of interest. It's a great way to get your foot in the door, network, and prove yourself.
- **Follow the money** – the stimulus money, that is, because it will lead you to jobs over the next few years.
- **Employers are increasingly using internships** as a tool to hire graduates, so it is wise to incorporate one or more internships in your plan.
- **Focus on building your skills and experience**, remembering that your first or second job will more than likely not be in the industry you settle into long-term.
- **Part-time jobs, volunteering, job shadowing and short-term projects** might be the best way to gain experience in the field and learn about the hidden job market.
- **Many state and federal agencies** are losing "baby boomer" employees to retirement. Even with budget cuts, many of these positions need to be replaced.

## Things To Avoid

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- **Don't let news of some employers rescinding accepted job offers** dissuade you from engaging in a job search. Although the few that are rescinding offers are a few too many, a significant majority of employers will not resort to this kind of action and there are still some great job opportunities available.
- **Don't give up on an entire industry** because of bad news reported about a few high profile employers in that industry. Do your homework on specific employers of interest and you may be surprised where the career opportunities will surface.
- **Do not let the economy dictate your job choice.** The economy is most effectively used as a secondary factor in career decision-making. Decide first what you want to do. Assess as always your focus and direction. Then work to evaluate how the economy will play a role and adjust. Too many new grads (and alumni) are going after jobs that they have no interest in doing. This approach guarantees you will be back on the market at least once before the economy turns positive again.
- **Do not OD on CNN**, because the media often thrives on sensationalizing the negative even though positive things are still occurring every day.
- **Don't stay in your comfort zone.** Even though it is tempting to return home and find a comfortable daily routine, which aids in the avoidance of the whole job search process, refrain from hiding under the covers and feeding your fears. Stay engaged in the process and position yourself; treat this as an intense time of career research by learning about and connecting with those top organizations you are interested in so when the market turns around, you will be in the right place at the right time.

## Follow Up

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- **Be optimistic and persistent.** Employers still respond to job seekers who make the extra effort to write follow-up thank you notes, and continue to reconfirm interest – when the hiring process gets protracted. Position yourself as a candidate that “wants the job the most”. Use the advice of career counselors in assessing how proactive you can get with an employer.
- **Say – and write** – “thank you” notes to those who do help you and keep them apprised of your progress. You will be remembered favorably for your courtesies.
- **Inquire** about each of your applications in the first two weeks with an email or phone call.

## Flexibility/Compromise

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### Be willing to:

- Consider moving to and working in a different geographic location than you had planned.
- Consider doing a different kind of work than you believe would be ideal, at least for the short term.
- Consider working in a different industry than originally planned.
- Consider a lower starting salary than you had expected.
- Accept a part-time position. It may position you for full time openings.
- Adopt a lifestyle different from that you had envisioned.

## Encouragement

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- **This is a very strong country.** When the rate of unemployment in the U.S. is 9%, this means that 91% of the people in this country who want to work have a job.
- **Keep in mind that over the longer term, the demographics are on your side.** There will be many more professionals retiring than there are next generation replacements, and employers will soon be aggressively seeking to hire energetic, well-prepared college graduates.
- **Excellence of preparation and performance,** strength of network, passionate execution, and working with an organization that shares your values are still the greatest predictors of success in a job search.
- **Identify one, two, or several people to be part of your support team.** Their role is to be there for you through the ups and downs – to remind you that you are a good person, who is talented, determined and will succeed. Talk with "potential candidates" and ask if they can and are willing to become a member of your team. Only select people who will truly be supportive!
- **Even in the good times, 90% of the positions were offered** by the small and medium-sized organizations. Remember that what you hear in the media relates for the most part to the larger organizations, and some companies are still hiring.
- **Dream big** and create back up plans.