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# Effective Job Search Strategies

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*Assess. Explore. Experience. Transition.*

CAREER CENTER  
*for* VOCATION & DEVELOPMENT



# Do what you love, love what you do

Finding a job and developing a career path that fits your interests and qualifications is a combined process of self awareness, research, networking and communication with others. Expect your job search to take time, so don't wait until the last minute! Ideally, you should begin your search 3-6 months before you'd realistically like to start working. The purpose of this job hunting guide is to guide you through this process, and to provide you with useful resources to make your search more effective.

## Job Tip #1: Know Yourself

Before beginning your search, be sure to do a thorough evaluation of your workplace interests, values, strengths, and areas of improvement. If you'd like a guide to help with this, request to take a self-assessment inventory through the Career Center.

**What do YOU have to offer to a potential employer?**

We encourage you to think broadly about what you have to offer, even beyond your academic major. Once you determine your core strengths (skills, qualifications, experiences), take confidence in them, and learn how to communicate these strengths to others. This is critical when communicating what you have to offer, and why you think you would be a "good fit." Being aware of what you have to offer and knowing how to clearly articulate that to an employer will make you a more marketable candidate.

## Job Tip #2: Industry Research

Once you identify your interests, values, strengths and areas of improvement, it's time to do some research and narrow down your options. What career fields best represent your areas of interest? It may be helpful to think and research more broadly. Then, you will know more information to narrow down your focus as you move forward during the initial stages of your research.

- FOCUS** – A computerized career planning system. Available on the Career Center's website
- Career Center Website** – [messiah.edu/offices/career](http://messiah.edu/offices/career)
- A few other websites to get you started...**
  - Occupational Outlook Handbook: [www.bls.gov/oco/](http://www.bls.gov/oco/)
  - O\*Net: <http://online.onetcenter.org>
  - Wet Feet: [www.wetfeet.com](http://www.wetfeet.com)
- Company/Organization Websites** - If there are companies or organizations that interest you, check out their websites to learn more about them. Items to pay attention to include mission statement, population they serve, special recognitions, etc. Note their "human resources" or "employment" links for job postings. You can also begin to follow companies/organizations through their Twitter, LinkedIn, or Facebook accounts.
- Informational Interviews** - Learn more about fields of interest through informational interviews with professionals who have taken similar paths. Consider networking with Messiah College alumni through FalconNet. See the Career Center website for more information . Keep in mind, you are not asking for a job; rather you are gathering information on a particular profession or career path.

"Welcome to the Real World",  
she said to me,  
condescendingly  
Take your seat  
Take your life  
Plot it out in black and white  
Well I never lived the dreams of  
the prom kings  
Or the drama queens  
I'd like to think the best of me  
Is still hiding up my sleeve

They love to tell you  
Stay inside the lines  
But something's better  
On the other side

- John Mayer, "No Such Thing"

## Job Tip #3: Documents that Brand and Differentiate Yourself

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### Résumé

See the Career Center's guide on *Résumés & Cover Letters* for information on how to perfect these documents (also available on our [website](#)). The Career Center offers a free, drop-off résumé/cover letter critiquing service. Take advantage of it as often as necessary!

Your résumé should reflect your significant skills, experiences, and educational background. Employers will also pay close attention to see if you have highlighted key transferable skills for the position to which you're applying.

### Cover Letter

"Do I need to send a cover letter?" Unless the employer specifically states that they do not require a cover letter, the answer to this question is ... yes! A cover letter provides you the opportunity to let the employer know what you are seeking, what you have to offer, and why you would like a position with their company/organization. Also, the cover letter actively demonstrates your writing and communication skills. More information, along with samples, on writing a cover letter can be found in our *Résumé & Cover Letter Guide*, also found on our [website](#).

### References

Choose individuals who know you and your work ethic well. References might include professors, advisors, work or internship supervisors, or others in professional positions who can speak to your strengths. It's important to *ask* them if they feel comfortable serving as a reference for you. As a courtesy, provide your identified references with your résumé and job description for the position for which you're applying. **Don't forget to write them a thank-you note!**

## Job Tip #4: Conducting Your Search

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When conducting your job search, it's essential to use a mixed-method approach – don't rely just on monster.com or the want-ads. Instead, plan on utilizing a combination of strategies mentioned below.

❑ **FalconJobs** – Messiah's online job search database. [https://www.myinterfase.com/messiah\\_careercenter/student](https://www.myinterfase.com/messiah_careercenter/student)  
Simply create an account if you don't have one already.

❑ **Career Fairs** – Don't miss the face-to-face time with employers. A few of the career fairs sponsored/co-sponsored by the Career Center include:

- Fall Career & Grad School Expo (largest recruiting event - open to all majors)
- Accounting Night
- Cumberland Valley Consortium (CVC) Job & Internship Fair
- Central Pennsylvania Employment Consortium (CPEC) Job & Internship Fair
- Teacher Recruitment Day & CVC Teacher Job Fair

Check the Career Center [website](#) for dates and locations!

❑ **Networking** – As you may have heard, networking is the #1 access point to career opportunities. Think about those who are in your network – family, friends, church members, professors, Messiah alumni, internship supervisors, your roommate's parents, and on and on! Ask people in your network for referrals so you can begin to "grow" your connections. Don't be afraid to ask! Check out [www.socialnetworkaudit.com](http://www.socialnetworkaudit.com) for a tool to help you organize your network.

### Reality Check

According to an article in *The Harvard Business Review*, nearly **80%** of job openings available are never advertised. The moral of this fact is to invest time into developing your network.

**Check out Messiah's *FalconNet!* Contact the Career Center for more info!**

- ❑ **Professional Associations** – Most career fields have a professional association that offers professional development resources, networking opportunities, and sometimes job postings. You may have to pay for membership, but most associations offer discounted rates to students. If you're unsure if there's an association for your field of interest, ask someone in your academic department or check out a professional association directory: <http://www.weddles.com/associations/index.cfm> and [http://dir.yahoo.com/Business\\_and\\_Economy/Organizations/Professional/](http://dir.yahoo.com/Business_and_Economy/Organizations/Professional/)
- ❑ **Twitter and LinkedIn Accounts** – Check out the jobs advertised on Twitter and LinkedIn. Better yet, create your own accounts to network through the backdoor with professionals in organizations that interest you.
- ❑ **Internet** – Websites focused on specific job areas (e.g. "Art Jobs Online") are typically more productive than those that attempt to cater to every type of field. Check out the Career Center website for a listing of general job search sites.
- ❑ **Local Chamber of Commerce** – Locate yours at [www.uschamber.com](http://www.uschamber.com).
- ❑ **Local Career Services Offices** – If you are relocating, and it's difficult to take advantage of Messiah's alumni career services from a distance, contact local career services offices and ask what services you can have access to. They may charge a minimal fee.
- ❑ **"New Professionals" Local Networks** (e.g. Harrisburg Young Professionals [www.hyp.org](http://www.hyp.org))
- ❑ **Employer Directories** – Find potential employers in specific industries and geographic locations. Employer directories can be found on the Career Center's website.
- ❑ **Employer Websites** – Identify companies that hire for the positions you are seeking, and regularly check their job postings.
- ❑ **Direct Mailing** – If the company you desire to work for does not have openings posted on their website, send a résumé and cover letter which clearly states your interest in their organization, what type of position you are seeking, and your qualifications. This does not guarantee they will respond to you, but they may see something in your materials that piques their interest.

## Job Tip #5: The Interview

Pick up a copy of our *Interviewing Tips Guide* in the Career Center, and take advantage of our Practice Interview Service. Check the website for upcoming dates for practice interviews. Thorough preparation is the key to successful interviewing!

## Job Tip: #6: Helpful Hints

*Consider the following suggestions when you are conducting your job search:*

- **Answering machines/voicemail:** make sure it's professional – nothing funny or cutesy. If you are expecting calls from potential employers, be sure to alert your roommates as well. Always answer the phone in a professional tone.
- **Professional communication:** No slang, use capital letters and appropriate punctuation. Always remember to have your materials edited by a peer, professor, and/or a career coach before you send them out to potential employers. Any mistakes can count as a strike against you.

- **Thank-you notes:** This is a very important part of the process! If you meet a new contact who provides you with information related to your job search, send them a thank-you note. The same goes for individuals who participate in an informational or job interview.
- **Keep records** of your networks and places you're applying, and remember to follow-up.
- **It's never too late** to build your experience. Consider an internship, part-time job, volunteer experience or co-curricular organization to become involved in. These are great résumé builders.
- **Procrastination doesn't pay:** Don't wait until the week of graduation if you expect to land a position for the following week. Start early, and set achievable goals to keep yourself motivated.
- **Attitude:** Make a conscious effort to maintain a positive attitude. Remember that many strong, qualified candidates experience rejections, so get back on your feet and forge ahead!
- **Support network:** Surround yourself with people who will offer encouragement and support to you through the job searching process.

## CAREER CENTER RESOURCES & SERVICES

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- Career Coaching** – Not sure which direction you're headed? Have specific questions about your search? Don't hesitate to set up an appointment to talk with one of our career development coaches.
- Practice Interviews** – Stop by or give us a call to set up a 45-minute appointment. Come dressed as you would for the real thing.
- Résumé & Cover Letter Critiquing Service** – Drop off your documents at the Career Center to be reviewed by a career development coach. Please allow a one-week turnaround.
- FalconJobs** – Simply create an account at [https://www.myinterfase.com/messiah\\_careercenter/student/](https://www.myinterfase.com/messiah_careercenter/student/) and have access to hundreds of job postings. Once you have an account, post your résumé for employers to view.
- Going Global** – Job searching resources by city or country. Find information on networking groups, cost-of-living data, job postings, and employer listings. Access Going Global from the Career Center's website.
- Job Bulletins** (Contact the Career Center for usernames and passwords):
  - *Current Jobs in Performing Arts*
  - *Current Jobs in Writing, Editing & Communication*
  - *Current Jobs in Liberal Arts*
  - *Art Jobs Online*
  - *Environmental Career Opportunities*
  - *The International Educator (TIE)*

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