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# Effective Job Search Strategies

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Career Center  
For Vocation & Development



## Do what you love, love what you do

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Finding a job that fits your interests and qualifications is a process that's unfortunately not always quick or linear. 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 intention of this job hunting guide is to make this process a little less overwhelming, and to provide you with useful tips to make your search more efficient.

### Job Tip #1: Know Yourself

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Before beginning your search, be sure to do a thorough evaluation of your workplace values, strengths, and interests. 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. 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

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Once you nail down your values, strengths, and interests, it's time to do some research and narrow down your options. What career fields fit best for you? Not sure? Here are some helpful resources to get you started:

- ❑ **FOCUS** – a computerized career planning system. Contact the Career Center for more info.
- ❑ **VAULT Career Research Library** (go to Career Center website, [www.messiah.edu/offices/career/](http://www.messiah.edu/offices/career/), and click on "Vault Online Career Library" listed on left sidebar)
- ❑ **Career Center Website and Resource Library** – check out books on the industries of your choice
- ❑ **A few 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)
  - Career Center website – note web resources by major: [www.messiah.edu/offices/career](http://www.messiah.edu/offices/career)
- ❑ **Company 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.
- ❑ **Informational Interviews** - Learn more about fields of interest through informational interviews with professionals who have taken similar paths. Consider taking advantage of our Alumni Career Network to be matched with an alum who fits the description. Keep in mind, you are not asking for a job; rather you are gathering information on a particular profession. A list of appropriate questions can be found in the Career Center.

**"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: VIP Documents

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### Resume

See the Career Center's guide on *Resumés & Cover Letters* for information on how to perfect these documents (also available on our [website](#)). Quick tip: use high quality resumé paper. The Career Center offers a free, drop-off resumé/cover letter critiquing service. Take advantage of it as often as necessary! Or, meet with a career counselor if you have questions about where to start.

Your resumé 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. More information, along with samples, on writing a cover letter can be found in our Resumé & 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 them with your resumé 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, use a variety of the strategies mentioned below.

- ❑ **eRecruiting** – Messiah's online job search database: <http://messiah.erecruiting.com>. Simply create an account.
- ❑ **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:
  - Career & Grad School Expo (largest recruiting event - open to all majors)
  - Accounting Night
  - Nursing Job Fair
  - Cumberland Valley Consortium (CVC) Job & Internship Fair
  - Central Pennsylvania Employment Consortium (CPEC) Job & Internship Fair
  - Teacher Recruitment Day & CVC Teacher Job Fair
  - Human Services Job & Internship Fair

### **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 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, etc. etc. Ask people in your network for referrals so you can begin to “grow” your network. Don’t be afraid to ask! Check out [www.socialnetworkaudit.com](http://www.socialnetworkaudit.com) for a tool to help you organize your network.

**Check out our *Alumni Career Network!*** Details can be found on our [website](#).

- ❑ **Professional Associations** – most career fields have a professional association that offers professional development resources, networking opportunities, and sometimes job postings. You will likely 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://dir.yahoo.com/Business\\_and\\_Economy/Organizations/Professional/](http://dir.yahoo.com/Business_and_Economy/Organizations/Professional/)
- ❑ **Internet Surfing** – 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 our 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))
- ❑ **General Job Search Sites** – see Career Center’s [website](#) for a recommended list.
- ❑ **Employer Directories** – find potential employers in specific industries and geographic locations. Employer directories can be found in the Career Center’s resource library and online.
- ❑ **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 resume 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**

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

## **Job Tip: #6: Helpful Hints**

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*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 counselor before you send them out to potential employers. Any mistakes can count as a strike against you.
- **Attitude:** Make a conscious effort to maintain a positive attitude. Remember that many good, qualified people never get a call back or 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.
- **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.
- **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.
- **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 resumé builders.

## Career Center Services to Remember:

- ❑ **Career Counseling** – 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 counselors.
- ❑ **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.
- ❑ **Resumé & Cover Letter Critiquing Service** – Drop off your documents at the Career Center to be reviewed by a career counselor. Please allow 1 week turnaround.
- ❑ **eRecruiting** – Simply create an account at <http://messiah.erecruiting.com>, and have access to hundreds of job postings. Once you have an account, post your resume for employers to view.
- ❑ **Job Bulletins** (Contact the Career Center for usernames and passwords):
  - *Current Jobs in Art*
  - *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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 Evening & Drop-in Hours as posted