

# **JOB SEARCHING**

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**Tips & Strategies**



**CAREER AND  
PROFESSIONAL  
DEVELOPMENT CENTER**

# DO WHAT YOU LOVE, LOVE WHAT YOU DO

Finding a job and developing a career path that fits your interests and qualifications is a process of self-assessment, research and exploration, networking and communication with others. Your job search will 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 guide is to lay out the process, and to provide you with useful resources to make your search most effective.

## Job Tip #1: Know Yourself

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Before beginning your search, be sure to do a thorough evaluation of your workplace interests, values, strengths, and areas in need of improvement. If you'd like help with this, utilize the assessment inventories through [FOCUS](#) in the Career and Professional Development Center. Or, talk with us about taking the Strengths Finder assessment!

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

## Job Tip #2: Research Your Industry of Interest

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Once you've thoroughly gone through the process of self-assessment, it's time to do some research and narrow down your options. What career fields best represent your goals and areas of interest? Start broadly, and narrow as you get more information.

### Resources to assist in researching careers:

- [Career Resources by Major on the Career and Professional Development Center Website](#)
- A few other good websites to get you started...**
  - Occupational Outlook Handbook: <https://www.bls.gov/ooh/>
  - O\*Net: <http://online.onetcenter.org>
- Company/Organization Websites** – Pay careful attention to important items such as their mission statement, population they serve, special recognitions, etc. Explore their “Human Resources” or “Employment” links for job postings.
- Social Media** – Begin following companies and organizations through their **Twitter**, **LinkedIn**, or **Facebook** accounts.  
**\*NOTE:** Be sure your own social network profiles are professional in nature before you connect with potential employers!
- Informational Interviews** – This is a GREAT way to learn more about fields of interest from professionals who have taken similar paths while networking at the same time! Consider searching for alumni through the **Messiah University Professional Network on LinkedIn**. View the CPDC [Information Interview Guide](#) 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.



## Job Tip #3: Brand and Differentiate Yourself

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### Résumé, Cover Letter and References

See the CPDC's guide on [Résumés & Cover Letters](#) for information on how to perfect these documents. The CPDC offers a drop-in résumé/cover letter critiquing service. Take advantage of it as often as necessary!

### Cover Letter

There are mixed reviews on the usefulness of cover letters. Typically, it doesn't hurt to include one, and use it as an opportunity to make the case for your candidacy, while showcasing great writing skills! More information on cover letters, along with samples, is located in our [Résumé & Cover Letter Guide](#).

### References

In most cases, you should wait to submit references until you're asked for them. Always bring them along to an interview. They should be typed on professional résumé paper. 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 and accomplishments. It's important to **ask** them if they feel comfortable serving as a reference for you. As a courtesy, provide your identified references with sufficient time (at least 2-3 weeks) and 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: Conduct Your Search

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When conducting your job search, it's essential to use a mixed-method approach. Don't rely solely on online job boards. Utilize a combination of strategies mentioned below. Expect your search to take time. Hearing nothing back, or facing rejection from employers, is a natural part of the process, so perseverance is important!

- 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 others! Ask people in your network for referrals to grow the number of connections. Don't be afraid to ask! Also be sure to utilize the **Messiah University Professional Network on LinkedIn**.
- Handshake** – Messiah's online job search/employer database. All of the jobs the CPDC receives are posted on this website. Your Messiah University log-in credentials will be your username and password to log-in to Handshake. The more information you add to your profile, the better Handshake can match you with strong opportunities.
- Career Fairs** – For certain industries (not all!), career fairs are a popular way to recruit college grads. **\*Check the CPDC [website](#) for dates and locations of these and other events!**
- Volunteer Experiences** – Sometimes, the best way to get a foot in the door is to offer your time free of charge to an organization. This is especially true for non-profits and human service agencies. Additionally, volunteer experiences in general are a great way to increase your networks and add to your relevant experiences.
- Internships** – A proven way to increase your marketability is through an internship. Learn about the CPDC's [Internship Program](#) to get started.
- Professional Associations** – Most career fields have professional associations that offer development resources, networking opportunities, and sometimes job postings. You may have to pay for membership, but most associations offer discounted rates to students.

- ❑ **Local Chamber of Commerce** – The local Chamber of Commerce lists employers for the area. If you know the area where you want to work, the Chamber of Commerce can be a great way to identify organizations that you might be interested in.
- ❑ **Young Professionals Networks** - Search them out in your preferred geographical area(s). In the Central Pennsylvania region there are the Harrisburg Young Professionals and the West Shore Young Professionals.
- ❑ **Local Career Services Offices** – If you are relocating, look at college career services pages from the local area. See who is recruiting on their campuses. This may give insight as to who you should be contacting to explore potential job opportunities.
- ❑ **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: Utilize Social Media

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When used correctly, social media can be an integral part of your job search. The following platforms each offer a unique way to connect professionally with others while developing your digital career brand:

- I. **LINKEDIN** – The most popular, international networking resource! Utilize LinkedIn to connect professionally with others in your field of interest, join professional groups (including the **Messiah University Professional Network**), follow companies, and search for jobs. You can also look on Messiah University’s LI page to identify possible alumni connections at companies you are interested in.
- II. **TWITTER** – In addition to connecting you with others in your field, this platform can provide you with access to a wealth of information from industry experts. Twitter also is a fantastic way to view job postings, as over one million job openings are tweeted each month. Your Twitter profile should include a link to your LinkedIn profile. All of your tweets should primarily be about items that relate to your field of interest, and should make optimal use of hashtags and retweets. A final recommendation is to follow people on Twitter who you would like to know you, such as industry leaders or human resource representatives.
- III. **FACEBOOK** – Before you begin to utilize Facebook to network professionally, be sure ALL of your postings, pictures, and updates are appropriate for recruiters to see. Some effective ways to use Facebook when networking include: linking your blog or website to your Facebook page, reminding others of your job search status through your status updates, and/or posting a professionally-written note about your current career situation onto your profile page.



## Job Tip #6: Applicant Tracking Systems

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Many websites use Applicant Tracking Systems to scan your resume for key words. Identify important key words by carefully looking at the job description and company website. Be sure the key words appear on your resume. This will increase the likelihood that your resume will be viewed by an HR manager. You will need to tailor your resume to each job description.

## Job Tip: #7: Pay Attention to Details

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- **Professional communication:** No slang or “text-speak”; 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 information 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 and expect to land a position 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.
- **Develop Resilience** - It can be easy to take rejection personally; understand that as a job seeker you are only aware of a small piece of an organization's hiring needs and time schedules. Remember that if you view setbacks as temporary, specific, and external, you will be able to enhance your resilience. Focus on those aspects of the process you CAN control.



### **Factors YOU CONTROL in the Job Hunt**

- Your interview attire and display of professionalism
- Quality of your resume and cover letter
- Your communication skills (e.g., how you come across verbally and non-verbally)
- The amount of time and energy you invest in your job search
- Your attitude and demeanor
- Expanding your personal and professional network
- Interview preparation – which includes researching an organization as thoroughly as possible and preparing specific examples to demonstrate your qualifications
- Appropriate follow up (write that thank you letter!)

### **Factors BEYOND Your Control**

- Number of qualified applicants with whom you may be competing
- Inside candidates (when posting the job is done as a formality, and a candidate has been pre-identified)
- Personality and agenda of the interviewer
- Time schedule of hiring decisions

## **CAREER AND PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT 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 coaches.
- Mock Interviews** – Stop by or give us a call to set up an appointment. Come professionally dressed.
- Résumé & Cover Letter Critique Drop In Hours** – Check out our [website](#) for current days and times.
- Networking Tips** – an essential component of any job search! Join the Messiah University Professional Network on LinkedIn.



## Not Getting Anywhere? Diagnosing Your Career Roadblock

Sometimes, despite our best efforts, the words “you’re hired!” remain an elusive dream. Don’t give up – overcoming the obstacles to securing your first job may be easier than you think!!

SYMPTOM	DIAGNOSIS	REMEDY
<p>You are sending hundreds of resumes, but have <b>not received a single phone call back</b> or an invitation to an interview.</p>	<p>Your resume and/or cover letter may not be up to par. These important documents create the first impression an employer forms of you, so it is vital that they are top notch and error-free. Are your documents tailored to the position for which you’re applying? Would the employer see the clear connection between your skills and experience and the job responsibilities?</p>	<p>Have your resume and cover letter critiqued by a Career Coach during scheduled drop-in hours. Be sure to ask about the best way to submit your documents.</p>
<p>You are getting invited to interviews, but are <b>not receiving any job offers</b>.</p>	<p>Focus on strengthening your interviewing skills, which can encompass a broad array of verbal and non-verbal areas. Have you done extensive research on the organization/company? Are you articulating concrete examples of your skills and abilities? Do you display confidence, a strong handshake, and a positive, professional demeanor? Are you dressing in proper interview attire?</p>	<p>Schedule a mock interview with a Career Coach. Be sure to wear your interviewing apparel to the mock interview. It is also recommended that you review the interviewing information on our website, including videos on professional dress, and a copy of our interviewing handout.</p>
<p>You have a phone interview with a recruiter, but <b>do not get asked for a follow up</b> on-site interview.</p>	<p>Focus specifically on practicing your over-the-phone conversational skills, which may also include improving your basic interviewing skills. What is being conveyed by the tone of your voice (since you aren’t face-to-face)?</p>	<p>Dress professionally and smile during phone interviews, it will make you sound confident and alert. Do not converse in a place where there is background noise. Request a mock phone interview with a Career Coach.</p>
<p>You are attending many job fairs, but are <b>not hearing back from any recruiters</b>.</p>	<p>You may not have an effective “one minute sales pitch” to use when approaching recruiters. Other contributing factors may be your resume, attire, or lack of follow-up.</p>	<p>Talk with a Career Coach about how to successfully navigate a job fair.</p>

## SAMPLE JOB SEARCH PLAN TO USE WITH A CAREER COACH

<b>Career Tools Checklist</b> <i>What have you completed/prepared?</i>	<input type="checkbox"/> Resume/Cover Letter <input type="checkbox"/> 30 Second Pitch/Value Proposition <input type="checkbox"/> LinkedIn Profile <input type="checkbox"/> Audit of Social Media Accounts <input type="checkbox"/> Target Company List <input type="checkbox"/> Mock Interview				
<b>What do you want to do? What is important to you?</b>	<b>Industries of Interest</b> <i>What type of company (e.g. healthcare, technology, non-profit, etc.)</i>	<b>Targeted Job Function(s)</b> <i>What type of work within the industry? (e.g. accounting, writing, public relations, etc.)</i>	<b>Targeted Geographic Location(s)</b>	<b>Most Important Workplace Values/Culture</b> <i>(e.g. small vs. large, family friendly, modern vs. traditional, etc.)</i>	
<b>What do you need to get there?</b>	<b>Skills</b> <i>What specific skills do you possess that this type of employer is seeking? Which are you lacking?</i>	<b>Internship/Relevant Experience</b> <i>What specific experiences have you had that increase your marketability? Which are you lacking?</i>	<b>Networking</b> <i>Who do you know that works in or has connections to the field(s) you're interested in?</i>	<b>Interviewing</b> <i>Have you practiced articulating your interest and qualifications in an interview setting?</i>	
<b>Obstacle Assessment (High/Medium/Low)</b> <i>Assess yourself in each of these areas – what's going well; what's challenging?</i>	<b>Time Management</b>	<b>Confidence</b>	<b>Motivation</b>	<b>Expectations of Others</b>	<b>Other</b>
<b>Next Steps</b> <i>Review gaps that are noted in the categories above and convert them into action steps. Identify, with a career coach, what resources will help you achieve your next steps.</i>	<b>Actions</b>			<b>Resources</b>	
<b>Follow-Up Appointment with a Career Coach in the CPDC</b>	<b>Date</b>		<b>Coach</b>		<b>Area(s) to focus on in the appointment</b>

