

NAVIGATING YOUR JOB SEARCH

Professional Development Workshop Series

Career Development
and Internships Office (CDIO)
careers@northpark.edu
(773)244-5575

There are eight important steps to take when navigating your job search. The better you understand and follow this process, the more successful your job search is likely to be. This packet includes the steps, along with worksheet space, for you to think critically about your own search. Good luck and remember that the Career Development and Internships Office staff is here to help!

The 8 steps to landing your first job:

1. Know Yourself
2. Decisions and Priorities
3. Resume
4. Searching
5. Networking
6. Cover Letters
7. Interviews
8. Thank You

1. KNOW YOURSELF

How do you like to spend your time? What chores, tasks, or activities do you dread or avoid doing? What are your strengths? What are your weaknesses? Do you like working with people? Do you like to work in long, quiet, uninterrupted stretches? Do you like to interact with and work with others most of the time? In class, do you prefer group projects or individual papers? Do you like analyzing and thinking hard to solve problems with data? Or do you like to think freely about artistic things like painting, nature, or fashion? The better you know yourself, the more likely you are to pick a job that fits you. Ask yourself the following questions to start thinking about the best career fit for you:

What are my hobbies? _____

What are my favorite classes, the ones that feel more like fun than work?

What am I good at? _____

What jobs sound fun or exciting to me? _____

When I was little, what did I want to be when I grew up? _____

****Visit CDIO to take a Skills Inventory test to learn about your strengths and weaknesses and personality; this can help you make an educated career choice!**

2. DECISIONS AND PRIORITIES

This is the step that involves making some hard choices. You must think critically and be honest with yourself about what is important to you and what you want out of a job. This is a set of questions to help you think about priorities and help you decide where to look for a job, what kind of job, what kind of work, and what kind of people you want to work with.

Think about these questions as you're considering your job search:

- Do you like to be inside or outside?
- Do you like to work in long stretches or do many different short tasks?
- Do you like to work on computers or paper?
- Do you want to live in a city or the country or in between?
- Do you prefer to be in a laid back or fast-paced environment?
- Is money the most important measure of success to you?
- How do you measure success?
- Are you ambitious and driven to succeed at a high level?
- Do you like to travel frequently?
- Are you comfortable convincing people of your opinions?
- Do you want to commute by car, bike, foot, or train and for how long?
- Is it important to be near your family?
- Do you adapt well to change and new surroundings?

3. RESUME

Your resume is a very important tool in your job search. It tells the reader the highlights of your education and work experience and helps them understand how you can help them. Your resume should be well written and represent you well. Here are some points to consider when writing or updating your resume:

- Is the formatting consistent as both a digital and printed copy?
- Is it easy to read?
- Have I checked the spelling and grammar?
- Am I proud of this?
- Do I feel confident letting this piece of paper represent me?
- Is it one page? (yes, it must only be one page if you are a recent graduate)
- Is it free of any lines?
- Is it all true and accurate?
- Have I removed all mentions of high school and pre-college activities, grades, & awards?
- Does it have my name in a larger font size (16-20 point font) at the top?
- Does it list my address (if a local candidate), phone number and email?
- Have I included locations for every school, company or organization I attended or worked for?
- Is it printed on resume-quality paper?
- If submitting a resume online, is it a pdf version?

*Upload your resume to Career Hub or come to CDIO for additional help!

4. SEARCH

Your job search can be challenging, but with a positive attitude and some good tips, you can be successful. Here are tips to try once you know what kind of job you want:

- **Search Google** to find out what industries are popular in your area as there are often jobs in other industries you did not think of.
- **Enter your address into Google Maps and “Search Nearby”** for the type of organization. For example, searching “Hospital” would tell you about nearby hospitals if you’re interested in nursing, customer service, or human resources.
- **Sign up for North Park Connect** through the alumni office to connect with other graduates in your field and your geographic region. They will likely want to help a fellow Viking!
- **Post a polite message on Facebook** about what you are looking for—let your friends and family help you search.
- **Use careerbuilder.com, monster.com, and indeed.com** but beware of scams and that these postings may be hard to interview for without a further connection—see step five about networking.
- **Be open** to jobs or companies you have never heard of—you never know what you are missing if you do not consider it.
- **Set up a LinkedIn account**; it is a professional and job-focused social media tool.
- **Customize your resume** to each job you apply to. Yes, it is more work, but it shows your interest and if you are not willing to put in the time, do you really want the job?
- **Research** the organization or company heavily. What is their mission statement? Are they growing or investing or building? Are they conducting layoffs or furloughs or reductions or closing plants or offices? Check the website for information about their ideal employees or for any employee bios.
- **Have a professional greeting** on your voicemail message. Answer your phone in a professional way, especially if you don’t know the number.
- **Clean up your online presence** including pictures, personal web pages or blogs, Twitter, and Facebook. Recruiters will Google your name—do it and see what comes up.

Your search will take a lot of hours—if a job falls into your lap, that is great, but you cannot wait for that to happen!

5. NETWORKING

Networking is the art of using conversation and relationship building skills to your advantage, and in this case, to get a job. Be polite, considerate, and appreciative. Make sure you know what you want to do and be willing to talk about it. You can network with anyone—your professors, your dentist, your mom’s dog’s vet, your next-door neighbor, your elementary school principal, the bus driver, the cafeteria lady, the grocery store cashier, the person trying on jeans in the fitting room next to you, the guy on the El. All these people might know something or someone to help you, but if you do not ask or start conversation, you will never know. Think of networking like playing a video game in which you are not sure where the final battle or test will be, but you know you should gather things and learn new techniques along the way. These new contacts and relationships might not help you in this job search, but they could help you later or you could help them!

- What do you want to tell a new contact about yourself and your job search? What is your elevator speech?
- What kind of job are you looking for?
- What industry are you looking at?
- Where do you hope to be living and working?
- What is their educational and professional background?
- Who do they suggest you contact for more information?
- Where should you go to look for more information?
- What advice would they give you about your job search?
- Do they suggest a tactic or search method that is particular to the industry?
- What do they see happening in the industry right now or in the future?

**To learn more, see our *Networking: Why, How, Who, and When* Handout.

6. COVER LETTERS

Cover letters are your opportunity to highlight experiences that are not on your resume. You should focus on experiences and roles from your resume that best apply to the job and demonstrate your personality (your passion, creativity, or organization). Use the cover letter to give a more complete picture of you. The tips below will help you write your cover letter:

- Include the date you are applying.
- List the addressee's name, organization, and address along the left margin.
- Address the letter formally and respectfully (know the proper pronoun to use).
- The first sentence should say how you found the opening.
- The second sentence should say that you believe you are a good fit for the role and organization.
- The first paragraph should end with a reference to the company/organization's mission statement. This demonstrates that you have done your research.
- In the second paragraph share your experiences that best relate to the job.
- Show how your skills match the skills needed in the job and that you know the company.
- Say why you want to work for them.
- Express your wish to add value to their organization and help support their mission statement and goals.
- In the final paragraph, say you are very interested in the position.
- Express your enthusiasm and that you have attached, included or posted a resume for their review.
- State that you hope to hear from them soon and would enjoy speaking in person about the position.
- Close with "Sincerely", and then your name, and preferably your signature as well.
- This should not exceed a page
- Check the spelling and grammar.
- Check the person's name and spelling twice!
- Read aloud to make sure the sentences are not awkward and sound concise.

**Come to CDIO for more help on your cover letters—we are happy to proofread!

7. INTERVIEWS

You should practice interviewing. Interviewing is a skill and you will improve with practice. As this is the primary tool organizations use to measure you for a job, you need to be comfortable with the process. Think through and plan your answers to standard questions, so you are prepared ahead of time and can answer intelligently and confidently. You should practice interviewing with a friend, roommate, or CDIO staff member. Have the other person ask you questions and answer as if it is an interview. The more seriously you take the practice, the better prepared you will be. You can practice with multiple people to get better each time. Make sure to ask for feedback on how you could improve. Prepare answers to questions such as:

- What is your greatest strength?
- What is your greatest weakness?
- Why do you want this job?
- How did you find out about this position?
- Tell me about yourself.
- Tell me about a time you worked in a team and what you accomplished.
- How would you handle working with someone you did not like or disagreed with?
- How do you respond to feedback?
- What is your long-term career plan?
- What are your hobbies?
- Tell me about a time you failed at something.
- Tell me about a time you were in charge of something.
- Tell me about your college and why you chose it.

Remember to prepare questions for the interviewer. These should show your research, and your interest in the organization. Several examples of questions are:

- What characteristics or skills would this new hire ideally have?
- What do you need a new hire to accomplish in the first 3 months of the job?
- What are you struggling with right now?
- What are your favorite and least favorite parts of your job?
- What is your management style?
- What is the culture and pace of the organization?
- How do you feel your job relates to the mission statement?

8. THANK YOU NOTES

It is VERY important to write thank you notes after an interview. After a telephone interview you may send an email thank you. Make sure that it is carefully written and has the same effort and attention as a handwritten note.

After a live interview, send an email the same day to thank the interviewer for his/her time. You may also write thank you notes by hand to the people you interviewed with for an added touch of professionalism. Ask for the interviewer(s)'s cards at the end of the interview if they are not offered, or, ask the person who coordinated the interviews for names and titles afterward. Write the notes by hand in blue or black ink on professional stationary and mail them within 24 hours.

This is your final chance to make a positive impression and will likely be your last communication with the organization before they make a yes or no decision about extending you an offer. Use the note to express your enthusiasm and interest in the role. It is wonderful if you can mention a piece of the interview conversation, to show that you remember them specifically. Also restate your qualifications and the value you would bring to the role. Close it with "Sincerely" or "Best Wishes" and sign your name. Make sure you write neatly and that the envelope is properly addressed. You can always look up the address on the internet and send multiple thank you notes to the same general organization address—the mailroom staff can sort them to the right places.

****Visit CDIO for additional help with thank you notes so you can make a great last impression!**