Job Searching
From the University of Massachusetts Amherst
Career Services

Job searching is a time and energy consuming process. Distributing your energy, by using different approach strategies, can help you along the way.

**Online Websites**: Spend a small amount of time bookmarking five to ten job listing sites and visit them frequently to check new job postings.

**Research**: Allot some time to researching five to ten organizations or companies you would want to work for. Bookmark and track all employment sites posted by these organizations or companies frequently.

**Relevant Experience**: Now designate half of the remaining time towards gaining experience relevant to your field of interest by interning or volunteering at companies and non-profit organizations or joining on-campus or professional organizations.

**Networking and Informational Interviewing**: Spend the last chunk of your time contacting everyone you know and everyone they know to learn about your fields of interest and ask for advice.

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The Employer’s View on Filling Job Vacancies

Small and medium sized companies and organizations do not have the resources to train new employees. Employers look to hire people they know. They do not like sifting through hundreds of resumes and cover letters to find “ideal candidates.” Therefore, keep in mind the top ways companies go about hiring individuals:

1. Promote from within
2. Take recommendations from current employees
3. Hire from intern pool
4. Hire people they like, so if anything else, be likeable!
Informational Interviews

Why: Informational interviewing is a way to gain real world information, meet people doing work in which you are interested, and start networking in professional situations where you do not presently have contacts. This is a skill that must be done right in order to reap worthwhile rewards.

How: Find people by using common contacts (people) or situations (i.e. schools, clubs, orgs) and ask them questions about their experiences. Write, email or call the person you’d like to meet. Do not ask for a job. Though best done face-to-face and at a person’s workplace, informational interviewing can also take place by phone when distance makes an in-person meeting impractical. Focus your attention on the person you are interviewing, not on yourself – that’s how you are able to get the other person’s time and energy. Do not ask for a job. Bring your resume but do not offer it. Dress nicely but not as though for a job interview, and do not ask for a job.

What to Do:
- Background Research: allows you to ask more focused questions. Read up on the field and browse the website of the organization where our contact works. Dress appropriately for the field and practice your best professional etiquette. Most informational meetings are fairly short--15-20 minutes.
- Sound Byte: develop a 10-30 second sound byte to introduce yourself. Example: “Hello, my name is Dana Brown and I’m a University of Massachusetts Amherst junior majoring in Government and Biology. I’m interested in how government regulations affect health care issues such as stem cell research. I’d like to hear about your experience as a policy maker in Washington.”

Sample Questions for Informational Interview:
- Can you describe a typical day or week? Does your work change during the year?
- What do you like best about your job and/or field? Least?
- How did you learn how to do your work? On the job? At a previous job? Formal training? If you were starting out in your field now, would you train in the same way?
- What makes someone successful in your work? (Listen carefully for the skill words in their answer. You’ll need those terms for your resume).
- As you look back on your experiences, is there anything you wish you’d known? Anything you would do differently?
- Do people in your field belong to professional associations or organizations? Is there a local chapter? Do you think it would make sense for me to attend a meeting?
- How do you keep current in your field?
- What should I be reading?
- What advice do you have for someone starting out?
- Do you have any job search strategies you’d like to share with me?
- Can you suggest two or three other people I might contact? May I use your name if I contact them, just to explain how I got their name?

Keep Notes and Maintain Relationships: collect notes on when your conversations took place, suggestions the contacts made, the dates you sent thank you notes (preferably within 24 hours), and any follow up actions you took. It is up to you to maintain the relationship by emailing or phoning periodically.

Networking is a skill for life -- enjoy!