So, you’re ready to make your move, ready for action. Whether you’re looking for an internship or a full-time job after college, the process of looking for the position (and employer!) that’s right for you is pretty much the same and both involve developing a search strategy. A search strategy is a plan or series of steps to help you obtain your goal: Getting an offer for a position that fits your interests, skills, values, and personality.
job search facts

- According to information from the U.S. Department of Labor, up to **80% of all positions are filled without employer advertising**. Think about it. It saves time, energy, and money for the employer to hire people they know, who have been referred by a trusted source, or who have made contact directly. And not only is this more efficient, it also often means the employer is getting a candidate who is not just looking for a job, but looking for this job.

- **98% of U.S. employers have fewer than 100 employees.** That means these organizations often do not recruit from college campuses. To find these “hidden” employers, you need to have a strategy.

- **Using multiple job search methods will help you find a position faster,** as data from the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics suggests. Read on for more about those methods and how you can decide which might work best for you.

- **The average American with a bachelor’s degree has about 12 different jobs between the ages of 18 and 50.** Again, this is data from research done by the Bureau of Labor Statistics. To survive—and advance—you’ll have to become skilled at job hunting. Your first job out of college is just the beginning of a lifelong process.

the bottom line

- The Internet should **not** be your only means of searching for jobs!

- **Talking to people,** asking questions, and being able to quickly and easily describe who you are (your interests, skills, experience) and what you’re looking for may be your best job search method.

- Conduct **informational interviews** (pages 22-25) and don’t be afraid to network (pages 58-59)!

- **Take advantage of MSU resources like Handshake, workshops and career events, employer events and info sessions, LinkedIn groups like SpartanLinks, and other student organization meetings to meet and discover potential employers.**

- **Use more than the Internet when searching for jobs!**
Developing your search strategy

Do you remember those “Choose Your Own Adventure” books you read in elementary school? Well, developing your strategy is a lot like that. You may start off down one path to find that it’s not working, or that it didn’t pan out the way you wanted. You may end up deciding you want to go off in a new direction. An unexpected opportunity might present itself. The job search is also a very personal process. There is no one job search technique that will work every time for everyone.

As you develop your search strategy, you should:

▶ **Create a list of 5–10 organizations** where you’d like to work. These organizations should get most of your attention. Actively work to meet people in the organizations and learn more about their goals.

▶ **Create a second list** of organizations you have some interest in. When you have time, do some basic research to refine the level of your interest and find possible networking or career openings.

▶ **Keep a log of research and activities**, so you know whom you’ve called, when, and next steps. It’s embarrassing to call someone twice because you forgot that you already called, or not to call at all when someone asked.

But how do you narrow the field? Read on!
define what you’re looking for

What are your search criteria? Be honest with yourself and the people you talk with about your search (whether it’s your Career Consultant, Career Advisor, or professional contacts you’ve made). Common search criteria are:

- **Geographic location**
- Application of your skills
- Connection to interest/passion
- Fit with work values
- Compatibility with personality

If you find that you’re having a hard time putting parameters around your search, start by going back to the “Explore Your Future” section (pages 14-30) for tips on resources, tools, and methods for getting some clarity. Some people think it’s good to be flexible in your job search, and to some extent it is. However, being overly flexible can be a real hurdle. The more you can narrow down what you’re looking for and where, the more likely you’ll be able to uncover viable possibilities. It’s possible that you might have more than one thing you’re looking for though, and that’s fine!

The better you can describe the kinds of opportunities you’re aiming for, the easier you can organize your search appropriately. You may have different methods that you use for different kinds of positions, organizations, fields, or geographic areas.

field-specific research: focus & identify opportunities

**Focus & identify opportunities.** Research can make all the difference in your search. You need to look more like a great potential colleague than a desperate job seeker! It’s your job to do the research needed to understand your top employers’ needs and place yourself in situations where you can demonstrate your abilities. **Where do you find the people you want to work with?**

- **Professional organizations.** Nearly every profession you can think of has a professional organization — American Institute of Graphic Arts, American Society for Clinical Laboratory Science, Association of American Publishers, American Sociological Association, American Library Association, Society of Illustrators, American Chemical Society, Association of Music Writers and Photographers — to name just a few.

For links to professional organizations that might be of interest to you based on your field of study, check out “What Can I Do with This Major?” and our online Career Tools at CareerNetwork.msu.edu/search (see page 10). Even a basic Google search with the name of your field of interest and “professional organization” will often yield good results.

Organization websites usually have info on current trends, salary surveys, job listings, directories of accredited graduate/professional programs and more. Check to see if they offer a discounted rate for student members and join while you’re still in school to take advantage of the savings!

Developing your search strategy

▶ **Subscriptions** to many of these publications can be costly, so make use of copies or electronic subscriptions available through your academic department, and MSU Libraries.

▶ **Job listing and professional resource sites.** Use Career Tools at CareerNetwork.msu.edu to find links to job boards and posting sites that might be of interest to you. And click on the Career Tools to search for lists of potential employers, industries, professional organizations and potential employers. You can search by geographic location and even find salary information and get info about where recent MSU students landed their first job!

▶ **Social media.** Yes, social media can be a part of your research and job search. See more on page 59.

**Employer research: the right place, the right job**

**Find the right place to find the right job.** Some people are completely flexible when it comes to location. In that case, focusing on field-specific resources to identify specific employers is a great move. But if you’ve got some particular geographic areas in mind, or are geographically limited, there are resources that can help you uncover employers by location.

▶ Click on Career Tools at CareerNetwork.msu.edu/search (page 10) to find accurate, up-to-date information on potential employers and contacts in a wide range of industries nationally and internationally. Explore the industry (or industries) and geographic area(s) you’re interested in, and find employers located there! You can also research salary information and get valuable insider information on industries, career fields, employers, cities, and countries.

▶ **MSU Libraries** has databases and other resources offering a wealth of information on specific employers. And unlike a generic Google search, the MSU library provides employer info that is authoritative, credible, and timely. Library resources are free to current students and it can give you a competitive edge with quality information that employers will notice. Email the Gast Business Library for help with employer research: gastbus@bus.msu.edu.

▶ **Find and make use of local resources** such as newspapers, networking groups, Chambers of Commerce, regional alumni clubs (check alumni.msu.edu for regional and international groups), etc. in your area of interest. They are a great way to find people who are doing work you find interesting.

▶ **Additional sources include:**
  - Employer websites
  - Annual reports
  - Recruiting materials/packets
  - Marketing materials
  - Media articles and coverage (check out press releases on their website too!)
  - And don’t forget social media!
International students

- Whether you are considering employment during your time at MSU or afterwards, it’s important to partner with both the Office for International Students and Scholars (OISS) and the Career Services Network at MSU.

- OISS can explain your U.S. work authorization options, assist you with the proper documentation in many instances, and give you tips on how to talk to employers about your immigration status.

- The Career Services Network offers resources and programs to build your resume writing and interviewing skills, one-on-one career advising, career workshops and fairs, and connections to jobs and internships.

International students’ work authorization options

- **On-campus Employment**
  - F-1 or J-1 students (unless prohibited by J-1 sponsor) are eligible to work on-campus for 20 hours a week when classes are in session without work authorization.
  - Work that exceeds 20 hours per week on campus or any work off campus must be authorized in advance by OISS.

- **Off-campus Employment**
  - F-1 or J-1 students (unless prohibited by J-1 sponsor) are eligible to work off-campus ONLY with pre-approved employment authorizations:

Before Graduation
- F-1 students -Curriculum Practical Training (CPT)
- J-1 students -Academic Training (AT)

After Graduation
- F-1 students may apply for 12 months of work authorization, called the Optional Practical Training (OPT)
- J-1 students (unless prohibited by J-1 sponsor) may apply for up to 18 months (36 months for post-doctoral) of Academic Training (AT)

Goals after graduation

- **Working in the U.S**
  - Know your work authorization options and partner with OISS.
  - Identify international student-friendly employers, the Global Talent Retention Initiative of Michigan is a great resource for this: migtri.org.
  - Learn about U.S. work culture/values by getting engaged in groups on campus and develop your communication skills in the community.
  - Build your personal and professional network: start with LinkedIn.com, reach out to MSU alumni, and conduct informational interviews.

- **Working in your home country/another country**
  - Use GoinGlobal for country-specific career tips and internship/job postings. Find it on career.msu.edu under ‘Career Resource Tools.’
  - Build your network in desired country: connect with MSU alums, join MSU student groups affiliated with the country where you wish to work.
  - Use your existing network: reach out to friends and family to conduct informational interviews.

Online career help

- For more information on work authorizations and Resume, Interviewing, and Networking Guides, visit the OISS website: oiss.isp.msu.edu

- Or visit their office:
  - Office for International Students and Scholars 427 Shaw Lane, Room 105, International Center
  - Phone (517) 353-1720
  - Email: oiss@msu.edu
  - Web: oiss.msu.edu
  - Drop In Hours: Monday-Friday, 1-3pm

Handshake

- For in-depth information specifically for international students, visit http://careernetwork.msu.edu/resources-tools/student-resources/resources-for-international-students.html. You can personalize your online resource search at CareerNetwork.msu.edu/search

Whether you are looking for a position on or off campus, OISS and Career Services encourage you to become familiar with Handshake, MSU’s online advising, events, and job and internship resource. Access your account at CareerNetwork.msu.edu/Handshake.
government employment

“why work for government?”

Employees in the public sector get to work on challenging and complex issues often affecting the lives and legacies of many people. Students say “I don’t like campaigns or elections” but the majority of government employees are working outside the election process. Government employees are often eligible for student loan repayment assistance or forgiveness in addition to competitive compensation packages. Government positions touch every part of life in America, from commerce, to education, the environment, law, families, communities, public transportation, safety, and more.

“what do I need to know about government employment?”

Did you know the federal government employs people in all fields from art to zoology and is among the leading employers of liberal arts grads? In fact, thousands of humanities and social science alums work in federal agencies. And median salaries for these workers tend to be higher in the federal government when compared to other employers. High rates of retirement—more than 500,000 employees are eligible to retire over the next few years—are creating job openings across the government. Some agencies will post openings on their own website while others will post through USAjobs.gov.

“isn’t the application process hard?”

The basics of applying for federal or state positions are similar to private industry: It usually starts with a resume and cover letter. Depending on the position or agency, you may have additional forms, documents, or questionnaires to submit, so pay attention to the information included in the “How to Apply” section of postings.

The good news is that even though there can be more steps, federal and state governments are more transparent about how to successfully compete for openings. Many agencies include advice for applicants, sample resumes, interview questions, and selection criteria right on their website. The State of Michigan has a Career Services office for applicants and offers resume reviews and individual appointments with their staff. Many agencies also host prospective employee events in large cities or web-based workshops on how to be successful in your search.

There are great resources to help you! The USAjobs.gov website Info Center has special information for students, (including a list of federal jobs by college major), as well as tutorials for how to use the system, tips on applying, and more.

▶ Federal applications have no length limitations!
▶ Include every detail and skill about your experience

“don’t you have to move to DC?”

Government jobs span all parts of the U.S. and overseas. In fact, only 8% of federal positions are located in Washington, D.C. Additionally, state, country, and city governments have all kinds of positions for college students and graduates, too.

Visit the government websites for your locations of interest and talk to your Career Consultant or Career Advisor for assistance.

More than 22 million work for governments in the U.S.
finding your niche at a nonprofit

If you’re looking for a chance to use your talents with a sense of social contribution, a career with a nonprofit might be right for you. Nonprofits have full-time, paid staff performing all the tasks a for-profit business has, such as management, volunteer coordination, writing, accounting, graphic design, and much more. People from all kinds of academic backgrounds find nonprofits a rewarding and fulfilling career path.

Nonprofit organizations raise and generate revenue, but making a profit isn’t their goal; they are focused on their mission and use their revenue to that end. Nonprofits can be professional associations, political activist organizations, educational institutions, museums and cultural organizations, and human service providers, just to name a few. If there is a cause or issue you care passionately about, chances are there’s a nonprofit doing great work on that issue who may be hiring!

getting started

With so many nonprofit organizations, here are some tips on where to begin:

▶ Be specific. Which causes are you passionate about? Literacy and education, the environment, advocacy, human or animal rights? Which interest area would you like to support? Public health, business services, outreach, research? The more specific you can be, the more successful you will be in finding an organization that might be right for you. See resources below to learn more about specific organizations and positions.

▶ Don’t forget the little guys. You may be familiar with large organizations like the United Way, Red Cross, or Sierra Club; however there are many smaller nonprofit organizations that might not be so well known offering great jobs.

▶ Show your skills. Are you a good writer? Event planner? Do you have web-development or graphic design skills? The more you stand out as somebody who offers a number of valuable skills, the more competitive you are.

nonprofits & government agencies come to campus!

These employers attend large events such as career fairs throughout the year (see pages 64-65). They may also attend Career Exposure Series events, workshops, or offer information sessions. Always check Handshake to see which employers are visiting campus and make an effort to connect with them during these events.

to learn more about nonprofits

For more information on nonprofits, including nationwide and international job postings, visit Idealist.org. Be sure to visit their The Idealist Guide to Nonprofit Careers and other great tools. MNAonline.org is another popular site from the Michigan Nonprofit Association. Nonprofits can be found from coast to coast! Visit CouncilOfNonProfits.org for nonprofit listings and resources by state.

Many MSU graduates begin their nonprofit careers through “term of service” programs such as AmeriCorps. Check out AmeriCorps.gov and CollegeAdvisingCorps.msu.edu. See more “term of service” opportunities through Idealist.org.
Building your network

We’ve given you methods and tools for finding professionals working in your fields of interest. What are you doing right now to create or establish those important professional relationships? Meeting people gives you an opportunity to learn from them. If you are not sure what career path you would like to pursue, talk with many different professionals… they can help you narrow your areas of interest. (Read more about the first step to building your own personal network, informational interviewing, on pages 22-25.) Remember, networking should begin long before your job search and often you don’t even realize that you are doing it!

Networking is usually an informal discussion with people you already know, or have just met. In fact, most students use networking all the time without even realizing it. When scheduling classes, have you ever asked a friend or classmate about their experiences, or to recommend a good class or section? When making a (relatively) large purchase such as a new cell phone, athletic shoes, computer, or even a car, have you asked people you know what they’ve liked or disliked about theirs? Have you posted questions (or answers) to social media discussing these kinds of topics? Guess what—that’s networking!

Networking takes place whenever you:
• Meet with faculty or staff—especially a Career Advisor (see pages 8-9)
• Attend an event, career fair or MSU workshop (Handshake has a list of all these opportunities)
• Meet guest speakers or engage with your peers in class or through a student organization
• Talk with family, friends, and other acquaintances about their work
• Post messages on Facebook, LinkedIn, other websites, and blogs
• Volunteer for a community service event

Since networking can happen anywhere, be prepared to introduce yourself and deliver your pitch about who you are and what you want to do. For some students, this often happens at their part-time job in conversations with customers and clients. “You’re a student at MSU? What are you studying? What do you want to do after graduation?” You never know when that conversation can lead to a new contact or even an invitation to pass along your resume!

The U.S. Department of Labor estimates that up to 80% of positions are filled without employer advertising.
Your Career Services Network at MSU is prepared to help you understand the importance of social media in your career development. Here is a quick overview of several social media web-tools you may want to consider using.

▶ LinkedIn. Why bother with LinkedIn?
  - internships & job postings
  - research grad schools
  - research employers
  - maintain professional connections
  - career related news & information

▶ Twitter. Stay updated with professionals or employers and keep others up to date with this instant information tool. Use Twitter directories like WeFollow.com and Twellow.com to find professionals and organizations related to your interests that you may want to follow. Many organizations have Twitter accounts dedicated to job postings.

▶ Facebook. Yes, employers and professionals are on Facebook too. Even if you don’t choose to add professional contacts as friends, be aware that employers (and your future colleagues) are very likely to look you up on Facebook or Google you before you even come in for an interview. If you like the idea of using Facebook for both personal and professional reasons, search pages and groups for field or employer specific info or communities. Also consider using your status updates strategically to help your network of friends help you.

The use of social media in learning about potential career paths, receiving feedback on job search documents (e.g., resumes), connecting with alumni, and networking with professionals in your field of interest is becoming one of the most important avenues for successful job seekers.

▶ Visit CareerNetwork.msu.edu/services-locations/social-media to find a list of Facebook, Twitter, Instagram and YouTube accounts managed by Career Services staff and Career Peers.

▶ SpartanLinks is a group on LinkedIn that connects MSU students to alumni working in their areas of interest. Alumni who join are looking to share insight, advice, and expertise with students and recent graduates. Student, alumni, and employer members within this main group discuss general career topics such as resume writing, interviewing, job search strategies, workplace trends, and employment/recruiting trends.

▶ The MSU Alumni Association also has a large LinkedIn group that students can join to connect with other alumni. In addition, many regional MSU Alumni Clubs have LinkedIn groups specifically for those living and working in that area. If you are planning to relocate or are looking for an internship in a particular area, these groups can be useful resources!

▶ After you’ve joined MSU groups that fit your interests, search groups to find professional associations, industries, or interest affiliations to join. As a member, you can comment on discussions, find exclusive job listings, and meet people who share interests.
Dress to impress

You know that thing about never getting a second chance to make a first impression? Well, it’s true. It’s just as true about a blind date as it is about meeting a professional contact for the first time.

Make your best impression the first time around – you might not get a second chance!

Womenswear

New Jacket? Carefully cut & remove “tack stitching”
lapels sewn to suit vent sewn together label on sleeve

Menswear
Professional dress matters because it helps you to project an image that lets the employer see you in the professional role you are seeking. What you wear for a professional encounter depends on the career field you’re pursuing.

Always follow these general guidelines:

- Hair should be clean, well groomed, and away from the eyes. Simple, classic styles are best.
- No visible tattoos or body piercings.
- Earrings? (Keep it simple, less is more.)
- Avoid strong mints, perfumes, or aftershaves.
- Clothing should work for you, not against you. Fit and comfort are important!
- Trendy clothing—like short skirts, low necklines, extreme prints or colors—generally do not project an image appropriate for a professional meeting.
- Moderate heel height and knee length skirts or pants suits.
- Plant tours require close-toed shoes.
- Crisp, clean, well-pressed clothing is a must.

Who wears what?

- For traditional careers—like banking, accounting, finance, engineering, law, and corporate positions—you’ll need a conservative look that conveys competence and authority. Suits should have a classic cut or style and be dark in color (navy, dark grey, etc.). Shirts and blouses should be a neutral color, like white, ivory, light grey, etc. Ties and scarves should be subtle with a little color.

- For those pursuing technical careers—in areas like engineering, information technology, sciences, etc.—a clean look that conveys knowledge, innovation, and approachability is important. Suits should be conservative in subtle dark colors. Blouses and shirts should be a subtle color.

- People-focused careers—counseling, teaching, sales, and social work, for example—require an image that projects expertise and approachability. Suits should be conservative in subtle dark colors; coordinate separates can work too. Blouses and shirts should be a subtle color.

- The most opportunity for expression of personal style can be found in creative careers—like advertising, art, design, and entertainment, to name a few. In these fields you’ll need a contemporary image that conveys creativity, innovation, and competence. Suits can vary in cut, style, and color; two-piece coordinates are acceptable. Blouses and shirts should accent your total look. While you will often see professionals in these careers wearing jeans and other more casual clothing, it is best for prospective professionals to step it up a notch. Show your creative flair, but remember to look more like a professional than a student.

What to wear for less formal meetings

So, for more formal interactions like career fairs and interviews, hopefully it’s clearer now why suits are usually your best option. But if you’re going to a fair as an information seeker instead of a job seeker, or if you’re attending an event like a conference, informational interview, job shadow, etc., a suit may make you overdressed.

For these kinds of interactions, you always want to dress professionally—no ripped jeans, flip-flops, or T-shirts with provocative graphics on them. Save these clothes for your friends, not a potential employer.

Follow the “dress essentials for everyone,” and consider the items below when you’re picking out what to wear . . .

- khakis
- blazer
- button-down shirt
- sweater
- dress shoes
- shirt
- dress pants
- loafers

And remember, when in doubt, check with an insider (your employer contact or Career Advisor, for example) about what the appropriate dress in a particular situation might be!
We work with America’s premier homebuilders and industrial developers to design solutions for growing communities across the southwest.

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