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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.

Job search facts

▶ 80% of all positions are filled without employer advertising. Employers like to hire people they know, who have been referred by a trusted source, or who have made contact directly.

▶ 98% of U.S. employers have fewer than 100 employees and often do not directly recruit from college campuses.

▶ The average bachelor degree holder will have about 12 different jobs over their working years. Your first job out of college is just the beginning of a lifelong job search process! You’ll need to become skilled at job hunting.

The top line tips

▶ The Internet should not be your only means of searching for a job.

▶ Talking to people, asking questions, and being about to effectively describe who you are and what you’re looking for may be your best job search method!

▶ Conduct information interviews (pages 23-25) and don’t be afraid to network (page 57).

▶ Take advantage of MSU resources like Handshake, career workshops and events, employer events and info sessions, LinkedIn groups like Spartan Links, and student organizations to discover potential employers.
Developing your search strategy

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 a 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 14-29) 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, the more you can narrow down what you’re looking for and where, the more likely you’ll be able to uncover viable possibilities.

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. 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, 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, check out “What Can I Do with This Major?” and our online Career Tools at CareerNetwork.msu.edu/search (see page 9). Even a basic Google search with the name of your field of interest and “professional organization” will often yield good results.

Professional 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!


- Job listing and professional resource sites. Use Career Tools at CareerNetwork.msu.edu to find links to job boards, lists of potential employers, industries, and professional organizations. 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. See more tips on page 59.
geographic research: the right place, the right job

If you've got some particular geographic areas in mind, there are resources that can help you uncover employers by location.

- Click on Career Tools at CareerNetwork.msu.edu/search (page 9) 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, subscriptions and other resources offering a wealth of information on specific employers. And unlike a generic Google search, the MSU library provides free employer info that is authoritative.

develop your strategy

As you develop your search strategy, you should:

- Create a list of 5–10 organizations where you'd like to work. These should get most of your attention. Actively work to meet people in the organizations and learn more.

- Create a second list of organizations you have some interest in. 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.

if you're considering graduate school

The MSU website grad.msu.edu offers a variety of resources from how to apply to graduate school to how to fund your graduate education. Other great sources for grad school info:

- Search using “Grad School” filter at msuCareerTools.

- Check out the Summer Research Opportunities Program, at grad.msu.edu/SROP

- Petersons.com, allows you to search for programs by type, degree offered, and location, and get info on financing your advanced degree, test preparation, and more.

- PhDs.org allows students to run customized rankings from the National Research Council.

- GradSchools.com offers articles about graduate education and tips about the graduate admissions process.

- DiverseEducation.com/top100 provides rankings of graduate programs in each discipline by minority student participation.

- Interfolio.com/dossier is a web-based service that can hold letters, evaluations, and unofficial transcripts for candidates applying to graduate/professional schools or seeking employment in the field of education; documents kept in your file will be sent out upon your request. Note that this is a fee-for-service resource.
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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 by visiting careernetwork.msu/internationalstudents and learn where MSU international student alumni found work in the U.S. and their home countries.
    - 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. Schedule an appointment with Career Services using Handshake to learn more about this!

  - Working in your home country/another country
    - Use GoinGlobal for country-specific career tips and internship/job postings. Find it on careernetwork.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.

- 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

**Online career help**

- For in-depth information, visit careernetwork.msu.edu/internationalstudents.
  You can personalize your online resource search at CareerNetwork.msu.edu/search.

**Handshake**

- 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 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. 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.

- Federal: 2.8 million
- State: 5.3 million
- Local: 14 million

Figures in millions

More than 22 million work for governments in the U.S.
It’s a big world out there, and it can sometimes feel like you could be finding more opportunities if you just knew the right places to look. There are two sectors of the job market that seekers don’t always tap to their full capacity: government and nonprofit jobs. The good news: There are lots of opportunities with organizations that care more about their mission than the bottom line!

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 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 62-65). 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.

There are over 1.5 million nonprofits in the U.S.

U.S. nonprofits have over 12.3 million employees

U.S. nonprofits have $5.78 trillion in total assets

1 in 10 U.S. jobs are found in nonprofits

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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 23-25.) 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 6-7)
- Attend an employer 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!
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COMPREHENSIVE BENEFITS PACKAGE
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• CAREER PROGRESSION
• COMPETITIVE PAY
• PAID TIME OFF (ANNUAL/SICK/HOLIDAY PAY)
• HEALTH INSURANCE
• LIFE INSURANCE
• GENEROUS RETIREMENT

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Using Social Media

LinkedIn, Facebook & Twitter

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

▶ Sign up at LinkedIn.com/reg/join
  • Photo – doesn’t have to be fancy
  • Headline – who you are and what you want to do
  • Summary – what motivates you? What are you good at?
  • Experience – don’t hold back, list it all!
  • Skills – try to list 5-10 skills
  • Courses – focus on those related to your career interests

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.

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.

career services network & social media

▶ Visit CareerNetwork.msu.edu/services-locations/social-media.html 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!

▶ MSU departments and student organizations often have social media accounts that you can join. This is where you can make connections with people who share your interests plus often learn about student jobs, visiting employers and other career-related information. Check out the MSU Social Media Directory at msu.edu/social/
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!

**New Jacket?** Carefully cut & remove “tack stitching”

- Lapels sewn to suit
- Vent sewn together
- Label on sleeve
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**

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
- 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!