

MANAGING AN EXTENDED JOB SEARCH



OKLAHOMA
CareerTech

Job searches vary depending on a person's career and can potentially last months or longer. The effort required can be exhausting, which will test your resilience. In today's hiring landscape, the shifts can be based on the industry, the time of year, and the role being filled. Talent acquisition staff may also become the recipients of layoffs, leaving fewer people to review even more applications. Staying focused on both your job search and your well-being is vitally important during these times. Below are some suggestions you may find helpful.

Job Search Tips

Time Management & Organization

- Set daily or weekly goals, such as applications per week or networking activities per week.
 - Set achievable daily goals (applications submitted, new contacts made, etc.).
 - Track your applications and follow-ups using a spreadsheet (or other method that works for you).
- Establish and keep a daily routine that centers around job search activities; recognize that your job search is your current job.
- Set fixed hours for your job search "workday." Build in breaks to keep from feeling overwhelmed. Consistency can strengthen focus.

Industry Focus

- Identify the potential employers that align with your skillset, experience, and personal preferences (driving distance, family needs, etc.).
- Revitalize your approach:
 - Refresh your LinkedIn profile.
 - Revise your resume using AI-generated feedback.
 - Boost your networking efforts with personal and professional contacts.
 - Consider expanding your horizons to related industries or jobs.
 - Consider taking a course or seeking to obtain a certificate that may enhance your skills.

Personal Inventory & Reflection

- Inventory your durable skills and how you've used them to make an impact. These skills include communication, critical thinking, creativity, problem-solving, and self-motivation.
- Upskill your skillset during your job search. *Use learning to create future value.*
- Review your words and actions for *projections of confidence*—in your resume and cover letter, in your LinkedIn profile, during networking events, and during interviews.

Networking

- Dedicate time to networking, including engaging with people on LinkedIn and conducting informational interviews.
- Network with a purpose: (1) Identify potential employers that align with your skillset, experiences, and preferences, then (2) Shape your networking efforts with your employer list in mind.
- Reach out to personal mentors and advisers.
- Optimize your network to serve as a learning hub to help you spot opportunities and stay current. Everyone has a network, by chance or by design. Your network should be diversified with purpose to help you stay on top of trends and spot opportunities.

Job Rejection Management

- Recognize that job rejections happen every day and may seem overwhelming. Don't take it personally. Keep reminding yourself by perhaps putting this on a sticky note in your computer. It's not about you.
- A rejection can be delivered in many forms. If you have the opportunity, ask for feedback as to why you were not selected for the position.
- Step back to reconsider your approach. Perhaps you are "stuck in your old ways" and need to rethink your strategies.

Resilience & Grit

After a period with unsatisfactory results, this is where resiliency and grit get tested:

- Are you unclear about what you want? You may be targeting the wrong employers or failing to communicate what you're seeking.
- Is your resume just like the rest? Your resume should not only demonstrate that you are a qualified applicant but should help set you apart from others. *Your resume should make it easy for the employer to recognize that you are a top candidate for the job.*
- Is your LinkedIn profile misaligned with your job search goals? Make sure your profile includes key words relating to your job search to appeal to recruiters (so they will spot your profile) and hiring managers (so they will read your profile). *Your profile should stand in for you while you are asleep.*
- Are you discounting the importance of networking? Growing and leveraging your personal and professional networks will speed up your job search. *Studies show that most jobs are found through personal contacts and referrals.*
- Are you letting yourself down during interviews? Besides being able to explain what sets you apart from other applicants, you should have a library of experiences to share that specify a relevant situation or task, your action, and the result—in other words, stories that create a *STAR*. (These stories will help you respond to behavioral-style interview questions.)

Health and Well-Being Tips

Fundamental Strategies

- Separate your identity from your job search. *You are not your employment status.*
- Focus on what is within your control: preparing quality application resources, reaching out to people through networking, and getting ready for interviews.
- Prioritize self-care, especially activities that get you moving.
- List the attributes that set you apart from other job applicants and remind yourself of them daily.
- Ration the time you spend scrolling through job boards and social media posts.
- Avoid isolation. Pursue networking opportunities, volunteer, take a class to build your skills, set up informational interviews, and generally *get out and among people*.
- Give yourself a break from searching for and applying for jobs. Schedule focused time for informal networking.
- Set smaller goals you can achieve each day and celebrate achieving them.
- Celebrate small successes, such as finding a relevant job posting or getting through the resume screening process.
- Choose a personal “walk-up song” or “get-in-the-zone” tune—you could even assemble a playlist for your daily job search efforts (like a unique song that plays as a baseball player walks up to home plate to bat or thematic music from a movie/album).
- Recognize that your job search efforts also create more examples of your development of *durable skills* that are prized by employers.
- Work to stay in the moment. Focus on your future, not your setbacks.
- Continue to build *social capital*—goodwill that you build with others and that you can draw upon later.
- Implement a personal “gratitude challenge.”
- Create a personal “community of support” for:
 - career development support.
 - financial support.
 - emotional support.
- Continue to enjoy a hobby or get a new one. You never know where a passion could surface.

Managing Change & Risk

- Sometimes, you’ll face decisions that require taking a risk. Consider taking calculated risks; they are more strategic. Change often involves risk — not a risk of danger in this context, but a risk of continued job rejections with an ambiguous timeline.
- Reflect on previous challenges to identify successful coping strategies.
- Be open. This may sound easy, but it is surprisingly tough for most people. Are you open to change, opportunities, and ideas? Are you truly open to honest feedback?
- Improve your ability to confront change without fear. Fear is natural, but it can be managed with practice and time.

Staying Current

- Keep an eye on trends in your field and in technology and pursue ways to prepare for those trends. Watching for trends also buys yourself some time to get comfortable with the idea of change.
- Learn with purpose using every source available:
 - Completing online courses
 - Accessing blogs, podcasts, videos
 - Participating in chat discussions, online forums, social networks
 - Interacting with coaches, mentors, peers
 - Volunteering
 - Reading, joining a book discussion group

Final Suggestions

- Imagine an interim role for yourself as an entrepreneur—what could you provide for which someone else would pay? Consider temporary roles such as contract work or part-time work to stay engaged, satisfy a sense of purpose, gain experience, and bridge any income gaps.
- Take care of the basics:
 - Manage your budget.
 - Unsubscribe ruthlessly.
 - Look for ways to downsize.
 - Find a part-time job to pay some bills.
 - Look into any state or city programs that could help support your basic needs.

