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The Job Search Wheel



Introduction

The Job Search Wheel is a tool for structuring your job search and keeping track of the big picture. Each of the 10 areas of the Job Search Wheel is an important part of your job search. It's easy to overlook some of them while you focus on others—so check in regularly to be sure you're on track. The rest of this paper tells how to use the Wheel and gives a brief overview of each area, including tips and questions to ask yourself.

How to use the Wheel

When starting your job search: look at the ten steps above to get oriented to the steps of a good search. While you can start your search at various places on the Wheel, and lots of the steps overlap, I recommend starting with Know Yourself.

For check-ins once you are into your job search: look at the ten steps above and consider how you're doing in each area. A level of 10 is high, 1 is low. Rate your satisfaction for each area by drawing over the appropriate dotted line from 1-10. What did you learn?

Know Yourself

What do you care about? The clearer you are about this, the easier it will be to find a job that's a good fit for you.

Values. What matters to you most about your work? Having a clear list of values will help you evaluate opportunities.

- *For example: skills used, the contribution you make, profession, type of employer, challenge, salary, environment, location, commute....*

Strengths and skills. What do you do best? It's lots more productive to focus on your strengths than to worry about your weaknesses. Strengths and skills overlap; for simplicity I'll call them all "strengths" here. Spend some time coming up with a list of your top strengths.

- *What are your top strengths?*
- *Which do you most enjoy using?*
- *What are your burnout strengths—the ones you're good at but hate using?*
- *What are some examples of how you have done well by using your strengths?*
- *What is a strength that you'd like to make even stronger?*

To take this farther, use an online assessment. Here are three:

- *VIA (viacharacter.org)—"the only free, scientific survey on character strengths"*
- *StrengthsFinder 2.0 (Gallup, 2007)—the main point is to take the online assessment you reach through a code in the back of the book*
- *My Next Move—go to mynextmove.org, Tell us what you like to do.*

Interests. Interests, the third big piece of the puzzle, are discussed in the next section on Research.

Do Research

Once you've done some internal research, it's time for external research. There's a wealth of information out there on careers, employers and jobs. The two best sources are the internet and information interviews.

Internet: Find your favorite job websites, including those that focus on professions of interest, and create job searches that will notify you when appropriate positions that are posted. See listing at lmeadows.com/Resources, *Online Career Resources*.

A huge and useful website is O*Net (onetonline.org). It can lead you to jobs that suit your interests and skills and careers with a bright outlook. It can tell you a remarkable amount of information on any career, including local salaries. Explore!

Information interviews: People are usually glad to be helpful to job-seekers—everyone can relate. Consider sending an email to lots of people you know, asking if they know anyone in areas or employers that interest you. When you have an interview, ask the person you meet with if they will suggest another couple of people you could talk to, and whether they can use their name.

- *If you need clarity on fields to research, what are 3 areas of interest that you can explore? Don't get paralyzed by looking for a perfect fit immediately.*
- *What job websites look most useful to you?*
- *What friends can you email for help in finding contacts for information interviews?*

Set Goals

Your goals will depend on where you are in your thinking. They will change as you move ahead. What stage are you at?

- *Are you wondering what to do with the rest of your life?*
- *Are you looking for a new profession within a certain area?*
- *Within your field are you wondering what employers to focus on?*

Set goals that inspire you. Don't be blind to potential obstacles but decide how to deal with those obstacles. Your goals should be clear enough that you will know when you have met them. For example:

- *Figure out six professions that intrigue me and choose one to research first.*
- *Make calls to these five people in the coming week.*
- *Update my LinkedIn profile by Wednesday.*

A tip for reaching your goals: consider banning the word “try” from your vocabulary because it gives you an out. Instead, commit to something you are confident of achieving, which will give you energy for the next goal. If you don’t get there, learn from the experience and keep moving ahead.

Build Your Network

Now is the time to be sure you have a good LinkedIn profile. When you start networking, LinkedIn is usually the first place people will check you out. You want to have a profile that is concise and readable and shows who you are—no lists of generic adjectives. For a basic introduction see How To Shine on LinkedIn at *lmeadows.com/Resources*.

The thought of doing actual networking can be intimidating—usually because of a misunderstanding. If you think networking means having to contact a bunch of strangers and persuade them to hire you, think again. Network building works best when you start with people you know, and work out from there. Ask yourself:

- *What ten or so people would I be comfortable asking for help?*
- *What are five or so organizations where I would like to work?*

Then email those people to ask if they can suggest people to talk to in those organizations (or in that field). You may be surprised by the useful contacts that result. Then thank your friends and email your new contacts to ask for information interviews. Interviews in person are ideal; by phone is a close second.

Create a Confident Spiel

Create a spiel—a short talk—of 30 seconds or so that you can use to introduce yourself. Then either PRACTICE it in a mirror or—better yet—video yourself. Say your spiel time and again with minor variations until it comes easily. Then you’ll be able to say it when you need to without sounding like a parrot. Vary it as appropriate.

Here are some questions to answer:

- *What are the 5 main ways I can help this employer?*
- *What’s a quick summary of the main points of my experience (if not already included)?*

Create Resumes and Cover Letters

Allow lots of time to do this right. First create a basic resume and a basic cover letter, then modify them to fit each job you apply for. Remember the purpose is to interest the reader and get an interview, not to tell your life history. Find good examples and follow them.

A few resume guidelines:

- *Emphasize your achievements, not just your responsibilities.*
- *Leave plenty of white space – avoid the common trap of a dense, hard-to-read resume.*
- *For an up-to-date look, use sans-serif fonts such as Arial or Calibri.*
- *Proofread carefully then get someone else to proofread again.*

Apply for Positions

Networking is the best way to get hired, but remember to apply for positions too. Sending out huge numbers of resumes isn't a good use of your time. Instead, focus on what interests you—and remember you can decide later whether this is the right job for you. If you're a woman, remind yourself to apply for jobs you can learn, not just ones you could already do.

Ask yourself:

- *Does this job fit my list of values well? or well enough?*
- *Can I find a contact at this organization through LinkedIn?*
- *How else can I do really thorough research on this employer and position?*

Organize and Stay on Track

You need a way to keep track of the details, including:

- *The status of each connection, request or application*
- *Next steps, including sending follow-ups and thank you notes*

What kind of system will work best for you? Possibilities are:

- *A spreadsheet or table you create yourself*
- *A simple notebook with a page for each contact you're tracking and each application – use stickies to remind you of deadlines*
- *A job search website such as jibberjobber.com (free, or pay fee to get reminders sent)*
- *A mobile app – though most of them are tied to specific job search sites*

Stay Energized

Job searching is challenging! Treat yourself as well as possible, both for your own sake and in order to be your best self when you talk with people. Some tips:

- *Make a special effort to exercise, eat well, and get enough sleep. These are all important for your brain as well as your body.*
- *Stay centered. Meditate each day for even a few minutes. Stressed? Take a few slow deep breaths to come back to center.*

- *Keep the big picture in mind. It's very possible that you'll get turned down more than once before you get hired. Always have at least a few connections going. After an interview start working on the next thing so that you won't pin all your hopes on one job.*

Interview, negotiate

OK, all your good work has paid off and you have a job interview. Now it's time to:

- *Research, research, research the organization and the job*
- *Also research typical salaries on salary.com, if you haven't already*
- *Figure out likely interview questions and PRACTICE with a friend*
- *Beforehand, practice one of the power positions from Amy Cuddy's TED talk¹*
- *Remember that an interview is a two-way street: do you want the position?*
- *After the interview send prompt thank-you notes to everyone who interviewed you*

Once you get a salary offer, keep going! You may well do better by negotiating.

- *Take a free AAUW Work Smart salary negotiation class for women (aauw.org/work-smart-boston/)*
- *Know your value (salary.com)*
- *Never give a salary number first if you can help it*
- *When you need to give a salary number, give a range*
- *Know the lowest salary you will accept*
- *Remember you can negotiate benefits as well as salary*

And of course, you can always hire a career coach.

I offer my clients warm, experienced support, help with the personal challenges of a job search, plenty of practical assistance, and accountability—on a sliding scale. Ask me about a Clarity Session.

Good luck!

¹ It's debatable whether power positions actually affect your state of mind, but they are good for coming across as confident.