

## Job Search Strategies

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Whether you want to be an artist, a designer or a business tycoon there are certain job searching skills that are applicable to almost everyone. Like any well executed project, the better your design, the better the results. Think of your job search as something you are designing to meet career goals. While some of these strategies may be more or less helpful for your particular search, all of them may be helpful at some point in your career.

### Decision Making

The first thing you will need to do is decide what you want to be doing, at least for the next few years. In today's job market people not only change jobs with relative frequency, but on average will change *careers* five to seven times. So, even if you know that your goal is to be an artist, you will have to think about how to support yourself while you make that happen. Hence, you will need to find a "make money job."

On the other hand, your short and long-term goals may have nothing to do directly with art or design, and instead you may want to use your creativity in some other way. You still need to make some decisions and create a focus. Having a focus will help direct your job search. Some things you may wish to think about to clarify your focus and get started may be:

- Values
- Priorities
- Geographic Location
- Salary
- Job Function
- Possibility for advancement
- Meaningfulness

Thinking of these things will help fuel how you approach your search. For example, if you know where you want to live, you will have to concentrate your search efforts toward the work that is available in that locale.

### Make a Plan

Job searching can sometimes be daunting. If you make a plan and chart your progress by setting short-term and long-term goals the process can feel much more manageable. Here is a checklist for charting your progress:

- Create a timeline
- Create an adaptable Resume
- Create an adaptable Cover Letter
- Create an adaptable Portfolio
- Identify and contact potential employers

- Keep a log of your contacts
- Follow up with employers as needed

The Academic Programs Center has handouts on Resume Writing, Cover Letter Writing and Portfolio Preparation.

In addition, conduct informational interviews with people in the fields that interest you. By talking to people who do what you want to do, you will gain more clarity about the field, learn about entry level positions in the field, gain a new contact, and perhaps a potential employer. If you are having problems finding someone in your fields of interest, try contacting an alumnus through the alumni network at

<http://career.umalumni.com>

In addition, the School of Art and Design is fortunate to have many alumni/ae willing to speak with you. Schedule an appointment with the Career Development Coordinator for contact information for A&D alumni/ae.

### **Strategies**

There is no one right or foolproof way to search for a job. However, there are a number of strategies to employ and what follows is a partial list for you to try. Remember, you have been trained to think creatively and your creativity applied to the job search may make all the difference.

### **Networking**

Since it is estimated that as many as 80 to 90% of all jobs are never posted, networking is key. Even if a job is posted, you are far more likely to get it if you know someone connected to the organization in some way. Networking can happen in both formal and informal ways. Formal networking occurs at meetings of professional associations and trade groups (e.g., AIGA, IDSA, AAF, etc.). Informal networking can happen anywhere and everywhere from talking to your seatmate on a plane to an opening at an art gallery.

In addition, social networking sites like Facebook and business Networking sites like LinkedIn are enhancing the options for networking your way into the job you want. Use them! However, be savvy and recognize that good networking is not asking for a job:

“The key to networking (or “schmozing”), however, is filled with counter-intuitiveness. First, it’s not who you know—it’s who knows of you. Second, Great schmoozers are not thinking “What can this person do for me?” To the contrary, they are thinking, “What can I do for this person?”

Guy Kawasaki

Read more: <http://blog.guykawasaki.com/2009/02/10-ways-to-use.html#ixzz0QXu1DKuI>

### **Targeted Searching**

Investigate who does what you want to do and then get in touch with those people. You may contact them for an informational interview, call, and send e-mail or a letter. By doing a targeted search you ensure that you are expressing interest only in positions and organizations of interest. Different strategies work better for different people. However, e-mails can easily

be ignored and some potential employers receive hundreds of letters of inquiry a day. When doing a targeted search there is no guarantee that positions are available, but if you present yourself well, the employer is more likely to remember you favorably when a position becomes available. Be persistent but don't be a pest.

### **Professional Associations**

Although already mentioned as a possibility for networking, joining a professional association will also allow you access to their job postings. Many professional associations such as American Institute of Graphic Arts (AIGA) Graphic Artists Guild (GAG) and the Industrial Design Society of America (IDSA) have job postings on their web pages and this information may or may not be available to non-members. Joining a professional association while still a student usually means paying lower dues, but having the same benefits for making contacts. Many Art and Design Associations are listed in the Resources section of the A&D Career Development Web Pages.

### **Job Bulletins**

Job bulletins have the advantage of listing openings for immediate employment. As previously mentioned, professional associations often have jobs posted in their publications, but there are other job bulletins available as well. One, available to all U of M students can be accessed through the Career Center's web page at [www.careercenter.umich.edu](http://www.careercenter.umich.edu). Another U of M resource is the job-posting page for the University, which can be found at <http://www.umich.edu/~jobs>.

### **Want Ads**

Like job bulletins, the advantage is that you are applying for a position that exists. However, whether you find a want ad in a newspaper or on a large job search board through the Internet, hundreds (and sometimes thousands) of others have access to the same information. Relying solely on want ads is probably not the best strategy, but combined with other strategies, like networking and private bulletins, searching want ads can be effective.

### **Volunteering and Internships**

Sometimes you can get a job with an organization by starting out as a volunteer. Non-profit organizations are usually in need of volunteers and if you bring needed transferable skills (for example Quark, In Design, Photoshop, etc.) you just may translate your volunteering into a job. Internships for graduating seniors do exist, and sometimes can become full time jobs. To find out if a potential employer has internships for graduating seniors you might want to consider looking at publications like The Internship Bible and Peterson's Internships available in the UM libraries and in the Career Center.

### **Job Fairs**

Job Fairs are a great way to meet with employers who are seeking employees. You can speak with recruiters at job fairs and find out more about the company or organization and what they seek in an employee. You can leave a copy of your resume with an employer and then follow up, hopefully leading to an interview. Various Job Fairs are held throughout the year and sponsored by various colleges and organizations at the University of Michigan. Other colleges, Universities, and independent organizations sponsor Job Fairs as well.

A partial list of Job Fairs includes:

The University of Michigan Career Expo  
The Multi-Cultural Career Fair  
The Michigan Collegiate Job Fair  
Engineering Career Fair  
The UM Not for Profit Career Expo  
The UM Government Career Expo  
MPowered Career Fair

### **Employment Agencies and Professional Search Firms**

Registering with an employment agency is a way to get a job through the backdoor. Even when the economy is not in great shape the work still needs to get done, and employers will turn to temporary workers. It is not uncommon for very skilled workers to be offered a job after working in a temporary capacity. In addition, temporary work allows you to explore an organization and get paid at the same time. The down side to temporary work is that you will not have benefits, the work may not be stable, and there is no guarantee that you will get as many work hours as you need.

Professional search firms are generally not helpful for students just graduating from college. Executives or seasoned professionals in search of a position may use a search firm, and organizations in need of an executive or seasoned professional will use a search firm. If you decide to use a search firm, be very cautious about any that ask you to pay a fee. Use only those that have an “employer paid fee.”

### **Follow Up**

No matter what strategies you decide to use, follow up is important. If your cover letter states you will call an employer on or by a certain date, make sure you do so. If you have had an informational interview, send a thank you note. If you have had a job interview, send a thank you note or letter. When you target an employer make sure you stay in contact and let the person know you have continued interest. Keep track of all that you are doing so you can follow up in a timely manner.

### **Making it Happen**

When you have an adaptable resume and cover letter and you are satisfied with the work you are showing in your portfolio, you have reached a point when you can use these tools to search. Sometimes job searching takes longer than expected, so allow time and be patient. There are many factors beyond your control, not the least of which is the changing demands of a dynamic economy. Think of job searching as a 3-credit course. It is time consuming and you will have to do homework. If you work diligently at finding a job you will eventually find one. The *majority* of all college students find a job within six months after they graduate. The *minority* find a job before they graduate. If your goal is to find a job before you graduate, then plan accordingly and start your job search in advance. Have the tools you need, investigate the resources available to you at the Student Services Office and elsewhere.

For more information about job searching, or to discuss other issues related to career development, contact John Luther, Career Development Coordinator, by stopping at the front desk of the Academic Services Office or calling to make an appointment (734) 764-0397.