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Ultimate **Job Finding** **Solution**



Winning Strategies

**A Guide to Landing a Job in the Sweet Spot of
Passion and Meaningfulness**

Steven Simon, Ph.D.



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THE ULTIMATE JOB FINDING SOLUTION: A GUIDE TO LANDING A JOB IN THE SWEET SPOT OF PASSION AND MEANINGFULNESS (Volume 1, Mid-Career Change Series)

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Why Use this Guide?

I often get career assistance inquiries that start something like this: “I’ve been laid off and it’s been years since I last looked for a job. I feel lost. Where do I even start?” Others will say, “I can’t stand this work anymore. I need something that will ignite a spark of passion for my job again.” Yet others will say, “I’ve been a stay-at-home mom for 12 years and I’m bored. I need to feel a sense of meaning from the work I was trained to do. I have a degree and some experience from when I was in my 20’s, but I don’t even know the first step in finding a job.” This guide will address those questions and issues, and more.

There are many resources available in print and online to help with finding a job. However, this book is meant to be a short, no-fluff comprehensive guide to systematically take you through the job search process from beginning to end. It hits only on the areas which, in my experience as a career counselor, are crucial to moving you quickly and most effectively to finding a job. However, I don’t mean just any job. I mean one that will bring you a sense of passion and meaning in what you do over the long term. This is based on application of what we call the [intersection principle](#).

The guide will also answer the difficult questions you have about the job search, particularly the ones that are causing you anxiety. Each chapter contains only the essentials of what you need to know. These are supplemented by up-to-date in-text links to brief but reliable resources that will provide more details when you need them.

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Chapter 1

Know What You're Looking For

“If you don't know where you're going, you'll end up someplace else.” This funny but true aphorism, attributed to baseball's Yogi Berra, fits well with respect to your job search. Even if you don't know the exact type of job you are looking for, you should have a direction. Otherwise you could easily end up in a cycle of unsatisfying, unsuccessful jobs or even joblessness.

If you don't have a specific type of job or a general field in mind, establishing a direction is your first step. The direction should be consistent with your background, the skills you've developed and enjoy using, as well as your overall career interests. The match need not be exact, but at least good enough to ensure interest in the work and having the skills to do it well.

If you are up in the air about what you really want to do, here are some tools you can use to narrow your direction:

1. Assess your skills, particularly your hidden skills using [this](#) resource. When doing this task, you will also determine the skills you do best and those which you enjoy using the most.
2. Assess your interests and explore occupations using [this](#) resource. You will identify your occupational interests and preferred environments, as well as associated jobs and careers. As you explore, you will also have the opportunity to incorporate the best skills you are most interested in using as identified in the skills exercise in item #1.

You'll need to put all this information together and narrow things down to find your direction. If you are still having trouble, you should speak with a professional career counselor or career consultant. The [National Career Development Association](#) provides a searchable register of career counseling professionals or you can search for one locally through the [Psychology Today "Find a Therapist" list](#). If you cannot afford to pay for career services, visit an [American Job Centers](#) office in your geographical area.



Photo by [Geralt](#)

Chapter 2

Writing Your Resume

A resume is a summary presentation of yourself to a potential employer. The purpose is usually to get an interview. It is suggested that you write a basic (generic) resume and save it on your computer. Then modify it to correspond with the specific requirements and terminology in the job announcement when you apply for specific jobs. This will align your qualifications with what the employer needs and therefore make you more likely to get an interview.

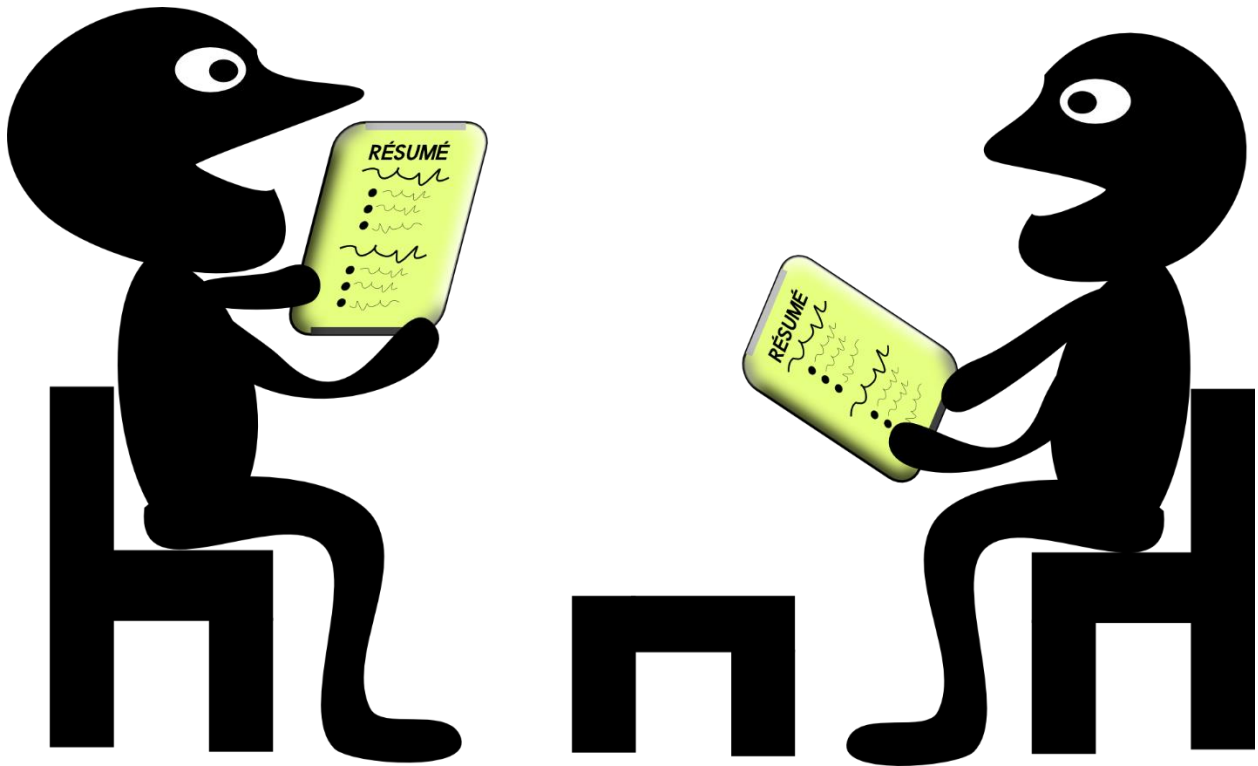


Image by [Open Clip-Art Vectors](#)

The Basic Resume

It is to your advantage to create the content and at least a draft of the basic resume yourself rather than hiring someone to write it. Determining content and organization will force you to think deeply about your experience, skills, and accomplishments, and then organize them. This will serve you well as you do resume modifications, prepare for and have job interviews. If you do use a resume writer, have that person help clean up what you've already done and put the resume in a final, most presentable form.

There is no single best way to write a basic resume. As a minimum, it should be no longer than 1-2 pages, typed on standard white paper, must contain NO spelling or grammatical errors, and should grab the reader's attention at the beginning.

Note that the 1-2 page limit may not apply if an employer invites you for an interview based on your reputation or a special recommendation. In that case the interviewer may want a more detailed description of your background, including a curriculum vitae, which is far more detailed. Try to find that out in advance so you will be prepared.

For a basic resume, include:

1. Your identifying information, i.e., name, address (optional), city, state, a non-work phone number, and a non-work professional sounding email address. Also include a link to your LinkedIn profile if you have one. If you do that, make sure your LinkedIn profile is fully updated.
2. A branding statement at the beginning of the resume. This very briefly explains the value you can bring to an organization. Click [here](#) for a credible source with further explanation and examples. A career summary statement, which might be a few lines longer can substitute for the briefer branding statement. However, it too should focus on your value to an organization. The critical element in either of these statements is grabbing the reader's attention by demonstrating not what you want, but what value you bring.
3. Information about your current and past jobs over the last 10 years, with a focus on your quantifiable achievements. When listing jobs, do so in reverse chronological order.
4. Your education in reverse chronological order.
5. You can add other sections as pertinent and necessary to strengthen your qualification profile and differentiate you from other candidates. These include detailed skills, military service, professional or other affiliations, and extracurricular activities. However, do not include anything irrelevant to the jobs for which you will be applying.

The use of job objectives in resumes is no longer usually considered desirable by employers. However, if you have a very specific or specialized job objective, or if you are changing to a new career, you can insert a job objective prior to your branding or career summary statement.

There are several basic resume formats you can use depending on your circumstances. These are:

1. Chronological – This is the style most preferred by reviewers. It works best when you have a work background with no or few breaks in continuity, and jobs in the same or similar fields. If you use one of the other formats you may run the risk of an employer sensing that there are “problems” in your work history before even reading further. This is not always the case, but it's worth mentioning. Click [here](#) for a sample of a well written chronological resume, as well as other samples for different fields.
2. Functional – This format allows for organizing your work experience, skills, and achievements by functional categories, such as “Administration”, “Technology Innovation”, and “Customer Care”. You create the categories based on what you want to highlight in your

background. You may include a listing of your prior jobs, but the emphasis in the resume is on functions.

The functional resume is useful if you have gaps in your work history; a lot of short-term jobs, or very little work history; have worked in varied or different fields; or have periods in your life with volunteer or other experiences not associated with paid work that resulted in special skills that you want to highlight. Click [here](#) for a sample of a well written functional resume, or [here](#) for another. Note that in these samples dates of employment are not shown.

3. Combination – This format creatively combines elements from both the chronological and functional. For this reason, it is a good option if you have a long, continuous job history encompassing different fields, full time and/or part-time, (e.g., medical practitioner, university professor, chief operating officer of a company).

The combination format opens a lot of possibilities. For example, I like a separate section on Skills or Skills and Achievements, after the brief branding statement or statement of qualifications, but before a chronological statement of jobs. This focuses early in the resume on a detailed statement of what might be most relevant to the employer in selecting an applicant. It serves as a 1-2 punch in the first 5-10 seconds of review.

Click [here](#) for a sample of a combination resume using the skills/achievements option, or [here](#) for several more using different creative strategies.

Modifying the Basic Resume

For each job announcement of interest, carefully read the job specifications. Make note of the exact experience, skills and other qualifications required, including the terms used to describe them. Then change your basic resume to honestly reflect your qualifications as closely to what is described in the announcement. Use terms stated in the announcement to the extent you can without repeating the whole announcement verbatim or not sounding like yourself. This can particularly help when large companies use automated resume screening systems.

Finally, to maximize effectiveness of your resume, check out this brief [article](#) for some basic do's and don'ts in getting your resume noticed.

Chapter 3

Starting to Build Your Network



Photo by [Geralt](#)

Networking, *when used effectively and efficiently*, can be an important strategy in locating the right job. Estimates indicate that almost half of all job seekers obtain a job through their network. However, this suggests that while networking can powerfully enhance a job search, many people will still get a job outside of their use of networking.

So as a primary strategy, networking alone will not result in a job for everyone. However, the secondary value of networking can become evident even as a small but sometimes critical part of the job search. For example, you may apply for a job through a company website listing. At the same time, you try to use an “inside the company” LinkedIn connection to help. You may not know the connection well, but maybe you offer to buy her a cup of coffee for a brief meeting to discuss the company; she accepts, you impress her, and she mentions your name to the hiring manager.

Let’s start by taking a look at what effective networking really is and isn’t. Networking is the establishment and use of relationships that can help you in your job search. Needless to say, networking is going to help when you have positive relationships. If you have a negative relationship with someone or have a less-than-good reputation in that person’s eyes, networking for help in finding a new job can be more harmful than helpful!

You don't need to be a social butterfly or highly charismatic to be an effective networker. The best results for most of us come from people who know us and from positive relationships we've nurtured in the past, for example, friends, relatives, and close colleagues. They may also come from new relationships while conducting a job search and through social media.

If you happen to be charismatic, enjoy social relationships, meeting new people, and easily impress others positively, a focus on attending social, political, and job-related events to meet people could be very effective. On the other hand, if you are more introverted or socially reticent, you may be most successful using social media and personal interactions with people you already know. The point is that while networking can be important, how, when, and how much time you spend on it should be planned in a manner that will work best for you. Conventional thinking would suggest the more networking the better. However, networking can also be a time-waster.

Finally, part of networking is not only in the help you can get, but also in the help you can give. The most effective networking relationships involve benefits for everyone involved. The more help you can provide to others the more they will want to reciprocate. Gratitude is a great motivator!

So, where do you start? The essentials are:

1. Open a LinkedIn account if you don't already have one. Aside from networking purposes, your presence on LinkedIn will be important for other reasons. **FULLY AND ACCURATELY COMPLETE YOUR PROFILE** with no errors and no exaggerations. Treat this with the same care as your resume. Then start requesting to connect with other LinkedIn members that you know and trust, and judiciously with others you think might be good connections to have if they accept.
2. Talk to friends, relatives, and colleagues with whom you have a positive relationship. Let them know you are looking for a job and ask for their help. This is a difficult step for most people who have lost jobs because you are telling people, with whom you've had the status of a successful worker, that you are no longer working. You've lost status and may feel ashamed to admit it, and that you need help. You may feel like you're begging. The reality is that most people, when asked, feel good that you came to them. It provides a feeling of importance and being needed, and most people want to do what they can to help. I've worked with even the highest level workers in this situation who have been fired or laid-off. When the anxiety is overcome to make those first few contacts, the positive results are remarkable! For many of us, this approach represents a change in how we view ourselves. Our lives have often taught us that we can solve our own problems. We don't need help. That self-concept has to change if networking is to be effective.

To go beyond the essentials, consider these efficient networking and job seeking strategies:

1. Join a job club – Job clubs bring job seekers together, in a structured setting, to work on finding jobs. I have found such meetings to be among the most effective options because they provide relationship-based connections, new ideas, and input from others' job search experiences. Most importantly, they can also provide emotional support during a difficult search, helping to counteract feelings of depression. To find a job club, check with your local [One Stop Center](#), or local non-profit agencies and educational institutions that provide career services.



[Photo](#) by [geralt](#)

2. Do informational interviewing – This involves requesting meetings with people working in jobs or fields of interest, for the main purpose of gathering information about a type of career, job, or organization. In effect, you are asking for assistance with finding out more rather than overtly asking for or interviewing for a job. These types of connections can be powerful because a real relationship can be established, hopefully a positive one. This can not only lead to helping you find out more about jobs and careers, but also sometimes to either a job offer, referral to someone else who can help, or a continuing connection who can bring your name up to a colleague looking to fill a job. When I have a client who is looking for a job in a new field or one related to what they were previously doing, e.g., human resources, I often suggest they speak to one or more people who are working in that field.

Most articles or experts on networking will also suggest a litany of other sources for networking such as attending networking or meetup groups, social events, conferences, and community meetings. All of these can be valuable, but they are also time-consuming. So, the value of each activity must be considered in terms of potential yield vs. time spent.

Chapter 4

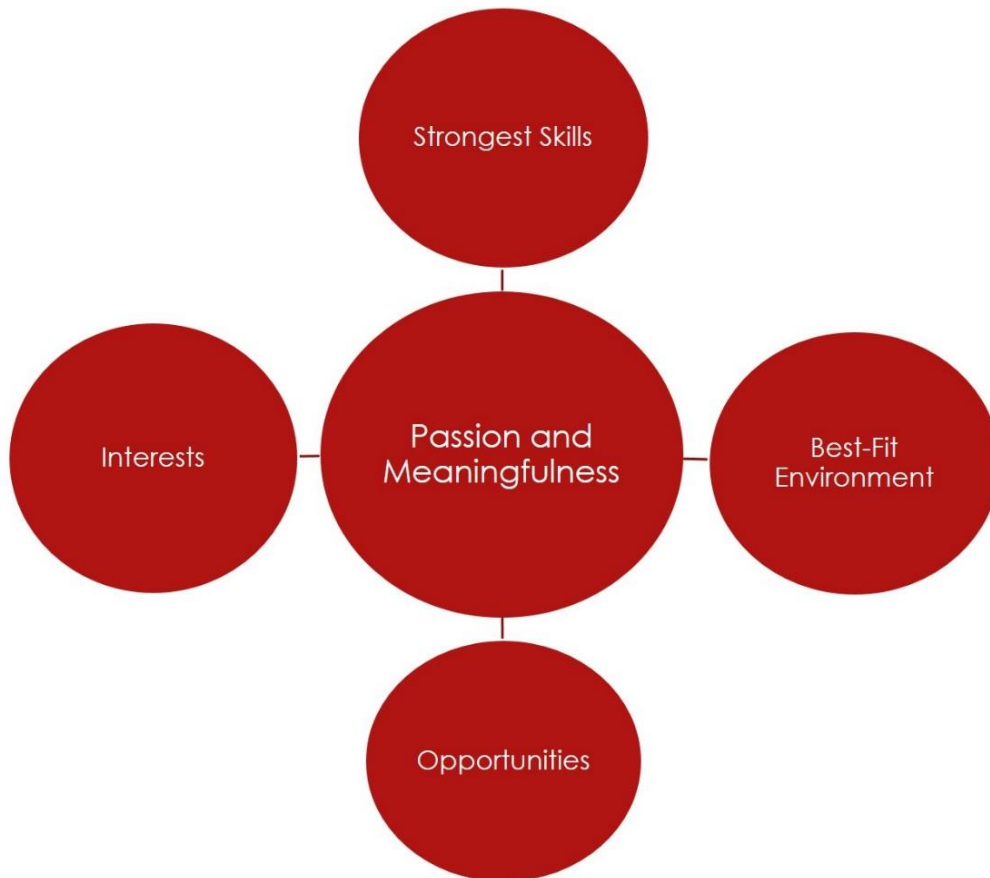
Searching for Jobs

As with the importance of skills and interests in choosing a career direction, targeting a best-fit environment when searching for a job is also important. This is consistent with what we call the “[intersection principle](#).”

Simply stated, you are likely to find the most passion for and meaning in your work when:

1. You are using your strongest skills, particularly those which you are most interested in using;
2. You are in a field of work and industry that is consistent with your interests; and
3. You are in a work environment that best fits your style and preferences as well as an employer’s needs.

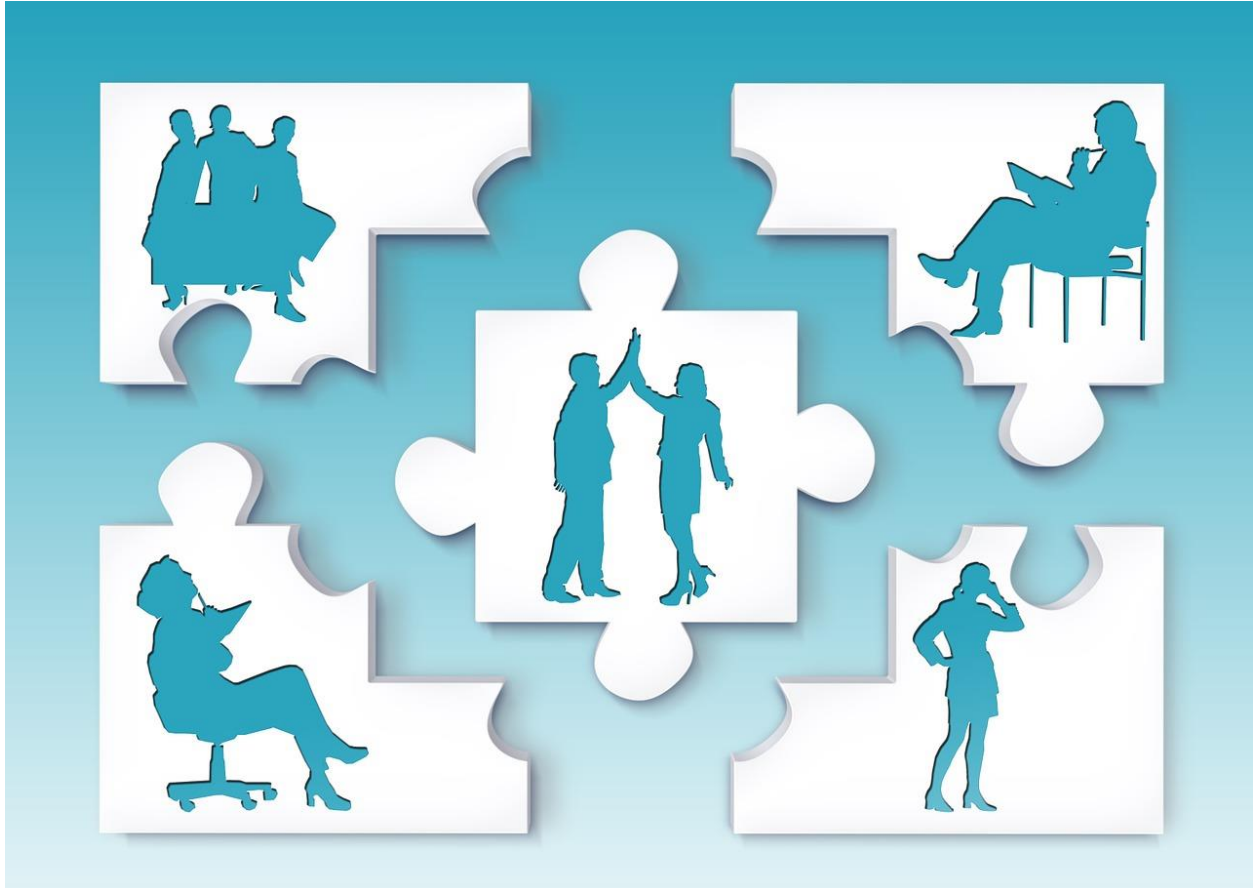
When you find a job meeting the above criteria, you are in the “sweet spot” of passion and meaningfulness.



Consistent with the intersection principle, the job search should separate out and focus on job opportunities in places where you are likely to thrive. When you make this the target, you will be more efficient in your job search.

So, how do you do it? Where do you start? First, a few important considerations:

1. **TARGETING** the right employers throughout the search is a key point. This means that before applying for jobs you do preliminary research to determine whether this might be a place where you will fit.



[Photo](#) by [geralt](#)

2. Focus on jobs in the hidden job market. These are jobs that are not broadly advertised. This keeps the competition more manageable. Some of these jobs may come to your attention through networking contacts, but others can come from tapping into channels less used by typical job seekers. These are discussed in ideas for an efficient job search later in this chapter.
3. Because it looks easy and intuitively logical, most people will start their search by applying for jobs listed on internet job boards. I don't recommend spending much time on this. The competition is highest and the yield is lowest. Thus it can be the least efficient and most discouraging method. I've had clients who have said "I've applied for

200 jobs without a single interview!” How much rejection (or non-response) can you take before you want to give up? An exception may be searching for highly specialized jobs for which you have superior qualifications separating you out from most applicants. There are endless job boards. You can do an internet search for specialized ones. Some of the more popular general job boards include Glassdoor, Indeed, Simply Hired, Monster, and CareerBuilder.

Here are some ideas for an efficient job search:

1. As suggested earlier as a networking strategy, join a job club. This will keep you focused, provide ongoing suggestions and techniques for your job search, and provide emotional support.
2. Do a company search for the types of jobs of interest. This will allow you to target specific companies and then determine what jobs are being filled within those companies. You can then apply for those jobs. There is a wonderful tool for this <https://www.careeronestop.org/toolkit/jobs/find-businesses.aspx> Enter the occupation title and location to search for a list of all organizations in your geographical area that are likely to have the types of jobs you’re seeking in their workforce. You can narrow your search by selecting only companies that are closest to your home, are in industries of interest, and are of a desirable size.

Next, you can click on each company name to find out more specific information and get a better read on your fit. When you have narrowed to the best-fit organizations, then you can see if jobs are posted on each website, or you can call the contact persons listed to ask about jobs or attempt to set up exploratory or informational interviews. Also, check company pages on LinkedIn to see job postings that may not be listed on the websites.

3. If you have many years of experience in a profession, or are looking in a very specialized field, and have a strong reputation, consider working with a recruiter. Click [here](#) to find out more about the types of recruiters, and [here](#) to learn how to find them using LinkedIn.
4. If you can develop enough of a comfort level, try a strategy of “getting in the door.” This approach is similar to #2 above. However, the focus is on getting in the door to speak to someone in a targeted organization before a job is posted. It’s the ultimate approach to tapping the hidden job market. Richard Bolles, in repeated editions of *What Color is Your Parachute?* cites this as being among the highest yield methods in quickly getting a job. Click [here](#) to see a suggested method to cold call for jobs.
5. [Career One Stop](#) sponsored by the U.S. Department of Labor, can provide valuable assistance. Job listings and other search information is readily available online. For more personalized help and more resources, including job clubs and job-seeking skills training groups, you can also visit a local [One Stop Center](#). Generally those in high population areas are likely to provide the most comprehensive services. For example, if you live in a rural or semi-rural area and

want a job club, you may need to visit a larger One Stop Center in a nearby city, rather than finding that service at a small local office.

6. If you are unemployed while conducting your job search, consider part-time and temporary employment. These jobs fill gaps which may enhance your resume, and they provide income during a long-term job search. They also provide new networking possibilities and experiences that can lead to a full-time job. Consider these sites for locating work, including jobs from home:

<http://work.chron.com/parttime-professional-job-19562.html>

<http://www.nextavenue.org/10-great-sites-find-gigs-and-part-time-work/>

<http://www.hsoutcomes.com/career-resource-center/2-static-page/45-recession-jobs.html>

<https://www.flexjobs.com>

Chapter 5

Applying for Jobs

Once you've located a job you want, then what? How do you apply? If you are applying for a job listed online, the instructions may be clear. In some instances, the application will be made directly using an employer's application form or instructions will be given to transmit a resume. If you are applying during a personal visit to an employer, bring your resume. Click [here](#) for more detailed general advice on applying for jobs.



Photo by [geralt](#)

Regardless of the application method for a specific job, keep your presentation of qualifications closely in line with the specific job requirements. When you are applying with a resume, modify your basic resume to reflect your qualifications as close to the job requirements as possible. Do this honestly without over- or understating your qualifications. For example, you may have 20 different skills. However, for each job for which you apply, modify your basic resume to include only those pertinent to that job. Similarly, modify what you emphasize in your statements of experience and achievements to those items that are specific to the stated job requirements. The organization may be using automated resume screening through an applicant tracking system, so try to incorporate exact words from the statement of job requirements in your resume, when possible. Generally, large companies are most likely to use such systems.

If you are applying with a resume, you will usually need an accompanying email or cover letter. When you transmit information by email, handle this like any other business correspondence, i.e., use perfect grammar and spelling, and be concise. Detailed guidelines and samples of cover letters are provided [here](#).

When you attach a resume, I suggest using PDF format, unless a specific software format is requested, e.g., MS Word. PDF assures that the formatting will remain the same as on the original document when opened, regardless of the

software program you used to create the resume. It also does not require the recipient to have that program on their computer.

FOLLOWING-UP on selected job applications can improve the chances of getting an interview. Try to identify the hiring manager. Then, as discussed in Chapter 3, use your network on LinkedIn or through other sources to attempt to get someone who knows the manager to arrange a meeting for you or at least mention your name to the hiring manager. Click [here](#) for a review of application follow-up strategies.

Chapter 6

Interviewing

Getting to the interview stage is an important milestone. It means you've passed the first difficult barrier to getting a job. So celebrate for a minute ... but then get back to work. You don't have the job yet!



Photo by [ambermcauley](#)

Prepare for the interview

Be ready to speak knowledgeably about yourself and about the company. So know your resume well and be ready to expand on your skills, achievements, and experiences. If you applied based on a targeted job search, you have probably also done some research on the company. Review that and prepare a list of questions about your fit with the organization environment. This [article](#) will help in defining important issues for you. Note that you may have more than one interview before a hiring decision is made. You will need to prepare for each.

The Interview(s)

There may be one or a series of interviews. For in-person interviews, DRESS should be consistent with what people in the position typically wear. When in doubt, stay on the conservative side. Grooming, as well as neat and pressed clothes, are essentials. Always be on time or slightly early; NEVER LATE. These are all first-impression issues, so pay close attention. For phone or video interviews, make sure your equipment is working properly before the interview. For phone, land-line phones are clearer and more reliable. If you only have a cellphone, try to be in an area where you get the best reception.

All interviews are different. However, click [here](#) for a link to the most common interview questions, plus a further link to potential “oddball” questions. When responding to questions, keep your answers brief and focused.

A common question I get is “How do I deal with salary in an interview?” It’s usually best to wait until the interviewer is ready to bring this up, meaning that you are being given serious consideration for the job. If you bring it up, particularly before the interviewer is sure you are a leading candidate, you can give the wrong impression and disqualify yourself. As a general rule, if you choose to raise the issue of salary before your prospective employer does, save it for last, at the time you and the employer are sold on each other. Click [here](#) for an article on questions an employer might ask about salary and how you might respond.

Once you have an offer, then you are in a position to, and should, negotiate reasonably. You’ve already been offered the job, so you know you’re the candidate they want. Negotiation is usually expected and will not result in withdrawal of the offer, unless the meeting becomes contentious.

In fact, if done effectively, negotiation could result in substantially more than the original offer. For purposes of negotiation, you will need to understand the complete salary and benefits package. If you can’t negotiate more salary, you may be able to negotiate more benefits, such as additional vacation time, full payment of medical insurance premiums, etc.

For negotiation purposes, you should know the salary range for similar jobs. You can use such sites as [salary.com](#), [payscale.com](#), and [glassdoor](#) to find information. When negotiating salary, shoot for the point in the usual salary range you think your background, experience, and expectations fit best. If you think it’s

on the high end or above the salary range, be ready to present the supporting data. Data-based negotiation can be very convincing and reasonable, as long as you are within what the organization will be willing and able to pay. For example, I once did a salary negotiation for a university job that netted well above what was expected to be paid for a temporary associate professor. The negotiation was based on data I was able to present about my salary history in non-university positions. Use whatever data you can to make your case.

Post Interview Follow-up

Write a thank you note as soon as you complete each interview. This is an important touch and can distinguish you from other candidates. There are several alternatives for doing this. Some authorities recommend a standard “snail mail” letter. Others suggest that a handwritten note written to each person involved in the interview process can make the difference in selecting among a few qualified candidates. There is always the option of an email message. You will need to assess the method that will best fit the interviewer and situation. For example, for a phone interview, an email may be most appropriate. For a personal interview or series of contacts, the handwritten note option might be most productive.

Whichever method you choose, be sure you have the correct address(es) that will get the correspondence directly to the right people. Additional follow-up suggestions are presented in this [article](#), including information on sample thank you letters and intensive contact activities.

Chapter 7

Managing Job Offers

YOU'RE HIRED

Congratulations on getting a job offer. Now what do you do? If you've been searching for a long time, you may be so happy that you can't wait to accept the job. Before you do that, it's worthwhile to think about a few things:

1. Is this job truly consistent with my best skills, and of those, the ones I am most interested in using, my general work interests, and my best-fit work environment? If the job meets those criteria, you have a great fit and can be expected to find passion and meaningfulness. If the job partially meets the criteria, consider whether there may be other offers coming that may be a better fit. In some instances, a compromise is worthwhile. For example, the job itself is a great fit, as is the company culture and the work team. However, the location is a little farther than you wanted to commute, the salary is not what you expected, and you'll work out of a cubicle rather than a private office. Over the long term, the intrinsic rewards of the work you are doing will probably make you feel very good about yourself and your contribution. The extrinsic factors, like salary and work spaces can change over time and while important, may ultimately not generate the sense of passion and well-being that a meaningful job can provide. So the compromise in taking this job may be more than worthwhile.
2. Will the job and/or industry allow for growth over time?
3. How will the job impact the rest of my everyday life – what I do on weekends, how might it affect my spouse and family, what are the implications for child care, and overall stress?

What if you get multiple job offers or think you will be getting more offers than you already have? Sounds great, but this may require juggling or use of delay tactics to avoid premature rejections and to end up with the most promising job. If you get into this situation, this [article](#) covers important strategies.

After considering and acting on the above, you should end up with the right job....one that falls within that sweet spot of passion and meaningfulness. You also now have the tools for repeating the process of finding a satisfying job when future need arises.

About the Author

[Steven Simon, Ph.D.](#) is President, CEO and a career consultant with [Human Services Outcomes, Inc.](#) His private practice focuses on mid-career issues of professional and skilled workers. Dr. Simon has a doctoral degree in counseling and a master's in rehabilitation counseling. He has over 45 years of experience as a career counselor, counseling psychologist and supervisory psychologist specializing in career and job issues, as a manager of career and job programs, and as a graduate school faculty member teaching students how to help people with career issues. He has extensive experience in the workings of large and small organizations at all levels. In addition to his private practice, Dr. Simon provides expert vocational testimony in Social Security disability hearings and writes a [blog](#) on mid-career issues.

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Look for the new Volume 2 of the Mid-Career Change Series, *RELAUNCH! Stagnation, Change, and Renewal in Mid-Career and Beyond*, available in [ebook](#) and [print](#) format.

