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My Job Search & Application Plan

An average job search time can take up to 6 months, and the average number of applicants per job may be in the hundreds. Some positions take longer to find or fill. Your preparation, planning, and follow up are crucial.

This checklist will remind you of the structure and steps in the job search process. Being in control at each step can help you decrease the search time and proactively build new connections, even if you do not get a particular job.

Focus on getting the maximum value out of your job search: networking, learning about your industry, discovering interesting companies and colleagues, and planning your career development better. With these skills, each next job application should be easier.

1. Prepare:

- draft ideas about your desired work environment and role
- create a list of potential employers (10-40+)
- [research](#) these companies carefully
- pick several job boards you enjoy using
- subscribe to email alerts via these job boards
- create a list of your target job titles (for efficient searches)
- join a professional association or review existing memberships
- let your network know that you are available for employment
- update/improve your LinkedIn profile

2. Develop career documents that set you apart from the competitors:

- list specific, quantifiable examples of your success
- update your resume to highlight specific results and relevant skills
- tailor the top part of your resume (career summary and areas of expertise) for each target role
- use the requirements from each job description to draft a customized cover letter
- know your unique value proposition and your top differentiators

3. Follow up:

- follow up within 5 business days by email, phone, or via LinkedIn
- identify decision-makers on LinkedIn and send an introductory message, mention your top (2-3) differentiators that are most relevant to the target role

In your short message, aim to be helpful in the hiring process – suggest a short phone conversation or propose sending additional documents the company may need (your references sheet, for example).

4. Prepare for the interview by knowing your unique differentiators:

- Know the employer's requirements and expectations well.
- If some of them are unclear from the job description, prepare insightful questions.
- During the interview, ask if you may follow up, when, and how (by email or phone).
- Ask for the interviewers' business cards or contact information.
- Whatever the outcome of the interview, treat it as a networking opportunity.
- Make a positive impression and continue the relationship on LinkedIn after they make the hiring decision, in case other opportunities come up.

5. Send thank you notes:

- Immediately after the interview send a thank you note highlighting 2-3 specific points of substance that were discussed during the interview.
- If you feel that you missed a chance to add some important information, use the thank you note to add it, briefly.

Which of these steps have you been neglecting so far? There's more to each of them depending on where you are in your career development journey, but I hope this checklist gives you a clear overview of the key steps in the process – so that you feel in control and ready to meet potential employers.

The obvious desired outcome of your job search is a fulfilling job. By being prepared, strategic, and consistent, you can also learn to

- ✓ quickly customize your career materials
- ✓ draft short and engaging networking messages
- ✓ be confident during interviews and when following up
- ✓ add new professional contacts who can introduce you to opportunities in the future.