

### GET THE SCOOP ON...

- Separating friend from foe as you assemble a job search support team
- Why you need a financial plan for your search
- How to set up “Job search central”
- Making the most of your time

## Getting Organized and Planning Your Action

**T**hink back to one of the most complex projects you’ve undertaken in your working life. Remember the preparation and planning that went into it, the strategizing, the difficult people you encountered, the budgets, the overtime, the other responsibilities you had to juggle at the same time, the details, the reports to write, and anything else that made it challenging. Now, take all that and add a dose of uncertainty about whether you’re succeeding or failing (because you get absolutely no feedback), lop on a dollop or two of emotional distress and financial pressure, and then top it all off with no end in sight. What have you got? A job search.

Looking for, and landing, a job is not easy. It stretches every organizational, time management, and project management skill you have. It calls upon people management, customer service, and teamwork skills you never knew you had. It taxes your patience and stamina, bruises your ego, and can send your self-esteem down the toilet. Sounds fun, doesn’t it?

Believe it or not, I have actually had clients tell me that they are enjoying their job searches. Okay, not that often, but it does happen. The key is to do the things that are recommended in this chapter. Forming or joining a job search support group or strategy team can be fun, inspiring, and motivating. Setting up a home office from which to conduct your search is a pleasant task for those who like to nest. Getting yourself organized makes the search much less painful (because you don't have to panic over lost papers or waste time fishing through files to find what you need). Tracking your progress as you take action gets the juices flowing in those who like to stay busy and make things happen. Even if you can't imagine yourself truly enjoying a job search, you can at least make it a lot more tolerable by following the tips offered in this chapter.

## **Regis, I'd like to use a lifeline**

Success in any area of life rarely comes from a solo effort, and a job search is no exception. Whether you like it or not, you will be dependent on people around you during the job hunt. You may need strategic advice, emotional support, contacts, and leads, or someone to hold you accountable so that you stay on track. You'll also have people involved in your search in not so much a helpful, strategic sense but more along the lines of rubbernecking. These are the friends and family—some well-meaning, some just, well, mean—who keep close tabs on your progress, or lack thereof, to the point of nagging and who offer their two cents whether you ask for it or not. You need to be prepared to deal with them because they're a given in every job search.

## **It's a family affair**

Your family can be a great source of comfort during your search. Or not. If you're lucky, your spouse or significant other and kids, if any, will be the glue that holds you together when you feel your sanity unraveling during the rough patches. On days

**Watch Out!**

Don't forget that family members who are a source of comfort for you may need some comforting of their own. Keep the lines of communication open so they understand what's happening in your search to alleviate any fears they may have about when you'll find a job. (In the case of children, make sure they're old enough to understand.)

when it feels like finding a job is the most important thing in the world, they help you keep a healthy perspective and not lose sight of what's really most important. If you don't have a family of your own, then your parents or other relatives might be the ones to fill this role.

What about those family members who only add to your stress during the search? I can't even count the number of times clients have complained to me about their spouses, or parents in the case of younger clients who haven't fully cut the cord. They are tired of being asked "Have you found a job yet?" or "How many résumés have you sent out?" or "Are you sure you're working hard enough at it?" Sometimes the questions are justified. Maybe the job seeker has been doing more hiding than seeking. Maybe a bit more effort could be put into the search. It never hurts to listen to the concerns of those around you. They just might have a point.

If you feel, however, that their questions and suggestions border more on nagging than constructive criticism, you can use a few strategies. First, before gearing up to do battle, try to view the situation from their perspective. Some of the reasons family members might be getting on your nerves without intending to include the following:

- They're very stressed about money and how long the family can hold out without you working.
- They're used to having you out of the house all day, and now here you are hanging around upsetting their applecart.

**Bright Idea**

Make a point of doing something with friends at least once a week to have fun and rejuvenate yourself for the job search.

- They don't realize how long it can take to find a job. Perhaps the last time you or they sought work, the new job came much more quickly.
- They don't know what an effective job search looks like. They think that job searches are measured by how many résumés are sent out, how many jobs are applied for online, and how many search firms or agencies you sign up with. They don't understand that those two networking lunch appointments you had this week may have been worth more than all those other activities combined.

The way to deal with any of the reasons listed here is to sit down with your family members and educate them about the process you'll be going through, sharing your strategy and plans (including the action plan you'll be learning about later in this chapter), and asking whether they have any questions or suggestions. In other words, involve them in the process so that they feel some degree of ownership. At the same time, make it clear that you are the primary owner of your job search and that they have to trust that you'll do it right. Also, establish some ground rules about when, where, and how you want to talk about your search so that you don't feel like an irritating question is lurking around every corner.

**With friends like these...**

As with family, your friends can be a wonderful part of your support system during your search or may pose some problems. In general, you need your friends more than ever during a job search. They can be valuable sources of comfort, ideas, leads, and the occasional much-needed reality check if they know you very well. Friends also play an important role in that they provide

**Watch Out!**

Many job seekers who have lost their jobs are ashamed to tell friends, acquaintances, and neighbors that they're unemployed. Get over it! It happens to the best of us, and anyone who can't understand that isn't someone you should care to impress anyway. Plus, you would be missing out on valuable networking.

an outlet of fun and relaxation to keep you fresh during your search. You can't job hunt every waking moment or you'll burn out, so connecting with friends to escape from the search is critical.

What about when friends aren't such a good source of support? This could be for many of the same reasons that family can be problematic. If so, use the same tactics suggested in the "It's a family affair" section. The difference with friends, however, is that if their true colors come out when you're down and out and those colors aren't so nice to see, then you might need to consider breaking off the friendship or at least let it cool off a bit until you're settled into your new job.

## You need professional help!

You may find that you need to call in some experts beyond your know-it-all Uncle Louie for help with your search. The following are several types of professionals whom you might want to contact. Although many, if not most, will require that you pay a fee, I have made suggestions for free or low-cost alternatives wherever possible.

### *Career coaching/counseling professionals*

If you receive a severance package when you leave your employer, that package might include the services of a career transition firm, commonly known as an outplacement firm. Outplacement companies don't get you a job; they coach you on the best way to land a job. Through various combinations of one-on-one consulting, group classes, and Web-based tools, they help you write



### **Moneysaver**

If you haven't yet left your current employer but do end up being laid off, negotiate to have them pay for outplacement services as a part of your severance package if they aren't already included. Your human resources department will know how to arrange them for you. Never hurts to ask!

a strong résumé, plan an effective strategy, and learn the best techniques for networking, interviewing, and negotiating compensation. Depending on the package your employer purchases from the outplacement service, you might also have access to an office or cubicle, with all the equipment and administrative support you need for your search. Some career transition firms, such as the one where I have worked for the past several years, also offer on-site networking events and job fairs, so they can help you cultivate contacts, not just get advice. If you have been given outplacement services, use them! They cost you nothing, and your search is likely to go much more smoothly and quickly if you do take part in them.

If you don't receive an outplacement package when you're laid off, or if you're choosing to leave your current job voluntarily and won't be getting a severance package, then you will be on your own to find the career or job search coaching that you might need. Although it is certainly possible to go through a job search without expert advice (especially if you read this book from cover to cover!), you may feel more comfortable consulting with someone face to face, by phone, or even online on the best ways for you to land the type of job you want. Even the best writers struggle with their own résumés, the most outgoing people question their networking techniques, and the most skilled negotiators wonder whether they're getting a fair shake with the compensation a new employer is offering. Career specialists in private practice can help with those and other concerns that arise in your search. Career professionals who are generalists help with everything from defining your focus to job search

strategy to résumé writing. Others may specialize in only one of those areas.

Choosing a career specialist to work with can be confusing, in part because we all go by different labels. Some, like myself, call themselves career counselors. Career counselors typically have advanced degrees, such as a master's or doctorate, usually in some area of psychology or counseling. Others call themselves career consultants, career strategists, or similar titles. They may or may not have degrees in counseling but often have experience in human resources or the business world that qualifies them to help others with their careers. Finally, there are the career coaches, also known as executive coaches, work-life coaches, career management coaches, or by other names that end with "coach." Career coaches often have training and certification from the coaching institutes that have formed in recent years as an alternative to graduate degree programs in counseling.

Adding to the confusion in choosing a career specialist is the alphabet soup of credentials some career specialists hold. If you don't know what the acronym(s) after someone's name means, ask. A staggering number of certifications have popped up in the career consulting and coaching worlds in recent years. They range from certifications earned after a one-day course to ones granted only after passing muster through a longer, stringent process involving presenting a portfolio of work for professional review and passing a tough exam. Although there's merit to both types of certifications and longer doesn't always mean better,

### **Where to Find a Career Professional to Help with Your Search**

Career Masters Institute—(800) 881-9972 or [www.cminstitute.com](http://www.cminstitute.com)

Career Planning and Adult Development Network—  
(650) 359-6911 or [www.careernetwork.org](http://www.careernetwork.org)



### **Moneysaver**

Check with your college and/or graduate school career services office to find out about free or low-cost services for alumni. Also, many churches and other religious institutions as well as community organizations have volunteers to help members of their communities with job searches.

make yourself well informed by finding out what the credentials really mean. Never pick someone based solely on his or her certification(s).

No matter which titles and letters appear after the name of the career specialist you choose, make sure that you understand his or her experience and areas of specialization and have a clear idea of how the coaching/counseling/consulting process will work, along with all fees that will be involved. Most career specialists will charge you on an hourly basis with no requirement to pay in advance for multiple sessions. However, some career coaches may charge one flat retainer fee when you work with them over a period of weeks or months. As long as that fee seems fair when you break it down to its hourly equivalent, there's nothing wrong with that approach. Also, some career professionals may charge a flat fee to administer a battery of career tests and discuss them with you in follow-up sessions. That, too, is nothing to be alarmed about, although if the fee is higher than about \$1,000, make sure that you know what you're getting for it and consider asking to speak to former clients as referrals.



### **Watch Out!**

Be very wary of career services firms that seem to promise the moon—tons of contacts, leads, and the implied guarantee of a job—along with pushy sales tactics. These companies advertise heavily in newspapers' help-wanted sections and troll the Internet for job seekers desperate enough to pay thousands of dollars in fees for services that end up being almost worthless.

If fees are based on an hourly rate, expect to pay anywhere from \$50 to \$75 per hour on the very low end, with \$100 to \$150 more typical, and more than \$150 an hour not uncommon for very experienced, in-demand career professionals.

### ***Image/communication consultants***

If you're concerned about the first impression you make on people in networking or interviewing (and first impressions are critical, as you probably know), you might find the services of a professional image coach or communication consultant to be helpful. Image consultants advise clients on wardrobe, hairstyle, and makeup, and may handle other aspects of personal presentation such as voice, diction, body language, and etiquette. Communication consultants (including voice coaches and accent coaches) overlap with some image consultants in that they help you express yourself more effectively through your spoken and nonverbal—maybe even written—communication. Some have a specialty in media presentations, helping people convey the right images on television or radio appearances, something that could come in handy if you find that your interviews will be conducted via videoconferencing.

### ***Business strategy consultants***

You might decide that rather than bang your head against the wall to land a job you're not really going to like all that much anyway, you will try your hand at self-employment. Business strategy coaches or consultants help you decide whether entrepreneurship—starting or buying a business or franchise, becoming a consultant, or freelancing—is right for you. They might also advise you on how to start or grow your business if you've already decided. Some coach you in one-on-one sessions, while others do so through seminars or other group events. You can find business strategy consultants working on their own in independent consulting practices as well as through seminars offered by business schools, community education centers, and the continuing education division of universities and colleges.

## ***Professional organizers***

Those of you who are organizationally challenged may find it hard to believe that some people actually earn their livings helping others get organized and manage their time well. If there was ever a time you needed to be organized, it's during a job search. Your search will bring a whole new set of papers, electronic files, books, records, schedules, and contact information into your life. You may find that it's time to bring in a professional organizer, too.

### **Where to Find the Experts**

The following organizations are sources of professionals described in the previous sections:

#### **Image, Voice, and Communications Experts**

American Speech-Language-Hearing Association—(800) 498-2071 or [www.asha.org](http://www.asha.org)

Association of Image Consultants International—(972) 755-1503 or [www.aici.org](http://www.aici.org)

Association of Professional Communication Consultants—  
[www.consultingsuccess.org](http://www.consultingsuccess.org)

#### **Entrepreneurship Advice**

Center for Entrepreneurial Management—(212) 925-7911  
or [www.ceoclubs.com](http://www.ceoclubs.com)

Small Business Administration, SCORE: The Service Corps of Retired Executives, and Small Business Development Councils—all three organizations can be reached at:  
(800) 827-5722 or [www.sba.gov](http://www.sba.gov)

Working Solo—[www.workingsolo.com](http://www.workingsolo.com)

#### **Professional Organizers**

National Association of Professional Organizers—(847) 375-4746 or [www.napo.net](http://www.napo.net)

## Going out for the strategy team

Earlier in this chapter, I described what a complex project your job search would be, and when mentioning the skills it will call upon, teamwork was one of them. You might have wondered why teamwork was listed when finding a job on your own seems nothing like being on a project team on the job. Well, teamwork *is* a big part of a job search, or at least it should be. You learned in Chapter 1, “Twenty Secrets of Successful Job Seekers,” that one of the biggest mistakes job seekers make is to try to go it alone. You need to involve people in your search, not only in the form of networking for leads but also for support and strategic input.

Family and friends can only go so far to provide the support and input you’ll need. You may find that you reach a saturation point with them. Leaning on family and friends during your job search can put a strain on the relationships. Plus, you might find that they simply cannot relate to what you’re going through if they’re not experiencing the same things themselves. That’s where strategy teams come in. Meeting regularly (once a week, once a month, or something in between) with a group of fellow job seekers is an excellent way to keep your search on track.

If you are working, or will be working, with an outplacement firm, independent career professional, or community-based career services organization, you might have access to some sort of job search group or club. If not, consider forming your own. You probably know people who are job seeking just like you or with some word of mouth could find friends of friends who are.

There’s no magic to running a job search strategy team. Set a date and time and find a place to meet that doesn’t cost anything (someone’s home, a public library, a religious institution, or a community center). Appoint someone, probably yourself, as the facilitator of the group but keep the group peer-led and democratic. The facilitator’s role would be to set the agenda, make sure that the agenda is followed, keep the conversation

flowing, and watch the clock to finish on time. Each meeting should last about two hours, possibly longer depending on the size of the group and how much is covered. A maximum of about 8 to 10 participants is recommended. You want enough people to get some energy and ideas flowing but not so many that everyone doesn't have a chance to be heard. A typical agenda would include the following:

### ***Sample job search strategy team agenda***

Use this sample agenda as a springboard for developing an agenda customized to your own group's needs and objectives.

#### I. Introductions (2–3 minutes per person)

- a. *Introductions:* Participants each introduce themselves very briefly using their self-marketing sound bite (described in Chapter 3). Even if the same group meets regularly, introductions should take place every time to give participants the chance to keep practicing their self-marketing sound bite.

#### II. Progress Reports and Needs (5–7 minutes per person)

- a. *Progress report:* Participants report on what they have done since the last meeting. They speak about networking and research conducted, interviews scheduled or attended, and any other activities, including successes and failures.
- b. *Needs:* Participants let the group know what they need help with. This might include a contact at a particular



#### **Watch Out!**

Be wary of job hunting advice offered during job search strategy meetings. Use sound judgment before making major decisions about your search strategy if they're based on advice from people who aren't professional career coaches or experienced hiring professionals. Consider using this book or another reliable source as your reference tool.

company, an idea of organizations to target, guidance in preparing for an interview, review of a résumé, and so on. Or, they might need cheerleading—encouragement if they are feeling concerned about how their search is going.

III. Open Group Discussion and Sharing (time varies widely depending on size of group and overall length of meeting, but this would be the majority of the time during the meeting)

- a. Participants offer advice and solutions to any needs expressed in Section IIb.
- b. All participants share additional ideas, tactics, strategies, leads, and information that might be helpful to the group at large.

IV. Conclusion and Next Steps (final 20–30 minutes)

- a. Each participant has the opportunity to speak up if anyone feels his or her needs were not met. Group attempts to remedy the situation or agrees to try to do so before the next meeting.
- b. All participants declare what they plan to accomplish in their searches before the next meeting. The group will hold each person accountable for those plans at the start of the next meeting.
- c. Any final remarks or questions.

The sample agenda is provided only as a jumping-off point for you. You may find the need to vary it. Some groups, for example, may want to conclude each meeting with an inspiring quote, or with a prayer or meditation if the group is religious or spiritual in nature. (But, make sure that all members want to do that!) Others may want to get creative with the introductions, such as having each member answer the “Why should we hire you?” question. You might also want to plan for activities between

meetings, such as dividing the group into pairs of partners who stay in contact between meetings to support and motivate each other. The variations are endless, but don't change the agenda too often. Having a familiar structure will make it easier for all participants to feel comfortable joining in and will ensure that everyone's needs are met.

### ***Job search strategy team ground rules***

In addition to having an agenda to work from, it's important that each meeting begin with a brief recitation of the group's ground rules. These are not meant to be rules that cramp anyone's style, but simply some basic principles everyone agrees to so that all can feel comfortable participating. Sample ground rules might include the following:

- Personal information should be kept confidential and not leave the room.
- Every member should offer at least one valid lead, contact, helpful suggestion, or new idea to at least one other member at each meeting.
- No one member should occupy a disproportionate amount of the group's time during any meeting unless the group as a whole decides that one particular member needs to be the focus of that meeting.
- The "No Yes-Buts" rule: All suggestions made to you should be accepted as well-meaning suggestions that deserve consideration. Do not shoot down an idea until you've given it careful thought.
- Any member who gets emotional during a meeting deserves respect and support (and a tissue!), not ridicule or condemnation.

This list is intended only as a starting point. Your particular group may need to modify some of these rules and add some. Feel free to do so as needed. There are no hard-and-fast rules for job search strategy groups; each one is unique. Just be sure

### **Strength in Numbers—Where to Find Job Search Groups**

If you prefer to join an established job search group rather than start your own, consider these two excellent resources. There are fees involved in joining and attending meetings, but they are reasonable and well worth it for the value you get.

**The Five O’Clock Club**—(800) 538-6645 or [www.fiveoclock.com](http://www.fiveoclock.com)

Headquartered in New York with affiliates across the United States and abroad, The Five O’Clock Club offers coaching, networking, and job search strategy support in small groups. Contact the home office or browse their site to find out whether there is a Five O’Clock Club near you.

**Forty Plus Clubs**—(212) 947-4230 or [www.fortyplus-nyc.org](http://www.fortyplus-nyc.org)

For job seekers 40 years of age or older, these nationwide clubs offer job search guidance and great networking opportunities at no cost or for a small fee. Contact the New York club or check the Web site for a location near you.

you don’t put so many rules in place that the group feels they can’t function freely!

## **Getting your personal life and money in order**

Before facing one of the most challenging projects you’ll ever encounter, it’s worth it to take some time to get your ducks in a row before plunging headlong into your search. It’s easy to underestimate how all-consuming a job search can be. If you’re looking for a new job while still employed, it’s even more challenging because you have to figure out how to fit all sorts of new

activities—research, letter writing, networking appointments, private phone calls, and interviews, to name only part of it—into a schedule dominated by your current job and personal life. The sections that follow offer suggestions for taking care of pending matters in your personal life or household and for getting your finances in order before embarking on your search.

## Clear your plate (and honey-do list) for the job search

I've seen people delay their searches for all sorts of reasons. Some were getting married or moving to a new home; some wanted to take time off for travel or just to relax; and others wanted to spend more time with family before getting back into the work grind. There was even the guy who couldn't get started on his résumé until he finished building the goldfish pond in his front yard. As long as you have a solid financial cushion and are realistic about how long your search will take after you do start it, there is no reason why you can't take some time off before officially beginning your search. In fact, it's a good thing. By taking some time to recharge body and soul or to cross some personal or household projects off your list, you will enter your job search ready for action with a clear head and empty to-do list.

What if you don't have a financial cushion and need to land a new job ASAP? I've seen candidates start their job searches but find themselves distracted by competing interests. A common situation is the case of a person who has been laid off and suddenly finds himself or herself at home all day with a spouse who presents a "honey-do" list each day, filled with household projects or errands to take care of. The job seeker wants to focus on



### Bright Idea

To squeeze personal and household projects into a tight job hunting schedule, set specific dates and blocks of time that you will work on the projects, rather than just saying "I'll get to them soon."

the job search, but the spouse doesn't understand why the job seeker can't do all the household chores. The result is hurt feelings and damaged relationships at home, along with a job search that is erratic and ineffectual. Whenever possible, clear off the honey-do list or your own personal to-do list before starting the job hunt. Or, if you're in too much of a hurry to get a job and have to start right away, then take care of as much as you can at home during the early stages of your search before appointments and interviews heat up, and make it clear to yourself or your family that certain projects simply aren't going to get done because finding a job has to be the priority.

## Financing your search

When buying a car or house, starting a business, or paying for a college education, it's normal to think of how you'll finance those expenses. You might seek bank loans, borrow from family or friends, look for investors, or even rack up some credit card debt temporarily. Whichever way you do it, financing those major expenses in life is likely to be something you give careful thought to, consult with experts on, work out a budget for, and do lots of number-crunching over. So, what about your job search? How are you going to pay for *it*?

All too often, job seekers don't plan ahead for the financial aspects of a search when they decide to look for a new job. Of course, even less planning goes into an involuntary search when you're caught off guard by a layoff or other type of termination that wasn't your choice. Unfortunately, job searches add a whole new set of expenses to your life, and if you're unemployed while job seeking, those expenses can become a significant burden when your income is no longer there.

To avoid undue stress down the road, particularly if your search ends up taking longer than you expect, put your finances in order before sending out the first résumé or making that first networking call. Total up the cash you have on hand plus savings and investments, and then take a close look at your monthly



### **Moneysaver**

You might lose your unemployment benefits if you take a part-time job or full-time temporary assignment to ease the financial pressure during your job search. So, make sure that you will earn enough to offset the loss.

expenses and see how long you could go before money would get uncomfortably tight. If you've already left your last job and are receiving severance pay or unemployment benefits, factor those in as well. Note that some expenses related to a job search are tax-deductible, so you may be able to shave some amount off the final cost of your search. Consult with a qualified tax professional for advice on what is deductible.

Be sure to be realistic about how long your search might take. No magic formulas exist for how long it will take you to find a new job. Talk to people in your field who've conducted searches recently and ask headhunters and career coaches who work with candidates in your field or industry to get a general idea of how long your search might take. If you've done the math and your balance sheet doesn't look too healthy, look for ways to cut your expenses and consider taking a part-time or full-time temporary job to ease the financial burden of your search.

Review the checklist BC1.1 and see which expenses you are likely to incur during your job search. You may not need everything on this list, either because you already have it (such as a home office setup), or it's an item not relevant to your search (such as a scanner to scan documents or images), or you choose



### **Bright Idea**

If your organization has been downsizing or there are rumors that layoffs could happen and if you own a home, consider taking out a home equity loan while you're still gainfully employed. The financial cushion could come in handy down the road if the ax falls on you.

not to use it (such as fee-based career coaching). For those expenses you do expect to have, put an estimated cost in the blank next to each item and then total your expenses at the end, being sure to account for some being one-time costs, like a computer purchase, and others monthly expenses, for example, DSL service for your Internet access.

### Checklist BC1.1. The Cost of Job Hunting

#### Equipment, furniture, and supplies

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- \$\_\_\_\_\_ Personal Computer (purchase or lease)
  - \$\_\_\_\_\_ Software
  - \$\_\_\_\_\_ Printer
  - \$\_\_\_\_\_ Office furniture
  - \$\_\_\_\_\_ Telephone answering machine or voice-mail service
  - \$\_\_\_\_\_ Cellphone
  - \$\_\_\_\_\_ Photocopier (optional)
  - \$\_\_\_\_\_ Fax (optional)
  - \$\_\_\_\_\_ Scanner (optional)
  - \$\_\_\_\_\_ PDA (personal digital assistant—handheld electronic address book, calendar, and so on)
  - \$\_\_\_\_\_ Network card (if you need to network your PC to another in your home to access the Internet or a printer)
  - \$\_\_\_\_\_ Accessories (for example, mouse, mousepad, cables, surge protector, laptop case, and so on)
  - \$\_\_\_\_\_ Printer cartridges
  - \$\_\_\_\_\_ Printer paper
  - \$\_\_\_\_\_ High-quality paper and envelopes for résumés and letters
  - \$\_\_\_\_\_ Postage
  - \$\_\_\_\_\_ Miscellaneous office supplies (note paper, pens, staples, diskettes, CDs, paper clips, and so on)
  - \$\_\_\_\_\_ Other: \$ subtotal (one-time purchase) \$ subtotal (monthly)
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*continued*

**Checklist BC1.1. (continued)****Office services**

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- \$ \_\_\_\_\_ Personal computer rental by the hour (if not purchasing or leasing your own)
  - \$ \_\_\_\_\_ Photocopying (if using an outside service)
  - \$ \_\_\_\_\_ Sending and receiving faxes (if using an outside service)
  - \$ \_\_\_\_\_ Scanning (if using an outside service)
  - \$ \_\_\_\_\_ Internet account
  - \$ \_\_\_\_\_ High-speed Internet access (if you want to upgrade to DSL, cable, or other)
  - \$ \_\_\_\_\_ Cellphone monthly service and usage charges
  - \$ \_\_\_\_\_ Land-line phone long-distance charges
  - \$ \_\_\_\_\_ Upgrades to your phone service (call waiting, call forwarding, three-way calling—services you might not have needed before your job search)
  - \$ \_\_\_\_\_ Administrative/secretarial services (for those who choose not to do their own typing)
  - \$ \_\_\_\_\_ Other: \$ subtotal (one-time purchase) \$ subtotal (monthly)
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**Miscellaneous expenses**

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- \$ \_\_\_\_\_ New clothes, shoes, or accessories for networking appointments and interviews
- \$ \_\_\_\_\_ Fees for career coaches, image consultants, or other experts
- \$ \_\_\_\_\_ Local travel (gas and mileage) to networking appointments and interviews
- \$ \_\_\_\_\_ Travel costs to explore other cities or towns if considering relocation
- \$ \_\_\_\_\_ Travel costs to interviews in other locations (usually reimbursed, but not always)
- \$ \_\_\_\_\_ Meals for yourself or others you might entertain while networking
- \$ \_\_\_\_\_ Gifts for those who help you during your search (for example, flowers or small gift items)

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### Miscellaneous expenses

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\$ \_\_\_\_\_ Child care (if you've been at home as a full-time parent and now will need child care while you go to interviews or out to other job search activities)

\$ \_\_\_\_\_ Other: \$ subtotal (one-time purchase) \$ subtotal (monthly)

\$ \_\_\_\_\_ Total (one-time purchases)

\$ \_\_\_\_\_ Total (monthly expenses)

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## Rocket science, brain surgery, and filing— how to get organized

When you have your support systems in place and have taken care of all possible distracters in the form of personal projects and financial pressures, it's time to get down to work. But, before you can take action, you need to put some organization in place. Now, before your eyes glaze over and you start thumbing through pages to skip to the next chapter, I want to let you in on another secret of successful job seekers: A job search takes longer when you are not well organized.

Every moment that you spend rifling through files to find a document you've lost is a moment that could have been spent networking or conducting valuable research. Every time you lose track of where your résumé is filed on your computer, you create more stress for yourself as you have to rekey it in from hard copy or call someone to ask sheepishly whether they have your résumé and can email it to you. (You might think that doesn't happen much, but you would be amazed how many



### Moneysaver

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Check your local Yellow Pages or ask around for businesses that sell used office furniture and equipment. Gently used merchandise usually works just as well as the shiny, new stuff and is much easier on the wallet at a time when every penny counts.

people lose or accidentally delete their résumés. I get calls all the time from clients who need me to send them my copy of their résumé. What if I were an employer, not their career consultant? How would their disorganization look to me if I were in a position to hire them?)

You can take four main steps to get your act together before diving into your search: Set up your workspace; line up access to the right office equipment; set up systems and forms for tracking your progress; and put a filing system in place that you can live with. Each of these is covered briefly in the following sections. For more details, consult any of the excellent books on organization listed in the online Bonus Appendix 2, “Recommended Reading List.”

## Setting up your workspace

If you’ve left a job where you had an office or cubicle, you probably knew every nook and cranny of that workspace. You knew every curve of your desk chair; your computer monitor was set up at just the right height for your eyes; you knew where you kept the most important files; and your personal photos and bulletin board mementos were in their places. No matter how neat or messy the space was, no matter how much you liked or loathed your job, it was your home away from home. So, what about now? You’ve been uprooted from your familiar workspace and have to start from scratch to set up job search central. Or, if you’re still employed, you have to find a place to conduct your search from home to keep your job hunting business private but will need to shuttle files and papers back and forth between home and work.

Whether you have a palatial room in which to set up a full home office or must designate a corner of your bedroom or kitchen counter for job search central, you should keep several guidelines in mind—some obvious, some not so:

- Make sure that you have enough space to set up office equipment, file and pile papers, and spread out comfortably. If necessary, temporarily rearrange a room or part of

a room to make space for your job search rather than squeezing the search into a space that's too small.

- Make sure that the work area is comfortable in terms of temperature. You might think the porch is a great place to set up shop, but when the winter wind wails through or summer heat soaks down, you'll be miserable.
- Pay attention to the ergonomics of your setup. Make sure that your desk chair is comfortable, desk or table is the right height, computer screen doesn't have glare on it, lighting is adequate and not harsh, and so on.

If you don't already have a good home office space and have to get by with a makeshift one, keep in mind that it won't be forever. Temporary inconveniences to other areas of your house or parts of rooms are a worthwhile sacrifice to ensure that you have a productive place from which to conduct your search.

## Essential office equipment

Checklist BC1.1, "The Cost of Job Hunting," provided you with an indication of some of the equipment you might need in your job search workspace. A computer is the most obvious piece of equipment you need, along with basic word-processing software and any other software you might need for your type of search, such as spreadsheet or database applications. A printer is pretty essential, too, and can be bought for very little money. You will find, however, that the majority of your communication takes place online with electronic files emailed, so if you really need to keep expenses down, consider doing without a printer. You would then take your files on disk or CD to a local print shop like a Kinko's (or to a generous neighbor with a printer) to print out anything you need in hard copy. This is not ideal but could be a good temporary solution until you can purchase a printer.

Whichever items from Checklist BC1.1 you choose to purchase or lease from, make sure that all are in good working order and convenient to use. In the thick of a job search, the



### **Moneysaver**

Some employers will let you buy your used computer when you leave a job, particularly if your leaving is part of an office closing or facility shutdown where the office equipment won't be needed anymore. If you need a home computer, ask whether this is possible and see whether they'll negotiate a good price.

pace can suddenly pick up, so you don't need to be messing around with equipment that doesn't work.

## **Tracking your progress**

After your office setup and supplies are in place, you'll soon be ready to start taking action in your search. It's important first, however, to put some tracking systems in place to keep track of what you do, whom you contact, how and when to follow up, and so forth. Tracking systems not only, well, keep you on track, they also can keep you motivated. When you have a down day and feel like your search is going nowhere, you can look at your logs and see how much you've accomplished, as well as get a reminder of people or places with which to reconnect. You need two simple tracking systems: activity log and networking log.

### ***Activity log***

You need to keep one running list of all activity in your search. Think of it as kind of like keeping a daily journal. You'll make an entry in it each time you do anything connected with your search. If you're the particularly organized type, you'll want to make entries in the log throughout each day, recording every action individually. You might record each phone call made, each email sent, every meeting held, and so on. This can get burdensome, however, so consider making only general entries at the end of each day. In that case, you'd record something like: "10 phone calls to old networking contacts; two emails to new (never met) contacts; applied for one position on Monster.com; registered to attend a professional conference;

and scheduled one interview. Of course, in a real-life situation, you'd record the names of the networking contacts you called or emailed, a few details of the position you applied for, the name and date of the conference, and the particulars of the interview.

Your log can take any number of forms. You might choose to keep it entirely electronically in your PDA (personal digital assistant) or computer. If electronic, you might set it up as a spreadsheet with columns for dates, type of activity, quantity, and any notes per activity. If you prefer a paper method, consider a section in a three-ring binder or simple spiral notebook. Another option is to select an aesthetically pleasing small book designed as a journal or diary if you prefer artistry to high-tech.

### ***Networking log***

Connecting with other people by phone, email, or in person will constitute a major portion of the time during your search, so your networking activities deserve their own log. A networking log is best set up electronically as a spreadsheet, with columns as depicted in the sample Networking Log that follows.

| <b>Sample Networking Log</b> |                                  |                      |                                     |                        |                                    |
|------------------------------|----------------------------------|----------------------|-------------------------------------|------------------------|------------------------------------|
| Date/Contact                 | Name/Title                       | Affiliation          | Phone/Email                         | Source                 | Action/Next steps                  |
| Mon 3/26<br>Called her       | Sue Jones/<br>HR Director        | AlliedTech,<br>Inc.  | 555-555-5555/<br>sjones@mail.com    | Met at PMI<br>mtg 3/23 | Set appt for 4/5<br>her office     |
| Mon 3/26<br>Emailed          | Bill Bradshaw/<br>VP, Operations | Overland<br>Chemical | 556-555-1212/<br>bbradshaw@mail.com | Neighbor               | Asked for appt.<br>Awaiting reply. |
| Wed 3/28<br>Called him       | Bill Bradshaw                    |                      |                                     |                        | Left VM for him<br>to call me.     |
|                              |                                  |                      |                                     |                        |                                    |
|                              |                                  |                      |                                     |                        |                                    |
|                              |                                  |                      |                                     |                        |                                    |
|                              |                                  |                      |                                     |                        |                                    |

Note that if you end up having extended communication and interaction with a particular individual or multiple individuals within one organization, you might want to establish a log

just for that person or organization to have a quick at-a-glance record of contact all in one place.

## **Filing systems that really work**

Most people don't particularly enjoy setting up filing systems or filing papers, and that's understandable. I happen to enjoy it, but I'm a little weird when it comes to that. After all, I am a former member of the National Association of Professional Organizers! Next to rocket science and brain surgery, setting up a decent filing system that you'll actually use has to be one of life's biggest challenges. The problem with most systems is that they're either too complex for anyone to be able to use them on a daily basis so they don't get used at all, or they're too simplistic and don't adequately contain all the paper and electronic files most people accumulate.

I don't expect you to become, or want to become, a master filer. Nor do I intend to cover all aspects of filing for all papers in your home or office. All I want you to be able to do is not drive yourself crazy with papers and files scattered far and wide throughout your job hunt. Now that you know how you'll be tracking your job search activity, you need to have a plan in place for how to keep track of all the paper and electronic files that your activity will be generating. The following is a simple way to do so.

### ***Electronic filing***

First, you need to set up folders on your computer's desktop so that it's easy to file documents that you'll be creating or receiving. If your desktop resembles a patchwork quilt, now is the



#### **Bright Idea**

To store and easily access email sent and received during your search, set up folders in your ISP (Internet Service Provider) that mirror the folders on your hard drive.

time to clean it off and make room for one primary folder called “Job Search,” or whatever nickname you might choose to give your search to be a bit more clever. Within the job search folder, you need to set up the following subfolders:

- **Résumés:** File all versions of your résumé in this folder.
- **Self-marketing documents:** File all other self-marketing documents here.
- **Marketing plan:** File any documents related to your self-assessment, occupational research, wish list, and target employer lists.
- **Logs and Forms:** File logs like those described in the “Tracking your progress” section of this chapter, along with other forms that you’ll be learning about throughout this book.
- **Advice and Ideas:** This folder will contain an assortment of information—tidbits of advice received from other people or read in books or online, lists of ideas you have for your search, and more. You may want to set up numerous subfolders to keep it all straight.
- **People and Places:** Here you should establish a subfolder anytime you have your first correspondence or research results with a particular person or organization. Then, store all future correspondence or information related to that person or place in the appropriate subfolder of this folder.
- **Expenses:** File your spreadsheet or other record-keeping system for job search expenditures, as well as various financial information you might collect.
- **Miscellaneous:** What would a filing system be without a good old miscellaneous folder for items that don’t fit into the other categories? Just be sure not to let this folder fill up. Establish other folders if you start to get enough items in a new category.

### ***Hard copy filing***

Most of the documents, forms, and correspondence related to your job hunt will probably be in electronic form, but you will invariably need to file some actual papers as well. The easiest way to set this up is to establish file folders with labels exactly the same as the electronic files listed previously. I recommend using hanging file folders that come in various colors so that you can use the same color for related items and group them together in your file cabinet or portable file storage box. The main key to making this simple system work is to save only those papers you are fairly certain you'll need so that you don't accumulate clutter and do actually file papers where they belong so that you can find them easily.

## **The call to action—what to do and when**

So, you've got job search central all set up and now you have to do something. Feeling all dressed up with no place to go? You probably need some guidelines for what to do today, tomorrow, and the days after that. There's so much to do to land a job that it can be hard to know where to start. The important thing is to have an overall sense of what you're supposed to be doing and then break it down into daily, weekly, or periodic objectives, and map out a daily or weekly routine that ensures you'll meet those objectives.

### **The three phases of job search action**

The first place to start is to have a big-picture sense of what needs to get done and in what order. The outline that follows shows the three main phases of action in your search, covering additional broad categories of activities in each phase, as well as the more specific actions you may need to take within each category. For topics that have not yet been covered up to this point in the book, I've indicated the chapter or chapters where you'll find out more about that particular activity.

## ***Phase One: preparation***

The tasks in Phase One form a critical foundation for the more action-oriented steps to come later.

### **Get organized**

Assemble a support system; take care of personal projects and finances; set up job search central; establish tracking and filing systems.

### **Get focused**

Develop a job search wish list; explore career options; decide on career focus.

### **Marketing plan**

Research and identify who needs what you offer and offers what you need; develop a hit list of targeted employers or types of employers (Chs. 10 and 14).

### **Self-marketing tools**

Develop résumé(s) (Ch. 5); create additional self-marketing tools (Bonus Chapter 3).

## ***Phase Two: Active search***

After laying the foundation in Phase Two, you're ready to enter the active search phase. This is the point where you'll start to feel like you're making some progress. Be forewarned, though, as this phase takes a lot of time, effort, and energy!

### **Hidden marketplace search methods**

Network (Ch. 9); conduct research to identify potential employers (Ch. 7); direct mail campaigns (Ch. 8).

### **Formal marketplace search methods**

Apply to online job postings or post résumés online (Ch. 10); apply to other advertised openings (Ch. 7); contact or meet with recruiters/placement consultants (Ch. 8); attend career/job fairs (Ch. 11).

**Interview**

Prepare for interviews; go to interviews; follow up after interviews (Chs. 15–17).

**Regroup, revisit, recycle**

Regain focus; revise marketing plan and self-marketing tools; continue to use varied search methods; follow up on leads, contacts, and interviews (Ch. 15).

***Phase Three: closure***

In this phase you'll start to see the light at the end of the tunnel. You've generated enough activity in your search to be able to concentrate on clinching a deal and eventually calling an end to your search. Enjoy!

**Land the offer**

Provide follow-up materials, for example, references or a proposal for how you'd approach the job if offered it, (Ch. 15); negotiate (Ch. 15); evaluate offers (Ch. 15); review and sign offer letters and employment agreements (Ch. 15).

**Close out the search**

Notify and thank your network (Bonus Chapter 5); organize, discard, distribute job search records and files; dismantle job search central (Bonus Chapter 5).

You might find that you have additional activities specific to your search to add to the preceding list, but this is a starting point covering most phases and types of action needed in a typical job search.

**Watch Out!**

Never forget that your job is to find a job. It's okay to take some time off from your job hunt every once in a while to reduce stress and enjoy life, but be sure that you are putting in as much or nearly as much time as you would on a "real" job.

## What did you do all day...all week?

One of the most common questions asked of me as a career counselor helping people with their job searches is “How should I allocate my time each day?” I’m happy to answer this question because one of the biggest mistakes job hunters make is to spend too much time on less valuable activities and not enough time on the more productive ones. The short answer to the question is: Network more and do everything else less. Be careful not to get sucked into hours and hours of browsing the Internet and not making human contact by phone or in person. However, if you’re the type of person who loves to be out amongst ’em and has networking appointments and events lined up all day every day, you might actually need to scale back on the networking to have some quiet regrouping time at your desk to organize your search, do research, or take care of follow up. That’s a rare situation, however, and my colleagues and I find that the most common misappropriation of time is too much Internet or research time and not enough human interaction.

So, how should a typical day or week look? Well, if you sleep an average of about eight hours a night over the course of a week, then you’ve got 119 waking hours per week. It’s your choice as to how you use them. I do have some recommendations, though!

### ***Phase One: preparation***

The tasks that make up Phase One will primarily be one-time activities. You’ll get yourself set up and organized, get your tools in place, define your focus, and then be on your way to Phase Two. Phase One doesn’t really require any particular set schedule, but do be sure to start each day and each week with clearly defined goals and action items. Set yourself a deadline for when you’ll complete your résumé, when you’ll finish the self-assessment and research necessary to define your focus, when you’ll have all your organizational structure in place, and so

forth. Phase One can last anywhere from a week to several months depending on how much of a hurry you're in to launch your search and how focused, prepared, and organized you are from the get-go.

### ***Phase Two: active search (preinterviews)***

While actively engaged in your search to drum up leads and interviews from the formal and hidden marketplaces, the following is a suggested breakdown of how to spend your days and weeks. You won't necessarily do every one of these activities every day, but over the course of a week or so the breakdown of your time should be approximately along these lines:

- Networking: 60%
- Researching and direct contact with targeted employers: 15%
- Online searching and applications: 10%
- Contacting recruiters; attending job fairs; applying to print ads: 10%
- Administrative work (follow up, organizing files): 5%

These percentages are not etched in stone, but they accurately depict a good use of time in a typical job search. Of course, each search is unique, and each job seeker is unique, so adjust the time breakdowns to fit the type of work you're seeking and your preferred style of working. For example, if trying to land a technical job, you might have better luck with online methods than through direct-mail campaigns or recruiters. In that case, adjust the percentages accordingly to give yourself more time on the Internet.

Also, as you begin to secure interviews, you'll need to revise this time breakdown to allow more time for interviewing and a little less time for lead generation. Just be sure not to cut back too much on networking and administrative time allotments.

### ***Phase Three: closure***

As with the preparation phase, the closure phase does not require as much of a set schedule as Phase Two, when you are actively searching. Just be sure to allow enough time to follow up thoroughly on live job possibilities in order to clinch the deal and take the time to close up shop and prepare to transition when you do land and accept an offer.

## **Just the facts**

- Establish a support system to help you through your search, either informally with family and friends, or formally by hiring career consultants or related professionals and joining or forming a job search strategy team.
- Clear off your personal to-do list and get your finances in order before embarking on your search.
- Set up a well-functioning, well-organized job search central, with all the equipment, supplies, filing systems, and tracking tools you'll need to be productive.
- Use “The three phases of job search action” section as a checklist to keep you on track throughout your search.
- Establish daily and weekly objectives and schedule your time carefully to make sure that you're spending time wisely.

