Logo of the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, Kenan-Flagler Business School. 

# Job Search Strategic Plan

With any important project, it is essential to have a plan. A good job-search plan will enable you to clarify your goals, stay on track, sense forward movement long before you land a job, assess your effectiveness, and identify whether and how to change course.

Don’t be alarmed if you do not have all the answers from the start – *no one does!* **That’s actually part of the process – developing a clear sense of what you don’t know.** This clarity will ultimately lead you towards getting the information you need to conduct an effective search.

It may feel counterproductive to spend time on planning, but it will actually save you time and energy in the long run by providing a results-driven approach to your search.

## Defining Your Goals

To find what you are looking for, you need a clear idea or definition of what it is. Defining your goal upfront will change everything about where you look for it and how you pursue it. It will also help you know when you have found it! And when you haven’t!

### TARGET JOBS

Define you target job in terms ***meaningful to you***. This can involve a range of things, but people typically find it helpful to use the descriptors used below. You are encouraged to add your own. In other words, which job titles will you be searching for?

#### Functional Areas

#### Levels

#### Job Titles

### TARGET INDUSTRIES

Which industries interest you the most and which industries might naturally be more receptive and interested in you than others? Which products, services, technologies, processes, or business models serve as a connecting point between your background/interests and a particular industry?

### COMPANY PROFILE

Define the attributes of the ideal company and why they matter to you.

#### Size

#### Profit/Non-Profit

#### Public/Private/Family-Owned

#### Business Lifecycle

#### Location

#### Culture

#### Other

### TARGET COMPANIES

Which organizations have you already identified that you would like to investigate further? Based on the above criteria, which organizations would you like to add to your list?

### YOUR BUSINESS CASE

Why *is* this your target market?

#### Relevant Skills/Experience

What skills or experiences form a link between your background and your target market’s needs?

#### Contributions

Given your skills, experience, or even personality traits, how might you be particularly well-positioned to impact your target market? What problems might you be uniquely equipped to solve for employers in this market?

### CHALLENGES

While it may be tempting to hide from obstacles, doing so does not avoid them, it only postpones them.

#### Objections to Overcome

What are the real or imagined skill/experience gaps that employers may perceive in you and how will you respond?

#### Risks

Don’t waste time pursuing jobs that you ultimately will not accept because the risks are too great or they don’t truly meet your needs. It may be disappointing to confront these unpleasant realities now, but it will be even more disappointing after you have invested months in pursuing a career path that is actually incompatible with your interests, skills, or needs.

## Job-Search Strategies

Once you define your target market, you will need a strategy to penetrate it. Although the most effective job searches are typically multifaceted, not all techniques will, nor should be, utilized by everyone. As long as they work for you – use them. But if they do not, you need to adjust your tactics!

### NETWORKING

Networking is not only an excellent way to gather leads on jobs but also to research the market itself and gain targeted advice on market-specific job-search techniques and tools. And **it is virtually the only way to tap into the unadvertised job market!**

The easiest way to begin is to start with people you know. Your existing contacts may or may not have insight into your target market, but they may know others who do!

There are actually two ways to approach your networking strategy. One is to identify the people you know who are either knowledgeable or well-connected in either your target market or the community at large. In other words, they can either give you good advice and insight into the market and/or connect you to others.

Perhaps an even better approach is to first consider what you need to learn to execute a more effective search and then consider who you know who may have the answers and advice you seek.

In any case, to build or expand your list of desirable contacts, consider the following types of people who tend to not only know a lot of people in the community, but in the business world in particular.

* Alumni
* Attorneys
* Consultants
* Doctors/Dentists
* CPA/Accountants
* Insurance Agents
* Sales People/Vendors
* Clergy
* Bankers
* Realtors
* Government Officials
* Teachers/Principals

#### Potential Contacts

Whom do you know that you would like to get started talking with?

#### Kenan-Flagler Alumni

Two very useful and easy-to-access tools to help you build appropriate connections are the [**Alumni Career Advisors Network**](https://give.unc.edu/directory-kfbs/) **(ACAN)** and the [**Alumni Directory**](https://give.unc.edu/directory-kfbs/). The ACAN is a group of over 1,800 alumni who have offered to share their professional expertise and knowledge to help you with your career goals. But you can also search the entire Alumni Directory to identify other fellow Tar Heels to contact. While you’re there, be sure to update your profile, too!

#### Networking Groups

Groups whose sole purpose is to facilitate networking exist in almost every city and town. Some are focused on specific professions or industries and some are general groups with diverse memberships. Check your local business newspaper or the business pages of your daily paper; they often list these groups and their meetings.

Which groups would make sense for you to attend?

#### Professional/Trade Associations

Professional and trade associations offer lots of benefits, not the least of which is the opportunity to meet others in your target market. Attending local chapter events can be a great way to connect, and you may not need to be a member to do so. If you do join, you may also get access to a membership directory.

#### Social Media

Of course, social media sites, such as LinkedIn, are great tools to help you identify potential contacts in specific industries, professions, companies, etc., as well as people who are naturally “connected” to you via a mutual acquaintance.

On LinkedIn, be sure to check out the Groups feature that allows you to join virtual networking groups based on shared interests, location, etc. They can allow you to find more relevant contacts, participate in online discussions, etc. In particular, consider joining the [**UNC Kenan-Flagler LinkedIn Group**](https://www.linkedin.com/groups/516/) to stay connected with alumni, students, faculty, and staff.

You will also want to explore the [**UNC Kenan-Flagler Alumni pages**](https://www.linkedin.com/school/unc-kenan-flagler/people/) on LinkedIn. This tool allows you to search for alumni by location, employer, functional area, etc. Click Next to access additional search criteria. There’s even an open search box at the top left that allows you to search on any word or phrase you’d like.

Which social media sites do you want to use?

### SOURCING OPENINGS

Where will you be most likely to find job postings of interest?

#### The Internet

Though the Internet is a great source for postings, realize that websites are just as easy to access for millions of others as they are for you. Therefore, the competition is great. In fact, you probably have only a 10% to 20% chance of finding your job there. But don’t overlook it. Someone is landing those jobs!

##### General/Aggregator Websites

##### Targeted Websites

#### Recruiters

Often called headhunters, search firms, executive recruiters, etc., these professionals, who are employed by an outside firm, assist employers with sourcing candidates. Are the employers in your target market likely to utilize recruiters to find applicants? Where might you find recruiters serving your market?

## Action Plan

Once you have filled out this plan as well as you can, step back and review it. Where are the gaps in your information? Perhaps some sections are still fairly vague and sketchy, others may be completely blank at this point. In any case, where gaps exist in your plan, translate them into questions. Then, consider where you might find answers. It may be a website, a directory at the library, or many times it will be someone you know. This is where you need to get to work with networking and other forms of information gathering.

| **Gaps in My Plan** | **Questions They Raise** | **Information Source** | **Task** |
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## Weekly Planning

You will also want to use your overall Action Plan to develop a Weekly Plan. Where you’ve described tactics you intend to utilize and questions you need to answer, create and prioritize a list of tasks for each. Then plan time into your week to devote to each task.

A single task list can quickly become overwhelming and diffuse your focus. Spreading your goals over the week will make your plan more manageable and less stressful. You can avoid the tendency to worry about all that needs doing, since you know you have a time preplanned for each task.