



This is “Step 1: Identify Your Job Search Targets”, chapter 3 from the book [Job Searching in Six Steps \(index.html\)](#) (v. 1.0).

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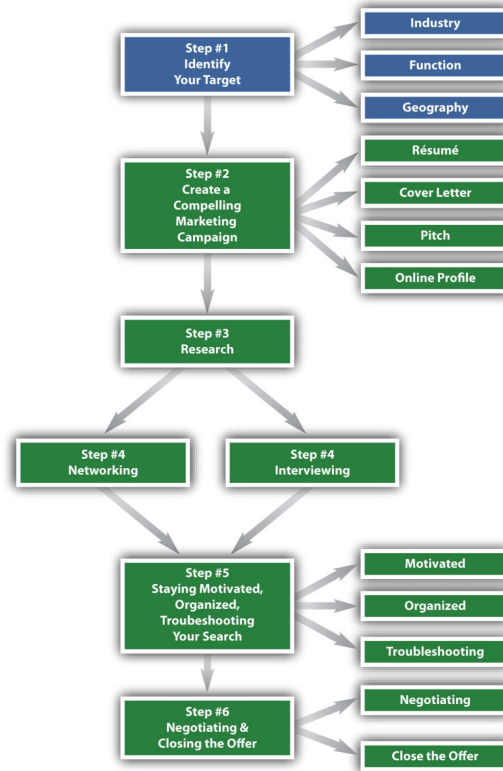
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Chapter 3

Step 1: Identify Your Job Search Targets

Figure 3.1 The Six-Step Job Search Process: Step 1



Overview

What Do We Mean by Job Search Targets?

If you think about achieving any goal (and finding a job definitely qualifies as a goal), the first step is to define the goal. What type of job do you want? Getting a job is a match between the employer who has the job opening and the employee who will be doing the job. Because two parties are involved in achieving this goal, there are two considerations in determining your job search targets:

1. What does the employer want from the job?
2. What do you want from the job?

This chapter talks about these two considerations and how you can find the overlap.



Because the employer will be defining the job and finding the right candidates for the job, it is important that you are able to understand the employer's perspective on the job search:

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- How is the employer going to describe the job?
- Where will the employer look for possible candidates for the job?
- What characteristics will the employer want in the person who is hired?

When you know how the employer describes the job, you know how to search for it. When you know where the employer will look, you can position yourself to be there. When you know what the employer wants in the person who is hired, you can market yourself to reflect these characteristics.

At the same time, you probably don't want just any job. You want a job for specific reasons. These reasons might be the following:

- Starting on your dream career path
- Supporting yourself in a comfortable way
- Fulfilling a specific mission or personal legacy
- Working with people you like and respect

When you know what you want in your next job, you can search for these specific criteria. If your priority is to start on a specific career path, then you look for growth, advancement, learning, and mentorship in your next job. If you have specific financial obligations that you need to meet (e.g., student loans to repay, family to support, a relocation), then compensation is a main criteria. If you have a mission or legacy you wish to impart (e.g., to help a specific underserved community), then you will be looking at the mission of your next employer to see if it aligns with yours. If you value your relationships and day-to-day interactions with people, then you will be looking closely at who your boss and colleagues will be in your next job. These are just some examples, and people often have multiple considerations. You will want to look closely at your interests and values to determine overall what you want and how you might prioritize jobs that meet some but not all criteria.

Figure 3.2 A Visual Representation of the Intersection of Employer and Job Seeker Wants



This chapter covers both the employer's and your considerations for possible jobs. We will be looking at the following considerations:

- Three elements that define how an employer broadly characterizes a job
- Strategies for you to match your interests to these three elements
- Multiple ideas for what you might look for in a job
- Strategies for you to match your ideas to the market of jobs

We will also be looking at the importance of having multiple job targets. Sometimes people romanticize the ideal job, making it sound like there is only one perfect job target. Perhaps you are waiting for a lightning bolt of inspiration to tell you what avenue to pursue. The idea of only one perfect job target is problematic for several reasons:

- If you don't know exactly what you want, you might spend all your time considering the possibilities, rather than looking for an actual job.
- In a very competitive market, having just one area to target makes for a narrow search and limited possibilities.

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- If you launch all of your search efforts on one job target and realize later that you are not as interested as you thought or otherwise need to refine your search, you need to start from the beginning.

As a job seeker, there is a lot to do, and identifying your job targets is just the beginning. This chapter provides a structure and steps to move forward so that you don't fall into the inertia of too many possibilities, the scarcity of too few possibilities, or the inflexibility of just one right answer.

3.1 Three Elements of a Well-Defined Target

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

1. Understand the importance of a structure to categorize the very broad job market.
2. Learn the importance of each of the three elements that define a specific job.
3. Start thinking about how these elements will play a role in your job search.

The Importance of the Three-Element Structure for Defining Job Targets

If you glance at a **job board**¹ or classified ad section, you will see hundreds, if not thousands, of job possibilities. Even similar ads, such as job postings for accountants, can list very different descriptions for the job responsibilities, as well as qualifications to get the job. If you don't have a structure to categorize this very broad job market, you will dilute your efforts wading through too many jobs that are of no interest to you or for which you are not qualified.



1. A place where jobs are posted. Most jobs boards are now online, such as Monster, Hotjobs, and Indeed.

Instead, you need a structure that cuts across all of the jobs and is representative of how the employer thinks of the job (since the employer is the one advertising the job). This way, you know what job postings to research. For the searchable online job databases, you can filter specifically with the structure in mind. As you move through the six steps of the job search process, you can tailor each step to the target structure to ensure that you are always keeping the employer's point of view at the heart of your search.

Three Elements of a Well-Defined Job Target

A well-defined job target includes three elements:

1. Industry
2. Function
3. Geography

Continuing the example of accounting from the first section, accounting is a function. It is what the person in the job is doing. However, this accountant can be working for a government agency, for a hospital, for an insurance company, for a toy manufacturer, or for a host of other types of companies and organizations. Therefore, accounting is not specific enough—we also need to know the industry (whether government, health care, insurance, etc.). Finally, because people might relocate for a job, we also need to know the geography of our job targets. Are you looking at a specific city only, surrounding suburbs, surrounding cities, multiple states, or even multiple countries?

Industry

The **industry**² you target is the type of business in which you want to work. Industries include the following examples:

- Arts
- Education
- Energy
- Food
- Fashion
- Health care, pharmaceuticals, and biotech
- Hospitality and leisure
- Financial services
- Government
- Legal

2. The type of business.

- Luxury goods
- Management consulting
- Manufacturing
- Media and entertainment
- Nonprofit causes
- Retail
- Sports
- Technology
- Telecommunications
- Transportation, aerospace, and automotive

These are just some examples, and they are of very broad industry categories. You can specify even further into subcategories. You will want to subcategorize because if you pick too broad an industry, you will have the same dilution-of-efforts problem as if you haven't specified an industry at all.

If you look at the arts, subcategories include the following examples:

- Type of art—visual, performing
- Type of organization—venues for exhibiting and performing, arts education, artist support, art supplies
- Sector—nonprofit (e.g., Lincoln Center, a venue for performing arts), private sector (e.g., Warner Music Group, a record label), government (e.g., National Endowment for the Arts, a federal agency supporting artists and arts organizations)

It is not enough to say, “I want a job in the arts.” Do you mean visual arts, as in painting or sculpting? Do you mean you'd like to work in a venue, such as a museum or a theater? Do you want to work for educational programs that focus on the arts? Do you want to work in support of artists—at a foundation that gives grants for creative projects, or at an artists' union? Do you want to be in and around artists, selling or manufacturing art supplies? Finally, you can be in the arts and work for a nonprofit, a private company, or a government agency. Each of these sectors is very different.

In a later section of this chapter, we will give ideas for how to explore different industries and the different subcategories of your industry choices to see what might be right for you. In Chapter 6 on *research*, we will talk about how to research industries for specific organizations and company names and other information that will help you find the jobs you want. You can see already how useful it can be to focus on being specific. Being specific in describing the jobs you want is necessary to find where those jobs are.

Let's take another example from the list so you can get more ideas on how to break an industry down. If you look at energy, the following subcategories are included:

- Types of energy—oil, gas, coal, nuclear, alternative
- Types of organizations—exploration companies, utilities, research firms, regulatory agencies, equipment and support, capital raising
- Sector—nonprofit (the US Energy Association, a nonprofit professional association), private sector (e.g., Exxon Mobil, an oil and gas company), government (e.g., the Environmental Protection Agency)

If you are interested in energy, you could work for a private company that is involved in many types of energy and at many stages, from exploration to delivery. You could research energy-related issues for a nonprofit. You could be focused on regulations for a government agency. There are multiple, different possibilities for that single energy industry choice.

Finally, let's look at sports as a possible interest. Perhaps you have been a longtime athlete or a diehard fan. Can you take a personal interest and make it into a career?

- Types of sports—a specific sport (e.g., football) or sports in general
- Types of organizations—sports team (e.g., New York Giants), sports league (e.g., NFL), sports venue (e.g., Madison Square Garden, Meadowlands), sports program (e.g., an after-school program dedicated to foster competitive skills among youth), sports product (e.g., Under Armour), sports retailer (e.g., FootLocker), sports business (e.g., agencies who represent athletes, marketing and advertising firms who help companies with sports-related campaigns)
- Sector—nonprofit (e.g., Turn 2 Foundation, which supports sports programs and is funded by Derek Jeter, a professional baseball player), private sector (e.g., Under Armour, FootLocker), government (local departments of parks and recreation)

If you are interested in sports, you might focus on a specific team or sport and look at different organizations involved with that team. Or you might focus on sports in general—perhaps take on the mission of expanding the spectator base, increasing participation among youth, or determining the impact of sports on culture.

Here is a list of possible subcategories for common industries:

Table 3.1 List of Industry with Examples of Subcategories for Each

Overall Industry	Subcategories
Arts	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Visual or performing arts • Venues • Education • Artist support and marketing • Arts-related products
Education	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Early, elementary, middle school, secondary school, higher education, adult, corporate, and executive • Independent, alternative and charter, public • Regulation and advocacy • Research • Pedagogy
Energy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Oil, gas, coal, nuclear, alternative • Exploration • Utilities • Research • Regulation and safety • Equipment • Capital raising
Food	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Catering • Restaurants • Corporate services • Media and journalism • Nutrition science • Regulation and safety • Human rights and food access

Overall Industry	Subcategories
Fashion	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Retail • Design • Manufacturing • Buying • Media and journalism
Health care, pharmaceuticals, biotech	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Hospitals, clinics • Pharmacies • Medical equipment • Research • Regulation and safety • Human rights, medical care access, patient advocacy, privacy • Insurance
Hospitality and leisure	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Hotels, resorts, spas • Leisure versus commercial • Booking and sales • Event planning • Equipment and operations
Financial services	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Accounting and audit • Commercial banking • Private banking and asset management • Investment banking • Retail banking • Insurance • Regulation • Consumer advocacy and protection
Government	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Federal, state, municipal • Constituents represented (e.g., artists, children, elderly, small business)

Overall Industry	Subcategories
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Industries represented (e.g., arts, education, health care, banking)
Legal	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Professional services, in-house • Criminal, civil • Family, immigration, litigation • Research • Operations and document processing • Regulation • Public defender
Luxury goods	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Retail • Design • Manufacturing • Media and journalism
Management consulting	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Functional specialists: HR, economics, sales, general strategy, technology • Industry specialists: financial services, pharmaceutical, nonprofits
Manufacturing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Equipment • Regulation and safety • Union relations • Capital financing
Media and entertainment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Film, TV, publishing, digital • Content production • Distribution • Marketing • Advertising

Overall Industry	Subcategories
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Research • Regulation and monitoring
Nonprofit causes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mission based (e.g., ending poverty, eradicating polio) • Constituent based (e.g., advocating for the homeless, protecting consumers) • Programs • Foundations
Retail	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Product based (e.g., clothing, office equipment) • Customer based (e.g., children’s, women’s)
Sports	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Specific sport or sports in general • Sports team • Sports league • Sports venue • Sports-related education • Sports products and equipment • Sports retailers • Sports agencies, marketing, or advertising
Technology	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Hardware • Software • Services • Regulation • Advocacy (e.g., privacy, net neutrality)
Telecommunications	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Engineering and design • Manufacturing • Utilities

Overall Industry	Subcategories
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Regulation • Advocacy
Transportation, aerospace, and automotive	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Motor, marine, rail, aerospace • Leisure versus commercial use • Engineering and design • Manufacturing • Logistics • Regulation and safety • Consumer protection and access

Function

The **function**³ of a job refers to your overall responsibility and what you are doing day to day. Examples of job functions follow:

- Management
- Sales
- Marketing and public relations
- Finance and accounting
- Human resources
- Operations
- Technology

In both of the industry examples for arts and energy, you could be doing many different things within any of the subcategories. If your industry choice leads you to an art museum as a possibility, you might do several things:

- Manage a program or exhibit (management).
- Handle membership or ticket sales (sales).
- Raise money (at a nonprofit, this is referred to as *development*).
- Create brochures and advertising (marketing).
- Analyze and report on the finances of the museum (finance and accounting).
- Act as the point person for employees on questions about pay, benefits, advancement, and other career-related issues (human resources).

3. Day-to-day role and responsibilities.

- Organize the open and close, facilities, and maintenance or other daily operations (operations).
- Run the customer database (technology).

In a later section of this chapter, we will give ideas for how to explore different functional areas to see what might be right for you. In Chapter 6 on *research*, we will talk about how to research functions for information that will help you position yourself appropriately for these jobs. Function and industry build on each other. Knowing one but the not the other is incomplete.

Geography

Finally, even if you know what you are doing (function) and who you are doing it for (industry), you need to know where you'll physically be. Geography is the third element of a well-defined target. How many potential art museums are located in your desired area? If your desired location has few or no art museums, then your search is unrealistic, and you have to expand your industry (to include other types of museums or other types of art-related organizations) or change your geography. If there are art museums in your desired location, but they are all small and do not need the fundraising skills you have, then you need to expand your function (do something else within the art museums) or change your geography. Geography gives you another critical point of focus for your job search.

Aside from physical location, some jobs have another type of geography consideration. You might be targeting a job whose customers, research subjects, or constituents are of a specific geography:

- Chicago-based (geography 1) curator (function) for an art museum (industry) specializing in East Asian Art (geography 2)
- New York City-based (geography 1) equity research analyst (function) specializing in transportation projects (industry) in sub-Saharan Africa (geography 2)
- Washington, DC-based (geography 1) lobbyist (function) specializing in raising awareness for energy alternatives (industry) in the Mississippi Delta (geography 2)
- Austin-based (geography 1) marketing manager (function) for a computer manufacturer (industry) is charged with opening up the China market (geography 2)

Your job interest may be related to a specific geography, and this definitely should factor in your search. You also must then factor in your physical location.

KEY TAKEAWAYS

- You cannot consider every job available, so you need a structure to filter through the possibilities and narrow your job search targets.
- Three elements of a well-defined job search target are industry, function, and geography.
- Each element can be further specified and may need to be, depending on how broad it is.

EXERCISES

1. Can you see how industry, function, and geography characterize the jobs around you? Look at friends and family members who are working, and practice categorizing their jobs.
2. Do you have an idea for jobs that you want to do? How would you categorize jobs you are interested in by industry, function, and geography?
3. Take a specific industry of interest, such as arts, energy, or sports, in the previous examples. Write out all the different subsectors you can think of.

3.2 Strategies to Match Your Interests to the Three Elements

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

1. Understand the importance of translating your job interests to the three-element structure.
2. Learn different ideas for finding specific industries, functions, and geographies of interest.

The Importance of the Three-Element Structure to Your Job Search

Having industry, function, and geography as filters for your job search is great because it translates to the employer's perspective. The computer manufacturer in Austin is looking for a marketing manager. If your search targets *technology manufacturing*, *Austin*, and *marketing*, you will hear about that position.

But what if you haven't narrowed down your search that specifically? You might just be getting started, and you know you want to live in Austin, but aren't sure about anything else. The three elements are offered here to prevent you from picking up the local paper and blindly going through every ad. When we get to the *research* and *networking* chapters, you will also see how the three elements will enable you to find jobs that aren't advertised. For example, by focusing on a specific industry, you can join a **professional association**⁴ with people from that industry and learn about companies and potential jobs via the association.

There are good reasons to try to move toward identifying your job search targets by industry + function + geography. This section gives some ideas and exercises for you to move toward more specific choices for your three elements.

Geography

You want to think about how narrow your geographic range is: neighborhood, city, surrounding suburbs, multiple cities, multiple states, multiple countries. You may decide to launch a job search in several geographies, for example, New York City and Boston. But each geographic target (New York City or Boston) is treated as a separate job search.

4. A membership group made up of people with a specific commonality in their work. For example, there are professional associations for real estate agents, investment advisers, teachers, and so forth.

Here are some considerations for your geography choice:

- Do I want to live there?
- Can I afford to live there?
- Can I complete a job search there (maybe you don't live there currently and need to look long distance)?
- Is the job market for my target industry and function big enough?

Here are some exercises and activities to help you make your choices:

- Visit the location. Some job seekers are quick to pick a big, well-known city without experiencing it first. Your job is but one aspect of your life. There are other considerations to your happiness—for example, social life, proximity to family, climate, population size, pace of life, activities, and entertainment. A great site for data on all aspects of cities in the United States is <http://www.city-data.com>.
- Run the numbers on the cost of living. A quick Internet search yields numerous cost-of-living calculators (from Salary.com, Bankrate, *Money Magazine*, and more). This is great for cursory research, but get into the details by looking at local papers for housing costs, local grocery circulars for food costs, and other local ads for products and services you will buy day-to-day.
- Make a plan, including a budget, for job search travel if needed. If your target geography is distant and expensive, you need to factor this into the feasibility of your search. The best long-distance job searches include several trips to the target geography for networking and interviews. You cannot count on your prospective employers to pay for any or all of your travel costs.
- Identify specific companies and organizations in your target geography that satisfy your industry and function requirements. A large metropolitan area, like New York City or Boston, will probably have a big enough market for most searches. But if your target industry is the federal government, then Washington, DC, trumps New York City or Boston. Your desired government agencies may not have any offices in New York City or Boston. Remember that some geographies are bigger than others and will therefore have more overall job targets. Some geographies are more specialized in the industries that are located there.
- Look at the state of the overall job market in your target geography. Some geographies have stronger or weaker economies. All things being equal, you may want to target areas showing strong job and population growth or that are magnets for growing industries.

Industry

Like geography, you may decide to target more than one industry, but each industry is treated as a separate job search. You also want to dig into each industry to see how you can get more specific on the subsectors of that industry.

One overall consideration is your sector of interest:

- Private sector
- Nonprofit
- Government or public sector

There are many examples of careers that include jobs across the sectors. Politicians currently in the government sector may have started their career as lawyers in the private sector or working for a nonprofit. Still, there are also people who very specifically want to target just one sector.

Private sector⁵ companies are also called for-profit because they exist to make a profit. The focus of private companies and the measure of their success are their financial results. While individual companies are different, the private sector has been characterized as fast-paced (companies are vying for market leadership), money oriented (the focus on financial results), and business focused (to improve those financial results).

Nonprofit⁶ organizations are also called not-for-profit because they don't exist to make money but rather to serve a specific mission or cause. Again, while each organization is different, the nonprofit sector has been characterized as more slowly paced than the private sector (there are no market forces pressing a specific timetable), service oriented (the focus is on a mission or cause), and smaller in size (the largest nonprofits will not have as many employees or offices as the largest for-profits).

5. Also known as for-profit.
Private sector companies exist to make a profit.

6. Also called not-for-profit.
Nonprofit organizations do not exist to make money but rather to serve a specific mission or cause.

7. Refers to government agencies and groups.

Government agencies can be at the municipal, state, or federal level. Government agencies and groups compose the **public sector**⁷. Their size and reach is going to depend on the level of government on which the agency focuses and the size and needs of the population, or constituents, it serves. Government jobs have historically been more stable than either private sector or nonprofit jobs, so they often appeal to people looking for that stable environment, though slower advancement. Government jobs may also be appealing if you are interested in service and politics.

Here are some questions to help you decide on a target sector or sectors:

- Does any one sector stand out as a possible fit for your interests or personality?
- Are there people whose careers you admire? In what sector are they employed?
- Are there companies or organizations in which you are interested? Which sector do they represent?
- If you are not partial to any sector, how can your current industry interests translate to each sector?

To help you identify specific industry interests, you can do the following:

- Look at industry lists.
- Read general news or business media.
- Review what you do for fun or things you've done that have interested you.

You can look at the list in section one and see if any of the industries mentioned stand out for you. Government and regulatory agencies also issue industry classifications (e.g., the North American Industry Classification System), and these lists can also give you ideas.

If seeing the names of industries isn't enough because you are not sure what they do, reading general news and business media is a great way to learn more about different industries. You don't have to read issues cover to cover, but go to a well-stocked magazine store or business library and read the table of contents for several issues of the major general news and business magazines. Which stories attract you? This gives a clue to industries of interest. You can also do a lot of this research online.

Examples of general business magazines that could be helpful for your industry research include the following:

- *BusinessWeek*
- *Fortune*
- *Fast Company*
- *Inc.*

- *Wired*

Sometimes you have dream companies in mind because you use their product or service. Several magazines have various top lists (e.g., Largest Companies, Best Places to Work for Women, Most Innovative, Fastest Growing). Look at these lists, which are often broken out by industry, and see if you recognize and are interested in any of the companies.

What you do for fun is also a good indication of what you might like to do for your work. If you are interested in clothes and fashion trends, the fashion or retail industry is a possibility. If you like to travel, the hospitality and leisure industry (e.g., hotels, travel agencies) is a possibility.

To help you break down your overall industry into the subcategories, brainstorm all of the people and companies associated with that industry. Let's say you are a fashionista:

- You read fashion magazines. Do you want to work at a magazine or other media that covers fashion?
- You follow celebrities for their latest look. Do you want to be in celebrity styling?
- You buy your clothes. Do you want to be in retail or sales?
- You may even make your own clothes. Do you want to design or manufacture clothing?
- You care about the content and origins of your clothes. Do you want to work on environmental causes relating to fashion?
- You care about everyone having access to good clothes. Do you want to work for social causes?

Look at the providers of the things you buy and use. This will enable you to branch out of just fashion and actually itemize the specific subcategories.

Function

The function of a job refers to your overall responsibility and what you are doing day-to-day. As you peruse the general news and business stories that interest you, what problem are they solving?

- Is the company trying to expand its customers or sales?
- Is the company trying to be more efficient in certain aspects?
- Are you drawn to the financial information—sales, costs, profits?

- Are you concerned with people issues?
- Are you interested in how things work behind the scenes or how technology can help?

Your target function of interest solves a problem or fills a need. The problems covered in news and business stories can give you a window into the types of problems with which you may want to work.

You might also have a theme in your life of doing certain types of activities. Make a list of twenty-four experiences and achievements over your life that you are most proud of. Be specific—don't just say "running," but talk about a specific route or event. Now select your top twelve, then top six, and then top three. Look across your list, but particularly at your top three.

- What are you doing?
- Are you solving a problem?
- Are you taking care of people?
- Are you creating something?
- Are you using specific skills—computer oriented, design, math, foreign language?
- What is your environment?
- Are you in a difficult situation that you are turning around?
- Are you in a happy, stable place?

Your past accomplishments give a window into what you might want to focus on for your work. You will still need to translate this into actual job titles and descriptions. Look for people you know who are doing a job you might want to do—what are these jobs called? Look at job boards for these job titles and read the descriptions to compare with what you think you like about the job. Look at career information websites, such as Vault.com or Wetfeet.com, that describe different jobs.

A good example of using past experience to identify potential function targets is Vince P. Vince had two business-related degrees, including an MBA, and had held various positions in financial services, including finance and reporting, business development, and investor relations. When it came time to pick a function, Vince focused on manager jobs that he thought would reflect the diversity of his skills. The problem was that manager roles are notoriously not specific enough—what does it mean to say that you *manage*? Instead, Vince made a detailed list of his twenty-four achievements, and once he looked at the patterns in these he noticed an interest and talent in turning around crisis situations, raising money, and creating new operating procedures, including working with regulatory and compliance issues. He now positions himself, not just for management in general,

but for managing crisis situations or new situations where processes need to be worked out. He has moved from a general manager to an operations and turnaround specialist.

KEY TAKEAWAYS

- You need to translate the three-element structure to your interests.
- Geography targets can be as narrow as a specific neighborhood or as broad as multiple countries. You want to look not just at the job market but also at living conditions when selecting your geography targets.
- Industry targets can be uncovered by looking at industry lists, general news and business magazines, and your own interests. Look at all the different products and services of a particular industry to identify possible subcategories.
- Function targets can be uncovered by looking at problems to solve or needs to fill.

EXERCISES

1. What are your initial industry, function, and geography targets?
2. Are you comfortable with your choices? What information do you still need? Can you talk to people in those jobs? Can you shadow someone in that job? Can you read a biography of someone doing a function or working in an industry of interest to you? Remember that business magazines often profile people's backgrounds.
3. Are you specific enough in your targets, or can you still break down any of the three elements into smaller, more specific categories? Does your interest have two geography components?
4. Review the different suggestions throughout the chapter for how to get more specific on your industry, function, and geography selections.

3.3 Personal Decision Criteria When Considering Possible Job Targets

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

1. Understand the different ways a job impacts your personal values and life.
2. Learn strategies and exercises to prioritize the different personal impacts.

The Three Elements Paint an Incomplete Picture

Industry, function, and geography are helpful external criteria. When you look out into the market at the broad spectrum of jobs, having three elements to filter and narrow this down is critical. But you have other criteria important to you internally that are unrelated to a specific industry, function, or geography:

- Employer size (global *Fortune* 500 company, small business)
- Employer history (start-up, established, either OK)
- Employer name recognition (household brand name, start-up)
- Compensation (minimum salary of \$x, bonus, equity)
- Opportunity for advancement and growth (clear path of advancement, training)
- Lifestyle (reasonable and set hours, no travel)
- Flexibility (able to work from home, able to work compressed workweek)
- Job structure (lots of autonomy, lots of structure)
- Culture and colleagues (friendly, meritocratic)

Being clear about the three elements will help you research, but understanding your internal criteria will help you *select* your next job. From the preceding, you can see three broad categories to consider:

1. Employer characteristics
2. Compensation and advancement
3. Lifestyle and environment

Employer Characteristics

An employer might be big or small, new or established, well branded, or unknown. These are all considerations that may or may not matter to you. Each has its pros and cons:

Table 3.2 Advantages and Disadvantages for a Sampling of Employer Characteristics

Type of Employer	Advantages	Disadvantages
Big Company	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Chance to meet lots of people and grow a big network • Likely more structured and defined role 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • May be overwhelming • Role may be very siloed and narrow
Small Company	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • You may know all or most of your colleagues. Chance to develop a small, but deep, network • You might have more variety in your tasks due to lack of staff 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Insular culture due to fewer perspectives • Less room for growth as there are fewer levels to move up into or fewer other departments to move laterally
New Company	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Chance to be part of growing and establishing something • Likely fast paced with lots of variety as there are no 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No track record, so you may be getting into something that turns out different than expected • Lack of structures means lots of volatility

Type of Employer	Advantages	Disadvantages
	<p>established structures in place</p>	
Old Company	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Established structures and best practices identified • Proven track record provides stability and security 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Might be less innovative or less receptive to change • Colleagues might be closed to new staff, hard to establish credibility
Brand Name	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Great résumé builder, company's brand casts a halo effect on your qualifications • Glamour and prestige that accompanies working for a famous name 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • People may have preconceived notions of the brand that cast a negative effect on you • Fewer brands means a more narrow search
Unknown Brand	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There are more of these companies out there. Not everyone can work at the market leader • Today's unknown might be tomorrow's market leader 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Not as valuable for marketing for your next job • Harder to market yourself for conferences and professional association leadership positions

Of course, there are gradations between each of the preceding extremes. You need to decide which, if any, criteria matter to you and your priorities. For example, is a brand-name company more important *to you* than whether it's big or small?

Compensation and Advancement

Compensation has many elements. Opportunity for advancement can be categorized with compensation because it is directly tied to compensation elements:

- Cash salary
- **Sign-on bonus**⁸
- Other bonus (year-end, quarterly, performance)
- Profit sharing
- **Equity and stock options**⁹
- Health benefits
- Insurance
- Retirement plans and pension
- Tuition reimbursement
- Travel and expense reimbursement
- Perks (professional association membership, discounts)
- Size and speed of salary increases and promotion opportunities

Some elements are more standard for certain jobs than others. Nonprofit and government jobs typically do not have any bonus components. You will want to find out what is customary in the sector, industry, and function you are considering, if a specific element of compensation is high on your list of priorities.

The range of offerings varies greatly from company to company and even within companies. One company in the same industry and for the same functional role may pay more or less and have a different compensation structure than another company in the same industry and function. Even within companies, there is variation because your compensation depends on the level of the job you are filling, as well as the skills and experience you are bringing to the job. Some roles have a lot of built-in variability. For example, sales roles may have a small defined portion (base salary or draw) and then have bonuses or commissions based on achieving certain goals (e.g., selling \$x amount).

Look at your needs and priorities. What are your financial obligations? If you have a lot of student loan or credit card debt, then lower-paying jobs may just be out of the question. If you have a spouse with health benefits that you can use, then maybe that part of the package doesn't matter to you. If you are considering graduate

8. Separate from your salary and is paid out when you accept (or sign on for) the job.

9. Equity is ownership in a company. Stock options do not convey actual ownership in the company, but rather are representations of ownership, and the value of your options parallels the value of ownership.

school, then tuition reimbursement may be more attractive. Rank the compensation elements in the previous list, and know which are necessary versus nice to have versus of no interest. Compare your list with what is customary to your job targets to ensure that you are realistic in your job search.

Lifestyle and Environment

While compensation items can be quantified, the lifestyle and environment category includes the qualitative benefits of your job:

- Lifestyle
- Flexibility
- Job structure
- Culture and colleagues

Table 3.3 Areas to Explore When Considering Lifestyle and Environment Issues of Job Choices

Benefit	Considerations
Lifestyle	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Is there work and life balance? Are the hours very long? • Are the hours volatile, such that it's hard to plan for activities after work? • Is there a lot of travel? International travel? Long periods of time away? • Do people take vacations and lunch breaks, or is it an all-work mentality?
Flexibility	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Can I work from home? • Can I start and end my day when it suits me as long as I get the work done? Is this a 9–5 workplace? • Can I work longer hours on fewer days? • Can I take personal days as needed?
Job structure	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Is the role well defined, or will I have to make my own way?

Benefit	Considerations
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Is the day-to-day experience very volatile? Will I be doing a lot of crisis management, or is it predictable?
Culture and colleagues	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Do people collaborate and work together, or is it a competitive place? • Do I like and respect my boss? Do I like and respect senior management? • Do I like my coworkers? Will I make friends here? • Will I have mentors and supporters here?

As with employer characteristics and compensation, itemize and prioritize what’s important to you. This way, you can look for jobs with these criteria, and you can assess job opportunities that come your way against the things that matter to you.

How to Make Trade-Offs

Take all of these criteria, including industry, function, geography, employer characteristics, compensation, and lifestyle and environment, and create a master list of the things that matter to you. Rank that list, and note any criteria that you absolutely must have in a job. You should have some, but not many, must-have criteria. You want some must-have criteria because these will anchor your job search and keep you from chasing opportunities that will not make sense in the long run. At the same time, no job will meet all of your desired criteria, so you want to remain flexible and open to trading off some criteria for others.

One possible exercise to work through is to force rank your criteria. Make a master list of the criteria, including the preceding suggestions as well as any other criteria you wish to add. Eliminate from the list criteria you don’t care about—for example, “Sure, a bonus would be nice to have, but I would still take a job that doesn’t provide one.” For the remaining criteria, select your top half and then select the top half from there. Keep reducing until you get to the criteria you absolutely must have in your next job and can delete no further.

A good example of using both external market criteria and internal personal criteria to make choices is Emily G., a recent undergraduate looking for her first full-time permanent position. She had interest in financial services and media, HR

or office administration, and New York City. Her wish list still included a lot of job possibilities, and therefore the risk of a haphazard, diluted search. But Emily also highly prioritized a brand name company, which narrowed the field considerably. She also knew she did well in a more structured environment, so she looked for either established roles or at least a boss and colleagues with tendencies to coach and support. Otherwise, she was flexible, looking at new roles and old roles, staying open about all aspects of compensation, and otherwise not restricting herself except for brand name and structure.

Emily wants	Hired for
New York City	New York City
Media or financial services	Media
HR or office administration	HR
Brand name	New division, but of a household name
Structure	Start-up environment, but very strong and supportive manager

Emily met her personal criteria because she knew to look for them. The job she accepted was not initially an obvious match because the company itself is very new, but it is a subsidiary of a brand name. The role also has the potential of being unstructured because of the start-up nature of the subsidiary, but Emily ensured she had supportive structures in place (an experienced boss with a supportive coaching style) before accepting. Similarly, you need to know your personal criteria, and find or negotiate your next job to meet them.

KEY TAKEAWAYS

- Industry, function, and geography are not enough when selecting your next job.
- You also want to look at employer characteristics, compensation, and lifestyle and environment.
- Not all criteria will or should matter to you. You decide what matters and how much you prioritize the criteria or are willing to make trade-offs.

EXERCISES

1. Using the list of different personal criteria, what are your top three priorities? The force-ranking exercise will help if your top priorities aren't immediately obvious.
2. Do your current industry, function, and geography targets meet the personal criteria you prioritize? If you see that the work and life balance is your top criterion, but your industry of choice is known for a very difficult lifestyle, do you plan to change industries or at least add additional industries for consideration? What characteristics will you look for in specific organizations to make sure you meet your work and life balance preference?
3. How will you reorient your search to more closely map industries and functions to your personal criteria? Remember the case study of Emily G., who was able to narrow down her target list to big companies in her target industry and function because she recognized that only these companies would have the possible support she prioritized.

3.4 Importance of Multiple Targets

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

1. Learn why you need more than one target.
2. Learn how to expand your targets without diluting your focus or efforts.

Up to this point, we have been talking about one job search target that maps to a specific industry, function, and geography and recognizes the personal decision criteria that are meaningful to you. It is important to be specific in your job search, so you know how to position yourself, what to research, and how to network and interview effectively. However, a specific target does not mean just one target. You can and should have multiple targets, each one being very specific, as you proceed with your search.

Advantage of Multiple Targets

You need multiple targets to do the following:

- Ensure that the total market of positions you are going for is large enough to sustain your search
- Give you flexibility if the hiring in any one target is slow, declining, or volatile
- Allow you to have alternative options if your search in one target stalls

You want a large job market in your target. This doesn't mean a large number of openings, but rather a large number of people working in that job. The Five O'Clock Club, a national career-coaching firm that has analyzed statistics on thousands of job seekers over twenty-five years, recommends two hundred active jobs as a sign that the market is large enough. See point 6 at <http://www.fiveoclockclub.com/2011/02/how-to-debunk-the-no-ones-hiring-myth-the-five-oclock-club-offers-12-proven-methods-to-help-you-land-yes-a-job> This does not mean two hundred job openings are posted and confirmed as needing to be filled. These are two hundred jobs, where some of these jobs will be filled and others will be vacant. The idea is that with a total of two hundred jobs or more, there will always be enough vacancies to support a search.

Remember the art museum example in the first section? If your search target is fund-raising in art museums in Minneapolis, you want to see how many art museums there are and check whether they are big enough to need a fund-raiser at your level. You don't need to identify two hundred art museums because some might need several fund-raisers (e.g., one for individual gifts, one for corporate gifts, one for grants, etc.). But you want to make sure there are two hundred positions. It is unlikely that any city will have two hundred art museum fund-raiser jobs, so this target is too narrow. You might keep Minneapolis and fund-raising constant but want to add art galleries, artist support agencies, and art schools to your target definition. Arts as an industry is too broad; art museum is too narrow. You want to be in-between. If the number of visual arts organizations still isn't high enough to support a search, you might broaden to performing arts, or you might add a different area altogether, say education. Now you can target fund-raising jobs in art museums *and* education organizations. (Remember that education needs to be broken down, as the arts were. Are you targeting schools themselves, government agencies or nonprofits that work with schools, or after-school programs?)

Another advantage of multiple targets is that it helps with timing if any one target is on a downturn with hiring. If you are a student looking for a full-time job after graduation, different companies recruit on different calendars. Banking and consulting firms recruit at the beginning of the academic year, but most other industries recruit in the spring or close to graduation. You might decide to focus on banks or consulting firms when they are active but add additional companies of interest later on.

Finally, having multiple targets broadens your options, thereby keeping momentum in your search and giving you more leads to pursue. Let's say that your ideal target function is fund-raising, but your experience and skills to date have been more in public relations. You might keep arts as a focus (specifying subcategories to narrow your search enough but not too much), and you might look at PR jobs, as well as fund-raising. This way, you can focus your research and networking on one industry, but you are not shut out if fund-raising is too much of a stretch right now.

Add Alternatives to One but Not All Three Elements

As you now know, a good way to expand your job targets is to change just one of the three elements. In one example, we expanded the industry target of the arts, keeping geography and function constant. In another example, we kept the industry target narrow and the geography constant, but we expanded the functions from fund-raising to fund-raising and PR to target within the industry and geography target.

You will know what works for you because you should expand based on your interests in different industries, functions, and geographies and how these possibilities match your personal decision criteria. The more elements you add, the more combinations you must pursue and the more diluted your search efforts may become. If we added education as an industry choice *and* added PR as a function choice, we now have four combinations:

1. Minneapolis + arts + PR
2. Minneapolis + education + PR
3. Minneapolis + arts + fund-raising
4. Minneapolis + education + fund-raising

This adds to the research you need to do, the networking meetings and interviews you need to attend, and the complexity of your marketing.

If you add another geography to the mix, say Chicago, now you have eight combinations:

1. Minneapolis + arts + PR
2. Minneapolis + education + PR
3. Minneapolis + arts + fund-raising
4. Minneapolis + education + fund-raising
5. Chicago + arts + PR
6. Chicago + education + PR
7. Chicago + arts + fund-raising
8. Chicago + education + fund-raising

At some point, the benefit of having more companies and organizations to target is lost by the complexity of having to cover too many disparate targets.

A special consideration before adding geographies or broadening your geography target is that there is a financial cost and physical time for travel that you must factor into your search efforts. It is far easier to contain your search to one geography and expand to multiple industries and functions.

KEY TAKEAWAYS

- Yes, targets need to be specific as you define each one, but you do not need to have only one target overall.
- There are significant advantages to having multiple targets, including increasing the size of your overall job market, increasing your flexibility to react to slowdowns in any one job market, and increasing your options should one target prove elusive.
- It is best to change just one element—either industry or function or geography—but not all three, to prevent search efforts from getting too confusing and diluted.
- Expanding geography targets is more difficult than expanding industry or function because of the financial and time requirements for travel.

EXERCISE

1. How might you expand the target you currently have? Make a list of industry, function, and geography interests. Rank your top combinations. Are you changing too many elements and possibly diluting your search? Or are your targets still too narrow?
2. If you are having trouble deciding how to expand your search, look at industries and functions related to the one you have selected. Look at the core skills you are using in the function you want and think about what other roles within the same industry might use those skills. Look at the industry you've selected and see if there are organizations from the different sectors (private, nonprofit, government) that you can add. Or see if the companies you want collaborate with other companies—these partners might be added to your target list.

3.5 Chapter Review and Exercises

Identifying your job search targets is step 1 of the six-step job search process because it informs all of the following steps:

- A specific target enables you to create marketing (step 2) that is appropriate to your prospective employers.
- In the *research* step, we will focus on finding the trends, challenges, and other nuances of your job targets. We also will focus on finding the structure and actual people of organizations that are active in your industry, function, and geography. By specifying your targets, you will know what to research in depth (step 3) and how to find this very specific information.
- You can define your networking and interviewing (step 4) around contacts relevant to your target.
- When you organize and troubleshoot your search (step 5), you can pace your search with what you know of a typical search in that target, and you can troubleshoot your results with what is expected for your target.
- When you negotiate your offer (step 6), you can build on the compensation structure and amounts that are customary for your target.

By looking at how to define your job target the way an employer defines jobs (the three elements of industry, function, and geography), you are grounding your search efforts in a practical, actionable way. Yet, we also reviewed other criteria that are meaningful to your job decisions personally (the decision criteria broadly categorized as employer characteristics, compensation and advancement, and lifestyle and environment). This way, you focus efforts not just on what the market wants but also on what you want.

Chapter Takeaways

- You cannot consider every job available, so you need a structure through which to filter the possibilities and narrow your job search targets.
- Three elements of a well-defined job search target are industry, function, and geography.
- Each element can be further specified and may need to be, depending on how broad it is.
- You need to translate the three-element structure to your interests.
- Geography targets can be as narrow as a specific neighborhood or as broad as multiple countries. You want to look not just at the job market but also at the living conditions when selecting your geography targets.
- Industry targets can be uncovered by looking at industry lists, general news and business magazines, and your own interests. Look at all the different products and services of a particular industry to identify possible subcategories.
- Function targets can be uncovered by looking at problems to solve or needs to fill.
- Industry, function, and geography are not enough when selecting your next job.
- You also want to look at employer characteristics, compensation and advancement, and lifestyle and environment.
- Not all criteria will or should matter to you. You decide what matters and how much you prioritize the criteria or are willing to make trade-offs.
- Yes, targets need to be specific as you define each one, but you do not need to have only one overall target.
- There are significant advantages to having multiple targets, including increasing the size of your overall job market, increasing your flexibility to react to slowdowns in any one job market, and increasing your options should one target prove elusive.
- It is best to change just one element of the industry-function-geography model to prevent search efforts from getting too confusing and diluted.
- Expanding geography targets is more difficult than expanding industry or function because of the financial and time requirements for travel.

Chapter Review

1. What are the three elements of a well-defined job search target?
2. Why is using the three elements to filter important to your job search?
3. Why are the three elements not enough to make decisions about your next job?
4. What are other criteria you need to consider as you search for a job that is right for you?
5. What does it mean to have multiple targets?
6. Why are multiple targets helpful?
7. How might you expand your targets without diluting your search efforts too much?

SuccessHawk: All about You

Log in to SuccessHawk and go to the right-hand menu bar. Under “My Account,” click on “Personal Profile.” Spend some time thinking about the information you are asked to provide here. This will help you determine what kinds of jobs and careers you should pursue.

SUCCESSHAWK
JOB SEARCH PRODUCTIVITY SOLUTIONS

My Workspace Logout (SuccessHawk Demo)

Profile

Home » Profile

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Why are we asking these questions?

This information is used to help you with your networking.
The things you have in common help you relate to people and help them relate to you.
Entering this information now will save you time later when using other SuccessHawk features.
SuccessHawk will not share this information without your permission and will not display this information on any public profile page.

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Career Interests

Desired Industry/Field: Enterprise Software/Educational

Desired Occupation/Job Title: Business Development Manager

My Contacts

Advice & Research

- Career Exploration
- Resumes
- Letter Templates
- Search Job Listings
- Interviewing
- Managing a Layoff
- Guide to Networking

Interactive Features

- My Workspace
- My Contacts
- My Action Items
- Goal Setting
- Personal Statements
- Resume Creator
- My Files
- Perfect Interview
- Self-Directed Search

My Account

- Change Login Info
- Current Job Status
- Personal Profile
- User Control Panel
- User Preferences
- Logout

Help Center

- Contact SuccessHawk
- Contact Support

SuccessHawk: Goal Setting

Clearly defined goals help focus your attention on your job search objectives, the actions you need to take to achieve your objectives, and the time you need to spend on your job search. To access the goal-setting tool, go to the right-hand menu bar and click on “Goal Setting” in the “Interactive Features” section.