



This is “Step 5: Stay Motivated and Organized and Troubleshoot Your Search”, chapter 9 from the book [Job Searching in Six Steps \(index.html\)](#) (v. 1.0).

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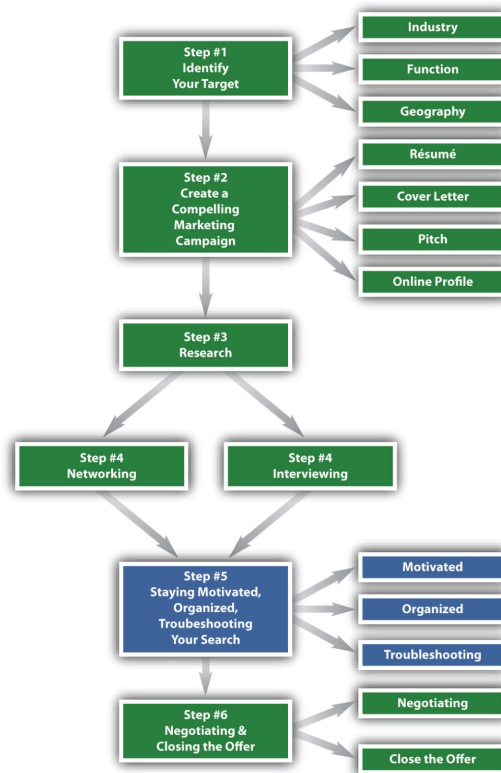
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Chapter 9

Step 5: Stay Motivated and Organized and Troubleshoot Your Search

Figure 9.1 The Six-Step Job Search Process: Step 5



Overview

What Do We Mean by Stay Motivated and Organized and Troubleshoot Your Search?

At this point in your search, you have taken the following four steps:

1. Identified your targets and have a list of companies, specific departments, and specific people to approach (step 1)
2. Created your marketing campaign, for example, résumé, cover letter, online profile, and networking pitch, to position yourself to these prospective employers (step 2)
3. Researched your desired market so that when you talk to people you can have an intelligent and engaging conversation, and they are more likely to help you or hire you (step 3)
4. Started talking to people, including developing relationships, learning new information, and interviewing for specific roles (step 4)

This chapter will discuss the different types of motivation and strategies for maintaining that motivation, how to develop organizational systems that work best with your style, and ways in which to troubleshoot your search.

Many job seekers slow down at this stage, right when the job search should instead be heating up. The job seeker has fun with the blank slate of targeting—envisioning his or her likes and dislikes. Marketing is tangible, and the job seeker feels productive, diligently putting together a résumé. In addition, a job seeker can read about companies and industries on his or her own schedule, at home, perhaps before bed, or after a tiring day at school or work. Getting in front of other people, however, and going beyond the awkwardness of networking with strangers or near strangers is hard work for a lot of job seekers. Yet this is the meaty part of the search, and a good job search should devote the bulk of time to the networking stage. As a job seeker, you will need to stay motivated throughout your job search, but especially in this critical networking and interviewing phase.



This chapter talks about the two types of motivation you will need and strategies for how to become and stay motivated. You will explore answers to the following questions on motivation:

- Do you consciously pace yourself for the long haul of a project (in the case of a job search, all six stages)?
- Does your energy tend to wane after an initial fast start?
- Do you have the ability to summon your motivation at will for an important event (in the case of a job search, at an interview or key networking meeting)?
- When you have a final exam, big game, or other high-stakes event, do you just hope you are at your best that day?

With four steps of the job search in full swing, you will be juggling names of companies, names of people, and insights into your target market. As you talk to more and more people, you will find out about other companies and get referrals to additional people to speak with or to specific jobs for which you need to apply. You need a way to stay on top of all this information. If you had been capturing all of this in a to-do list or a journal, your simple list will no longer suffice as the information flow increases.

This chapter covers the two categories of information that need to be organized and strategies for how to develop organization systems that work for your style:

- Do you have a system for organizing your network of contacts?
- Do you have a plan for how you will incorporate new job leads into your existing contacts?
- How do you keep track of long-term projects with lots of sequential steps but also lots of revisions (such as a job search)?
- How do you schedule and remind yourself of follow-up actions for long-term projects?

Finally, the networking phase is the time the job seeker tests the market. While you are *thinking* about companies and industries as you set your targets, create your market, and conduct your research, you don't actually put yourself *in front of* companies or other prospects until you reach the networking phase. Once you start networking, you will get your first market reaction. Your feedback might be anything from "Wow, where have you been all my life? We need to hire you right away!" to "Thanks for contacting us. We'll get back to you if you are a match with any of our openings." You might even end up with no response at all.

This chapter includes what problems you may encounter and ways to troubleshoot your search:

- Are your inquiries leading to networking meetings and interviews?
- Are your networking meetings and interviews leading to callbacks for additional interviews or referrals to other opportunities?
- Are you getting offers?

To stay motivated and organized and troubleshoot your search is a stand-alone, critical step in your job search that warrants your attention and prioritization. We place this step in the fifth position for several reasons:

- You need the data from the earlier steps to have something to organize.
- You need results and market reaction to troubleshoot.
- It is typically later in your process that the need to deliberately focus on motivation comes into play.

Many job seekers neglect this step, assuming that lists upon lists will be enough to stay organized. You might assume that motivation comes naturally, or perhaps that the financial or peer pressure of having to secure a job will be enough to motivate

you. It might not occur to you to go looking for problems in your job search. But the proactive job seeker is deliberate about all elements of his or her search and, therefore, *deliberately* harnesses motivation, creates the systems and other support required to stay organized, and identifies and fixes problems throughout the job search.

9.1 Two Types of Motivation Relating to the Job Search

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

1. Become aware of the importance of motivation to the job search.
2. Anticipate the areas within the job search where motivation is needed.
3. Start thinking about how you have handled motivation in the past and what you can use from past experience or what needs to change.

There are two types of motivation in your job search:

1. Long-term motivation over the duration of your job search
2. Short-term motivation for a specific job search event, such as a networking meeting, interview, or offer negotiation

Each type of motivation requires different energy and focus, and, therefore, a different strategy. It is similar to taking two different classes—one where the emphasis is on weekly exams versus another where the grade rests on research papers. The way that you prepare for each class will be different. The pace at which you do your work will differ. In a job search, the weekly exams are the networking meetings and interviews (in fact, you will have more than one exam during the busy weeks of your search). Getting from job idea to job offer is a long-term project, akin to a multiweek research paper.

Long-Term Motivation

To retain long-term motivation for your job search overall, you need to take certain actions:

- Pace yourself and move through the process.
- Push past the ups and downs, and do not get discouraged by the inevitable disappointments during the job search.
- Stay focused on the end goal of ultimately securing job offers.

Long-term motivation is the marathon aspect of your job search. If you are experienced at long-term projects, such as big research papers, then you can apply your experience and know-how about pacing and scheduling to your job search. If you are a better student in the weekly exam class model, then you need to

periodically remind yourself of your overall job search goals. Select from the specific strategies for maintaining long-term motivation later in this chapter.

A good example of maintaining long-term motivation is the case of Emily G., a class of 2008 undergraduate who was interested in the media industry and had moved to New York City after college in Pennsylvania. Her job search took over a year, during which time she held a series of **internships**¹ and part-time jobs, all while conducting her search. She graduated during a serious downturn in the economy. She received two offers that were rescinded, through no fault of her own, because the budget for those positions was cut. It took over a year, but her third offer finally stuck, and she is happily employed at a major media company in human resources.

Short-Term Motivation

In addition to long-term motivation, individual situations in the job search, such as a job interview, call for increased energy and focus. For every job interview, you will need to be at your best, regardless of whether the commute to the interview was tiring, whether you woke up feeling a bit down, or whether you stubbed your toe on the reception desk right after you walked in at your appointed time. This short-term motivation provides an immediate and necessary boost to whatever is the focus of your search right now.

There are many instances across your job search where you need to harness short-term motivation:

- Each and every job interview (and most companies will have multiple rounds for one job opening)
- Each and every networking meeting
- **Career fairs**²
- Professional group meetings or **mixers**³
- Phone calls to your target companies (e.g., for information, for a status update)
- Offer and salary negotiations

1. A job set up for the purpose of learning or developing the intern. While the employer also benefits, the difference between an internship and a regular job is that the primary purpose of the internship should be the intern's development.

2. An event where companies and organizations exhibit their information and job openings.

3. An event set up for the purpose of enabling people to meet each other, to mix and mingle.

If you are a better student in the research paper class or you like to ease into a situation, then you need to ramp up your preparation for the high-stakes events like job interviews. Prospective employers form impressions very early in the process. You will not have the first five minutes of an interview to ease into it. Your interviewer will already have an opinion of you from meeting you at reception or from the small talk you make at the start of the interview.

A good example of maintaining short-term motivation is the case of K. V., an experienced executive who was negotiating an end to her **contract**⁴ at a major firm while negotiating a new role at another one, all while continuing to do her high-profile management job. K. V. would often have very different types of meetings in the same day, from contentious negotiations with her bosses to enthusiastic sales meetings with her future bosses. She had to maintain composure and advocate hard for herself in a severance negotiation, and then turn around and be cheery for an offer negotiation. She was able to be at her best in each scenario, came to an amicable end with her former employer, and is now enjoying a bigger role at her new employer.

KEY TAKEAWAYS

- There are two types of motivation, long-term and short-term, each playing a critical role in your job search.
- Long-term job search motivation is akin to a multiweek research project, while short-term motivation is more like weekly class exams.

EXERCISES

1. Do you do better with exams or research papers? Based on this, on what areas of the job search will you pay particular attention so that nothing falls through the cracks?
2. Do you prefer exams or research papers? This gives you an indication of what areas you may enjoy in your job search.
3. How do you currently prepare for exams or research papers? What strengths do you have in one or both areas that you can bring to your job search?
4. What bad habits or tendencies do you need to avoid, for example, procrastination, nervousness?

4. A legal agreement. Most employment does not require contracts between employers and employees, but for very senior roles you will see employment agreements, or contracts.

9.2 Strategies for Motivating at Will

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

1. Understand the importance for deliberate actions and routines.
2. Learn different strategies for long-term and short-term motivation.
3. Get specific examples that you can apply to your own job search.

Motivation at Will Requires Deliberate Action

For a successful job search, you need to be able to harness both short-term motivation and long-term motivation *at will*. The best way to do this is to have a plan and structure in place to *deliberately* motivate yourself. You cannot rely on sheer willpower or inspiration because that is exhausting and unreliable.

Champion athletes and performing artists are good examples of people who use deliberate motivation. They have well-defined routines for the day of big events and for the long-term preparation leading up to the big events.



A good example of deliberate long-term motivation: One piano teacher at a leading conservatory gave his students very specific pacing for learning the concerto selected for the school's annual soloist competition. It included finishing the piece several *months* before the actual competition so that his students could stop playing it entirely for several weeks, and then pick it up again refreshed. A break of several weeks was deliberately built in to give students a tactic for staying refreshed, energized, and motivated on the piece.

A good example of deliberate short-term motivation: A commercial and TV acting teacher gave his students a specific routine and set of guidelines for the days they had auditions. One of the rules was no watching or reading news or dramas the night before and morning of the audition. This was a deliberate choice to keep the students upbeat in the hours leading up to the audition. He also coached his students to focus on one good thing that happened to them in the previous three days—another deliberate tactic to maintain positive energy.

Similarly, you will need a deliberate routine before job interviews and other high-stakes job search events. You will also need deliberate routines built in over your job search to stay refreshed, energized, and motivated. Deliberate motivation-at-will strategies will enable you to stick to your job search, regardless of nervousness, fatigue, or even forgetfulness.

Strategies for Maintaining Short-Term Motivation

Following are some suggestions for motivational routines to follow prior to a job interview, beginning the night before the interview:

- Do something relaxing that keeps you positive.
- Create a summary sheet of key research points you intend to share.
- Review your questions for the interviewer so that you ensure a two-way dialogue.
- Practice your interview responses for the top questions you are expecting.

The morning of the interview, certain actions can ensure a successful outcome:

- Skim the current event headlines so you can engage in a timely discussion.
- Have your favorite breakfast that will keep you full and energized, but not cause your energy level to crash (i.e., you may want to avoid too much sugar or caffeine).

- Pick a specific accessory or other item for your interview outfit that makes you feel good and is a visual cue that this is a special day.

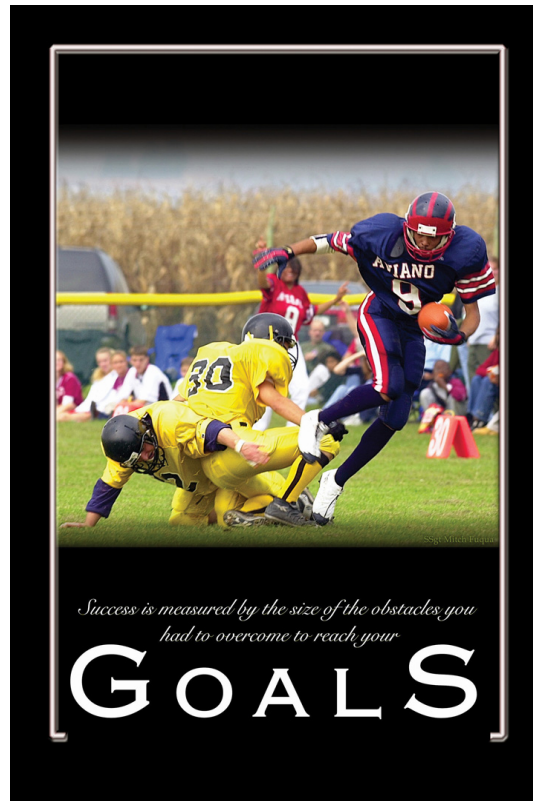
On the way to the interview, you can continue to maintain your motivation:

- Listen to your favorite, upbeat song (remember to take the earphones out of your ears while you are waiting in reception so you appear approachable)
- If you are inspired by quotes, have your favorites on an index card to read, even right before you check in at reception.
- If you are visually oriented, have a picture with you that instantly relaxes you.

These same suggestions can also work for the other job search events that require short-term motivation, such as networking meetings, career fairs, professional mixers, and offer negotiations. For the high-intensity, time-sensitive job search situations, such as sending that thank-you letter on time, consider designating a job search buddy on whom you can call for support. This person doesn't have to be a fellow job seeker, though that's one popular approach as you can support each other. Just make sure you pick someone who is encouraging and focuses on action.

Try different things as you go through your job search, and keep a log of what works for you:

- Activities that are relaxing and can easily be scheduled the night before an event (You may love a long hike in the woods, but this might not work for the day before an early-morning meeting.)
- Foods that are sustaining and energizing, including meal and snack options
- Outfits and accessories that are appropriate, flattering, and good visual cues to motivate you
- Songs, quotes, and pictures that inspire you
- People who encourage and inspire you



Also keep a log of what to avoid:

- Activities that put you in a bad mood (e.g., sad or scary movies)
- Activities that you may enjoy but distract you (e.g., Internet surfing)
- Foods that give you heartburn or make your energy level crash
- People who drain your energy and discourage you

Strategies for Maintaining Long-Term Motivation

For long-term motivation, recognize in advance that your search will take several months, so you need to plan for regular breaks throughout each day, during the week, and at various points during your overall search.

High-focus, ongoing activities, such as research or corresponding with networking leads, require breaks that give you refreshment but also don't derail your train of thought:

- Schedule activities that require concentration for when you do your best thinking.

- Block out uninterrupted time—turn off your e-mail alerts and close down your Internet browser so you don't jump on and off your favorite sites at every pause.
- Set a specific time, say on the hour, when you will get a glass of water, stretch, or incorporate a different activity for a few minutes. For example, one job seeker scheduled exercise and personal errands in the spaces between job search activities to give herself a mental break.

Each week, you also need a longer break, where you can unplug from the intense concentration a proactive job search requires. Plan for a half-day of a personal-interest activity:

- Museum visit
- Movie, show, or sporting event
- Hike or other physical activity
- Volunteer opportunity

Job seekers who tend to their personal interests are more relaxed and more interesting to prospective employers. Candidates who engage in outside interests tend to have a personality, unique point of view, and balanced approach that will serve them well during crunch times. Taking breaks enhances your search and is an investment in the success of your search.

Use these longer breaks to engage in a hobby or deep interest that might add to your networking. This is not just about meeting people during the times you might be volunteering or participating in an extracurricular class (though this may happen, too). Having genuine outside interests that you actively pursue is also a great conversation enhancer. In networking situations, such as a conference or industry mixer, it's tiring to just hear about work or the job search.

A good example of staying motivated *and* contributing to his job search is Daniel K. He was working full time, including lots of **overtime**⁵, at a job he didn't enjoy, so he was having a tough time staying upbeat and energized during his search. One of his longtime goals was to watch all of the American Film Institute top-one hundred movies. Not only did watching one or two movies during his weekly breaks energize him, but he also had natural conversation starters (the movies) for when he met with people. He noticed a huge difference in his demeanor and the way he approached his job search and was able to identify his next career step (in his case, graduate school).

5. Work above and beyond the typical full-time work week. For most companies, overtime is considered anything above forty hours per week, but some companies count overtime after thirty-five hours per week.

KEY TAKEAWAYS

- There are specific events during your job search when you need to get motivated at will, including job interviews, networking meetings, career fairs, professional mixers, and offer negotiations.
- Creating a deliberate routine and set of actions can enable you to get motivated for these high-stakes events.
- Deliberate work scheduling and taking longer breaks will help you stay motivated for the duration of your search.
- Activities during your longer breaks are not just about refreshment, but they can also contribute to the enthusiasm you bring to your job search.

EXERCISES

1. Where do you see your energy flagging in your current job search? If you are just starting a search, where has your energy flagged in the past—in high-stakes situations or over the course of a long project?
2. Which short-term motivation strategies will you use? Be specific and pick actual quotes, songs, or pictures if you decide to use those techniques.
3. Which long-term motivation strategies will you use? Make a list of places to visit, shows to see, books to read, and other activities that refresh you.

9.3 Information You Need to Organize

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

1. Learn the two categories of job search information you need to organize.
2. Understand how each piece of information fits into the job search so you capture everything that is relevant.

There are two categories of data and information every job seeker needs to organize:

- Your overall contact list
- Your job search–specific list, including information on contacts and activities

Your Overall Contact List

Because networking is so important to your job search, it is not just job-specific contacts that you need to track. Family, friends, colleagues, classmates, acquaintances, and any new contacts specifically for your job search all should be cataloged in one master list or database. Even people who do not seem relevant to your search now may turn out to be relevant:

- They know someone else who is relevant (remember the networking 2x2 matrix in Chapter 7).
- They have resources or services (e.g., color printer, copyediting skills) relevant to your job search activity.
- They are encouraging motivators.

By keeping all of your contacts in one overall list, you easily can move people into and out of search priority and are always reminded that everyone is a potential help to your search.

Your overall contact list should include, but not be limited to the following:

- Names
- Mailing address

- E-mail address
- Phone numbers (distinguished by home, work, cell, or other)

Your contact list should also be categorized by relationship:

- Family
- Close friends
- Colleagues
- Classmates
- Service providers

You can also categorize each contact by priority. Some salespeople will classify contacts in their database in order of how hot the prospect is—that is, how close they are to buying. You might want to categorize by priority of how much contact you want to maintain over the year:

- A-level contacts are people with whom you want to maintain close contact.
- B contacts are people whom you might contact every month or every several months.
- C contacts are people whom you contact just once a year—at the holidays, for example.

You want to maintain your C relationships, but you are not trying to grow them. B contacts are people you are trying to get to know better. B contacts might become A or C contacts once you have a better sense of the relationship.

When you categorize your contacts, you are able to sort and find people for your exact needs. If you need a favor, you would look through family and close friends. If you have a general professional question, you may start with colleagues. If you are working on networking, you might want to look at B contacts specifically so you can find the people you already tagged as those with whom you want to expand the relationship.

Your Job Search–Specific List

Even though your whole list is important to your search, some contacts will be closer to your search outcomes than others. For these contacts, you need to track information beyond just contact information or category. For the search-specific list, this includes everyone with whom you have inquired about your job search. Your well-connected Aunt Mary is appropriate to your job search–specific list

because in addition to being family, she works in the industry you are targeting. Informational interview contacts go on this list. Of course, people who interview you are on this list.

For the search-specific contacts, you will want to track the following information:

- How you heard about them
- When you first contacted them
- The quantity of activity involved with them (e.g., how many phone calls, how many meetings, how many attempts to contact or other back and forth)
- The quality of activity (e.g., what did you talk about, what reactions and rapport were evident)
- The most current point of contact and the date
- Any follow-up required (e.g., send a résumé, e-mail John Doe and say this contact referred me)

KEY TAKEAWAYS

- You need two lists of contacts: an overall list; and a job search-specific list.
- You need to track all of your contacts because you need one go-to place for information about your network.
- You need a job search-specific list because there is additional information to track regarding the contacts for your job search.
- For your job search contacts, you want to know the activity, dates, and follow-up actions related to your contacts.

EXERCISES

1. How are you currently organizing your contact list—cell phone, Outlook, LinkedIn, Facebook, paper address book, business cards you collect?
2. How do you currently categorize your list, if at all?
3. If you don't yet categorize your list, will you use the categories and priorities suggested earlier? If your list is already categorized, is it suitable for your job search activity? Do you need to update any of your contact information or categories?
4. How in the past have you managed a long-term project where you have to track different pieces of information at different times—on paper, electronically? This may give you some guidance in terms of how you might stay organized with your job search project.

9.4 How to Create Systems to Stay Organized

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

1. Learn why systems are important to getting and staying organized.
2. Get ideas for different organizational systems.

Systems are essential to getting and staying organized. By selecting a system, you ensure that your current lists get organized but also that any additional items to your list get organized. A system enables you to make updates and changes to your contacts or activities. A good system enables you to find what you need quickly so you can track your job search and move forward.

The most important criterion for selecting your organizational system is that it supports you and how you work best. You do not want to create or select a high-maintenance system that requires big changes in your natural work style and, therefore, a lot of additional work. Your job search will give you enough to do without having to add extra time and effort tracking the information.

Systems for Your Overall Contact List

Some popular methods of storing your overall contacts include the following:

- Paper address book
- **Rolodex**⁶ or business card collection
- Cell phone directory
- **Outlook**⁷ or other e-mail contacts database
- Facebook, LinkedIn, or other **social media network**⁸
- Relationship management system, such as SuccessHawk for job search or Salesforce for sales leads

For many people, the overall contact system is some combination of the preceding methods. The important thing is that the system supports you. There are ways you will know your system works:

- You can easily find the people you need.
- Information on your contacts is updated or easy to update.

6. A popular circular device that stores physical business cards in an alphabetized wheel that you can turn to access each card.

7. A Microsoft software program commonly used for e-mail that also has organizational features, including address book, distribution list, calendar, to-do list, notes, reminders, and other features.

8. An online community where members of that community can connect to and communicate with each other.

- You can easily skim or search your contacts to discover people you might have forgotten.
- You can categorize people so that your network stays organized as it grows.

Systems for Your Job Search–Specific List

For your job search–specific list, you need a system that can capture both contact information and activity. So it needs to be more flexible and substantive than your overall contact system. You can choose from three categories of systems for your job search–specific list:

1. Paper based
2. Customized electronic
3. Off-the-shelf electronic

Paper-Based Job Search–Specific Systems

In a paper-based system, you have a tabbed binder or accordion file folder, with different sections corresponding to different areas of your search. You can have a section for each target company, as well as for your overall search. You can also have a separate sheet for each person related to each target company and log your activity with that person there.

A paper system has several positive traits:

- It is visual.
- It enables you to easily capture thoughts, ideas, and asides
- It is easily portable, so you don't have to carry a laptop or find an Internet connection

A paper system does have some downsides:

- It is difficult to search. What if your research turns up a name for a senior executive at one of your dream companies, who happens to be an alumnus of your school? You don't want to contact him right away because you want to do some other lower-level **informational interviews**⁹ first. Several weeks later, you know you want to go back to this contact, but what was his name? You would have to page through your whole paper system to find it.
- It is hard to back up.

9. A meeting set up with the purpose of gathering information or exploring a topic.

- It consumes more space when you have a lot of leads.
- It lacks flexibility. If you arranged your filing by company, where do you put your general networking contacts or other people who may be relevant across companies?

Customized Electronic Systems

You can create an electronic system for your job search activity in **Excel**¹⁰:

Table 9.1 Sample Activity-Tracking Spreadsheet in Excel

First Name	Last Name	Title	Company	Source (How You Heard of Them)	Current Status	Status Date	Follow-Up	First Contact
John	Smith	Head of campus recruiting	Company X	Career services	Résumé and cover letter sent	9/23/10	Call after 10/8 to check on status	9/1/10
Jane	Doe	Marketing associate	Company X	Alumni database	Second e-mail	10/1/10	Follow up on request for info interview	9/1/10

You can add additional columns as needed for fields you want to track. For example, you may want to include a Comments column and put notes or ideas there. As you add more contacts, sort by status date to see to whom you haven't reached out recently. Then check the follow-up column to see if you need to do something specific or just reach out to maintain the relationship. The First Contact field shows the first time you reached out to this person, so you can see if you have moved forward since adding them to the list. In the case of Jane Doe, you attempted to contact her on September 1 and you are still trying to reach her for an informational interview on October 1. You need to try harder to reach her, or assume the contact is stale and find someone else to add to your list.

The preceding table was created in Excel. On the plus side, you can customize an electronic system:

10. A Microsoft software program to create spreadsheets.

- You can be flexible about what fields you want to add.
- You can format and sort according to exactly what you need.
- You can back up electronic systems.

Electronic systems do have downsides:

- You have to build the system from scratch.
- You have to know what fields are worth tracking.
- If your contacts have a lot of activity, your spreadsheet can quickly get crowded and disorganized.

Off-the-Shelf Electronic Systems

Salespeople use customer relationship management (CRM) software, such as Salesforce or High Rise, to track candidates and activity. In the job search, you are the product and employers are the customers, so you can apply the idea of sales-tracking software to your job search. One solution already customized to the job search is SuccessHawk Job Search Productivity Solutions.

Figure 9.2 SuccessHawk Home Page



SuccessHawk is a web-based platform that you customize with your contacts and activities. You can import your contacts from your existing overall lists. SuccessHawk supports online e-mail (e.g., Gmail, Hotmail, and so forth), LinkedIn, Outlook, Apple Address Book, vCards, and Internet service provider webmail (e.g., Comcast).

SuccessHawk also has a section for tasks, where you can export tasks from Apple calendar or Outlook, or you can add tasks manually. So instead of documenting in Excel that you want to call Jane Doe for an informational interview, you would Add a Task to your SuccessHawk “My Action Items” section, designating the target (Jane Doe), a description of the task (call to follow up on e-mail request for informational interview), and a target due date. SuccessHawk sends you e-mail reminders of upcoming tasks, so instead of having to visit your Excel spreadsheet and sort by follow-up, the reminders come to you.

SuccessHawk also has other job search-related features built into the platform, including a space for goals, a résumé creator, and advice and research.

On the plus side, off-the-shelf electronic systems have several attributes:

- They are prebuilt so you can get started right away.
- They can be interactive and give you extra support (e.g., the reminder feature in SuccessHawk).
- They can be synchronized with other resources you already use (e.g., contact lists, task lists).
- They can be backed up.
- They have additional features and resources you wouldn’t get on your own.

Off-the-shelf systems also have a downside:

- You may have less flexibility if you are very particular about how you organize data.
- You have to buy the system or pay for a user account.
- You have to learn the ins and outs of the system.

KEY TAKEAWAYS

- You need to select a system to get and stay organized.
- There are three main choices for organizational systems: paper-based, customized electronic, and off-the-shelf electronic.
- Each choice of system has its pros and cons.
- You want to select a system that matches the way you naturally work.

EXERCISES

1. How have you been tracking the information and contacts developed during your job search?
2. If you haven't already selected a system, experiment with paper and electronic. Pick five friendly contacts and try to schedule meetings with them so you have something to track. Create a paper folder or binder system to track your efforts and build a spreadsheet to track your efforts. What data and fields did you include? Which system did you prefer?
3. If you already have a task-organization system, are there additional fields you will track for your job search? How will you change (or not) your organization of your search based on the information you have learned?
4. What do you wish you could track better, or where are you stuck in your organizational needs? What resources might you consult to get your organizational needs met?

9.5 Troubleshooting Your Search: Three Areas Your Job Search Can Break Down

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

1. Learn the importance of troubleshooting in your job search.
2. Learn the three stages of the hiring process where your job search can get stuck.
3. Become aware of how you can measure your own job search to identify your problem areas.

If you've made it this far, you have accomplished a lot toward your job search. You have a sense of what you want in your job targets, you are positioning yourself well with your marketing, you are arming yourself with research to make you a knowledgeable candidate, and you are putting yourself out there by networking and interviewing. You are doing a lot, but are you being effective? Troubleshooting is about looking at your search results to date and figuring out where your job search needs work and how to fix it.

At the networking and interviewing stage, you are getting market feedback. Even if you are getting no response from your networking inquiries, no response is still feedback (it's negative feedback because what you are doing is not eliciting a response). There are many reasons behind the feedback you may be getting. You need to use the feedback you are getting (or lack of feedback) to troubleshoot your search. There are three stages of the hiring process where your job search can get stuck:

1. The candidate identification stage
2. The general interview stage
3. The closing stage

In the most general description of the hiring process, a candidate is identified, interviewed, and hired. A job search can break down at any one of these three stages. From the job seeker's perspective, you must be identified as a candidate—that is, you must be invited to an interview. You must be interviewed and get called back for more interviews or for a hiring decision. You must be on the positive end of a hiring decision. So, the three categories of potential job search

problems are (1) you are not getting enough interviews, (2) you are not moving forward in the interview process; or (3) you are not getting offers.

The Identification Stage Problem: You Are Not Getting Enough Interviews

If you have been submitting résumés or asking people for exploratory interviews for more than thirty days, look back and see how many people have asked you to meet with them. You want to meet with several people per week (five to ten if you are working on your search full time or one to four if you are working on your search part time). Are you not getting invited to meetings or interviews?

The Interview Stage Problem: You Are Not Moving Forward in the Process

If you have been getting meetings or interviews, congratulations! Clearly, your marketing is paying off. Now, your focus should be getting more meetings and interviews:

- More networking meetings that can lead to job interviews
- More first-round job interviews with additional companies
- More second-, third-, and fourth-round interviews with your existing targets

Look over your latest thirty days and note the types of meetings you've been getting and the steps that follow. Are you getting lots of first-round interviews, but are not getting asked to return for more interviews? Are you getting referrals from your introductory networking meetings to actual jobs or additional possible networking leads?

The Hiring Stage Problem: You Are Not Getting Offers

If you have been getting interviews and getting called back, then clearly you are doing something right because prospective employers are interested. But if there have already been several companies where you have been the bridesmaid but never the bride, then there could be a problem during the later stages of interviewing that is hindering your ability to close. Hiring is subjective, so if you lose one or two offers, that is to be expected and may be through no fault of your own. But three or more lost offers, especially if you went far along the process for all of them, could signal a problem.

KEY TAKEAWAYS

- The hiring process includes candidate identification, interviewing, and hiring. At any of these stages, there can be problems for the job seeker.
- You should measure the results of your networking and interviewing on a regular basis to see how you are doing at the identification, interviewing, and hiring stages.

EXERCISES

1. At what stage are you stuck in the job search process? If you haven't started your job search yet, put reminders on your calendar during the time you intend to do your job search to troubleshoot according to the three stages.
2. As you have been reviewing your data capture so far, what data, if any, is missing that you should add to your search going forward?

9.6 Troubleshooting Your Search: Strategies for the Three Common Problem Areas

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

1. Learn potential reasons for the problems at each job search stage.
2. Learn strategies to get your job search unstuck and moving forward again.

Three Reasons You Are Not Getting Enough Interviews

You may not be getting enough interviews for the following reasons:

1. There is a mismatch between what you are targeting and who you are.
2. Your marketing is incomplete.
3. You are too passive in your outreach.

What to Do for a Mismatch

A mismatch occurs between what you are targeting and who you are when one or both of the following are true:

- You are not the right candidate for what you are targeting.
- You are a qualified candidate, but you are not positioning yourself to reflect this.

You may not be qualified for the companies or jobs you are targeting. Some industries or functions have very specific **certification**¹¹ requirements, GPA minimums, or some other very clear deal breaker. If you are focusing your efforts on these competitive areas, and you do not have the prerequisites, you are sabotaging your search. Review your targets to see if they are appropriate for your experience and skills. Be realistic with what the requirements are and what you bring to the table. You may need additional experience, another degree or certification, or a specific skill you do not yet have before you can go after your targets.

Similarly, you might be going after the right companies or jobs, but your positioning, the way you represent yourself, may not reflect how good a fit you are.

11. In a subject or for a job, certification means that a recognized authority has deemed you qualified in that subject or for that job. For example, some information technology roles require certification in a particular software.

Your targets may be correct, but you may not be positioning yourself correctly to your target. This is a marketing problem. Review your résumé, cover letter, networking pitch, and online profile to ensure that your marketing reflects that you are indeed a match.

What to Do When Your Marketing Is Incomplete

Your marketing may be incomplete when you focus too much or exclusively on only some, but not all, of the four main elements of your marketing campaign:

- 1. Résumé
- 2. Cover letter
- 3. Networking pitch
- 4. Online profile

Prospective employers often favor some elements more than the others, but you do not know which employer favors which element, so you have to be strong across the board.

Many job seekers spend a lot of time on the résumé, but not as much time on the cover letter or other correspondence. If your overall package is not consistent, you will lose out if a prospective employer happens to weigh the cover letter most heavily. Some job seekers do not have any online presence. If you do not have an online profile, and recruiters are looking for you online, then they will not find you. If you are not getting enough interviews, your marketing is not getting through to prospective employers. Review your marketing to ensure that you have both a strong résumé and online profile, that cover letters and all your correspondence are effective, and that you have a compelling and memorable networking pitch.

What to Do When Your Outreach Is Too Passive

Finally, you may not be getting interviews because you are relying too much on passive methods—recruiters or job postings—to get you interviews. Recruiters and job postings are just one source of leads. They are passive sources because you are waiting to be selected. You are giving up control of your search to someone else.

Instead, take a more active approach:

- Contact companies directly.
- Identify the specific departments where you'd like to work.

- Network your way to the specific people who manage these departments and, therefore, have hiring authority.

The majority of jobs are filled by candidates who are referred directly by employees or who otherwise network into the company. Fewer jobs are filled by **external recruiters**¹² or unsolicited responses to job postings. Review your approach to ensure that you are directly networking with prospective employers and not just relying on recruiters or job postings for your leads.

Three Possible Reasons You Are Not Getting Called Back after You Interview

You may not be getting called back after your interviews for the following reasons:

1. Your interview responses do not convey key message points.
2. You spend the interview telling without showing.
3. You aren't at your best during the interview.

Have Key Interview Message Points

Some job seekers blame the interviewer for not asking the questions that will enable them to highlight their best self. It's true that some interviewers don't know how to interview well, or at least in a way that enables the job seeker to show his or her best. But it's the job seeker's responsibility to control the interview. You should have three to four key message points that demonstrate why you should be hired. These are your unique strengths, skills, experience, and personal attributes most relevant to the job being discussed.

You need to weave these key message points into the interview, regardless of what is specifically asked of you. Think about the president of the United States facing the press room: He does not wait for the right question. He has an agenda prepared in advance and uses whatever question he gets as a springboard to forward his agenda.

Show, Don't Just Tell

The best candidates give examples with details and tangible results. You don't say you have great analytical skills. You talk about a specific example of when you used your analytical skills and the quantified results you achieved for your employer because of them. You don't say you work well with people. You give a specific example of a project that involved coordinating a group of people or

12. Match job seekers to openings at a company but do not work within the company. External recruiters work for a search firm or agency and are paid a fee, not a salary, by the company.

communicating or relationship building. You don't say you will learn on the job. You come in having clearly researched your target company with specific ideas of what you would do in your role.

A good framework exists to ensure that the examples you give clearly highlight your contributions. That framework also gives the interviewer a good sense of the scope of your responsibility. To emphasize your contributions, answer these five questions:

1. Who sponsored the project? Was it the CEO, the head of a department, an outside client?
2. What was the overall objective? Were you researching a new market, developing a new product, organizing a conference for key clients?
3. What was the output you needed to deliver? Was it a PowerPoint presentation to senior management, an Excel spreadsheet with projections, a written report?
4. What was the result? Did the company enter the new market? Was the product developed, and was it well received? How did the conference turn out?
5. What did you do, and what did everyone else on the team do? A prospective employer needs to understand what you specifically did. Itemizing what you did shows your contribution. Itemizing what everyone else did shows you stayed on top of the overall project, and it also gives the interviewer a clear sense of the size and composition of the team.

For example, Russell S. is a recent undergraduate with extensive music-related internships but who now wants a sales role upon graduation. To highlight that his experience in music was indeed relevant to sales, he walked his then-prospective, now-current employer through a sample music project. He deliberately picked a promotion project because it is closely related to sales:

- I was promoting a high school band for gigs in the neighborhood. (Question 1: The band sponsored this project. Also Question 2: The objective was landing gigs.)
- I canvassed different restaurants, bars, and community organizations for the type of entertainment they booked and developed relationships with the bookers of places that fit the music of my band. (Question 3: The output was the sales process.)
- We landed several gigs throughout the summer, and many places became repeat customers. (Question 4: The result was multiple sales and repeat business.)

- I was not in the band, but I acted as the business manager, negotiated the contracts, collected the fees, and worked with the venues to promote the band. Everybody else was a performer. (Question 5: Russell itemized exactly what he did in relation to everyone else.)

Be at Your Best

This chapter started with the importance of harnessing motivation at will. A major way to kill an interview is to have low energy. If you are not excited and enthusiastic, it looks like you don't really want the job. Many prospective employers will choose the less-qualified but more-enthusiastic candidate over a great candidate who appears disinterested. Remember the suggestions earlier in the chapter for motivational routines to follow prior to a job interview. There are several steps you can take the night before the interview:

- Do something relaxing that keeps you positive.
- Create a summary sheet of key research points you intend to share.
- Review your questions for the interviewer so that you ensure a two-way dialogue.
- Practice your interview responses for the top questions you are expecting.

The morning of the interview, certain actions can help ensure your interview is successful:

- Skim the current event headlines so you can engage in a timely discussion.
- Have your favorite breakfast.
- Pick a specific accessory or other item for your interview outfit that makes you feel good and is a visual cue that this is a special day.

On the way to the interview, continue to maintain your motivation:

- Listen to your favorite, upbeat song (remember to take the earphones out of your ears while you are waiting so you appear approachable).
- If you are inspired by quotes, have your favorites on an index card to read, even right before you check in at reception.
- If you are visually oriented, have a picture with you that instantly relaxes you.

Three Possibilities That Might Keep You from Closing the Offer

You might not be closing the offer for the following reasons:

1. You encounter job search fatigue.
2. You do not follow up enough and employers forget about you.
3. You aim for the job, instead of the offer.

Beware of Job Search Fatigue

Here's that motivation issue again: you need to ensure that you are at peak performance throughout all of your interviews. You can't just start out strong and assume that the positive feedback will carry through. What's tricky about the later stages of interviewing is that job seekers experience a roller coaster of feelings. They are elated at being called back, but many interview processes last for multiple rounds. After a while, it's physically, mentally, and emotionally exhausting, and a job seeker gets tired, which looks like disinterest, which kills the later interviews. Refer to the refreshment activities suggested earlier to maintain your long-term motivation, including these activities:

- Museum visit
- Movie, show, or sporting event
- Hike or other physical activity
- Volunteer opportunity
- Job search buddy

Don't Let Employers Forget about You

There are a lot of time gaps in the hiring process—the time between when candidates apply and when interviews are scheduled; the time between when interviews are scheduled to when they actually happen; and the time between when various candidates get through their interviews and decisions can be made. During these gaps, the employers are seeing other candidates. You think you are just waiting patiently, but don't stay out of sight for too long:

- Keep in touch with your contacts at the prospective company.
- Don't just ask about the status of the search—that puts too much pressure on the company.
- Check in with interesting news you have heard about the market. The networking chapter includes tips on how to follow up in an engaging but nondemanding way.

Focus on Getting the Offer, Not the Job

In the six steps to job search success, the last step is to close the *offer*, not get the job. We focused the language specifically on the offer, as opposed to the job, because you always want an offer, but you may or may not want a job. The offer puts the ball back in your court, so you can decide what's best for you. If you only interview at companies where you are sure you want the job, you won't interview that often because it's not easy to evaluate a job without interviewing for it. Yet, you don't want to analyze the job too closely as you interview because then you seem unsure. Recruiters and employers can see the doubts you bring to interviews. Therefore, go for the offer, not the job. Be 100 percent committed to getting an offer (you can still say no, after all). Don't ever show the interviewers you are second-guessing.

Strategies to Troubleshoot Your Overall Job Search

The key to troubleshooting your search is having good data to review but also being honest with yourself about where you are. Remember that the stage where you are stuck—whether it's not getting interviews, not moving forward, or not getting offers—is not a reflection of the quality of your candidacy. It is a reflection of your job search *technique*. You might be an amazingly qualified candidate, but have poor job search technique. Remember, you can learn good job search technique and adjust what you are doing to improve your search going *forward*.

There are very good reasons great candidates get stuck in their search. Career changers, **on-rampers**¹³, or international candidates needing sponsorship are just some examples of candidates who may have trouble getting interviews. Employers prefer people who have done the job before (sorry career changers), or people currently active in the market (sorry on-rampers), or people who are easiest to bring on board (sorry internationals). All three of these candidate groups may have exceptional candidates, but they are coming with preexisting red flags that need to be overcome. Therefore, don't see an ineffective job search as a poor reflection on you. Just acknowledge that something isn't working, try to identify it, and fix it.

Build in time for regular troubleshooting, at least every thirty days. Schedule time for job search review in your calendar at these regular intervals, so that you automatically save the time when it arises, and you don't have to rely on your memory or discipline. Regular review ensures you identify and can stop problems early.

13. A colloquial term referring to candidates who are returning to the workforce after family leave or another long gap in employment.

KEY TAKEAWAYS

- At the candidate identification stage, you may not be getting enough interviews because of a mismatch between your targeting and positioning, an incomplete marketing campaign, or passive outreach.
- At the interviewing stage, you may not be moving forward because you lack key message points that highlight your value, you give answers without examples, or you are not at your best.
- At the closing stage, you may not be getting offers because you have job search fatigue that appears to be lack of interest, you don't follow up and employers forget you while they interview others, or you show hesitation about the job or self-doubt.
- You should be troubleshooting your job search at regular intervals by tracking your results data and by being honest with yourself.

EXERCISES

1. Review the possible problems at each stage and look at your own search activity. Are you guilty of any of these shortfalls?
2. If you have identified possible problems, do you know how to fix them?
3. If you haven't started your search, which stage do you think will be toughest for you? Most job seekers, especially for first jobs, have the most trouble with the identification stage because early in a career there is not a lot of experience to differentiate yourself in your marketing.
4. Where could you use help with your search?

9.7 Chapter Review and Exercises

Stay motivated and organized and troubleshoot your search:

- Keep your energy high and your focus strong.
- Maintain data in a structured and meaningful way.
- Identify and fix problems along the way.

Step 5 is the most proactive of the six steps to job search success because these activities can so easily be overlooked. Yet, for the job seeker who takes the time to master each of these activities, he or she will have a more efficient and productive search.

Chapter Takeaways

- There are two types of motivation, long-term and short-term; each plays a critical role in your job search.
- Long-term job search motivation is akin to a multiweek research project, while short-term motivation is more like weekly class exams.
- There are specific events during your job search when you need to get motivated at will, including job interviews, networking meetings, career fairs, professional mixers, and offer negotiations.
- Creating a deliberate routine and set of actions can enable you to get motivated for these high-stakes events.
- Deliberate work scheduling and taking longer breaks will help you stay motivated for the duration of your search.
- Activities during your longer breaks are not just about refreshment but also about contributing to the enthusiasm you bring to your job search.
- You need two lists of contacts: an overall list and a job search-specific list.
- You need to track all of your contacts because you need one go-to place for your network.
- You need a job search-specific list because there is additional information to track regarding the contacts for your job search.
- For your job search contacts, you want to know the activity, dates, and follow-up actions related to your contacts.
- You need to select a system to get and stay organized.
- There are three main choices for organizational systems: paper-based, electronic customized, and electronic off-the-shelf.
- Each choice of system has its pros and cons.
- You want to select a system that matches the way you naturally work.
- The hiring process includes candidate identification, interviewing, and hiring. At any of these stages, there can be problems for the job seeker.
- You should measure the results of your networking and interviewing on a regular basis to see how you are doing at the identification, interviewing, and hiring stages.
- At the candidate identification stage, you may not be getting enough interviews because of a mismatch between your targeting and positioning, an incomplete marketing campaign, or passive outreach.

- At the interviewing stage, you may not be moving forward because you lack key message points that highlight your value, you give answers without examples, or you are not at your best.
- At the closing stage, you may not be getting offers because you have job search fatigue that appears to be lack of interest, you don't follow up and employers forget you while they interview others, or you show hesitation about the job or self-doubt.
- You should be troubleshooting your job search at regular intervals by tracking your results data and by being honest with yourself.

Chapter Review

1. Why is motivation important to the job search?
2. Why is organization important to the job search?
3. Why is troubleshooting important to the job search?
4. Why is after the network and interview phase has begun a good time to look at motivation, organization, and troubleshooting?
5. What are some ways to stay motivated during your job search?
6. What are some tools to stay organized during your job search?
7. Where are the three stages in a job search where a search may get stuck?
8. Why is it a good idea to set a calendar reminder for every thirty days to troubleshoot your job search?

SuccessHawk: The Scheduler

The Scheduler is the key tool for keeping your job search organized and on track. It notifies you of actions you need to take with your contacts to keep your job search moving forward. The Scheduler is activated in two ways:

1. Go to a Contact's page and scroll down to "Actions to Take." Click on "Actions to Take" and complete the form.
2. Go to a Contact's pages and scroll down to "Reactions and Next Steps," answer the questions, and click "Set Follow Up."

The screenshot shows the SuccessHawk interface for a contact named Lin Polk. The page is organized into several sections:

- Contact Information:** Lists contact details for Lin Polk, including author information, office phone numbers, and email addresses.
- Interactions:** Includes a button to "Add New Interaction".
- Advice & Research:** A sidebar menu with links to various tools like Career Exploration, Resumes, and Interviewing.
- Actions to Take:** A section for creating new action items with fields for "Action:" and "Date/Due by:".
- Ice Breakers:** A section with a message template and a "Set" button.
- Reactions and Next Steps:** A section with a series of questions and buttons for "Yes", "No", "Unknown", "Send Right Now", "Send Later", and "Set Follow-up".

The "Reactions and Next Steps" section is highlighted with a white box, showing the following questions and options:

- Is there an opportunity? (Yes, No, Unknown)
- Am I interested in this opportunity? (Yes, No, Maybe)
- Have I sent a resume? (Yes, Send Right Now, Send Later)
- Next follow-up: (Days or Weeks) (Set Follow-up)
- Job Title of the Opportunity: (Set)
- Phone Interview Scheduled On: (Set)
- Have they invited me for an interview? (Yes, No)
- Interview Scheduled On: (Set)

Completing this procedure triggers the following:

1. SuccessHawk will automatically populate "Actions for this Week" on My Workspace. Note that you can export Actions for this Week to Microsoft Outlook, Apple iCal, and other applications that support calendar (.ics) files.

2. SuccessHawk will also e-mail you reminders about who to contact and when. You can choose how often you want to receive e-mail reminders by clicking on “User Preferences” in the right-hand menu bar under My Account.

