

Ask the Career Coach: Job Search Struggle

A recent college graduate is having a hard time with his job search

By [Lisa Chenofsky Singer](#)

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Dear Career Coach Lisa,

As a recent college grad I am feeling completely lost in my job search. Why is this so difficult?

J.D.
Millburn

Think about when you were in college and a semester ended. There was a pattern established with your class schedule, how you engaged your classmates and professors, and what was expected of you as outlined in the course syllabus. You knew what you needed to accomplish in order to succeed. Completing the assignments, research papers, labs and internships was a priority. Juggling responsibilities of your social life, possibly work, and getting good grades was your focus. You had flexibility regarding how you juggled the demands as long as you delivered the results.

How successful you were depended on how you engaged and how you prioritized.

Job searching is much more open-ended. You need to organize your time by creating a plan for yourself. This plan should have set time periods for daily goals and track your progress on a weekly basis. It is easy to get distracted when there is no set schedule. The Internet research and job board search may be done after business hours when you are unable to make your networking calls.

Your weekly schedule may include:

- Attending networking meetings. You may start out with two or three and ramp up to one daily or decide three per week is just right for you. These may include events on meetup.com, library-sponsored adult and job search programs, webinars, alumni events and professional/student affiliation groups to name just a few for consideration.
- Allocate time to do some career exploration, search the job boards and informational databases at your local library. Reference librarians can be most helpful in identifying resources based on your job search interests. Many of these databases can be accessed remotely as well.
- When you explore the job boards, search on key words based on skills, interests and abilities.
- You may volunteer to you gain some practical experience and try out new and different opportunities.
- Create a targeted list of companies to apply to if you know the jobs you are interested in.
- Create a social presence for yourself on LinkedIn, Facebook, college Alumni site. Consider a resume blog.
- Create a list of contacts that you may reach out to for networking, engaging for informational interviews and possibly interviewing with for a position or offering to volunteer.
- Prepare your agenda before engaging in a conversation or email with one of your contacts. Understand what you want to obtain from this connection and be clear how you go about asking for what you want.
- If you do not know what you want to do, then consider contacting your college alumni office to see if they offer any alumni programs for career exploration. Alternatively, you can contact a career coach after speaking with your parents and all of their friends.

This is not a comprehensive list but rather a beginning for you to factor into your job search strategy. Prioritizing what is important to you and committing to your daily agenda will help. Set your expectations realistically. Realize you are at the beginning of a steep learning curve.

Translating what you learned in academia into what the work place desires is not an easy task. According to one college grad client, "the biggest challenge is being the tiny fish thrown into a huge pool. Sometimes it feels like a whirlpool." This is true for many in the job search process. It is a tight market, being polite yet persistent will serve you well.

"Ask the Career Coach" is a column dedicated to those who may be in transition or wrestling with a career dilemma by providing a forum for advice. We welcome your questions. Please send them to CareerCoachLisa@gmail.com.

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