



The Street Smart Approach to Job Search

Second Edition



Kathy Bornheimer, MST



FORWARD

The hiring outlook in the IT industry is improving as every month goes by. Whereas in 2002 over 235,000 IT professionals lost their jobs, today many are back to work. Some of these IT professionals are finding it difficult to find work and this book is dedicated to them. Many professionals in the IT industry have never experienced the need to market themselves nor have they ever needed to follow a structured job search plan.

This book, “Street Smart Approach To Job Search”, version two is designed to assist those NaSPA Members needing guidance in the creation of a structured job search plan. This book will assist you in the path to successful employment.

We thank this book’s author, Kathy Bornheimer, for her dedication to NaSPA’s members and look forward to assisting our unemployed members in their job search.

Scott Sherer
President
NaSPA, Inc.

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FOREWORD

Kathy Bornheimer has been successful in four different careers in over 20 years. She began her professional life in the late 70's as a Speech/Language Therapist after receiving her Master's degree from the University of Wisconsin.

Kathy moved up the corporate ladder of a startup for-profit contractual rehab agency. However, after six years of profitability the owner decided to sell the organization. Kathy knew that by seniority and performance she'd keep her job. But, it would not be the job that she loved to do.

Kathy decided to not only change jobs, but also change careers! She entered the world of *straight commissioned* outside sales! Kathy "ate dirt" her first 10 months with her new company. The training she had received in product sales did not match her personality so she decided to develop her own style. By the beginning of her second year her efforts paid off. She became sales rep of the year and at the end of the year was the highest paid sales representative in the Milwaukee office. The owners of that newly formed company decided to sell it in the third year. Again, the focus of the new owners did not match Kathy's goals. After several key people were released, Kathy decided to move on.

She ended up accepting a position with one of her customers. Kathy became a Technical Recruiter specializing in Engineering /Manufacturing. There she was, recruiting Engineers without having ever set foot in a factory. Boy, did she learn quickly, remember *straight commission!* Kathy spent five successful years with this company, but change occurred again. This time the ownership stayed the same, but the market changed in the upper Midwest. Management was not willing to consider adapting to the market. "Think of us as a ship", one of the partners stated, "We're not going to change our course". Kathy felt that they were heading for the rocks. Since she could not change the course of the "ship," she decided to "jump ship."

There wasn't any company in the Milwaukee area that she would want to work for, so she took the ultimate plunge, *self-employment*.

Kathy started K.B. & Associates in 1992. She concentrated on Employment consulting. She was qualified to work with companies in Southeast Wisconsin to solve their recruitment problems, however it was the *job seeker* (65% were employed) who really wanted her services. Since 35% were unemployed and unable to pay her fees she continued to recruit to subsidize this group. Not only did she recruit Engineers, but also she began recruiting IT professionals in 1995.

What's Kathy doing now? In late December 2000 she joined the Milwaukee branch of Bryant & Stratton College as the Director of Career Services. She focused her energies back on K.B. & Associates in 2004, and now manages the internship program at the college.

The moral of the story is that change is inevitable. In today's job market skill, flexibility and risk taking are needed to succeed, let alone survive. If you're going to learn how to succeed, why not learn from someone who's done it. Kathy practices what she preaches! She walks people through the process. Learn from other's mistakes and reduce (not eliminate) your own.

Follow the suggestions and strategies outlined in this book and you will find a job that you enjoy. Learn how to find a *good job* with a *good company* and work with *good people*. These are the ingredients for job fulfillment.

Dedication

This book is dedicated to my nephew Christopher. He has satisfied every maternal instinct I've ever had! Chris has helped me keep things in perspective as only children can. Now that he is a teenager he has become my technical support in the *wonderful world of computers!* Being close to you Chris has enabled me to truly enjoy life even during the difficult times.

CASE STUDIES

Mature Worker

Jim is an accomplished salesman for his company. He's feeling good about himself; after all, he just closed that deal with the state government for those cartridges. He's been chosen Sales rep of the year more than once, and for a previous employer he was "Rookie" of the year.

Life is good. But wait! Jim has just met with his manager and his position has just been eliminated. Oh, by the way, he *is* getting a two-week severance package. Jim is 57 years old, and we all know you can't get another job at that age, right? What does he do now?

Jim is connected with Kathy Bornheimer. She helps him put together a great resume. They discuss strategy and methods of getting to the *decision-maker*.

Within two months of losing his job, Jim finds another one selling a product he has no past experience in! Jim is hired *because* of his years of experience!

Low Ball Salary Offer

You're a professional with experience in a highly desired skill area within the printing industry. You're currently in a position requiring a lot of travel, and you'd just as soon cut back on that. You're making a good salary for your area, and you also received a nice pay increase during your last review.

You are now interviewing with the *largest printing company* in the state of Wisconsin. On the application form you've included your current salary, and by the way, since the interview process has taken so long, you even informed them of your *new* salary level. As an added measure, you've done your research on compensation, so you know your expectations are realistic.

The big day has arrived! The company is giving you an offer! It is *\$4,000 less* a year than what you're making now! What do you do? Kathy Bornheimer has dedicated an entire chapter to negotiating a compensation package.

Networking

You need a good job that pays you what you are worth. Now you're at a major conference that is full of *key players*. Attendees include people from at least six companies that you would love to work for! You're talking with these people, and at the end of the conversation you hand them your ...what *do* you give them? Personal business cards are back in fashion!

How you are perceived is a major factor in your success. If you hand them your resume, you are at the level of the *job seeker*. If you provide them with your two-sided business card you are at the level of the *networking professional*. Whether you are employed or not, this is the way to go.

Kathy Bornheimer has provided extensive information on personal business cards in the section, The Resume: Just Part of the Package.

Getting to the Decision Maker

Josie was upset. She'd just found out from a recruiter that the human resources representative had taken her out of consideration for a great job. When she asked the recruiter why, she learned that it was because when asked if she was currently employed, Josie had answered (honestly), "No." On that basis alone, the HR person put her resume on the *reject* pile and never presented her to the hiring manager.

Josie was outraged. She got the hiring manager's name from the recruiter and called her direct. She and the manager found they had much in common and that the manager would have welcomed the opportunity to meet with her! Alas, the position had just been filled.

However, there were more positions opening up in that department. Josie proceeded to send her information to the Group Manager for distribution to other hiring managers.

Don't let the wrong person reject you! Only the hiring manager knows what he/she really wants in a candidate. Learn how to contact these people directly to increase your chances for success!

YOUR JOB: DO WHAT YOU LOVE TO DO

As more "baby boomers" approach middle age, many find themselves reflecting on their jobs/careers. At this stage of life there are more work years behind them than in front.

This reflection is important:

- Am I where I planned to be?
- Am I where I want to be?
- Do I enjoy what I do?
- Do I like the company I work for and the people I work with?

People spend 45 to 50 hours per week in the work world. Are you enjoying this time or complaining to friends and family about your job or your boss? Are you counting the years or months until you retire? Life is *too short* not to have satisfaction at your job.

Whether you're a job seeker or currently employed, job satisfaction is critical. It affects your performance on the job, during a job search, and definitely your quality of life at home. Do you "kick the dog" because you're mad at your boss?

If you're not happy in your job or weren't in your past job, now's the time to make some changes. Assess your current and past situations; if you aren't or weren't satisfied, why not? Look for specific reasons. It's easier to have a good job if you're with a good company, so evaluate the employer as well. Can you change negative areas internally? It's more plausible – not to mention much easier – to make changes in yourself than in others. Switching employers isn't always the answer, and you may find you've only replaced one set of problems with another.

Do some self-assessment

- Technical skills - current and wanted in today's market
- Leadership skills - both formal and informal
- Personal skills - communication, work style and attitude
- Where are your strongest capabilities and how does your track record reflect these capabilities?

- Determine your professional and personal criteria for job satisfaction - “I'm at my best when...” “I enjoy my work best if...”

Knowing the answers to these areas enables you to form your strategy, then develop and implement a plan for change if needed.

- First address changes within your current job.
 - Control your attitude. Be careful who you "vent" to or where. Most work environments are in open areas so privacy is limited. Also, never pour your heart out to the "corporate mouth." This will come back to haunt you.
- De-personalize what's happening to you.
 - It's not that they're doing it to *you*, they're just doing it. Lengthen your reaction time in certain situations. You may be acting on impulse or habit and decreasing your effectiveness.

Take ownership of your changes.

Hold yourself accountable and do it for you, not just to please others.

Choose your battles carefully.

Opt for win-win situations. Find support in co-workers and supervisors. There is not only strength but success in numbers. If you're always alone you may not be heard.

Learn to be tolerant of others' mistakes. Get all of the facts before rushing to judgment. Practice good stress management techniques. Don't let stress affect your performance or your home life.

Don't let your strengths become your weaknesses. If you are very good at what you do others may have become dependent on that skill. This can cause resistance if you want to make a change or advancement.

Invent the future instead of trying to redesign the past. It's too late for should have, would have, or could have. Start fresh and don't dwell on past problems.

If your changes don't produce improvements in your current situation, find a new job by changing departments or employers.

If you're without an employer go through the self-assessment described earlier in the article. Can you show that you are capable of accomplishing the other areas mentioned above? Your ability to invent the future is increased since there is no history with a new employer.

It's still possible, however, for your strengths to become your weaknesses, especially with certain types of professions (clerical or administrative) or career changers. Prospective employers may want to keep you in the field, industry or job that you've been good at instead of allowing you to transfer those skills to another area. You may be more willing to take the risk than they are.

Start researching other jobs or employers in advance to avoid negatively affecting your work or family. Know who you are and what you want to accomplish. Don't overlook job related knowledge, hobbies or interests; they can relieve some of the pressure and be a bridge to a career change. Let contacts know that you're around, aware and available. Keep your contacts current and maintain a positive attitude. Nobody wants to be around a negative person. Remember, your goal is to get involved in a better situation, not escape from negative employment.

Life is a complete package. Total fulfillment is difficult, but not impossible to achieve. Balance your work with your personal life to maintain levels of satisfaction in both.

Self-Assessment Guide

Technical Skills

_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____

Leadership Skills

_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____

Personal Skills

_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____

Key Strengths

1) _____
Describe:

2) _____
Describe:

3) _____
Describe:

4) _____
Describe:

Complete the following phrases:

1) "I'm at my best when":

2) "I enjoy my job better if":

3) "I imagine myself being":

4) "What's most important to me is":

EMPLOYMENT STABILITY vs. JOB SECURITY

Corporate America has changed since the “good old days”. Gone are the days of climbing the corporate ladder – most of the rungs have been removed – and getting your gold watch after 40 years of service is history.

This is the age of instability. Since the late 1980’s:

- Nearly half of all U.S. companies were restructured.
- 80,000+ firms were acquired or merged.
- Several hundred thousand companies were downsized.
- Over a half million organizations sought bankruptcy protection in order to continue operating.
- Almost a half a million companies failed.

On the other hand:

- Some organizations expanded rapidly.
- Others revamped their product lines or entered new markets.
- Organizations overhauled their systems and/or procedures or installed new technologies.
- Others relocated to different facilities, regions or countries, shut down some operations, made sweeping budget cuts or sought deregulation.
- Certain organizations brought in a new management team, tried to change their corporate culture or saw a change in ownership.

Source: **The Employee Handbook for Organizational Change* (Pritchett/Pound, 1990).

Sounds like a wild ride, doesn't it? Jobs and companies will come and go, hence, there is no longer *job security*. However, you can control your *employment stability*.

In order to meet the challenge of today’s job market you must display the following traits*:

1. Become a “quick change” artist.
2. Commit fully to your job.
3. Speed up.
4. Accept ambiguity and uncertainty.

5. Behave like you're in business for yourself (adopt the mindset of the self-employed).
6. Stay in school (keep your skills current).
7. Hold yourself accountable for outcomes (or someone else will).
8. Add value (flexibility, multi-task).
9. See yourself as a service center.
10. Manage your own morale.
11. Practice "Kaizen" (the quest for a better way).
12. Be a fixer, not a finger pointer.
13. Alter your expectations (including raising them).

Source: **New Work Habits for a Radically Changing World* (Pritchett, 1994)

There is no way you can guarantee that you will not be affected by layoffs. Even if your position is not eliminated, you will still feel the impact. These situations can be as difficult for the "survivors" as for those who are terminated.

No one is truly safe during the "re-structuring" frenzy currently underway in the United States. However, a strong performer has a better chance when seeking new employment.

The following is a checklist that will help you be ready for whatever happens:

- Prepare a well-written resume and keep it current!
- Know your marketability – do you have what the market wants?
- Know your finances – personal and employers monies (401K plan, profit sharing, bonuses, etc.).
- Reduce your debt – don't stay in a negative situation because you have to; don't be a "slave" to your job.
- Have at least 6 months of liquid assets for living expenses (12 months if you're considering self-employment) and a line of credit on your home for emergencies only!
- Establish an active professional network.
- Join at least two dynamic organizations that have some "power players."
- Pass along information, the flip side of networking; have the reputation of being approachable.

- Develop a relationship with 2-3 recruiters who specialize in your area of expertise.
- Use local or trade publications to keep current on what's going on in your community, industry and/or field.

If you can check off *everything* on this list, then your employability will be *more* stable. You don't have to leave your fate in the hands of others. Take control, be prepared, and gain the advantage.

JOB HOPPER OR CAREER BUILDER: IT'S A FINE LINE

In my dual role as recruiter and career coach, I listen to comments from both employers and job seekers about their perception of employment duration with one organization. When does your work history show “job hopping” and when does it reflect employment movement that shows your flexibility or ability to adapt?

The answer is: *perception is everything*. The prospective employer’s perception most affects the outcome. In some occupations, there’s more tolerance for frequent employer changes. In information technology (IT), it’s almost expected. Other fields, such as education, healthcare, insurance or banking, are more steeped in tradition, and the expectation is to remain with a single employer.

Let’s look at some frequent occurrences in today’s job market that affect employment duration:

- Mergers, acquisitions, bankruptcy, or change in upper management. Take your pick, all occur continually in the work world. Restructuring affects job existence or the job as you know it. This is generally beyond your control yet it can cause you to change employers.
- Company relocation. You usually have only two options: move with the company and keep your job or stay in your current location and forfeit your job.
- You are a “trailing spouse” due to your partner’s employer change or promotion.
- You have reached a plateau professionally or financially with your current employer. Moving to another organization is common practice. Staying in an environment of no growth could prove more detrimental in the long run.

These are reasons most people change employers. Some people have actually experienced more than one of them ... sometimes more than once! Having five employer changes in less than ten years is not unheard of! There are no hard and fast rules as to what makes the perfect “track record.” However, there are some general guidelines. The advantages of changing employers periodically are as follows:

- Change can be good; you don't want to become bored (or boring) in your job. There is also no point in staying in a job that you don't like.
- Some employers prefer that you've moved around. You've experienced different ways of doing things.
- You have direct evidence of your promotability, flexibility, and willingness to change.

Take a good look at your employment history. Do you have *twenty* years of experience or *one* year of experience 20 times? Have you stayed in a narrow area, field or industry? Are you at the top of your pay range with your company, but won't be retiring for another 15 years? Maybe you've stayed too long in a dead end job.

Some employers will pass on a candidate who's been with one organization for 20-25 years. They often feel that the person cannot adapt to new ways easily. If you've had three or four different positions with that same company over 20 years, you'll improve your marketability somewhat.

I'm not proposing change just for its own sake (unless you're really in a rut and it's affecting your performance). But take a good look at your resume and ask yourself, "Would I hire me?" If you are or have been in supervision, you'll recognize achievement versus mere longevity. Does your resume reflect continuing education, upward or lateral job movement, and progression of technical and/or interpersonal skills, in addition to strong skills in your field or industry?

If you are not able to get this kind of mobility and growth from your current organization, then it's time to move on. The field of IT is most affected by these areas. Its' pace compared to other fields is accelerated. A job change every two years is actually more tolerated and not viewed as abnormal or detrimental to future employment. However, many other professions are far more conservative.

Look at the future of your career in increments of three to five years. You may be able to go as far as seven years, but projecting beyond ten years is unpredictable in today's market. There are just too many outside factors.

Look at the diversity in your background, hopefully it will jump out at you. Though there may be diversity in the types of jobs you have had, you must make connections between them to show that you have focused on developing certain skills. You need to show managed direction in your work history, and your resume should reflect your abilities and capabilities in that work history.

If you have had many employers in a relatively short period of time, a functional resume is best. However, most employers do not like this format. In order to emphasize your expertise, develop a one-page summary that precedes or accompanies the resume, and that will cover the key areas immediately. In the resume itself and in an application form, include a brief statement in parentheses to explain unexpected or frequent job change. This could be:

- position eliminated
- function outsourced
- company relocated out of area
- organization merged/acquired
- facility closed

Keep this brief and use only one line of space in the resume or application form.

Again, keep in mind that the resume is only supportive documentation in your job search. It must be able to stand alone if you're using traditional methods such as answering want ads. If you're networking to gain a position, some of the communication will have already occurred over the telephone or in person, and the resume will not be the first impression.

Above all, the hiring manager's perception of your work history will be paramount in whether you get labeled as a "job hopper." The manager's own work history will influence his attitude as he looks at your information or interviews you. If the organization is ultraconservative or entrenched in concepts from the 1950s, your background may not get you past the first stage. If you're involved in IT and dealing with an organization less than ten years old, you'll have more latitude.

Remember, the layout and language of the resume and your ability to explain your job movements will determine whether you're viewed as a "job hopper" or someone who's built a successful, well-directed career.

THE RESUME: JUST A PART OF THE PACKAGE

Most people sweat and strain to put together the perfect resume, then they circulate it and pray for responses. Far too often, those prayers are unanswered.

The reason for this is that this technique uses only a small portion of the resources needed for effective job searching for today's market. It's relatively easy to find a job during a labor shortage. But most job seekers/career changers are looking for a good or better job with a good organization. That takes extra effort and a good marketing plan, complete with a marketing packet.

A complete packet contains:

- a well written resume
- personal business cards
- a one page supplement/highlight sheet
- individualized cover letters

All of these should be on matching or complimentary paper stock.

The following information details each of the components.

Resume

- It's direct evidence of your writing skills.
- A one or two page resume is appropriate for everyone.
- White or off white paper with black laser print or ink jet (from a new printer) quality.
- Layout and spacing will affect readability at a glance.
- Summarization of accomplishments or qualifications, then reverse chronology of employment.

Don't just think in terms of duties and responsibilities. Assess your skills and professional interests. Remember that you are best at what you like to do.

When compiling a resume, consider which of your skills are the most marketable. What do employers want or need? These items go in the accomplishment/qualification section. They can also be used again on the personal business card.

Put your accomplishments down on paper. Use action words such as increased, decreased, developed, managed, directed, implemented, reduced, improved, etc. Think of earlier accomplishments or skills you have developed and their applicability to a new position or career. Employers want to know how you can help them succeed.

Create your basic resume and save it on a floppy disk. Print copies only as needed, since customization or modifications may be necessary. Remember, employers know that almost everyone has access to a personal computer, and therefore, they're not interested in getting "canned" or pre-printed resumes.

Two-sided personal business cards

This is the most effective and appropriate piece to use when making new contacts. Develop and pay for your own. Don't use your employer-supplied cards, because it wouldn't be ethical to use their resources in your job search. It's also safer since you can list your home phone number and avoid calls at work.

- The front of the card should have your name, home address, phone number, and personal e-mail address.
- Under your name place a "title" or a descriptive phrase that describes your area of expertise. This will give people an idea of what you do.
- The back of the card can have 4-8 bullets providing more detail of your abilities and experience. Simply take portions of the summary section from the resume.
- The business card will enable you to keep the status of a professional who is networking instead of a job seeker looking for work.

A one-page supplement/highlight sheet

This covers specific areas germane to a particular job or company. It can be used with or in place of a resume. It is very useful for networking and for getting your information out there.

Individualized cover letter

No "To whom it may concern" or "Dear Sir or Madame" salutations allowed! You will be developing a basic cover letter but only as your guideline.

Each cover letter should be addressed to the intended recipient. If you don't know the name and correct spelling, get it. You want to make sure that the person who can say "yes" receives your information. Again, the cover letter can accompany the resume or precede it.

Always send the business card with any written correspondence including thank you notes. You'll get the most *bang for your buck* with the cards. They can still be used after you find your next job, just in case you have to go through this process again. A well-developed personal business card should have a "shelf life" of five years.

Having all of these tools at your disposal enables you to put forth a multiple approach sales and marketing campaign in job search/career advancement. You'll increase your avenues for contacting key people, expanding your network, getting your message across, maintaining your dignity, and improving your effectiveness.

The following segment contains samples of the development of a resume, cover letters, references, and personal business cards.

Brian Jones
1234 South 15th Street
Milwaukee, WI 53222
Phone (414) 555-1234
Email brian@yahoo.com

PROFILE SUMMARY

- Degreed IT professional with the proven ability to increase a firm's revenues through the identification of previously untapped markets and niches using technology.
- Ability to reduce start up costs and improve customer satisfaction with accurate forecasts of product demand.
- Provide top management with accurate research and analysis necessary to make informed decisions in a dynamic market place.
- Areas of effectiveness: strategic planning, competitor analysis, acquisition studies, strategic strategies, statistical analysis, and demand forecasting.

EMPLOYMENT HISTORY

ABC Enterprises Milwaukee, WI 1999 to present
New Product Analyst

Responsible for all new product development. Streamlined special system including the design of a computer program to automate the quotation process. Performed acquisition study of data warehousing supplier. Created support materials for new product introductions. Analyzed products for an addition to divisions product line. Reduced losses associated with under utilization of systems by 50 percent.

Kelley Data Systems Milwaukee, WI 1997 to 1999
Associate Product Manager

Designed and authored support materials including application guides and spec sheets for new and existing products.

M & I Data Corporation Milwaukee, WI 1990 to 1996
Business Analyst

Constructed statistical models to accurately forecast product demand resulting in savings in excess of \$50,000. Increased efficiency of an existing product line by reducing redundancy of end user procedures. Converted existing data base to a more user friendly format. Compiled accounts list for a product line which identified 50 percent of the entire market.

EDUCATION

MBA	University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee	1994
BS	Carroll College	1989
Major:	Computer Science	

E-Mail

Name
Title

Logo or picture 

310 W. Wisconsin Avenue
Suite 500, East
Milwaukee, WI 53203
(414) 276-5200
(414) 276-3930

Brian Jones
1234 South 15th Street
Milwaukee, WI 53222
Phone (414) 555-1234
Email brian@yahoo.com

REFERENCES

First Name Last Name
Director of Information Systems
Dell Computers – Milwaukee Division
1030 North Old World Third Street
Milwaukee, WI 53203
(414) 555-5555

First Name Last name
Supplier Quality
ASQ
North 21st Street
Milwaukee, WI 53202
(414) 555-5555

First Name Last Name
Group Manager
Metavante (formerly M & I Data Corp.)
North 71st Street
Milwaukee, WI 53222
(414) 555-5555

Patricia Black
4444 Nichols Ave.
Milwaukee, WI 53222
Phone (414) 555-1234
Email pjb@netstream.net

Objective: To obtain a full time position as a help desk analyst

Skills: Excellent communication and customer service skills.
Technical experience in multiple technologies including Novell 4, Lotus notes, IBM PC and Macintosh configurations, hardware installation; PC, AS/400 and mainframe platforms experience

Professional Experience:

- 1998 – 2004 AURORA HEALTH CARE SYSTEMS Milwaukee, WI
Help Desk Analyst II
Provided first level support for all Aurora employees with computer related problems on LAN, mainframe, and PC. Responsible for monitoring systems, troubleshooting, and supporting over 400 PC/mainframe based applications.
- 1996 – 1998 IMPERIAL PALACE HOTEL AND CASINO Las Vegas, NV
Desktop Support Specialist
Provided end user support including troubleshooting PC configuration, software/hardware installs and upgrades. Performed routine server backups and maintenance.

Education: Associate Degree in Microcomputer Systems Management, 1996
Bryant & Stratton College Milwaukee, WI

References: Available on request

Michael Thompson
4321 Lake Drive
Sheboygan, WI 53206
Phone (920) 555-1234
Email SmittyD@netstream.net

Professional Experience

SBC Communications 1975 – present
(formerly Ameritech)

Senior Systems Programmer 1985 - present

OS/390 Systems Programmer responsible for installation, maintenance, and testing of over 150 IBM and OEM software products currently running at the SBC Data Centers. Develop and maintain SCP documentation and procedures for IOGENS, product installations, PARMLIB updates, JES updates, system pack layouts, system backup and recovery, new CPU installation and master catalog creation.

Also provide software expertise to operations, technical and other support groups, plus assist in training new systems programmers. Currently support software within SBC Data Centers running on IBM CMOS processors and all IPARS running OS/390 V2R8 software in sysplex mode. Project lead on installation and deployment of OS/380 v2r8 on the 42 IPARS currently running at data centers.

Technical Support – Corporate Data Center 1978 – 1985

Monitored multiple IBM CPU's for hardware/software problems. Additional responsibilities included assisting production control and the application's staff with abends.

Production Control Supervisor 1975 – 1985

Managed for lead operators in running daily production. Other responsibilities included interfacing with application's staff with abends.

Education

Sponsored by IBM

- Data Center Management
- Operation Analysis Planning and Control
- IMS vs Master Term Operations
- Project Management
- ICF Catalog Management
- MVS Structure and Logic
- MVS/SP Planning and Control
- MVS/ESA Diagnostic Data and Procedures
- VTAM From Start to Finish
- VM for MVS Users
- RACF Administration/RACF Installation
- Hardware Configuration Definition
- S90 Parallel Sysplex Planning

4321 Lake Drive
Sheboygan, WI 53206

July 10, 2002

Aurora Centralized Employment
3307 W. Forest Home Avenue
P.O. Box 343910
Milwaukee, WI 53234-3910

Dear Mr. or Ms. Last Name:

Please accept my application for the Senior Systems Programmer position displayed on the online Aurora employment page. As an experienced mainframe systems programmer and support specialist, I believe that I have all of the necessary skills required to be successful in this position. As a current employee at SBC Communications, I am well versed in a large organization that has gone through major change.

In addition to having the technical skills desired, I also have extensive training through IBM. I have strong customer service skills from previous experience that can be utilized in the position for which I am applying. These experiences have given me the ability to work well with people from all walks of life, which is necessary to be successful in this position.

As you can see from my resume, I have a solid work history and am an active member in NaSPA. I am skilled at multi-tasking and I know my experience would fit the requirements of this position. I would appreciate an interview to discuss the possibility of obtaining the position of Senior Systems Programmer. Please contact me at (920) 555-1234 to discuss my credentials and those required for the position.

Sincerely,

Signature

Michael Thompson

August 1, 2002

Metavante
Attn: Human Resources
1555 North Rivercenter Drive
Milwaukee, WI 53217

Attn: Human Resources

This letter is in regards to a Customer Service position at your company, posted in the Bryant & Stratton College Career Center.

Currently I am a full-time student at Bryant & Stratton College majoring in the Business Administration Program. In my first semester, I studied and successfully completed courses in Information Technology and Human Relations. I believe these courses will improve my performance in the business environment.

I have been in a customer service environment for four years, providing quality assistance to customers and developing administrative skills that are helpful to my coworkers. During my final semester I will be doing an internship to help me gain the hands-on experience that clients want. I believe my background with customer service, my administrative skills, and my eagerness to learn make me a good candidate for the position.

Enclosed is a copy of my resume, which gives you more details about my work experience. Thank you in advance for your time and consideration. I look forward to meeting with you soon to discuss my qualifications. If you need to contact me, I can be reached at **414-555-5555**.

Sincerely,

Signature

Angela Last Name

North 60th Street
Milwaukee, WI 53218
July 31, 2002

Time Warner Cable-Milwaukee
Human Resources Department
1320 North Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Drive
Milwaukee, WI 53212

Attn: Human Resources

I am inquiring about a possible Customer Service position with Time Warner Cable. Current employee Aimee Brown informed me of several positions available at Time Warner Cable.

I will be graduating from Bryant & Stratton College in August 2002 with an Associates Degree in Information Technology. I am seeking a position in an office environment that will utilize my oral and written communication skills as well as my experience with state of the art Microsoft packages. I have knowledge of Microsoft Office packages and would be willing to learn what is necessary for the Customer Service Representative position.

As you can see from my enclosed resume I have experience in areas that would relate to such positions as entry-level Information Technology, Administrative Assistant, Customer Service Rep, and Office Support. I have good communication skills and have taken related courses that support these skills. I have also completed my internship with the City of Milwaukee where I did a variety of administrative tasks. My main duties at my internship were filing, assisting in the work that was in need of immediate completion, and making copies of important documents.

Please review my resume and contact me concerning appropriate opportunities at Time Warner Cable. Thank you in advance for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,

Signature

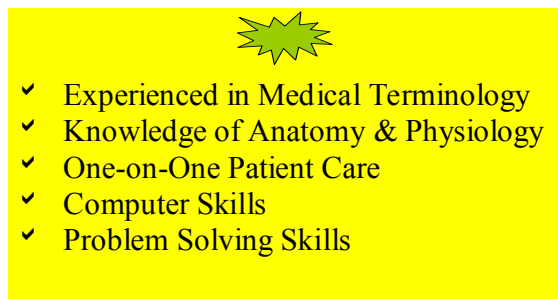
Lataska Last Name

Samples of Personal Business Cards

Front of Business Card



Back of Business Card



Front of Business Card



Back of Business Card

- Experience in the following:
- *Q Basic
 - *Visual Basic
 - *Customer Service
 - * Microsoft Office Technology
 - * Internet and Web Page Development

Front of Business Card

(414) 555-5555

Richard C. Last Name
Project Management/Cost Control

5555 Pecan Street
South Milwaukee, WI 53172

Back of Business Card

Degreed professional with over fifteen years experience in project management/project control. Experience in:

- Cost Control
- Cost Recovery
- Contract Administration
- Cost Estimation
- Contract/Construction Auditing
- Project Administration
- Internal Control
- Budgeting

Front of Business Card

S 109th Street
West Allis, WI 53214-2838

Tom Last Name
Product Engineer

(414) 555-5555

lastname@jkleee.com

Back of Business Card

- Degreed professional with 15 years experience in:
- Design of pharmaceuticals, chemical, bio-tech, food grade, turnkey pilot plants
 - Cryostats and Vacuum systems
 - Outsourcing of materials, fabricators, and vendors.
 - Hands on manufacturing/machine shop background.

Front of Business Card



Back of Business Card

Skills & Abilities

- > Tax Accounting
- > Cost Accounting
- > General Accounting
- > Payroll
- > Microsoft Office (Word, Excel & Access)
- > Attention to Detail
- > Taking Responsibility
- > Adapting to Change

DIRECTING YOUR CAREER: SOME ASSEMBLY REQUIRED

More and more people are not only changing jobs, but also changing careers. Options have increased in our outsourcing economy. Often changes are intentional and planned, but sometimes they can be unexpected and rushed. This could be due to job loss, or on the positive side, recruitment. You need to set yourself up for success, however you define it.

In order to avoid mistakes or false starts in the workforce today, you must take an active self-management role in your own career. Remember that you're the one who will ultimately deal with the end results. Being proactive will better prepare you for whatever comes your way.

Here are some practical tips:

- Adapt to the mindset of the self-employed; profit and loss, cost containment, budgets, performance, revenues, processes, etc. You'll be able to see changes or the need for change early. You'll know how your employer thinks and how they make decisions.
- Always look for areas of improvement, especially in efficiency and/or quality, and remember, time is money. In the global economy speed and quality products /services are required.
- Meet quarterly with your manager/supervisor to review or discuss your work or projects. By doing this, everything will stay on track and you'll form solid relationships. If this is not compatible with your manager's style, choose a peer or "teammate" and follow through. You need alliances to strengthen your positioning for that next move. Send your manager written summaries to keep him/her in the loop.
- Prepare yourself for your next job within six months of obtaining it. Remember, your next job not necessarily your next employer. Most successful people have had two or three positions over several years within one organization. This approach will give you time to build your track record.

- Develop and implement your safety net. This too is a tactic of the self-employed. The safety net includes financial preparedness,

professional and personal networks, plus continual research of the business world. The whole family needs to be involved in this area. A great opportunity can be presented to you, but change may be required, including relocation. You must be prepared mentally, and different scenarios should be discussed and agreed on. Some people have had phenomenal opportunities fall into their laps, but these opportunities were missed due to lack of forethought. "When opportunity knocks, answer the door with your clothes on." Be prepared.

- Become a referral source in the true sense of networking. Have a professional relationship with two or three recruiters who specialize in your area of expertise. Be honest and professional with them. This will enable the recruiter to qualify their contacts with you. If it's not a match for you but you know someone else who'd be interested, provide the referral.
- Establish local ties with volunteer groups and local/state associations, and read local business publications, plus *The Wall Street Journal*. Know what's going on in the business world since it can directly affect your job or career.
- Do not become complacent or get too comfortable in your job. You snooze, you lose! Missed opportunities are more painful than those you never had. Again, always be prepared.
- Develop strong, general skills and an expertise in 1-2 specific areas. You will be more valuable than the average employee.
- Focus on areas in your job that cannot be replaced by technology, but enhanced by technology. As long as you keep up with the pace of changing technology, you'll be one step ahead of the rest.

People who become proactive in these areas are often able to create their own work or jobs. Mergers and acquisitions have forever changed the world of work. Many large companies are merging to create even larger entities, yet at the same time small business start-ups are at an all time high.

Many of these start-ups are actually providing goods or services to the "giants." Where do you think these entrepreneurs are coming from? They were "downsized" or "restructured" out of the newly formed

mega-corporations. Many of these people created their own companies, thus creating their jobs. This is a trend that will continue well into the new century.

No one really knows what the new millennium will bring. Change is inevitable, but those who are prepared and proactive will continue to have the advantage of increased choices.

DIRECTING YOUR CAREER THROUGH SELF-PROMOTION

Many if not most people tend to be too humble when promoting themselves. They see it as bragging or fear that they'll be viewed as arrogant. However, people who are too quiet about letting the right people know about their abilities or accomplishments often are overlooked for those great jobs or projects.

All companies have basic goals for their survival or success. These include safety, profit, quality, productivity, and maintenance of their corporate culture or structure. People are hired with these goals in mind.

Organizations develop strategies via compensation, employee involvement or continuous improvement to achieve these goals. Often the tools used are employee opinion surveys, job descriptions and employee appraisal.

A good system will assist in developing and improving your skills. Sometimes employee assessment tools can be faulty or inadequate. When an individual is seeking new or better employment these tools can hinder rather than help. Take a look at your current or past employer's rating system.

- Are the ratings administered consistently and in a timely manner?
- How is compensation linked with performance?
- How are the assessment questions and responses worded?
- Is there a numerical ranking paired with narrative and are they compatible?

A well constructed evaluation should contain:

- Behavior based questions and responses (observable behaviors and responses)
- Wording that's positive and direct
- Sections for a follow-up plan, including a time line, feedback solutions, or projected actions
- Self-evaluation sections for the employee

If your current employer's system lacks the above or is flawed start developing a strategy for yourself. First of all don't be disengaged. Take ownership or responsibility for failures and successes. Be visible to the power structure in your successes. Don't rely on memory, yours or others, to keep track of your achievements. Some of your early accomplishments in your appraisal cycle may be critical.

Establish a system of documentation to provide feedback, objectives or supportive information. Memos of meetings, project deadlines, project status or successful completions to supervisors or co-workers can help people remember what you've accomplished or what their responsibilities are. Always maintain copies for yourself with the original going to the most involved individual.

Address issues when they occur. It may seem easier to ignore them and hope they'll go away, but the most valuable team members know how to nip those issues in the bud. Don't let negative situations go unattended; learn how to confront with finesse.

Above all, empower yourself. By practicing continuous improvement, you'll benefit your current employer or your next employer.

All of this organization and documentation will be vital during your performance evaluation or annual review. You cannot always rely on your supervisor's memory or documentation when preparing for this process. You'll actually be helping him or her out by providing information to increase accuracy. This way your evaluation will reflect your abilities, skills and contribution to your job and employer.

Some key guidelines to follow in this process include:

- First choose the right employer and know the rules.
- Identify key players early (positive and negative) at all levels of the organization.
- Find and listen to the "grapevine" but minimize participation (you want to be in the loop but not be a gossip).
- Be an idea person, a problem solver, and lead by example, thus building a positive reputation.
- Refine your oral and written communication skills.
- Establish your expertise within your profession or job (be good at what you do!).

- Choose your battles carefully, be realistic and play to win.
- Have a plan and its back up; having an alternative to number one could save you grief or disappointment.
- Avoid the “Negative Nannies.” They’ll suck the energy out of the best people.
- Choose your support staff carefully if you are a supervisor, project leader or manager.
- Find ways to make other peoples’ job easier.
- Be consistent without being predictable.
- Do everything with "style" to increase your credibility.

These tips will position you for success. You'll develop a reputation of quality in performance to ensure good salary increases and good job progression. This system will carry you through the duration of your career because it benefits you and your employer.

USING THE INTERNET FOR JOB SEARCH/CAREER ADVANCEMENT

Modern technology is fast and intriguing. It can offer instant access to many avenues with little effort. Using a few strokes of the keyboard you can send and receive information to anyone, anywhere!

The Internet enables people to cast a broad net anywhere in the world quickly and inexpensively. It is a great tool for research, shopping, entertainment and increasingly, job searching. Because of quick access and anonymity, many job seekers or career advancers have used the Internet to find their next job.

Two of the better-known services, Monster Board.com and Headhunter.com, contain a multitude of resumes for employers that can be accessed by anyone who's registered with the services. Most employers use their own Web sites or shared Web sites to advertise positions. Again, it's fast and covers a broad territory.

This chapter will focus on the challenge of using the internet: utilizing the technology without making mistakes.

First, we'll address the issue from the job seeker/career advancer's point of view. If you're using one of the resume services mentioned above, be aware that these are massive data warehouses, and people all over the world are using them for job searching.

Resumes are not routinely "purged", so some of this information is old. In fact your resume may remain on the Internet long after you should have taken it off. A resume circulated this way is risky because the wrong people might see you. You have little or no control over who has access to your information or how it will be used. It is similar to responding to a blind box ad in the newspaper.

A recent Dilbert cartoon strip portrayed a fairly accurate possibility – inquiring to companies about openings rather than responding to advertised positions. If you're currently employed this avenue may not

be the best route because of who can obtain access to your information, first hand or otherwise. If you're unemployed you have nothing to lose by doing a general broadcast. The more people who see your resume the greater your chances are of finding a new or better job.

Oftentimes third party recruiters are the ones most apt to take advantage of exploring the Internet to find candidates for their assignments. There are pluses and minuses to this also. A good recruiter who "picks you up" can be a great asset. You're more accessible to these professionals and make it easier to find you if you fit their area of expertise.

In this arena, the layout of the resume and the technical "buzz words" must lend themselves to being noticed at a glance. A glance at the screen is all the resume will get initially. If these buzz words are in plain sight, then the resume will be printed and read.

The resume must be of the quality that can be submitted to the hiring manager. No one will do a rewrite, and if a recruiter does a rewrite it may not be the document that reflects the original. This will be self-defeating if you get to the interview stage.

Do not include personal information on the resume document itself. Use attachments to be sent to specific individuals or companies when interest has been generated. The most sensitive yet critical topics are salary parameters and professional references. You want to avoid inappropriate treatment of this information.

If the Internet service provider allows for targeting where the resume is sent take advantage of that option. If not then the information literally goes all over the place and possibly through multiple search engines.

Here are some things to consider. Some recruiters (internal and external) avoid resumes from some of the larger search engines. They are looking for select and fresh information. The size and age of the database is critical. You can easily get lost in the extreme volume.

Many of the providers boast of the size of the database to attract advertisers or users. However, many people savvy to the Internet realize that an old database, just like an old mailing list, can be ineffective.

As a final quality check, pull your own resume off the Internet. Does it look the same way you submitted it? E-mail can do funny things. The most common problems are extraneous symbols, misarranged sentences, inappropriate spacing, and omissions. You want to make sure this document looks good and the way you intended.

The best way to use the Internet in job search, especially for the employed, is to use a targeted company's Web site to see if they're the best organization for you. Most are now listing their Web sites in their want ads or marketing literature. However a Web site is only as good as the people utilizing it. Many a Web designer has developed a masterpiece only to have it languish due to misuse or under utilization.

Check to see how recently changes or updates have been made, the date is posted in the site. Some are developed, put on the Internet, and then go unchecked or unused for months at a time. The information is old or outdated plus your submission may not receive a response.

Something else to consider is how user friendly the Web site is for job seekers. Many indicate job openings but are difficult to access by even the most savvy computer users. Is the web page used to not only attract candidates but also qualify the positions to avoid inappropriate responses? You want to make sure that if you're submitting your resume that it will be received, evaluated and responded to.

Web sites are still very useful for researching companies. Things to focus on include products, services, press releases, company history, philosophy, subsidiaries, etc. If the organization includes openings, learn how to glean details to start your plan of action for quicker responses.

Some resume submittals to web sites are delayed for weeks. It is not uncommon for a company to check e-mailed resumes only after an external recruiter has submitted a resume. A company wants to make sure that they haven't already received it so they can claim "first rights" by date received.

When using a specific company's web site for job search use the same techniques as if responding to a want ad. (*Employment Times* 12/10/98)

The Internet is a useful tool for job searching or career advancement. But like all tools, you can't become dependent on this as your only method. Use it to expand or augment networking, want ads and recruiters.

Be selective in choosing how you'll use the Internet to ensure that you'll achieve desired results. People are still the best connection in a successful job search. Technology can bring people together or keep them apart. How the technology is used determines the success.

COMPANY WEB SITES: A TOOL FOR THE JOB SEARCH DETECTIVE

Web sites are like parking lots – most companies have them. In fact, an organization today is *more* likely to have a Web site than a parking lot. Whether it's IBM or "No One's Ever Heard of Us, Inc.", companies are developing and using Web sites to advertise or to educate customers.

For job seekers and career advancers who can find their way around a computer mouse, an organization's Web site can provide a wealth of information to assist in an effective job search. This additional source can enable you to find material or contacts to utilize in networking. We're not talking about spying, "flipping" or doing anything unethical. It's just using the information that the company itself provides for its visitors.

It's quite easy to obtain a company's web address. Often it's at the bottom of a published want ad, or on an employee's business card or sales literature. If these are not available, just try, [www."companyname".com](http://www.) once you're on the Internet. If all else fails, just call them and ask for the Web site address.

The quality of the information varies with each organization. Often, smaller employers have better web sites than the "big boys" do. How user friendly a site is determines how easy it is to navigate around the site to obtain information.

The basic setup of most Web sites contains the following sections: **Home, Company, Jobs or Careers, Products or Services, Sales, In the News, Site Map, and Contact Us**. The wording varies, but the layout is fairly consistent. Occasionally some will include **Links** to complementary or related Web sites.

Going to the **Jobs/Careers** section can be a good start. However, it can be better to view the rest of the site first to see if the company is right for you. Even if none of the jobs listed are a fit for you, it doesn't mean that you don't fit into the organization. Certain skills or job functions are applicable to multiple industries or fields.

You will get an idea of the general requirements needed for specific positions by visiting the web site. But more importantly, you'll see what *types* of positions are at that company. You'll pick up on the technology used, educational requirements, specific skills or background required, etc.

So read through the job write-ups regardless of the *job title*. These are leads or idea generators to start your legwork. Remember, only a minority of Internet users find their new position on the Web (*Wall Street Journal*, 7/11/00).

One very important thing to look for here is the "age" of the job if a date is posted. Some can be as old as six months to two years! Not everyone has figured out how to keep a Web site current.

The next section to visit is **Company/About Us/History**. These may be individual sections or in composite form. This is where you'll get the history of the organization. It's always good to know how and when a company started. Historical markers such as mergers, acquisitions, product introductions or expansions are listed here. Time lines of events can provide valuable insight to a company's past and possible future.

By learning about a company's history, you're keying into a company's growth and ability to adapt and progress. How this was achieved is also vital; was it through innovation and creativity, or mergers or acquisitions? Other bits of information available here may include corporate culture (stated), philosophy or mission statement.

Products/Services provides the most information about your possible match with the organization. You'll be able to determine if your experience is needed or compatible. This information is used when approaching people who work there during your networking phase.

If you have a strong background in the product, service or industry/field, use that strength to "talk shop" once you've found the potential hiring manager. If you have related experience, use all the commonalties you find.

In the **Sales** section you'll find out the parameters of the company's customer base. This could be geographical (local to international),

industry(s) or information about distributors, other divisions /subsidiaries or parent company.

Press Releases or **In the News** is often the best part of the web site. This information is usually recent, less than two years old, and has a date it was issued so you can tell exactly how old it is. It can be business related, product introduction or development, new personnel or promotions, industry awards/recognition, or upcoming events (community related, training or trade shows). On many Web sites this is where you'll be able to gather contacts. The information here often provides you with the perfect excuse to contact an individual.

Not all Web sites are user friendly. Specific categories may not be directly evident, and very few are developed with recruitment as a primary goal. The exceptions, of course, are Search Firms or Employment Agencies. It is advisable to go to these sites also, since you may find your next job this way. It is still up to the *visitor* to get the needed information to implement a strategy.

There are no set rules when using Web sites to research specific companies. Your success can be determined by the quality of that site. Remember that the primary purpose of the information they're providing is to obtain customers and increase sales. It's up to the savvy job seeker to use this material to obtain applicable information and contacts. You must be able to present yourself in a professional and articulate manner in order to be successful with the people that you eventually talk with.

Don't become overly focused on just surfing the web. It's easy and it's fun, but it can also gobble up lots of time without being productive. Connecting with people is still what gets results.

It's also possible to rule out a company as a potential employer after reviewing their Web site. Don't expect to get that perfect job by simply submitting your resume on line or traditionally to a posted position. How to follow up on that submittal is still important. Always make sure that your resume is received. Don't assume anything!

Extra effort is still needed in getting to the person who can determine if you're a good match for their needs. You have to be able to find the

hiring manager and present your qualifications in a concise manner. The more you know about the company, the faster you can accomplish this goal. Using the Internet just speeds up this process.

Play around in a company's site. Some people find the best information accidentally! This can be a wonderful tool in finding the job and the company that's the best match for you.

Job/Career Search Web Sites & Descriptions

JOB LISTINGS

Flip Dog

www.flipdog.com

National listing of jobs that can be localized. Good source for IT positions, including *customer support* category and can link directly to company's Web site.

America's Job Bank

www.abj.org

National listing of jobs and ability to access specific states sites. Also contains information and links to other resources.

Hot Jobs

www.hotjobs.com

National listing of jobs that can be localized. Note dates on job listings, some may be outdated and possibly filled or pulled.

Monster Board

www.monsterboard.com

One of the most popular. However, due to that popularity there is an extremely large database and you may get lost in the pack. Fewer employers are pulling from monster and more are opting to post on more specific sites (Flip dog), state sponsored or "niche" sites.

CAREER/OCCUPATION

Hale on Line

www.haleonline.com

Popular adaptation of the Myers-Briggs personality test. Easy to follow and supplies brief but usable information on your aptitude and style.

America's Career Infonet

www.acinet.org/acinet

Using the Wages and Trends icon, information can be accessed on a wide variety of careers.

Salary.Com

www.salary.com

Salary Expert.Com

www.salaryexpert.com

Salary averages provided for a large variety of occupations, localized by city and state.

Also provides a "job profile and description", not just job title.

EMPLOYER RESEARCH

Business Journals

www.bizjournals.com

Listing of all of the Business Journals throughout the U.S. Currently has 30 cities listed. Weekly publication of current business trends, issues or events. Great source for people open to relocation. Can also subscribe to electronic daily updates via e-mail.

Hoovers Online

www.hoovers.com

Abundant information on publicly held businesses can be accessed through the "capsule" link.

Be aware that Web sites change continually. It is best to revisit sites periodically since merger and acquisition "mania" occurs on the Internet often.

WHEN A JOB SEARCH IS YOUR FULL TIME JOB

Looking for good employment when you're without a job is the hardest job you'll ever have. For most people this is not intentional, because it's not a paid position!

Full time job searching usually occurs due to your employer's decisions or actions. Occasionally, people will resign from a position without first obtaining a new job. This should only occur in rare circumstances such as extremely stressful employment. Increasingly it occurs due to spouse relocation.

The first thing to remember is that you are not alone! Survey results from a national poll published in Pay Dirt (9/1/00 in Salary.com) indicate that 41% of respondents have experienced layoffs and 15% of this group have dealt with this issue more than once! Some people receive advance warning (due to state or federal regulations) in a major downsizing, but many people are taken by surprise.

So, now you've been thrust into this demanding task with no guaranteed income and the risk of frequent rejection! It doesn't sound like the job you would choose, but you're stuck with it. The time spent in this process can take from 0 days (in demand computer programmers) to 18+ months (CEO or top management). Even with great preparation, you're still looking at a 90 day stint at best. Your ability or willingness to relocate is also a major factor in the length of time of a job search.

You now work for "2MI", Me, Myself and I. This is a good response when people ask who you work for. This could occur in networking, business or social gatherings. This approach injects humor, lets people know that you're job searching, yet maintains your dignity. Since you work for "2MI" you are now like the self-employed and responsible for everything.

This includes:

- Sales/Marketing
- Research and Development
- Budgeting and Purchasing
- Advertisement/PR

- Administration
- Production
- Customer Service
- Your Morale

It's a major undertaking, but it can be made easier (though never easy) if you approach this the way you would any job. You will set up the project, get organized and stay focused.

Remember that this is your new full time job. Does this mean that you're putting in 40 hours per week? Not necessarily, due to the high demands of this task, 36 hours is satisfactory, 32 hours is the minimum. Unlike a job that you're getting paid for, with less responsibility, 40 hours is pushing it.

The preparation, implementation and follow through are paramount. Because of the high stress level in the "job", more time off for relief is justified.

How do you get started? Whether you've been provided with Outplacement services or not (fewer employers are offering the service, and those who do have been shortening the time allowed), you are still responsible for the outcome.

Remember that you are now in charge of your own morale. The first thing that you need to do is to eliminate any psychological "demons" that you have because of your situation. Experiencing job loss can be very similar to experiencing the death of someone close to you. The emotions that you may experience range from denial, anger and relief to depression.

The key is to eliminate these feelings, not ignore them! Dwelling on your situation is non-productive. However, early in this stage you are allowed some brief "pity parties" to get it out of your system. You have to get to the level of acceptance and a positive attitude. If you don't, you may sabotage your own efforts. Negative "vibes" come across loud and clear in the interview process.

You need to find a high energy, positive support system. *Do not try this on your own!* Most experts recommend not using immediate family and spouse (or significant other), because they have their own demons to deal with and tend to be the least sensitive or most critical. This is not intentional or mean spirited, they're just too close to the situation.

There are many job seeker networks in the area (the Job Forum, 40+, church groups, etc). Read local publications to find out which ones are best for you. More than one is recommended. The more people that you interact with the greater the odds are of finding a good job.

Now start with the basics and gather your primary materials:

- A well written resume
- Personal business cards
- Adaptable cover letter
- Supplemental highlight sheet (if needed)
- Boxes of invitation size Thank You notes

All of this, with the exception of the Thank You notes, will be on disk. Before you send out any of these items, do a "test run." Develop examples and show them to people you know who can be objective and provide constructive feedback.

You are following the basic principles of market research. What does the market (employers) want, do I have it and how do I effectively present it? With the increased access to PCs, it's no longer necessary to print 500 copies of your resume and "To whom it may concern" cover letters.

Adjustments are usually required before submission to a targeted company or position, so five to ten copies at a time are adequate. Plus, all of the cover letters are customized to increase effectiveness. However, 1,000 business cards are realistic. You're in sales now, hand these out like candy.

The next step is logistics, or getting organized. Develop a workable system that you will follow.

- Set up a "day planner" system
- Arrange your schedule weekly (remember it's your job now)
- Keep accurate, detailed and retrievable records of your activities including who, what, where and when
- Develop the weekly "to do" list and do it!

- Review your records every Friday. If an item(s) keeps reappearing and is never checked off make sure it gets done!

A suggestion for research time (paper or Internet) is Monday morning and/or Friday afternoon. If someone is receptive to meeting with you at those times by all means follow through. However, these two times are not the best for “cold calling.”

Excuse me, did you say COLD CALLING!!?

Yes, remember you’re responsible for selling yourself now. You’ll minimize your success if you can’t present yourself to total strangers. Plan your strategy, prepare your message, and contact people in the companies that you have selected as potential employers.

Practice the 3-message rule. Leave clearly stated, brief messages. If one is not returned, provide for a 48-hour grace period before leaving the next. If your messages are not returned using this system, chances are that they will not be returned. You will need to regroup and find someone else; do not be a pest! Practice these basic sales techniques:

- Get out and be with people. This is where the contacts are made. It’s risky and scary, but remember that you have your support sources to help you get through this.
- Use your personal business cards as an ice breaker. It’s more acceptable in networking situations than your resume.
- Follow through and maintain your documentation. You’re keeping daily records of your weekly activities and developing new ones. Review of these records will let you know how you’re progressing.
- Do not allow your “pipeline” to dry up! Don’t find yourself in a situation where you have nothing on your “to do” list.
- Re-contact certain people when applicable. Since you have their name, the circumstances and the date of last contact at your fingertips, you have the leverage.

As in long cycle sales the “one call close” is unlikely. Repeat contact is often necessary. Don’t let people or events fall through the cracks.

If or when (and people do) you *hit the wall*, review your strategy and plans. Step back, talk to someone in your support system and evaluate

your system. Often this occurs when you have stopped doing the basics. Don't get into a rut, it will take its toll on your energy, and thus your effectiveness. A *time out* and application of stress relievers is needed periodically. Suggestions include:

- Take a brisk walk (your dog can come too)
- Mow the lawn or do some other yard work
- Clean out a closet or the garage. Make sure that it's not a project that lasts more than 4 hours.
- Go see an action movie or comedy. Avoid the tear jerker!

Talking aloud to yourself while engaged in physical activity not only relieves stress but also helps you to come up with some solutions. Deal with your pent up emotions effectively and never take it out on your loved ones.

Learn how to be persistent without being a pest. Apply the *three-message* rule. Find the person at the targeted company who can say "yes." Present your best case and leave it up to them. If that manager sees that you are the best individual for that position, you will get the job.

Many people have faced the dilemma of a full time job search, and there is no longer a stigma attached to going through this process. Always remember that you may not have an employer at that time, but you definitely have a job to accomplish.

ACTIVITY LOG SHEET

WEEK OF _____

COMPANY CONTACT PERSON
ACTIVITY/RESULTS

- 1)
- 2)
- 3)
- 4)
- 5)

APPOINTMENTS TO BE SCHEDULED

Company Contact Date Completed

- 1)
- 2)
- 3)
- 4)
- 5)

RESULTS FROM PREVIOUS CONTACTS

Company Referrals Interviews Follow up letters

- 1)
- 2)
- 3)
- 4)
- 5)

INTERVIEWS

Company Contact person Date Status

- 1)
- 2)

GETTING TO THE DECISION MAKER

Since a job search is like sales, getting past the “gatekeepers” is critical. Remember, gatekeepers can only say no, they do not have the final say in hiring. Sometimes they don’t have *any* say. They can help or hinder your efforts in getting to the right person.

This depends on how a particular gatekeeper views the job. You’ll hear the same old lines: “I’m here to see who qualifies to speak to my boss.” “It’s my job to only let the right people through.” While that may be true, it’s not your concern.

Your mission is to contact the hiring manager. Only that person knows what he or she wants in the desired candidate who will report to them. The key areas may not even have been included in the job requisition that was just submitted to Human Resources.

There are steps to take to get to the right person. They do involve some risk since rejection is a strong possibility. However, with practice, success rates are high – and if you do get rejected, what have you actually lost? You want to make sure that you hear from the hiring manager that you’re not matching what they need.

The first critical step in this process is to do your homework! *Who* is the hiring manager? *Who* would *I* report to? If you’re responding to a want ad or job posting you may be provided with the title of the position that you would report to, i.e., Director of Operations, Nursing Supervisor, Project Leader, etc. This is an excellent starting point. If you’re not responding to a published ad or the position is not identified, you’ll have to work a little harder.

The most important thing is to get the name of that person and direct all correspondence to that person from the beginning. It is better to start too high up the chain than too low. If you start too low you increase your chances of being blocked or simply routed to Human Resources.

Smart hiring managers realize that they must take a proactive approach in hiring the right people in today’s market. Few will turn away someone who approaches them professionally and competently.

Here are some techniques that professional recruiters and sales people use to get to decision-makers.

Responding to an ad that states the job title

Call the company's main number and in your best, professional voice say, "This is (*your name*), I'm sending information to your (*their title*), I need the correct spelling of their name." Keep it gender neutral, don't assume that the Plant Manager is a man, or the Office Manager is a woman. When you're provided the name, it should indicate the gender. If you get Chris or Pat as the name, double check on the salutation for Ms. or Mr.

Also verify the correct mailing address at this time. This approach is tried and true. You could achieve a 95% success rate if done correctly and with confidence.

As with anything new, practice this technique first. You need to send a credible message with a pleasant telephone voice in order to get the desired information.

Using the company's Web site

This is very beneficial for people seeking higher-level positions, but information can be gathered to benefit almost anyone. Go to the "History", "About Us" and the "In the News/Press Releases" sections. Generally you will find names and titles of top and/or upper level managers (CEO, CIO, VP and Director levels). You may even be provided with a little history on them.

Begin collecting names and titles for your resources. Gather other applicable information from the Web site for future reference. You may need quick access to some of this material when you connect with the targeted person.

Double check the accuracy of the Web site information. Things change quickly these days, and if the Web site isn't updated you will not succeed in your mission. Call up the company and say "This is (*your name*), I'm sending information to *John/Jane Doe*. My records indicate that her/she is your (*job title*). Are my records accurate?"

“Cold calling” to get the name

Now you are starting from scratch. This is the scariest part, but it can be done. You’ll be using the first approach, but with an added feature. Again, “This is (*your name*), I’m sending information to the person responsible for (*name of possible function*).” Possibilities include manufacturing operations, domestic sales, AS/400 applications, etc. “I need the correct spelling of the name.” “By the way what’s his/her correct title?” Using this approach should help you get the needed information.

However, a word to the wise: a few unenlightened companies have an 11th commandment, *Thou shall not give out names!* Using the company Web site or knowing someone who works there are the best avenues for those organizations.

You are lucky and you know someone who works at that company!

Ask your friend or acquaintance for assistance. Be professional and reasonable in this approach. Be clear as to what you are asking for and why you need the contact. “I’m interested in working for your company. I think that I could be a good fit for (*job title or department*). Could you help me with the name of the manager in that department/group?” Maintain your business voice to make sure that you’re taken seriously.

If necessary, offer to keep their information in confidence. Some people prefer to remain anonymous. Some may offer to help you get in, provide you extra information, or provide you with alternative contacts. Treat these people like the treasures that they are!

The most important thing to remember is to get names and job titles of those that you need to connect with. If you send correspondence (your resume, letter of introduction and/or personal business card) to a title or department, anyone can open the envelope. It will then be directed to who they think is the appropriate person or department. If the envelope is addressed to that specific person by name only they will open it.

You want to make sure that the one who can say yes reads your material and makes the judgment.

Rejection is still possible, but the right person has rejected you. Another way to look at that is, if rejection occurs at that level it wasn't meant to be. Following up on all of your paper work using the telephone is essential. In your cover letter you closed with "I'll be calling you in *(time reference)* to discuss this further." Now it's time to call to talk with them.

You now have the perfect way to reach this person in order to secure a face-to-face meeting. Script out and practice what you're going to say. Keep the script by the telephone as your "safety net" when you make the call.

When following up with the telephone call, always identify yourself. "This is Mary Smith. I'm calling for John/Jane Doe." You'll avoid the standard or automatic response "*May I ask who's calling?*" This response is so ingrained in some people that they will start to ask the question and catch themselves mid-sentence.

Then, if asked, "*What is this in reference to?*" you can honestly say, "*He/she is expecting my call.*" You should get passed along. If an additional probing question occurs you can say "*I'm following up on the documents that I sent John/Jane last week.*" Using their first name implies that you really know them. Again, use your credible business voice with this procedure. Be so well rehearsed that it comes out as natural conversation.

When you finally get them on the telephone remind them who you are and inquire whether they have received your information. Have copies of the materials in front of you for quick reference should they ask questions. Your mission is to obtain a face to face meeting with them.

If you're having trouble using these telephone techniques and are still being blocked by the gatekeeper, there are additional steps that you can take.

First, call before or after normal business hours or during the noon hour. The regular gatekeepers are apt to be "away from their posts." You'll either get the automated phone system (sometimes the best advantage) or whoever is covering the switchboard. It's usually easier

to obtain information from these people. They haven't fine tuned their "grilling skills" to an art form.

Automated Telephone Systems

Often utilizing automated phone systems is more productive than talking with real people. These are "dumb" systems. They don't challenge you, ask probing questions, and they tolerate performing functions repeatedly. All you do is follow the prompts that the system provides. Most are set up to help the caller get to the desired party.

There are almost always back ups to eventually get to a real person or transfer departments. On rare occasions you may get stuck in the "phone system from Hell." Then you'll have to use a different approach.

As you're following the prompts, listen to the number of digits for the extension. Most systems have two to four digit extensions, but occasionally up to five. Some indicate the way to access the directory. This is great if you know a name and all you have to do is spell it out.

Many automated systems will at a minimum provide department extensions. If none of them match what you need you can always go to Customer Service, Purchasing or Accounts Receivable. These people can usually assist you in getting to the right person.

If you're using the 2-4-digit approach, simply punch in any random digits until you reach a functioning one. The systems will accept mistakes and let you know if it's invalid. Some will terminate the connection (with apologies) after three failures; others just keep going

Some of the best systems have voice mail set up to identify the name and/or title of the person. You may have to use the transfer system or call back to make multiple connections to get to the appropriate person.

What if the individual is there and answers the phone!?!? Be prepared, some executives work unusual hours so it can happen. Have all of your information in front of you so that you can tell them why you wanted to

reach them. Keep it brief -- you're not telling them everything, just enough to schedule a meeting or send your information to them.

The advent of Web sites and e-mail provide additional options. If you have one you can figure out the other with reasonable success since there's a connection. If you see an e-mail address of jdoe@thiscompany.com you can try www.thiscompany.com to get the Web site. If you have the Web site you can try variations of the name followed by "@thiscompany.com." Conduct all of the Internet procedures at home, never from work.

The purpose of all of these techniques is not to be devious or to "pull a fast one." Your goal is to have the control in directing your information to the hiring manager. Your second goal is to ultimately meet with your potential boss to see if your abilities match what he needs.

Only the hiring manager really knows what it is about you, your background, skills or history that make you their candidate of choice. They also know what exceptions to rules they can make.

Be prepared with all of your thoughts and documents. Apply a little detective work in researching to get to the person who can say yes.

ANSWERING WANT ADS TO GET RESULTS

Responding to want ads in the newspapers has become a viable method of obtaining a job in the last few years. Networking is still the most successful route to secure a good position with a good company, however, answering want ads is now second best.

Expand your search by using a variety of publications (*Employment Times*, *CNI*, *The Business Journal*, *Wall Street Journal*, etc.) Often the Sunday paper contains so much information that it can be overwhelming and reader fatigue can set in. Good job opportunities can simply get lost in the multitude of advertised jobs. The smaller publications can offer better options since the positions tend to be of a different caliber due to the targeted or specific circulation. The advantage of the *Wall Street Journal* is not the size, but the types of positions advertised.

Contacting a company that is not advertising for your skills is also recommended after researching the company thoroughly. Research is again the key when choosing to respond and how to respond. Read the ad carefully. What are they telling you about the job and their organization? You have to be able to determine if this is a good match for your skills and interests.

There are techniques to use in order to increase your chances of being selected when responding to a want ad. Do you know someone who works or recently worked at that organization? Hopefully they are someone in the "loop." Find out about the corporate culture and more details about the position that you're applying for.

Research the company, their products or services. Learn as much as you can to incorporate specifics in your cover letter. Customize the resume to emphasize your skills or experience that best fit the position or company. Use the cover letter to indicate why or how you would be an asset to them. You may want to use the Executive Briefing format. (Knock'em Dead, Yate, 2000)

If you have been or currently are in a related industry or with a competitor, clearly state that in the cover letter.

Send the information at the beginning of the following week that the ad ran to avoid coming in with the rest of the "pack". **Follow up within 10-14 days (unless a postcard is sent stating that your resume was received) to obtain the status of your information.** Document when you sent the resume, to whom, and the current status. Weeks could pass before you receive a follow up call, so keep track of everything.

If you're employed, *never* respond to a "blind" ad, because you have no way of tracking your information. If the ad only states a P.O. Box number you are no longer able to trace the owner of the box. Again you have no control after the resume is mailed.

These last two items are critical since it could be your own employer. Finally, after you've gone through all of these steps, send the resume, invest the money for postage, document, and follow through. You'll need to be prepared when you get that call for the interview.

GETTING THE MOST OF JOB/CAREER FAIRS

Job or Career Fairs are becoming more frequent as employers try to be creative in their quest for good workers. These events can be a single employer, i.e. Kohl's Department Stores, or multiple employers at a separate location such as a major hotel or convention center. The job seeker without an employer can use these opportunities to obtain good information about the companies in attendance. The job seeker with an employer can still take advantage but must be more selective and cautious.

View Job Fairs as you would a shopping trip. A single employer event is like going to a specialty store (hardware, appliance, etc.). Your selections are limited to that organization, but you're still able to browse. Multiple employer Career Fairs are like going to the mall. The selections are greater and all under one roof, and your chances of finding what you're looking for are increased.

Let's approach this with shopping in mind.

Single Employer Job Fair

First, consider location. Drive to the site to verify commute time and route. Is it within your commute tolerance? What does the facility/building look like? How's the neighborhood? In other words, what is the curb appeal?

- Physical condition of the building and surrounding area, including parking lot.
- Type and age of cars in the parking lot can indicate corporate culture and pay levels.
- First impression at the main entrance, including how you are welcomed.

If this first impression passes your employer criteria, the next level will be evaluating that company's representatives at the Job Fair. These people are examples of the type of employee who works there. Are you comfortable, do you fit in? You will be the most successful in a company that matches your skills and personality.

The next steps include:

- Review the materials that the organization has set out: brochures, write-ups (internal and newspaper reprints) or any other information provided.
- Ask questions about the company: products/services and types of positions currently available. Talk to the employer's representative to get more detailed information.
- Be in your "interviewing mode" but be concise. The company representative does not have time for a full interview. Provide a resume if requested.
- Take one or two application forms home to fill out (take a spare in case you make a mistake). Fill out the form at home where you'll have access to all needed information.
- Mail or drop off the application form with attached resume one to two weeks after the Job Fair. Indicate your participation and which position(s) you're applying for in the cover letter as a reminder.
- Separate yourself from the pack with research and timing. Typically Job Fair responses take up to *four* weeks for processing.
- Final follow up is the telephone call to make sure that the resume and application were received.

Multiple Employer Job Fair

Remember, you're at the mall now! Check the list of participating companies and the map with the layout (if provided). Cruise the area and omit employers that look inappropriate because of the type of positions available or where they're located.

Now go back to the ones remaining on your list and check them out. Observe how creative they are in attracting people to their area, with both set up and staff performance.

- Collect literature and business cards and be on the look out for tote bags, cookies, or pens. These will give you an idea of how much effort the company is putting into the job fair.
- Go to a quiet area to read the literature and review the business cards to narrow down the selection process.
- Choose which employers to return to based on your criteria; pick the ones with attentive representatives.

- Discuss the organization, products/services, types of positions currently available, etc.
- If a resume is requested have one ready to provide.
- Be prepared to interview if the timing is right as in the single company scenario. Again, be concise, save the details for the on-site interview when both parties have more time.

After you return home, choose the top companies from your list of keepers. Use the companies' business cards to send your resume (if not done previously) and cover letter to the appropriate person. Again, indicate your participation in the Job Fair to remind them of your interest.

Follow up to either of these events is just as important as attending. Send a hand written, gender neutral thank you note to all of the company representatives who spent time with you. Even if you did your best at the job fair you are one of many and you *can* get lost in the crowd. Contacting the company (human resources or the representative) will refresh their memory. Re-approach them after the "hub bub" when they're better able to pay attention to *you*.

If you're currently employed, be sure to check the list of participants thoroughly before attending to avoid the embarrassment of encountering your own employer.

Again, the purpose of attending these events is to explore and investigate potential employment opportunities – in other words, you're there to do some "comparison shopping." These events offer exposure to multiple organizations, and you are there to exclude as well as include whom you may want to work for.

Dress for success, gather information, take your "goodies" home and follow through with your selected companies.

ASKING THE RIGHT QUESTIONS DURING THE INTERVIEW

Asking questions during an interview is just as important as answering questions. You need to make sure that you *can* do the job and that you *want* to do the job. Nobody wants negative or unpleasant surprises after accepting an offer or starting the new job.

You have to do extensive preparation for the interviewing process. Most professional positions involve two to three interviews, so you can base many of your questions on accumulated information. When making arrangements for the initial face-to-face meeting, request that certain information is sent to you for your review. This could include an annual report (if the company is publicly traded), product/service literature, Web site address, brief job description, etc. If you are going through this process via a recruiter, this information should be easy to obtain from that person.

Use these materials to formulate your questions. Have a legal pad in the portfolio that you are taking to the interview. On the top sheet develop your "T" list. Divide the paper in half and on one side make a list of four or five items that you need to cover about yourself. Check them off as they're discussed. Do not leave the interview until they're all checked off. On the other side of the paper have the list of questions you need answered about the job *and* the company. You want to make sure that this is the right match for you.

The initial questions that you ask must be directed toward the job itself. You need to have a good understanding of the duties and responsibilities. Questions would include:

- Could you give me examples of what my day-to-day functions would be?
- How does this position fit within the department and the organization?
- What special projects or functions would I be involved in or responsible for?
- What typically happens if/when...?

The hiring manager can best answer these questions. Two key considerations with this are *can* they answer these questions and *how* they answer these questions. You can begin to see examples of your potential manager's communication style when asking these questions. The next set of questions should be asked to all of the people involved in the interview process. These are basic business questions that address corporate culture and their method of operation. Look for consistent responses not verbatim answers. People from different departments/functions will have their own perceptions. These questions include:

- How is work organized at this company (self-directed work teams, cross over functions, etc.)?
- What characteristics do successful people in your organization share?
- What are some of the short and long term goals/objectives this company has?
- What are some of the unique qualities that this company has compared to the competition?
- What outside influences can affect this company's growth?
- In what areas does this organization excel and in what areas are its' limitations?
- In what areas does the company need improvements or polishing?
- What would you change about the incumbent's performance to improve the function of this position (if it's a replacement)?
- What do you see as the most exciting challenge your company will face over the next 1-3 years?
- In what areas do you see this company growing or changing in the next 1-3 years?

These questions will expose the interviewer's preparedness, corporate pride, business aptitude, communication style, and how they are apt to perform on the job. You will be able to find inconsistencies or any "red flags" that need to be addressed before you proceed.

These last questions should be asked during the final interview:

- Do you retain top performers and how?
- What programs do you have to assist the new employee in learning their job and your corporate culture? (Orientation has a great impact on early success in a new job)

- From what you've seen of me where do you think I could contribute effectively? Asking the hiring manager this question will provide feedback as to your strength as a hireable candidate.

There are no questions in this chapter about salary or salary negotiation; that topic warrants a separate chapter and will be covered later.

Even if you are between employers, these suggested questions should be asked. If you are a professional fitting into middle or upper management they are critical. You need to avoid going “out of the frying pan and into the fire.” A brief tenure (less than one year) or a negative employment situation can be detrimental to your next career move.

If you're currently employed, the answers to these questions will verify whether you're moving to a better opportunity. This type of questioning will help you make the best choices.

SELECTING AND PREPARING YOUR REFERENCES

Many people who are job seekers or who are advancing their careers tend not to specifically select or thoroughly prepare their references. A hasty, unprepared reference can actually cost you that job instead of solidifying your chances.

Even if you're not actively interviewing for a new or better job, you need to gather these contacts. It's actually more critical to choose these people carefully when you're employed because of the confidential nature of job hunting at that time. Make sure that they understand completely the trust you have in them.

Most well run companies are completing reference checks and are skilled in asking the right questions or asking questions that will get the most information out of the person provided as a reference.

The basic guidelines for selecting good references are:

- Select five people who can testify to your skills, observable behaviors and/or communication style. Most companies conduct three references but they want to complete them quickly.
- Have your backup selections in case someone's not available.
- Provide all of your references with your resume so they have accurate information about you and the same reference point the interviewer has.

Ask permission! A surprised or unknowing reference can be a disaster. Make sure that they can and *will* provide good, accurate information about you. When they've agreed, "test the waters." Find out what they'll actually say about you. Simply ask "What would you tell a prospective employer about me?" "What do you feel are my strengths?" "Where could I improve?"

Listen to what they say. If they're forgetting some key areas, remind them: "Remember when..." "What about the time we ...".

Be aware of *their* communication skills. If they are ineffective, reconsider them as a choice since it can detract from the quality of their information.

Provide a list of your references to the prospective employers when requested. The list should include name, job title, and place of employment, your relationship and length of that relationship. Also include the telephone number at which the individual prefers to be contacted. Some people will be more comfortable providing the information at home rather than at work. Do not have this information on your resume but rather on a separate paper.

Prepare your references. When the company that you are interviewing with lets you know that they'll be contacting your references, call everyone on your list. Let them know who will be contacting them by name and/or title (if you know), the name of the company, what position you're being considered for, and any details about the job or company that will help them provide the best information.

Follow up to make sure that they've been contacted and get their feedback. The comments made to them and the direction of the questions could be valuable and indicate your standing as a viable selection for that job.

For those who are employed, references can be more challenging. It is almost impossible to use your current supervisor. You don't want to draw attention to the fact that you want to leave. Exceptions would include a situation where you are being downsized or if you're using each other as references so confidentiality is mutual.

Start getting your sources now. With mergers, acquisitions and layoffs you may lose track of some very important people.

Consider people who you're currently working with and who can attest to your skills and abilities. These can be co-workers, customers, and people from other departments or even suppliers/vendors – anyone who is directly impacted or sees how well you do your job.

If you're active in professional associations or civic/volunteer groups tap these connections. Remember, if you've been in committees, held office or been involved in projects, you have additional resources. These people can answer the same questions as an employment related reference, plus they have no conflict of interest.

One aspect of references that has been underutilized is using these people as an initial networking source. If they know you well enough to provide a reference, then they would be a valuable resource for helping you get contacts. As in any networking scenario, be specific and let them know your purpose.

Meet with them away from the work environment to discuss details. Provide them with two resumes (one to assist when they're contacted for the reference and one to pass along). Be clear as to what types of positions you're interested in and why, which organizations/industries you're targeting and if they have any suggestions for you.

Send thank you notes to all of the people who have agreed to be your reference. When you get the job, you'll want show your appreciation by sending a plant or a gift certificate to those who recommended you. When you obtain your new business cards send them to all of these people to keep them updated.

Maintain an ongoing relationship with these individuals. You never know when you'll need each other in the future.

NEGOTIATING A COMPENSATION PACKAGE

Accepting a good offer at the compensation level you desire isn't as cut and dry as it used to be. Geographical location, specialties within a field, high demand/low supply positions or career changes are just some of the variables that have complicated the process. Another key variable is the transition from salary to hourly pay or vice versa, and this can influence the total compensation because of the overtime factor.

With the exceptions of career change or cost of living in a new location, all other variables actually provide leverage to the job seeker. Most of this article addresses the issue with the view of the employed job seeker. However, there is little difference for the unemployed individual.

Salary is the main focus of the compensation package and the most obvious. However, many companies incorporate a variety of benefits (vacation, education reimbursement, insurance options, retirement, bonuses, etc.) to create a total package. We'll address salary as the main issue, but utilize the other areas.

Companies seldom reveal salary/wage ranges in their want ads (but many require your salary history when submitting your resume). This is beginning to change in some areas. The skilled trades are offering hourly rates that are competitive, and information technology positions frequently state attractive bonuses.

This critical element is often unknown until you actually start interviewing or unless you know how to discover the information. Just because you've indicated your current salary level on a cover letter or application form doesn't mean that you'll receive an offer at the range that you want. If the application form has a section on desired salary/wage, provide a range: low 30's, upper 40's, etc. Do not state an actual number. You could lock yourself into a number when they would have gone higher.

A frequent mistake people make when filling out application forms or even during the interview stage is forgetting about overtime or bonuses. These can add a significant amount to your annual income.

If you're interviewing for a position with a recruiter, the salary parameters will have already been established. The recruiter knows not only the salary range, but also the "comfortable" hiring range. You wouldn't have reached this level if the dollars weren't matching. This is an advantage also when compensation negotiations begin since you now have leverage in the process. It can be frustrating to reach this stage, only to have a low offer extended.

A smart applicant needs to complete the research and convey skill or ability effectively to ensure a reasonable offer. First, do your homework as to salary levels in your field, industry or geographical area. A good resource is Salary.com (www.salary.com). Not only can you use job title, but also geographical parameters.

You'll be able to print out a salary chart, brief job description and total cash compensation for a specific position. If you're currently employed and remaining in the same profession your guidelines are evident. Use your current salary/wage as a starting point. It is still recommended to double check with industry salary surveys or Salary.com. If you're unemployed use your last salary.

If you think that you're below the norm due to wage/salary freezes, below average increases or your employer just doesn't pay well, there are some resources to use in order to gain accurate information. First, ask people that you know who are in comparable positions the salary ranges for their jobs. You're not asking them to reveal their income, just the ranges to the best of their knowledge. If you are fortunate enough to know someone who works for the company that you're interviewing with, get some insight from him or her.

There are state and federal statistics available, but they tend to be outdated and over generalized. Tap into the local Dept. of Labor resources. They often have county or regional information based on employer surveys as to what companies are actually paying their workforce.

Many professional associations run surveys among the membership, so national or statewide data should be available. ASQ (American Society of Quality), located in Milwaukee, WI, does an extensive report and

breaks down the information by job title, geography, industry, size of company, years of experience, education, and size of dept.

Gather the hard facts through these resources to begin your plan. One recommendation that is critical to successful compensation negotiation is to never state your actual dollar requirement during the interview. Have that number in your head, but if you bring it up too early you run the risk of “low balling” your self or appearing to be money driven rather than interested in the job or company.

Let them know your current level. Most companies will go five to eight percent higher. In some fields such as IT, it's not unheard of to go 10-15% higher because of supply and demand. However, be realistic or you could lose it all.

Be ready to prove that you're worth X number of dollars. Use skills, experience, and successes as the tools to achieve your goal. Your potential employer doesn't care about how much money you need to live on, so that should never be brought into the conversation.

If the interviewer asks what salary level you are looking for, don't provide an actual number. You can re-state your current level and qualifications then state, “I'm interested in hearing your best offer.” Make sure that you practice this technique; you must come across as business-like and interested.

If the company extends an offer significantly less than your current level or “market value” you have two options. Decline politely and restate your qualifications then present a counter offer, or simply decline the offer.

If they extend an offer slightly less than what you prefer again restate your qualifications and suggest additional compensation options that are non-salary related. These could include one week additional vacation, lower insurance premiums, and a special review in 90 days with an increase determined by performance, etc. Remember, if they agree get it in writing!

Do the essential “leg work” and keep up to date information as to salary levels in your field, job or industry. Never begrudgingly accept an offer

you won't be happy with. It will be evident in your attitude and performance. You'll be better off waiting until the right opportunity comes along with a total package that fits your needs.

GETTING A BETTER JOB WITHOUT CHANGING EMPLOYERS

If you're looking for a better job, the first place to look is your current employer. Staying with the same company yet obtaining a better job can be extremely advantageous. There are three ways to achieve career goals without leaving your current employer: promotions, lateral transfers, or creating your next job.

Most people keep track of internal postings at their place of employment. At times they may even be approached for promotions or positions with different departments to advance their careers. Making internal moves yet gaining a better job has advantages over leaving the organization. The job change is less stressful since there are fewer transitions, benefit levels are maintained, and the change is not as drastic. With all of these advantages people still fail to prepare for this process fully and don't get what they want.

Applying and interviewing for internal moves must be treated as seriously as a new employer situation. Two key areas that must be addressed are the *resume* and the *interview*. Don't assume that these are not important because you already work there and they already know everything about you.

Prepare a new resume -- the one on file could be years old or inappropriate for the position you're applying for. If you are seeking two different positions develop two different resumes, each unique to those positions. Content will be similar, but the emphasis will vary.

Find out from people already in that group or department what's really needed in the successful candidate. Obtain a job description of the position(s) to know what the job entails to match your skills and interests.

Find out from the human resources department the compensation or grade level of the position to compare to your current salary level. Make sure that this will be a salary increase, even if it is modest. Lateral salary or wage moves are acceptable if further career or job progression is possible in the new position or department.

Thoroughly prepare to interview for the position. You will have an advantage because you already know the corporate culture and key players. However, you should still prepare for the face-to-face interview as if you were a new hire.

Meet with the hiring manager informally to find out what they're looking for. Meet over coffee or lunch in neutral territory to get a good idea of what kind of person they are and to see if the chemistry is there. Practice your interviewing skills to be in top form.

When you go in for the actual interview, follow the same preparations as for a new hire: clothing, questions, paperwork, closing the interview, thank you notes and references. This is where people are apt to make mistakes; they lose focus and become too casual. Just because you've been with the organization for years doesn't mean that you are automatically going to get that new job.

The third way to get the job that you really want is to create it. Are there certain departments that just seem to be better than others? Are there key projects that you enjoy and that occur often enough to warrant full time attention? If you feel that you can justify a new position, then develop your ideal job. Put as much effort into this process as you would any vital project, after all it will directly effect your success.

Create your own job description, research compensation parameters based on company pay levels and present your plan to your supervisor. Be prepared to handle objections, this is a sales process. Have solutions and hard facts to back up your ideas. Many smaller companies will be receptive to this since it helps them keep their best employees and everybody wins.

Be on your best behavior, these are real interviews, not social gatherings. If the match is right for both parties you will get the offer, plus move your career in the direction that you want.

NEGOTIATING A SEVERANCE PACKAGE

Can the principle *and* practice of employee involvement and empowerment be applied to being released from an organization? Is today's worker qualified to make the right decisions in this critical issue? Can an employee and the employer work together to develop a severance package that's fair to all involved?

The answer from this author is obviously yes. However, your preparation in this matter will determine your success. The best time to find the solutions to these questions is *before* you receive your "walking papers."

In the current job market, no one is guaranteed a job for life. The time to set up your plan is when you're employed – and hope that you never have to use it.

Severance packages are negotiable. Human Resource professionals have known this for years. As a group they have been able to put together packages for themselves that have been superior to the "rank and file." (Company bankruptcies have been the obvious exception.) But savvy HR professionals know how to get a bigger or better "piece of the pie."

If you are caught in this dilemma, have everything prepared in writing so that you can cover all areas immediately. This will increase your leverage. One of my clients, after he had already experienced a layoff in another situation, actually kept his plan in his jacket pocket. Many people receive this news when called into an impromptu, unexpected meeting. Since he knew that, he kept his plan where he had immediate access if needed.

Some critical factors to consider:

- Do you suspect that you're being discriminated against (are you and almost everyone affected over 40 years of age, of one gender or ethnic group, etc.)? Contact the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC). Use the government section in your telephone book to contact the closest office.
- Never sign any papers during the initial meeting. Take them home to review, then sign, if agreeable to you. If you are pressured to sign on the spot, do so. However, take the copy

- home and contact a labor lawyer ASAP. In some states you still have seven days to review and rescind if you feel it's necessary.
- Have your package well prepared in writing. Think of it as any other business transaction that you've been involved in. Be firm but flexible. Have your bottom line thought out and something that you can live with.
 - A cost-effective route that you may want to consider is to have a service like Pre-Paid Legal. The premiums are very reasonable and you have access to a lawyer at any time on a variety of issues. For more information go to www.prepaidlegal.com.

One of the biggest concerns that you will have is job search assistance. Companies in the past have used two resources, traditional outplacement firms or Job Service. In Wisconsin this is now called Workforce Development Centers. You may want to choose an alternative.

There are now many independent consultants or career coaches who are much more effective and at times less expensive than outplacement companies. This must be brought into negotiations as early as possible. Since you'll be dealing with the outcome of this choice, you should be involved in the selection.

Some suggested areas of consideration should include:

- Is this provider current on the techniques and resources (including Internet) needed in the job market?
- Can this professional demonstrate "hands on" application of those techniques?
- Is there rapport with and confidence in this individual(s)? Does this person truly have *my* interests in mind?
- Am I receiving a custom program set at an effective pace, which addresses *my* needs and situation?
- How well connected is this person(s) with peripheral groups or professionals to assist me in networking?
- Will direct, applicable techniques with demonstrated examples be provided during my sessions? Will there be follow through as needed during my actual job search?
- Will I be participating in constructive group sessions as well as receiving individual attention?

- Is this provider skilled at sifting through and identifying the useful resources available in local, regional and national publications, as well as the Internet?
- Is this professional(s) still practicing these skills to keep abreast in the ever-changing employment community?

Each person must select the items that are the most helpful or necessary to him/her. Success or failure of the program provided is based on making this match since receptivity on the part of the participant is crucial.

Investigate these resources and their costs once you've narrowed down your selections. Remember to choose the *best* and not go solely on cost. Keep this in mind when you're negotiating a severance package with your soon to be ex-employer. If one of your best selections is more expensive than what your employer is willing to offer, determine how much you're willing to *self-pay*.

Do your best to use the monies released to you to achieve the best results. Discuss all of this with your legal counsel, especially because of income tax consideration. If the money is released to you in one lump sum, it could be classified as taxable income. You'll actually receive less money! Have the money set aside for the purpose of Reimbursable Funds as opposed to a check in your name. You want the tax burden kept to a minimum. You will have to keep track of invoices and receipts, but it will be worth it!

Try to negotiate a salary or pay continuation for a reasonable time period. Your job classification or duration of employment can be a major factor. Traditionally some companies have used one week for every year of employment as a benchmark. Some top management people actually get up to one year! Aim for a minimum of three months, since an average job search period is at least 90 days.

Base your negotiations on what you've *contributed* to the organization. Have all of that prepared in writing also. Never try for the sympathy route or guilt trip of *because I need it*. These are pure business transactions and there is no room for sentimentality, nor will any be given.

Be prepared, state your case and achieve your goal. Since you're dealing with the consequences of these decisions, do your best to be included in these decisions.

JOB SEARCH/CAREER CHANGE FOR THE MATURE WORKER

Corporate America has changed in the last fifteen years. Mergers, acquisitions and restructuring are now the norm, and will continue. Traditionally people sought good jobs with large companies. However, in today's market, these companies are now decreasing their number of employees.

Automation, offshore production or outsourcing specific jobs are just some of the ways larger companies reduce payroll expenses. During these transitions many workers over the age of 50 are being "retired" or released. They are too young to officially retire, so most must find new employment.

Two major obstacles must be overcome:

- 1) Corporate bias (illegal, but real) of which you have little or no control.
- 2) Your attitude (self-perception) which only you can control.

Let's start with self-assessment. If you feel "old" and "frumpy," you'll be perceived as old and frumpy. Look at yourself in a full-length mirror – don't worry it won't crack! How's your posture (standing, sitting and walking)? Do your clothes "hang well" on your body? Make changes if necessary in your appearance or wardrobe, but nothing drastic, you must feel comfortable. Most of the change needed will be internal – your attitude.

Use positive affirmations. You are good at what you do. You have more to contribute.

Assess your technical skills: are they current and in demand for today's market? The want ads are an excellent source for this information. If you need skill or education upgrading, investigate nontraditional bachelor or associate degree programs. Utilize the technical colleges for specific skill training.

Further research on what employers want can be obtained by the Workforce Development Centers. Your tax dollars are paying for these services, use them.

Do you have what the market wants? If so, how do you package it? Composing an effective resume is another form of self-assessment. Putting together your strengths, accomplishments or capabilities is critical. Career changers need to focus on transferable skills. Make sure your resume is easy to read and accurately portrays your abilities. Most employers prefer a chronological format, so avoid a functional format.

Before you finalize a resume however, you should research potential employers. Two key areas to concentrate on are what skills they're looking for and what their corporate culture is. Want ads will provide skills and background required or preferred. Look for such words as: required, needed, must have vs. preferred, desired, a plus. This will indicate how much latitude you may have in fitting that job.

Corporate culture, or what a company is really like, takes more detective work. You need to talk with people who work or have worked there to get the best information.

Two good publications that can help you with your search are The New Rules of The Job Search Game (Larson / Comstock, 1994) and Knock'em Dead (Yate 2000). They provide excellent methods and examples of researching companies, composing resumes and cover letters, and approaching people to obtain interviews or informational meetings.

Effective networking is still the best way to find a good job with a good company. You must become skilled at developing "coaches" or key contacts within companies you have targeted.

If you are concerned about your first impression based on your physical appearance, develop an effective telephone campaign to achieve face-to-face meetings. You must possess good vocal quality and language skills (tone, rate of speech, energy level, vocabulary, and diction). This will establish the first impression. When you meet face to face the perception will be influenced by previous telephone contacts.

Key contacts within various organizations can be found by reading several local publications. The “must reads” on all job seekers lists are the Business & Technology sections of the local newspaper, *The Business Journals*, and *The Small Business Times*. These publications contain a treasure chest of names, titles and organizations they represent. The job seeker can discover smaller lesser known companies’ successes, problems or issues that are discussed, and potential contacts that have been quoted.

Contacts can also be obtained by becoming involved in networking groups. The most well known groups are The Job Forum and 40+. The Job Forum is a very diverse group of job seekers and career changers. 40+ are specifically for people over the age of 40 years.

Link up with people who are looking for positions at the same level or areas that you are investigating, but not the same *job* that you are seeking. People rarely provide leads to their competition. The people in these groups are very loyal to one another and continue to network even after employment.

Try to network with people who are upbeat and productive. Any negativity can drain your energy and be self-defeating. Yes, you can vent and have short "pity parties ", but keep moving on.

When connecting with people for networking make your purpose clear, that you are looking for information or assistance. Be willing to help other people out, it’s a two way street. Use the word “meeting” rather than interview when requesting a face to face. After all, you're still researching and not ready to interview.

The four main methods of obtaining jobs have been covered are responding to want ads, listings at Workforce Development Centers (Job Service), using recruiters/temp. agencies, and networking. Networking is still the most effective, but use all four to cover your bases.

When using recruiters or temp agencies, be realistic; you are there so they can fill an order, not find you a job. It can be a numbers game and a matter of timing.

When responding to ads or listings consider these key areas:

- Read the ad carefully; how strong of a match are you?
- Avoid blind ads especially if you're still employed; you have no control or way to follow through.
- You may want to enclose an Executive Briefing (Yate) with your resume instead of a cover letter.
- Salary requirements; use current or last salary range not exact amount (mid 30's; upper 40's etc.).

Now that you've done everything right, you're getting the interviews. If you've been networking, you have actually been practicing your interviewing skills. There are several critical areas:

- Physical appearance: very few people are "good looking," but most of us can "look good." Dress appropriately for the interview; ask about dress code when arranging the meeting especially if it's on a Friday. Business casual can have a broad meaning. Be comfortable in what you are wearing or it will distract your concentration.
- Research the company ahead of time. Learn about products and services, history of organization, review articles that have included them recently, and who their customers or competitors might be.
- Practice and rehearse. Practice talking about your background so well that you can talk about your accomplishments and capabilities in natural conversation.
- Ask questions: make sure that you obtain enough information to determine that this is the right job and company for you.
- Talk to people who already work there, they can tell you exactly what it's like to work there. Talking with two or more employees will give you the best information of a company's true corporate culture.

Finally, all you can do is your best. The job market today is to your benefit for full time or part time employment. If you have current and desired skills and you present yourself well to the hiring manager, the chances of obtaining a good job are strong. When an organization has a problem with you having too much experience, don't be discouraged. Keep up the search. You will eventually find a hiring manager who will value that experience and bring you in to do what needs to be done.

THE OTHER SIDE OF NETWORKING: How to Benefit by Providing Information

Contribution by:

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The word “networking” is much espoused these days, but few people really know the depths of the concept. When approached with a question or request for a referral or help, your willingness to assist others is often a gauge of your character or knowledge.

Sometimes it is a part of your job responsibilities. Other times, it just makes good business sense. Remember the adage, “What goes around, comes around.” Often you’ll get the help back some day.

If you are a giving person and are seen as such, others will approach you for ideas, assistance or feedback on situations. Most people do not mind helping other people; however, when the circumstances are reversed they want to know others will be there for them.

It is wise to provide leads to people, no matter how far fetched the lead may seem to be. It may turn out to be the right match. Let’s review the true spirit of networking.

Basic Rules of Networking

Be there and be accessible. Are you there when your friends and colleagues really need you, or do you turn people away? Assisting others will profit you personally and professionally. People will remember your generosity and willingness to help. They may even present you with an opportunity you would not have gotten otherwise as a way of thanking you.

Be willing to listen and help. When you call or meet with a person whom you’ve asked for help, it’s always frustrating to hear “I don’t know anyone or know anything about....” This is especially true if you’ve done your homework and know that this is a person who can

help you, but for some reason they refuse. This appears to be an excuse for not wanting to be helpful or not wanting to be bothered.

In today's world of work, we all have tremendous demands put upon us so taking the time to assist others may seem overwhelming. Be careful how you refuse people. You may be perceived as apathetic, incompetent, or professionally isolated and don't know what's current in your field, company or industry. This could come back to haunt you in the future.

Make the effort. Go as far as you can to help or refer them to someone who is better able to provide them with the needed information or resources. Developing a reputation of willingness and accessibility will attract people to you. If you are in a sales-oriented profession, you couldn't ask for anything better.

Refining Your Network System

Now it's time to get more sophisticated in your networking. It's not just enough to give help, but ask for follow up to find out if the information you provided was truly valuable to them. Ask for status updates until the person has achieved their goal. It's a bothersome function, but you will thank yourself later.

If you do not follow through, you may not be aware that that individual may eventually be in a position to help *you* out. You don't have to hound them or imply that they owe you one, but opportunities can be lost if you drop the ball. Ask yourself, "Which kinds of networking acts will I track?" and "What's the best system for me to keep these records?" Many people swear by new technology and go "computerized." Others still prefer the business card route. The important thing is to develop a system that you will use and is expandable.

Getting started will be the hardest thing to do, so give yourself a deadline and stick with it. Remember if you don't track the times you've been helpful to others, you won't have anywhere to start when you're looking for major help. There's nothing wrong with "calling in your chips" when you need to.

Be Thankful

Let's say you've been looking for a new or better job. You've done a considerable amount of networking plus talking to friends and strangers who have been helpful with leads. You've finally landed that great job and you want them all to know!

If your new employer isn't sending a notice and hasn't asked you for a list of people to send postcards to, do it yourself. Send everyone who helped you your new business card so your networking can continue. It's the counterpart to the thank you note. Postcards look professional and it's worth the investment. Your network cannot grow if people lose track of you or you end up wondering "Whatever happened to...?"

Also, remember to always be polite and professional to others even when you're busy. If the timing is bad, arrange or suggest an alternative time instead of just turning them away.

Networking is a two way street, giving and receiving. They are equally important. Align yourself with people who understand and practice reciprocity. Everyone will benefit and help each other succeed.

LIFE-LONG LEARNING

You have just spent a good amount of time reading this book and completing the activities. You're sitting back in your chair and saying to yourself, "There, I'm done. I've got everything I need." Wrong!! In reality you'll never be finished with this process. The only way to succeed (and remember, you want to succeed not just survive) is to continually improve yourself.

Does this mean that you have to go back to school and get an additional degree? Not necessarily, but in some cases, yes. There are other ways to continually upgrade your education or skills. Remember these key points from the book.

- Keep your technical skills current. This isn't just for IT or Engineering professionals. Technology encompasses all professions in all fields.
- Obtain certifications in your field where applicable.
- Consider on-line or distance learning (Active Education) as an option. These programs are often offered by colleges through their Continuing Education or Outreach departments in your area. It's not for everyone and is based on subject, plus your learning style. It does save time and can benefit the busy working professional.
- Attend seminars or conferences that provide Continuing Education Units (CEU). Most employers require these and it definitely will advance your career.
- Keep all documents and certificates in your portfolio for safe keeping and easy retrieval.
- Remember the other skill areas (leadership, communication, customer service, quality).
- Keeping these skills current will demonstrate your transferable skills to employers. Again, look at programs such as team leadership, customer service, listening skills, and coaching.
- Expand yourself, accept challenges and stretch your abilities to ensure that added value component.
- Increase your promotability and job satisfaction by completing courses or programs that provide skills for multiple applications.

- Practice the mindset of continuous learning. Studies have shown that keeping the brain active improves memory and function as we age.
- Actively participate in professional associations or groups that are related to your field or interests.
- Volunteer to be on a committee or even a board position.
- Use your Alma Mater as a resource. Most colleges or universities have active Alumni associations for networking or career advancement opportunities. You could also be eligible for discounts on programs or courses.
- Keep those personal business cards handy to connect and network with others attending the classes. You never know who you'll sit next to in a class!
- The key element of employment stability is how proactive you are in managing your career. Again, make sure that technology is used to enhance your job, not replace your job. Achieve and maintain balance in your life, get excited and learn something new on a regular basis.

"Life-Long Learning = Life-Long Earning"

(Jack Colocousis, Career Services Director/PSC Training Consultant,
Bryant & Stratton College/Amherst Campus)