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Introduction

For the majority of job seekers these days, the search for employment begins online, and according to a report from the Pew Research Centre, 79% of job seekers used online resources in their most recent job search. Only 4% of job seekers said ads in print publications had been an important resource, and just 5% said employment agencies, job fairs and conferences had played an important role.

But while there’s no doubt that the wide range of job boards, career sites and professional networks available online can be hugely useful, in some ways it has also made the job search more confusing.

While our parents and grandparents may have simply perused the local newspapers for job openings and called up employers directly, the job search now involves everything from creating a personal brand to using the right resume keywords.

So if you’re looking for a job and are feeling a bit daunted by all the information and resources out there, this guide will help you focus your job search, find the right jobs to apply for and understand how recruiters can help.
Starting your job search

Although using social media in your job search and creating a strong online presence is important, the chances of being contacted by employers out of the blue are still slim, so your biggest challenge early on will be finding the right jobs to apply for.

To avoid wasting time, it’s important to focus your efforts early on. Christine Kotsapas, HR professional and People and Culture Manager at Open Colleges, suggests thinking about the type of companies you’re interested in working for and creating a list of things that are important to you.

“Consider what is important for you in your next position. The company culture, your career progression and flexibility are just a few aspects that might be important to you,” she says.

Once you know exactly what you’re looking for, you’ll be able to focus your search and target a specific type of job, employers and work environment, rather than applying for every opening you come across.

If you already have specific companies in mind, Glassdoor can be a great place to start your search. It allows you to check a company’s employee satisfaction score, read reviews, find out how other employees landed their interviews and work out what sort of salary or benefits you can expect.

Kotsapas says some other important first steps to take are:

- Follow companies you’re interested in working for on LinkedIn to keep abreast of hiring trends
- Set up job alerts through job boards; this way you don’t need to search through job boards
- Network through social media and connect with individuals within targeted organisations

She also recommends already having your resume and cover letter prepared before you begin applying for jobs, so that if you do see something you’re interested in you can apply straight away.

“But remember that it’s important to tailor your cover letter to the job advertisement,” she adds. “The job market can sometimes be competitive and having a strong cover letter will help you stand out from the crowd.”
5 ways to find a job online

Once you’ve narrowed down your options based on your skills and experience as well as your interests and career goals, it’s time to begin your job search. Here are some of the most effective ways to find a job online.

1. Use job search engines and aggregators

Job search engines and aggregators like Indeed, Adzuna and SimplyHired take job postings from all over the web and make them available in one place, which can save you a lot of time in the long run.

You’ll also be able to narrow down your search by specifying your skills, location and salary requirements or adding specific keywords.

If you’re looking for a very specific type of job, there may also be niche job boards that would be worth checking out. For instance, artists and photographers might use ArtsHub, while those in the care sector would find CareCareers useful, and Idealist would be great if you were looking for volunteer opportunities or internships abroad.

2. Use Google Search

Even with all the job sites out there, Google is often still the first place job seekers look. But while it can be a useful tool, you should know a few basic tricks in order to get the results you’re looking for.

- Enclose your search terms inside double quotation marks
  
  This helps you get more specific results. So if you’re looking for administration jobs in Sydney you could type “Administration jobs in Sydney” to ensure that Google will only bring up results for that exact phrase rather than all pages that happen to contain those words.

- Use different search terms
  
  Different variations of your search terms may bring up different results, so in addition to searching for “Administration jobs in Sydney” you could also try things like “Sydney Admin jobs” or “Admin assistant jobs” or you could add acronyms and abbreviations related to your industry.
• Search more efficiently
  If you want to make your search a little more efficient you can also search for two things at the same time. For instance, if you want to look for jobs in both Sydney and Melbourne, you could type “Administration jobs” (Sydney OR Melbourne).

• Exclude unwanted results
  You can make sure certain things don’t end up in your search results by adding a - symbol. For instance, if you want to work in admin but receptionist duties aren’t what you had in mind, you can type “Administration jobs in Sydney” - receptionist.

3. Check individual company websites
If you've done your research well, you should already have a pretty good idea of who the major players in your industry are, so in addition to using Google and job aggregators, you can check individual company websites to see if they have a careers section.

Some companies may even have employee referral programs, and since research shows that 48% of jobs are advertised through employee referrals rather than job boards, this can be a good way to get your foot through the door.

In fact, according to one study, employee referrals account for 44% of hires, so if anyone in your network works for the company you’re interested in applying to, you can increase your chances of landing an interview by asking him or her to forward your resume to the right person.

4. Create job alerts
Since you won’t have time to sort through hundreds of job postings every day, job alerts can be a lifesaver. Once you’ve set up an alert, which would ideally specify everything from your location to your desired salary, you’ll get an email whenever there’s a job opening that matches your requirements.

Most job sites provide email alerts, but since it can be a bit overwhelming to receive multiple emails per day from numerous different job boards and sites, it’s often better to use just a handful of your favourite career sites or job aggregators.

Google alerts is a great tool for this and you can find out more about how to create Google alerts here, but other job sites that offer email alerts include LinkedIn, Indeed and Adzuna.

5. Register with recruiters
Working with recruiters is another great way to widen your job search. Some recruiters work directly for companies while others work for third-party recruiting agencies, but all of them are better connected than you are and can help you get your resume in front of hiring managers.

As a job seeker you don’t pay to use a recruitment agency, so once you’ve submitted your resume and attended an interview to discuss your qualifications and experience, the recruiter will begin working to match your skills to relevant job openings.
What not to do when looking for a job online

Now that we’ve covered the online job search ‘dos’ here are a few things you should avoid doing when looking for or applying for jobs online.

**Don’t spam your resume**

It can be tempting to start sending your resume to every company you come across, but this isn’t a good use of your time and can actually end up making you look bad.

“Don’t apply for thousands of jobs, or you won’t remember what you’ve applied for,” advises Kotsapas. “It’s far better to apply for a few jobs at a time so you can keep track of your applications and ensure that your cover letters capture your genuine experience and skills.”

She adds that sending out countless applications at once can also lead to sloppy mistakes like addressing the wrong person or introducing spelling errors. “A resume or cover letter with typos never looks good and doesn’t demonstrate that you have taken time and care with your application.”

**Don’t apply for multiple jobs with the same company**

While you might think that applying for numerous job openings with the same company will increase your chances of securing a position, what you’re actually doing is sending employers and hiring managers the message that you’re unfocused.

Employers want to see why you’d be a good fit for the specific position you’re applying for, so if they see that you’ve applied for three or four different types of jobs, it may call your suitability into question.

**Don’t ask complete strangers to refer you**

Although being referred is a great way to get your foot through the door and secure an interview with your target company, you do need to actually know the person you want a referral from.

It’s one thing to connect with people on social media and strike up meaningful conversations based on common interests or shared connections, but it’s another thing entirely to send your resume to complete strangers on LinkedIn and ask them to refer you for a position with their company.

Real connections take weeks, months and sometimes even years to build up, so you can’t expect to add someone on Facebook today and get referred tomorrow.
Using recruitment agencies

Recruiters tend to be well connected and often hear about job openings that aren’t advertised online, so registering with a recruitment agency can set you up for opportunities you’d otherwise miss out on.

Of course, recruiters work for employers, not for you, but Bryan Chaney, global talent sourcing and attraction strategist and Director of Employer Brand at Indeed, says the fact that recruiters are focused on the needs of the employers they represent is not necessarily a bad thing for job seekers.

“Theyir drive to meet the client’s needs can be an asset in terms of them first ensuring you are a good candidate for the company, as well as helping you put your best foot forward for the hiring manager,” says Chaney.

He points out that most of the time, recruiters also want to make sure that you’re happy with the results of your career move, because happy and engaged workers are productive and typically stay longer.

“Problems arise mostly when recruiters don’t know the space you work in well, and don’t have a good handle on how your skills and experience do or don’t match up to the job on offer,” he explains.

To avoid this, he suggests first speaking with the recruiter about your background and how exactly you’d like to put it to use in your next job. “In this instance, make sure you share details about how you can add value that is not on your resume or profile.”

Chaney also says it’s important for job seekers to understand that a recruiter’s job is not to find jobs for people, but to find people for jobs.

“Recruiters are often specialists who understand an area of business and are looking to find a solution for a specific hiring need. If your experience and expertise overlap with the roles they are trying to fill, they will understand better how to help and communicate with you,” he explains.

If you have decided to work with one or more recruiters during your job search, he says the following points are important to keep in mind.

1. **Being contacted by a recruiter is no guarantee that you’ll get the job**

“Don’t assume that because a recruiter has contacted you that you’ll be offered the job they are recommending. Very often recruiters must cast a wide net to find candidates, and are seeking information beyond what you’ve listed in a resume or profile,” says Chaney.

“Working with a recruiter is an opportunity to get direct feedback on your resume, CV or social profile to help you strengthen yourself as a candidate.”
2. Recruiters can provide valuable insights
Chaney says recruiters can be valuable to bounce questions off of that you wouldn’t necessarily ask during the interview process, or at least not before you are close to an offer.
“This can range from discussion of salary to work life balance, a company’s culture, and other areas that may be important for you in your next job.”

3. Be specific about what you’re looking for
In order to get the best results, you should try to be specific about what you’re looking for when you approach recruiters.
Chaney advises asking them for help on specific things, such as an introduction to the hiring manager or recruiter on a particular job, or more information about the requirements for the role. This gives them a clear way to be helpful and solve one problem at a time.

4. Get as many details as possible
“Ask your recruiter to paint a picture of the entire recruiting process for the hiring team,” says Chaney.
“This will help set your expectations for how fast they hire, how they interview, and also give you the opportunity to respectfully follow up on your status in a realistic timeframe.”

So with all the job boards, search engines, and recruiting websites available online, there’s certainly no shortage of places to begin your job search. The trick is to first understand exactly what you’re looking for and why, and then narrow down your search to jobs that match these specific requirements.

When you do come across jobs you’d like to apply for, remember that it’s important to tailor your resume and cover letter to each application. If you’re wondering how to do this, check out our Resume Guide for in-depth tips and advice on how to write a strong resume and cover letter, include the right keywords and use social media to your advantage.