Embarking on a job search campaign can be a daunting experience. It doesn’t matter if it is for your first job or the last. The twitches in your stomach are usually the same. It is easy to put off getting down to the business of finding a job especially when other life situations pop up and give you an excuse to procrastinate. Some of the reasons for those twitches and nervousness in your stomach are probably due to the uncertainty of the future or the process. Plus, it is hard work trying to find a job that makes you happy. Wouldn’t it be wonderful if the job just landed in your lap? Of course, the risk of that scenario would be to grab the job and run toward it. Usually these types of “lucky” situations in the end just make you wish you had run the other way! Avoid waking up one year, five years or twenty years from now and asking yourself, “How did this happen?”

To find a rewarding, satisfying, work experience usually takes hard effort and commitment. Top consultants in the field of career planning will tell you that looking for a job should require a 40 hour a week commitment. Of course, 40 hours a week is equivalent to a full-time job! Wouldn’t it be better in the long run to know that you had followed the right process in securing your “dream job”? The top career planning consultants will also tell you that there is a process to follow if you really want to get the job that you desire. So, what do you need to do?

1. **Ask yourself some tough questions.**

What are you interested in doing? What skills do you have? What is most important to you in a work setting? What do you not want to do? What kind of an environment would you like that will best fit your personality type? Will the job fit with your lifestyle goals? What do you want to accomplish with your life? In essence, what do you want to do that will make you feel happy at the end of each day? If you need help in answering these questions, make an appointment with a counselor. In addition, go to the Career/Transfer Center and explore the many resources to help you better understand your needs and options.

2. **Set goals and work the plan.**

Most of us know how difficult it is to buckle down and get the job that we really want. An effective way to keep on course is to establish your goals for the job search process. Provide a timeline for each goal. It is much easier to stay on track when you have a plan. But remember, it is only good if you activate the plan and put it into action.

3. **Explore job opportunities.**

Knowing how to locate available job opportunities may be part of your secret to success. Think about this for a moment. If you concentrate on only advertised
job openings, where do you think your greatest amount of competition will be? This is what most job seekers will do. Consequently, this can be one of the major strikes in your game plan. To reduce your competition, try to locate jobs in the “hidden job market” or those that are not advertised. This involves researching the job market and specifically targeting those employers for whom you would be best qualified and for whom you would most like to work. Resources in the Career/Transfer Center can help you find out how to discover the hidden opportunities as well as those that are advertised.

4. **Research employers.**

No matter where you look for employment, it is vital to research all potential employers. What is their mission? What are their products and services? What is the size of the organization? Do they have branch facilities in areas that interest you? Do growth opportunities exist? Resources in the Career/Transfer Center and the college library can provide valuable company information. Remember, how will you determine if an employer will be a good fit for you unless you know something about the company? It is important to examine an employer just like an employer will screen you.

5. **Study specific occupations.**

To learn how an occupation may or may not fit into a career path, the Career/Transfer Center offers many printed and electronic resources to help you explore specific occupations and careers. Find out what workers will do on the job. In what industry are the jobs typically located? What are their working conditions? How much money do they make including benefits? What type of training or education must an employee have to obtain the job? What are the job prospects for the future with that particular career? Are employees required to purchase their own uniforms, tools or equipment? It is also important to know about the working environment to understand if it is a compatible one for you.

Learn how to navigate the career discussion boards hosted by many job related websites. There are also many helpful resources on the Internet available for job seekers. The Career/Transfer Center can provide you with web addresses for reputable sites.

6. **Get the training.**

Once you have explored a wide range of occupations in a variety of fields, you will have discovered that some jobs require specific training or education. Don’t let this hold you back from doing what you want to do with your life. Training and educational opportunities are available in many scheduling formats and locations from a host of institutions. The Career/Transfer Center offers a wealth of information for resources on educational and training options including traditional, short-term, and accelerated programs. See a counselor for ideas on how to get started and for sources to fund your education, if necessary. In the long run, you will be glad you made the commitment and investment in your future.
7. **Get organized.**

Since you will spend many hours a week conducting your job search, it is imperative that you find a way to organize yourself and your contacts. Create a filing system where you can quickly retrieve information by your phone or computer in the event you are contacted and readily need the information. Getting organized also includes recording a conservative, business-like message, on your voice mail. First impressions are lasting so you will want the phone message that is heard by potential employers to make a positive impression. You only have one chance for a first impression. Your filing system may include sections on new contacts, employers for follow-up, job announcements, employers to research, references, etc. Regardless of the system you choose, just make sure you have all of your information at your fingertips to use when you least expect it.

8. **Sharpen your technology skills.**

Technology has impacted most occupations in one way or another. This includes how you identify and apply for employment. If you do not possess some basic technology skills you will certainly be beat by your competition. Each job has its own technology standards. That is why it is so important to know about the occupation before you apply. Remember time means money so you will want to invest your time wisely. Enroll in a short-term community education course or a business or computer class at the college to sharpen your computer skills. The college catalog provides course descriptions. It is wise to see a counselor for recommendations on course work that will benefit you the most.

9. **Prepare your employment materials.**

Obtain a notebook where you can list the pertinent details of your past work and educational history for quick reference. This will also help to keep you organized during the job search.

If an electronic employment application is expected, staff in the Career/Transfer Center can help you learn and apply the differences between preparation and submission of electronic applications and resumes versus printed copies that are mailed or delivered. Both printed and electronic sources of information are available in the Career/Transfer Center to help you learn about and adapt to the new trends.

Many employers require resumes in addition to completion of an employment application. Supplemental materials such as a philosophy statement or writing answers to specific questions may be expected. For some positions, portfolios of past work may be required. Copies of training certificates, college certificates and degrees, and official transcripts may be necessary. A visual demonstration of past work projects maintained in an eye-appealing notebook is often a bonus that can be shared during an interview. Review the expectations for your particular field and gather all application materials in advance.
10. **Write an effective resume that will get results.**

Ideally, one resume should be written for each job opportunity. Effective resumes focus on how you can meet the specific needs of the job and the employer. Refer to the Career/Transfer Center’s materials and support resources for information on how to write an effective resume. There are resume writing rules that when followed can make you successful. If you want help or to have your resume critiqued, this service is also available in the Career/Transfer Center. Be prepared!

11. **Spiff up your personal appearance.**

It goes without saying that a well-groomed personal appearance can make a difference between your getting and not getting the job. Look in the mirror and ask your true friends for help on how you can impress potential employers. A conservative approach is always best during the job search. Learn about the acceptable dress and appearance standards for your particular field. Make the changes as best you can. Remember there is only one chance to make a first, positive and lasting impression.

12. **Maintain a positive perspective.**

Actively pursuing a job search campaign can not only be exciting but depressing. Inevitably, the repeated rejections of hearing “No, thanks” can get you feeling pretty low. So, how do you handle the negative responses and still keep yourself motivated to move forward? It is important to establish a regular pattern of positive thinking so this is conveyed with each new employer contact. Also, choose your friends wisely and ask those you trust to encourage you along the way. There are many self-help books and electronic resources in the Career/Transfer Center and college library that can bolster your self-esteem. Learn how to acquire and maintain the “can do” attitude. Take advantage of these resources as you will certainly need the support. In addition, talk to a counselor for help with new approaches for your job search. Most importantly, focus on your goals, keep a positive attitude, and make it happen!