



JOB SEARCH HANDBOOK

ADVICE AND STRATEGIES FOR FINDING YOUR FIT

**CAREER
CENTER**



NEBRASKA
WESLEYAN
UNIVERSITY

Introduction

Securing a satisfying position, whether that be a full-time job or an internship, depends largely on the effort you put forth and the active approaches you implement. It is important to realize that searching for an internship or full-time position takes time and may require you to utilize several strategies. Strategies often include researching employers, researching opportunities, and, often most essential, networking.

Out of all the resources you'll utilize during your job search, people are undoubtedly the most important. Connect with those who have the potential to help you most. Identify and speak to industry professionals, advisors, professors, and career coaches in the Career Center who will not only provide advice and support for the journey, but will also help you identify resources and connections for your specific path. Ultimately it will be a person who decides to hire you, and that person will probably rely on the feedback and recommendations of others. As you begin the process of searching for a fulfilling job or internship, reflect on who your network is and where you may need to look to increase the size and quality of your network. More tips on this later.

Step 1: Self-Assess *Who are you and what do you want?*

Though job satisfaction is steadily improving, according to recent reports, over half of American workers report feeling unsatisfied in their current jobs. The key to job satisfaction is truly understanding who you are as an individual and allowing your interests, skills, and values to guide your career decision-making.

Taking time to identify and evaluate qualities about yourself is no easy task. It requires intentional reflection on who you are, your natural tendencies, and reactions to former experiences. While often over-looked, taking stock of who you are and what matters most to you will pay off in the long-run. Treat the following questions like an assignment. On a separate sheet of paper, write out responses to the questions below to begin your reflection.

VALUES

1. What did I like most/least about experiences (part-time jobs, volunteer opportunities, student organizations) I've had?
2. What makes my life and work meaningful and purposeful?
3. Where have I found inspiration in the past?
4. Whose work do I admire? Why?
5. What do I need from a job?

INTERESTS

6. In which classes do I engage the most?
7. Which classes am I most interested in?
8. What are the common themes in the clubs/organizations I participate in?
9. When browsing online, talking with my friends, or selecting books to read for fun, which topics catch my attention?
10. Which types of news stories cause me to ask more questions based on my intellectual curiosity?

SKILLS

11. In which courses do I have a natural knack for understanding the material?
12. In what areas have I found success?
13. What do my friends/family members say I do well?

PERSONALITY

14. How much interaction with others do I need in my work? Am I energized by being around a lot of people, or do I prefer working in small groups, or working alone?
15. Do I prefer imagining possibilities and being inventive, or do I enjoy handling practical matters, details, and work that is measurable?
16. Do I tend to make decisions by first focusing on logical analysis and critique or do I tend to focus on values and feelings first?
17. Do I tend to follow a planned/organized structure in my daily life, or take a more spontaneous/flexible approach?

You might be asking yourself, “What do these questions have to do with my job search?” Realize that your responses will be much different than your peers. When employers hire, they are looking for the right individual who can solve a unique problem their organization is experiencing or make a unique contribution. Understanding your natural tendencies, interests, skills, and values will help guide you to satisfying work.

Below you’ll find a list of values, interests, and skills. As you read through these lists, consider which are consistent with who you are, and circle your top 5 in each category. Write them on the lines below.

VALUES

- | | | | |
|-----------------------|----------------------------|------------------------|--------------------|
| Advancement | Environmental conservation | Learning and education | Prestige |
| Adventure/risk taking | Family | Making a difference | Service to others |
| Autonomy | Helping others | Moral fulfillment | Social interaction |
| Community | Honesty and integrity | Power/money | Travel |
| Creative expression | Influencing others | Partnering with others | Variety of tasks |
| Diversity | Leadership | Work/home balance | Working alone |

INTERESTS

- | | | | |
|----------------------------|-----------------------------|-------------------------|---------------------|
| Advising others | Environmental | Media participation | Role playing |
| Business-related endeavors | Conservation/sustainability | Musical performances | Science |
| Community service | Event management | Organizing and planning | Sports |
| Creative production | Fashion/magazines | Political participation | Teaching |
| Cultural experiences | Healthy living | Programming | Writing and editing |
| Developing relationships | Law and legal practices | Project management | |
| Entrepreneurship | Literature | Research | |

SKILLS

- | | | | |
|-----------------------------------|--------------------------|------------------------------|--------------------------------|
| Analytical & Technical | Communication | Managerial/Leadership | Planning/Administrative |
| Analyzing | Advising | Adapting to change | Coordinating events |
| Assembling | Coaching | Comfort with ambiguity | Expediting |
| Interpreting data | Editing | Dealing with pressure | Implementing |
| Managing finances | Explaining concepts | Delegating | Improvising |
| Mechanical abilities | Facilitating discussions | Directing | Planning and organizing |
| Programming | Languages/translating | Influencing | |
| Quantitative | Listening | Making decisions | Creative/Design |
| Reasoning | Mediating | Mentoring | Conceptualizing |
| Repairing | Negotiating | Motivating others | Designing |
| Researching | Persuasive speaking | Problem solving | Drawing/Sketching |
| Synthesizing | Public speaking | Strategizing | Performing |
| | Teaching/training | Team building | Photography |
| | Writing | | Visualizing |

Values

Interests

Skills

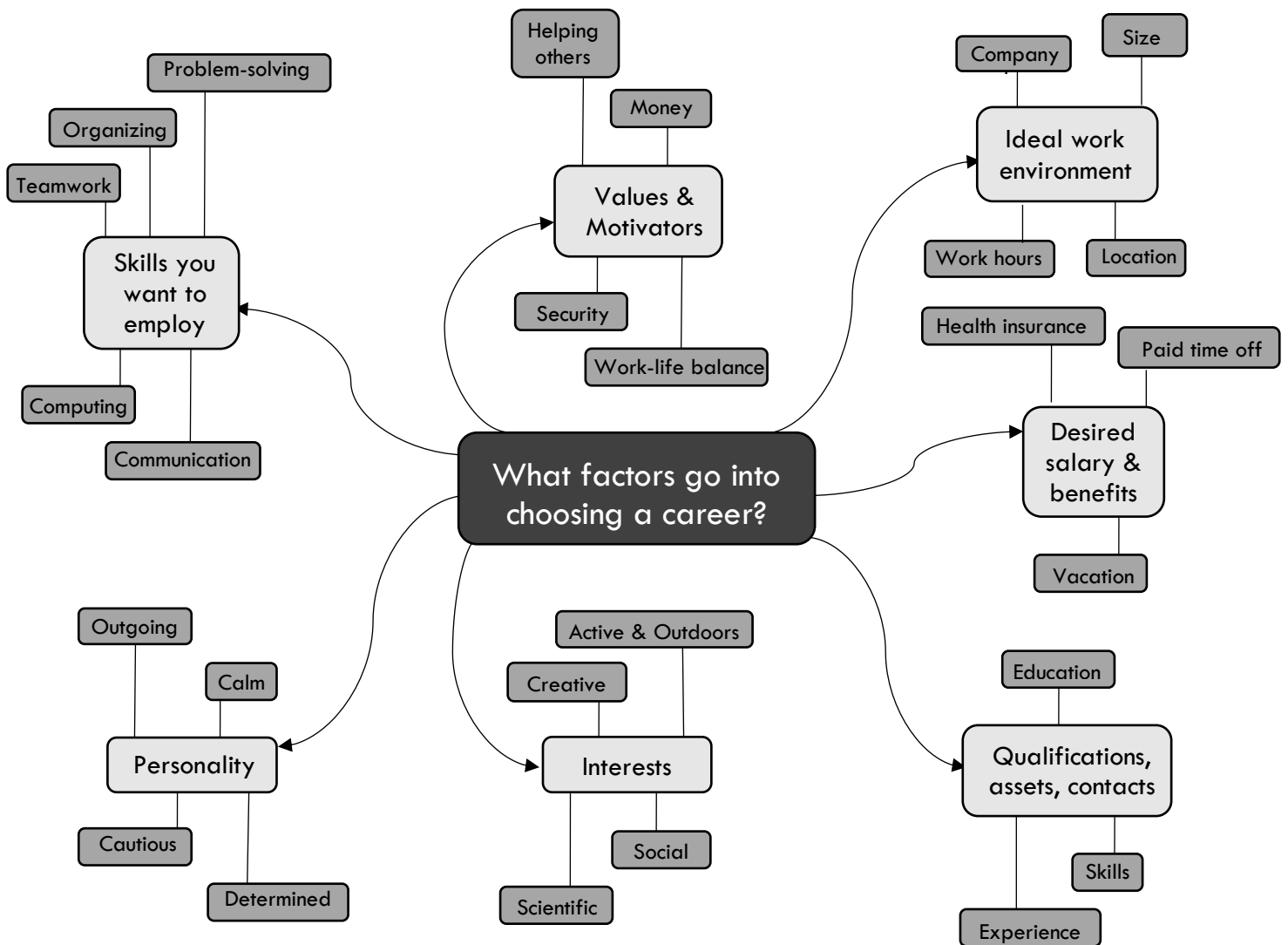
_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____

Reflect upon how this information informs your career search. Based on what you know about different industries, does this elevate some possible career fields over others? Realize that self-assessment is an ongoing process. As you learn more about yourself through experiences, including educational, extracurricular, personal and work, you may discover new interests and skills, and your values may also change at different stages of your life. This is normal; this process is fluid and flexible. As you move from exploring potential industries to considering an actual job offer, there are many other factors to consider such as your geographic location, ideal work culture, desired salary, and opportunities for advancement. More on this later.

Career Assessments

NWU's Career Center offers a number of career assessments that can help you gain further insight into your interests, strengths, and personality. These can be powerful and useful tools when used in conjunction with other self-assessment exercises and career exploration activities, but there are limitations. They cannot and do not define you, nor do they tell you what you should do. They may suggest areas for further exploration and give you a place to begin further research and evaluation. Assessments can be a valuable resource, but they can also be misleading if you are not ready to accurately and honestly assess yourself.

Meet with an NWU career coach to discuss where you're at in the self-assessment and career exploration process and whether or not a career assessment could be a next logical step.



Step 2: Research *What opportunities and employers are out there?*

After understanding who you are and what you're looking for in a position, you can begin researching your options. This process often involves utilizing many different strategies. Too often job seekers jump on online job boards and only search positions which posted online. While this can be a helpful strategy, realize it is also important to consider what employers are out there, and what employers hire people with your skills, interests, and values.

Researching Employers

Make a list of potential employers. Look at websites such as glassdoor.com, buzzfile.com, and linkedin.com to find companies in your desired industry/field. Career Center staff, NWU alumni, professors, friends, and family may help brainstorm organizations. Seek out relevant professional associations in the field, and also consider looking into the Chamber of Commerce in your desired location. Once you find a company of interest, explore their website, social media pages, and learn about positions they are hiring for.

Keep track of all the research you are doing. Use the table below as a guide, customizing as necessary.

	Organization Name	Industry	Why I'm interested	Type of position desired	Contact: Name and title	Email address	Most recent contact date	Status (ex: awaiting response, setting up informational interview...)	Next date of follow-up	Notes/next steps
1										
2										
3										
4										
5										

Adam Greenfield

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December 21, 20XX

Ms. Lisa Johnson
Human Resource Director
Arbor Day Foundation
211 N 12th St # 501
Lincoln, NE 68508

Dear Ms. Johnson:

Hands caked with mud, I grinned from ear to ear staring at the new trees I helped my dad plant for our shelterbelt. With the same attitude today, I have a strong desire to help families and communities understand the positive impact they can make on our environment. Like the value of adding trees to a home, I would like to bring my passion and skills to Arbor Day Foundation in an entry-level opportunity.

Further pursuing conservation work, my experiences with the Nebraska Wesleyan Beekeeping Club and active involvement in the Greenhouse Project have shaped my passion for spreading environmental awareness. Using my marketing skills from my communication studies major, I promoted the byproducts of the bees' honey and beeswax to students, staff, and faculty for purchase. To increase awareness of environmental changes, the Greenhouse Project gave out succulents to the Nebraska Wesleyan community on Earth Day. Based on these experiences, I can speak and distribute information to Arbor Day Foundations' constituents.

With child-like enthusiasm, I am excited about supporting the mission of Arbor Day Foundation upon graduation in May 20XX. I have included my resume for your review and plan to reach out to you next week about arranging a mutually agreeable time to discuss my qualifications. I can best be reached by the contact information above. Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,

Adam Greenfield

Even if you don't see open positions within a company of interest, consider writing a letter of inquiry. A type of cover letter, a letter of inquiry relays your desire to work for an organization even if there is no specific position, which you are applying.

Not all organizations advertise their jobs, and taking the initiative to ask about potential opportunities shows the kind of drive they're likely looking for in employees. Using this method helps you tap into the "hidden" job market. More on this on page 7.

Consider this example of a "Letter of Inquiry". Notice the applicant is not applying to a specific position; rather, they are demonstrating their fit and interest in the employer. This document is often emailed to an employer along with the applicant's resume.

Job Search Safety Tips

While you're working hard to make sure you land that perfect job, be aware that the perfect job may not be so perfect. Scam artists post fraudulent jobs that are sometimes difficult to spot at first, but if it sounds too good to be true, it probably is. Although the staff in the Career Center review job and internship postings on Handshake, you must also watch for signs that a posting may be fraudulent. These may include:

- Anyone asking for money in advance of your being hired, or offering to send you a check before being hired
- Being hired before ever meeting face-to-face with the employer
- Email communications from a non-company email account (e.g., Yahoo, Gmail)
- Employers asking for Social Security or bank information
- Be leery of job postings that include several spelling and/or grammatical errors
- A high salary for a position that requires few skills
- Anonymity. If it is difficult to find an address, actual contact, company name, etc., this is cause to proceed with caution. Fraud postings are illegal, so scammers will try to keep themselves well-hidden.
- The posting neglects to mention what the responsibilities of the job actually are. Instead, the description focuses on the amount of money to be made.

The Federal Trade Commission (FTC) recommends that victims of a scam immediately contact the local police. The police are responsible for conducting an investigation regardless of whether the scam is local or in another state. Please contact the Career Center, too. Although we make every effort to review postings before they go live to our campus, we want to be informed of illegal activity related to postings so there will not be other victims. If you have sent money to a fraudulent employer, contact your bank or credit card company immediately to close the account and dispute the charges. If the transaction occurred completely over the internet, you should file an incident report with <http://www.cybercrime.gov/>, or by calling the FTC at 1-877-FTC-HELP (1-877-382-4357).

Hiring and Recruiting Cycles

To plan your job search effectively, know when your industry recruits new employees. The diagram below shows the timeframes in which companies from various fields begin to search for new employees.

	SEPT	OCT	NOV	DEC	JAN	FEB	MAR	APR	MAY	JUN	JUL	AUG
Investment Banking, Finance, Consulting												
Technology												
Education, Nonprofit, Government												
Advertising, Marketing, Media, PR												

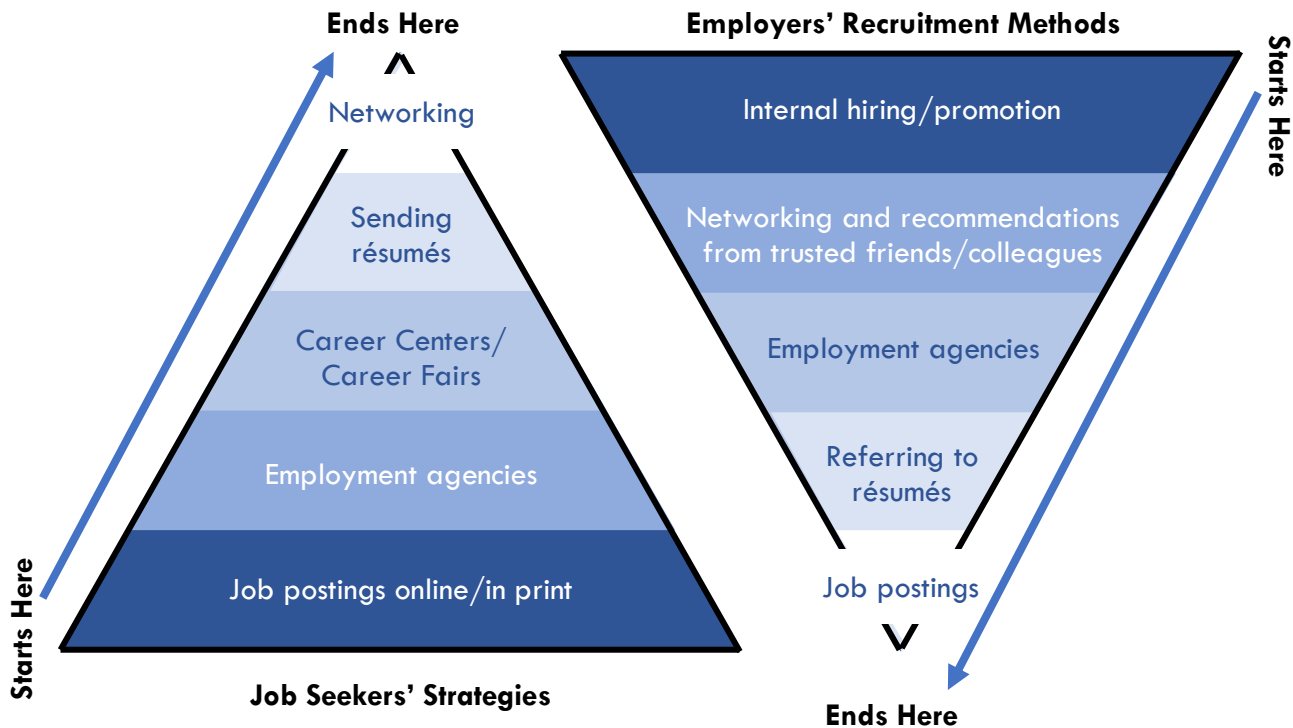
It is important to start early when searching for a job in business, accounting, banking, finance, and technology. Many firms that recruit on campus will hold information sessions, interviews, and other events during the first half of fall semester. In fact, the majority of positions in these areas that start in June will be filled before winter break.

The hiring cycles for education, government, and non-profit organizations typically begin later in the academic year, as do those for advertising, marketing, media, and PR. Employers in these fields assess their hiring needs and subsequently post positions during the winter, spring, or even summer. Many companies only look to fill positions that have recently been vacated. For government agencies, recruiting cycles vary by agency, so it is important to research application deadlines throughout the year.

The “Hidden” Job Market

Realize that people come and go from organizations frequently; however, it may seem like some companies never have open positions. It is more effective and cost-efficient for a company to look internally or hire from their employees’ connections and those who have already expressed an interest in the organization, rather than open the position to the public. You might be surprised to learn that approximately 80% of jobs are attained through networking. Because of this, it’s important to put yourself out there and make personal connections with people in organizations of interest.

While employers tend to hire primarily through networking, students tend to start looking at their options through online postings. This can be seen in the figure below. You can begin to understand how **networking** is the most preferred method of employers, though few job seekers intentionally use this strategy.



Build and Use Your Network

Contact your family members, friends, parents’ friends, advisors and professors, peers and classmates, alumni from your school, acquaintances from the activities you are involved in... everyone! You never know who may have a lead. Let them know your skills and the type of position/organization you are seeking. Ask if they know of a specific position, organization, or someone connected in the industry that you are interested in. Request for them to keep you in mind if they hear of any positions or prospects and offer to send them a copy of your résumé.

Informational interviews or job shadowing can be a great way to learn more about a typical day on the job and to establish contacts in the industry. You can also learn where and how people obtain positions, what skills and information are important on a résumé, and how various work settings differ. Gathering information can be one of the most important steps in the job search process, especially if your field of interest is difficult to enter. See the “Informational Interviewing and Job Shadowing” page on the Handshake resource library for a handout on informational interviewing, which includes examples of emails to send to organizations and contacts.



Also, consider joining a young professionals organization in your target city. These groups offer the chance to gain knowledge of the business community, find a mentor, show off your leadership skills, learn about opportunities such as conferences and other business events, and most importantly, find job prospects. Finding a local organization is easy. Start your search on Google: look for “professional association for [job field]” or “local professional associations in [city]”.

Attend career fairs and other networking events. You won't want to miss NWU's Backpack to Briefcase reception early in the Spring semester. Additionally, UNL has the largest career fairs in the state, which are open to the public. These occur every fall and spring. Go to <http://www.nccsa.info/upcoming-events.html> for a list of local college-sponsored career fairs.

When networking, it's important to have an 'Elevator Pitch' prepared. This is a short script for you to articulate your relevant experience and your interest in a company. Tailor your pitch to the employer based on your previous research of the company. End your introduction by asking a focused question that will engage the employer in conversation, and always say thank you when you're finished speaking with them. Below are some sample introductions/pitches:

"Hello, I'm _____ and I'm a junior English major at Nebraska Wesleyan University. I have completed three journalism courses and I am interested in obtaining an internship during spring semester that will provide me experience in the field of journalism. What internship opportunities do you have available?"

"My name is _____. I'll be graduating in May with a degree in psychology from Nebraska Wesleyan University. I'm looking for a position where I can apply my background in child and adolescent psychology and my experience from my internship at the Child Advocacy Center. Is this the type of background that would fit in at _____?"

Maintain Your Network

Don't forget to keep up the relationship with important connections. Whether you chatted at a hiring fair, met through a family friend, bumped into each other at a conference, or had coffee after being introduced by a professor, maintain contact with the individual! Send a follow-up email asking additional questions about a topic they touched on. Share an article you enjoyed about their industry and ask their thoughts. You can even set up a lunch or coffee simply to touch base. If you put in the time and effort, the impact of staying in touch with contacts will be well worth it; if you need to tap your network for a recommendation or advice, people will be much more willing to help you out, and they are likely to start to reach out to you when they hear of job openings.

Networking on LinkedIn

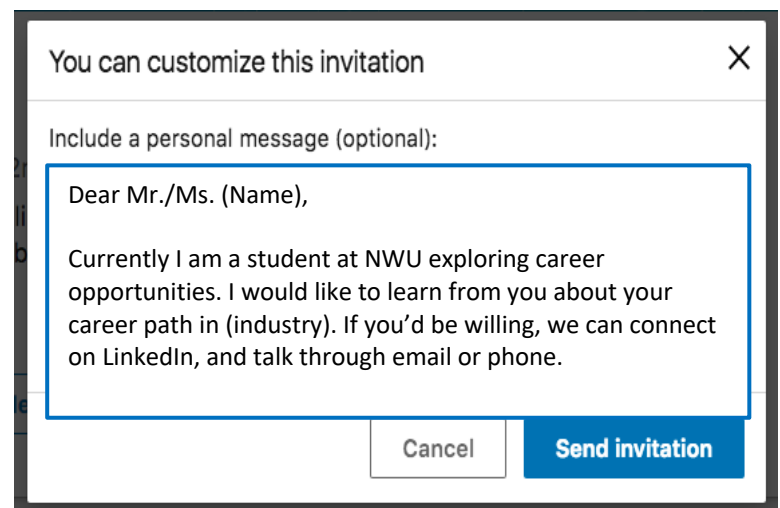
LinkedIn is a professional social media platform where you can connect with colleagues/classmates, professionals in industries you are interested in, and where you can follow companies or organizations.

Now more than ever, companies are using LinkedIn to find and source talented employees. The recruitment side of LinkedIn allows employers to set specific preferences and find people based on the skills, former experiences, location, and industries included in individual profiles. Because it's such a robust and effective tool to find people, if you're not on LinkedIn, you may very well be invisible to a company or organization.

LinkedIn is commonly used to network online. Though you're not initially meeting someone in person, you can still initiate a relationship.

By viewing someone's profile and clicking "connect," you will have the option of writing a short invitation to connect. To the right you'll see an example of how to reach out to someone you've never met.

TIP: When you view someone's profile, they receive a notification saying that you have viewed their profile. Before you start viewing a lot of profiles, it may be best to change your privacy settings so you appear "Anonymous".



The screenshot shows a window titled "You can customize this invitation" with a close button (X) in the top right corner. Below the title bar, there is a section labeled "Include a personal message (optional):" followed by a text input area. The text in the input area reads: "Dear Mr./Ms. (Name),

Currently I am a student at NWU exploring career opportunities. I would like to learn from you about your career path in (industry). If you'd be willing, we can connect on LinkedIn, and talk through email or phone." At the bottom of the window, there are two buttons: "Cancel" and "Send invitation".

LinkedIn has developed a plethora of videos and how-to tutorials for getting the most out of the professional social networking tool. To view content specific for students just getting started, be sure to visit:







https://university.linkedin.com/content/dam/university/global/en_US/site/pdf/TipSheet_BuildingGreatProfile.pdf

LinkedIn isn't just for acquiring connections. Here are a few other ways you may find LinkedIn helpful:

- Develop your profile fully to be an attractive candidate to recruiters. Include a professional photo, showcase your skills and relevant experiences, and ask for positive recommendations from supervisors.
- Visit Nebraska Wesleyan University's LinkedIn page and click on "Alumni". Here you can identify alumni by major, location, industry, or company. Use this tool to research what alumni have done with their major.
- Search for a specific employer to see who works for the company and if you have any common connections. You'll also find a list of other related companies.
- Join relevant groups to help you stay current on topics and trends. Read articles and meet others through these groups. Once you're ready, you may even choose to contribute to the conversation.

Step 3: Develop Your Personal Brand

Your 'brand' is what people associate with you when they hear your name. The development of your brand stems from your online presence, professional reputation and marketing documents (i.e. your resume, cover letter, or CV).

<p>Resume</p> 	<p>A document (typically one-page in length) that illustrates your education, experiences, and skills. Your resume should relate to the specific position and/or industry for which you are applying.</p>	<p>Cover Letter</p> 	<p>Often sent to introduce yourself as an applicant, the cover letter demonstrates your potential fit within the organization and fit in the position. This is your opportunity to explain how your skills match the organization's needs.</p>
<p>CV</p> 	<p>The CV is often the preferred professional document of choice in international cultures. While similar to a resume, the CV is used to keep track of all relevant research, presentations, and experiences.</p>	<p>Professional Reputation</p> 	<p>If you are just starting your working career, you may have a very limited professional reputation. Keep in mind that others will learn about your work ethic and skills via word of mouth from your network.</p>
<p>LinkedIn</p> 	<p>LinkedIn is one of the first places employers search to see your connections, skills, education, and interests in a professional social media platform. The site allows you to connect, network, and summarize your passions.</p>	<p>Online</p> 	<p>Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, and other personal social media accounts should be kept professional, as many employers search these profiles when making hiring decisions. You may consider adjusting your privacy settings on these platforms during your job search if you are concerned about any content on your accounts.</p>

Prepare a strong, polished résumé and cover letter. Every document should be tailored and customized to the employer and position. Begin by brainstorming what the organization is looking for (use the job description, if you have one) and write down what they might consider your most significant experiences and accomplishments based on their needs. Then, consider how you might highlight those in your application. Grab a "Resumes, References, and Cover Letters" handbook from the Career Center for guidance, and have a Career Center staff member critique your documents prior to sending them.

Step 4: Apply and Interview

Read this section for a quick overview, but be sure to check out our Interview Handbook for more in-depth information regarding the application and interview process.

MOST COMMON JOB APPLICATION AND INTERVIEW BLUNDERS TO AVOID:

- **Mass applying to open positions.**
Quality over quantity is key in the job search. If you are applying to every position you come across, chances are you are not evaluating your true fit and taking the time to customize your application. Recruiters are looking for the absolute best fit and when they come across applications that do not specifically address their company's needs, the applicant is rejected.
- **Not following job application instructions.**
Fill in all the fields and include all required attachments. If not requested, do not send unsolicited information such as your salary requirements or academic transcripts.
- **Making spelling and grammatical errors.**
Your marketing documents and any correspondence you have with an employer must be your absolute best quality work. There is no margin for errors.
- **Focusing only on responsibilities instead of highlighting accomplishments.**
Everyone who has had a job had responsibilities. Let the employer know how well you accomplished them.
- **Displaying an unfavorable online presence.**
Employees represent the company they work for even outside of work. Expect to be Googled. Ensure information available to the public would be acceptable to the employer.
- **Missing a phone or web interview because of a time zone difference.**
Some companies outsource screening interviews, or they may have employees who work remotely. Whatever the case, be aware of possible time zone differences.
- **Not knowing anything about the company/services/products when interviewing.**
This is a clear indication to the employer that you are not vested in working for the organization.
- **Forgetting to send a thank you note after the interview.**
In a competitive applicant pool, the final selection can be made based on who demonstrated their appreciation through a thank you note.

Keep Good Records

Remember those lists you made earlier to research employers and opportunities? Keep updating these lists by tracking where you applied, who you talked to, and what documents were sent. This makes it easier if you need to contact the organization in the future with questions, and also helps you stay organized and ensure you've sent in a complete application with all required materials. Additionally, be sure to keep your references updated about where you are at in the job search process!

Follow-Up

The importance of following-up after interviews cannot be stressed enough. Many employers consider these follow-up letters to gauge your interest in their organization. Immediately after an interview, it is strongly recommended that you send a thank you note to your interviewer expressing your appreciation for their time. Be sure to individualize your note, stating your interest in specific aspects of the company or position discussed.

Approximately five to ten days after the prospective employer has received your note, you may want to call to once again convey your interest in the organization. This call verifies your sincere interest in the company but also serves to keep your name fresh in the employer's mind. If you feel you left a good impression on the interviewer but were not offered the job, ask them to keep you in mind for future openings. It also can't hurt to inquire whether they have any feedback that may help as you move forward with your job search.

Progress Check

How are you doing with your job search? Rank each task below on a scale of 1-5 with 1 being “strongly disagree”, 3 being “not sure”, and 5 being “strongly agree”

SELF KNOWLEDGE:

I can...

- _____ Articulate the knowledge and skills gained from my liberal arts education.
- _____ List several successes or achievements.
- _____ Describe my own unique strengths and provide specific, concrete examples.
- _____ Honestly describe my weaknesses.
- _____ Describe work environments where I would be happiest and most productive.
- _____ State my career goals.

RESEARCH:

I have...

- _____ Identified job/internship titles that are appropriate for my interests/abilities.
- _____ Identified the type of organization(s) that hire people with my interests and abilities.
- _____ Talked to people in my field of interest to learn more about what they do.
- _____ Browsed the internet for information on organizations.
- _____ Researched the structure, services, programs or products of organizations I am interested in.
- _____ Looked into local and national professional associations for my field of interest.
- _____ Researched the salary range for positions I am considering.
- _____ Developed a list of potential networking contacts and keep in touch with them.

DEVELOP YOUR PERSONAL BRAND:

I have...

- _____ Prepared my resume, including relevant and targeted information based on opportunities of interest.
- _____ Composed well-written and customized cover letters to each company.
- _____ Assessed my online presence, developed a LinkedIn profile and reviewed personal social media accounts.
- _____ Prepared for interviewing.
- _____ Developed a system for tracking my contacts, interviews, and other job-search activities.

APPLY AND INTERVIEW:

I have...

- _____ Registered for Handshake and regularly check this site and others for new opportunities.
- _____ Taken the time necessary to promptly follow up on interesting job leads.
- _____ Sent thank you letters or e-mails to every person who interviews me.
- _____ Sought out feedback on improving my application after rejection.

Step 5: Evaluate Job Offers

Job Offers – After the Interview

If an employer has not gotten back to you within the time frame discussed, it is appropriate to contact the employer to follow-up on your status. If a time frame was not mentioned, wait two weeks after the interview to follow-up. Keep in mind that employers may be very busy meeting other work responsibilities — it is important to limit the frequency of follow-up contacts to avoid annoying the employer.

Receiving an Offer

An offer of employment is typically delivered over the phone by your primary point of contact through the recruiting process. Be sure to thank them for the offer and clarify when you need to provide a decision. Do not instantly accept the offer. Even if you are feeling confident about the opportunity, it is advised to take appropriate time to think through all aspects of the opportunity.

Example: *“Thank you for the offer. I am excited about this position and the opportunity to work for your company. Of course, this is a very important decision for me and I will need some time to think it over. May I get back to you with my decision by Friday?”*

In addition to a verbal offer, you should request a written document outlining the details of the employment offer as well as associated benefits. Bonus or relocation details and associated stipulations may also be included.

DO NOT ACCEPT AN OFFER AND CONTINUE THE JOB SEARCH. ONCE YOU ACCEPT AN OFFER, YOUR JOB SEARCH ENDS IMMEDIATELY. If you would like to continue interviewing with other companies or complete the interview process with another company, ask for a deadline extension.

Evaluating the Offer

It's not unusual for new questions to emerge as you evaluate an opportunity. Now is the time to ask the potential employer about these issues — and to do some checking on your own. Before you make a decision that you might regret, make the effort to get clarification. You can get in touch with the recruiting contact, an alumnus that works for the organization, career services staff or a current employee to provide you with the information that you need to make the best decision for you.

Factors to Consider in an Offer

A candidate rarely gets everything they want in a job offer. Consider which factors are most important to you and which ones you would be willing to give up in order to get what you want most. Think about what you will need from your future job.

- Salary and benefits
- Job/industry stability (turn-over and layoffs)
- Physical work environment
- Geographic location/possibility of relocation
- Personally rewarding work, impact on society
- Opportunities to travel
- Level of responsibility/autonomy
- Size of the organization
- Non-profit vs. profit/public vs. private
- Nature of supervision
- Fit with co-workers
- Telecommuting/flex-time
- Opportunity for advancement
- Work hours
- Ability to use skills and be challenged
- Training and development

Consider tools such as these when making financial decisions:

- **Budgeting tools:** Figure out your expenses and how much you need to earn based on your standard of living:
 - Mint.com, PearBudget.com
- **Cost of living calculators:** A salary of \$60,000 may seem attractive in San Diego, California, but that same salary is equivalent to receiving \$37,624 in Lincoln, Nebraska. To compare cities, check out these tools:
 - Bankrate.com, NerdWallet.com
- **Salary estimators:** Is the salary you've been offered competitive? Know if you're being over- or under-compensated:
 - [NACE Salary Calculator](https://www.nace.org/education-career/employment/salary-calculator), [educatetocareer.org](https://www.educatetocareer.org)

Understanding Benefits and Total Compensation

Total compensation includes base salary plus the value of the benefits package. It is a factor that must be carefully weighed. Benefits can increase compensation by up to one-third of the salary. These factors should be considered:

- Insurance premiums and coverage (medical, prescription, dental, vision, life, etc.). What is the co-pay?
- Paid time off (PTO): vacation, sick/disability leave, family leave (maternity, paternity, or family leave). How are these allocated? When can you begin to use them? Do you accrue this immediately, or is there a waiting period? Does your PTO roll over from year to year? When does your PTO allocation increase?
- Retirement plans. Does the company match? Are you eligible immediately? Is a contribution mandatory?
- Stock options and profit-sharing.
- Bonuses: signing, holiday, productivity. How are they allocated (seniority, sales, level of position, etc.)?
- Relocation expenses. Flat fee or reimbursement? If you lose your job, will you be required to pay it back?
- Tuition reimbursement. Will they reimburse for advanced degrees or licensures?
- Do they have a student loan payback plan?
- Flex-time or telecommuting. Is there flexibility to work from home? Do you need to be employed for a specific amount of time to be eligible? Can you work four 10-hour days instead of five 8-hour days? Will weekend or evening work be available/required?
- If the position requires travel or requires you to make purchases on behalf of the company, will you pay for these expenses upfront and receive reimbursement later? What amount of personal funds might you need to allocate for these expenses? Or, does the company provide you with funds prior to paying for travel or other expenses?
- What does professional development look like? Will the company pay for membership in professional organizations?
- Does the company offer on-site childcare?
- Transportation: Will you be provided a company car? If you use your personal car for work-related travel, will the company provide a mileage allowance? What does parking look like (free, paid – by who)?
- Will specific technology (i.e. cell phone, computer) be required? Will the company pay all or part of these expenses?

Negotiating the Offer

WARNING: Proceed with caution when negotiating because you are affecting your relationship with your future employer. Are there issues you want to negotiate that would make the offer more attractive? Perhaps there are issues about the offer that are flexible, such as start date or location. If you have concerns about a particular aspect of the offer, ask whether it can be negotiated. Many employers have a set salary range for entry-level positions and may not have the flexibility to negotiate.

Salary Negotiation Tips

- The best time to negotiate is after an offer is made. Avoid salary discussions during an interview.
- Don't negotiate just for the sake of it. A company will offer what they perceive to be a fair compensation package based on your experience, education, and skills. If you feel that it is inconsistent with market data, share your researched facts.
- Always maintain professionalism in the negotiation process. This reaffirms the skills that you have to offer.
- Don't negotiate TOO hard. Aggressive negotiation tactics may lead to a rescinded offer.
- Reiterate your excitement about the offer. Be gracious before elaborating on your concerns.
- Research typical salaries for the nature of the work and the geographical area before asking for more money.
- Current economic factors such as availability of candidates will influence your worth to an employer.
- Do not bring your personal financial obligations into a salary discussion. The organization is not concerned about your expenses or debts and is not likely to consider these issues in determining a fair salary for you.
- Be able to articulate your strengths so there is no question what value you can offer to an organization. This value can come from experience, specialized knowledge or certifications/licenses.
- A peer's higher offer is not sufficient reason to negotiate your offer. Salaries differ from company to company and from industry to industry; plus, a certain skill set may be more in demand at the current time.
- Understand that your negotiation requests may be denied. Even if an employer wanted to concede to your requests, the ability to do so might not exist. Decide which of your requests are "deal breakers" and which are only on your "wish list."
- If your negotiation requests are accepted, you are expected to accept the job with no further negotiation.

Handling Multiple Offers

Weigh all of the factors. Create a pros and cons list, outlining comparative aspects of each opportunity. Analyze the list according to what is most important to you. You might be tempted to accept the higher-paying offer, but many other factors will impact your career satisfaction. If the opportunities seem genuinely equal, look inside yourself, keeping in mind what is really important to you. Reflect back on your interests, skills, and values and consider which position or organization might be most consistent with these.

Turning Down an Offer

Be tactful and timely when declining an employment offer. It is important not to “burn bridges behind you.” Be sure to indicate any aspects of the recruiting process or organization that you enjoyed or appreciated. Be sure to call your main point of contact at the organization to decline verbally, but also decline in writing. Use this example as a guide:

“Thank you for offering me the position of Business Assistant with XYZ Company. Your organization’s reputation for exemplary customer service was reflected in the courtesy and professionalism provided to me throughout the interview process.

However, after careful consideration, I have decided to accept another position that aligns more closely with my skills and interests at this point in my career.

Thank you again for the opportunity to interview and learn more about your organization. I enjoyed meeting you and the other members of the sales team.”

Coping with Rejection

If you get the dreaded rejection email, it’s okay to feel disappointed. Give yourself a brief time period to grieve and then move on. Spend some time analyzing the process and what you could do differently in the future. Review your résumé and reflect on the interview. Consider your presentation, including preparation, interview attire, body language, nervous habits, and answers to the questions. Remember, even highly qualified people experience rejection and disappointment during the job search process. Don’t allow frustration to set in. Keep working towards your goal every day and consider these questions in the process:

- How much time each week am I actually spending on job search activities?
- Are my job objectives focused enough?
- How much have I learned about the industry that I want to work in and the work I want to do? What does the career path of people in this industry commonly look like? Do I have appropriate experiences and skills for the positions I am applying for at this time?
- Am I developing a network of contacts, and maintaining a relationship with those contacts?
- When I send a résumé and cover letter, are they tailored to the position?
- Have I looked for and exhausted all possible job leads?

Consider reapplying. In some industries, it is common to apply several times before your application is successful. A one-time rejection is not always a permanent rejection. Ask companies and organizations “What is your reapplication time frame or protocol?”

Succeeding in Your First Year

The first year in your job is important in determining your future with the company and establishing professional contacts who may serve as references in the future. Always maintain professionalism and a positive reputation for being prompt, efficient, respectful, attentive, and consistent.

Top 10 Tips for Crushing Your First Year

- 1. Look professional.**

As a newbie, your colleagues may already assume you are young and inexperienced. This is why it's all the more important to make yourself appear polished and professional while still adhering to the company dress code. This may involve adding to your wardrobe or getting a new haircut.
- 2. Be confident.**

If you exhibit apprehension, you may not be taken seriously. Show you deserve to be there and you have a voice. Be aware of your nervous habits and try to control them. If you ramble when you're nervous, make it a point to limit your chatter.
- 3. Communicate.**

Always be in touch and in tune. Check in with your boss periodically. Study their preferences for communication and update them on your projects as necessary. Don't be afraid to ask questions! This is how you learn. Problems can arise, and time is wasted when assuming.
- 4. Take initiative.**

As a working professional, you're rarely given a strict to-do list each day. You'll begin to manage your own projects and set goals. As you learn the ropes, take initiative for what needs to be done. Keeping within your role, seek opportunities to take the work load off others.
- 5. Separate work from home.**

Don't have your phone out and avoid taking personal calls while working. Don't use company supplies and equipment for personal projects.
- 6. Find a mentor.**

Mentors can sometimes be hard to come by, but they are invaluable to your success. This individual may or may not work at your organization but should be able to provide guidance from their experience and honest feedback for you. This will be the person you can turn to for knowledge, skills, professional development, and support for future successes.
- 7. Learn the company culture.**

While not always expressly stated, it is important to fit in with the beliefs, behaviors, and company norms expected of the employees. Evaluate the work environment, observe your fellow employees, and survey the office protocol, work flow and discourse. Ask others about office norms, traditions, history, and values.
- 8. Build relationships.**

You'll be spending a lot of time with your colleagues. Get to know them and build solid, positive relationships. This has been known to boost workplace satisfaction and help you understand the organization from different perspectives.
- 9. Stay organized and pay attention to detail.**

Organization is key for remaining effective and efficient. Being accurate and organized will boost your professionalism and ensure that tasks do not "slip through the cracks". This will also help ensure you don't feel stressed at work!
- 10. Bring solutions, not problems.**

Your supervisor is well aware of issues and challenges, but a lack of devoted time and good solutions sometimes prevents issues from being solved. Don't simply go to your boss with a laundry list of problems. Instead, research and think through the best solutions. This will help you develop positive rapport and value to the organization.