

The 5 smartest job search strategies in a tight economy

The news about the US economy and employment is not as good as last year. We have seen this happen before. It means that graduating students will need to work a little harder to get the jobs they want. The good news is that Willamette students are smart, have good skills, and are from a highly respected university.

Here are some recommendations for helping students find the best opportunities possible.

1. Don't listen to the bad news.

It's tempting to get discouraged when you listen to the 6:00 news. But students should still be able to find employment if they do what they do best – work harder and smarter than others.

2. Focus Your Search:

It's tempting to say, "I'll take anything," but a focused search works best. Identify your skills and the kinds of jobs your skills are required. It's okay to pursue more than one kind of job, but you'll need separate, targeted resumes and letters for each.

Develop a target list of employers in the areas that you're qualified for and interested in, and visit their web sites regularly. One of the ways employers save money is by not advertising on the well-known Internet sites or in newspapers – they simply post openings on their own web sites. They figure that if you're truly interested in working for them, you'll come to them, rather than their reaching out to find you.

3. Identify What Distinguishes You:

In a nutshell, employers want employees to do 3 things: *Make money, save money, and strengthen the bench (team)*. Show the employer how you have added to the bottom line in a past accomplishment (effectiveness). Show the employer how you have saved money or time (efficiency) in a past accomplishment. Show the employer how you have strengthened the work team in a past accomplishment.

Think about the hiring process from the employer's perspective. If you can identify the value you offer and the achievements or attributes or skills that make you a strong candidate, you will make yourself more attractive to the employer and provide the justification for selecting you. As you review your distinguishing accomplishments and qualities, remind yourself, too, about the many positive attributes that students have which employers look for and their benefits to employers – for example, good listening skills, calm demeanor, well-thought-out ideas, problem-solving, and task-orientation, just to name a few. Most importantly, employers look for people who help them make money, save money and contribute to their team. Tell them how you can do this.

4. Network – the least obvious, yet most effective job search strategy.

This aligns with the Pareto principle, or 80-20 rule, which states that, for many events, roughly 80% of the effects come from 20% of the causes. Translation in terms of career opportunities - 80% of job offers come from networking.

Research has found networking to be the single most effective job search method in the U.S.

Read the [Informational Interviewing](#) handout, then make an exhaustive list of professors, family (parents, siblings, aunts, uncles, etc.), college friends, family friends, university staff and administrators, alumni, old high school friends, etc. After you make the list start contacting them following the script provided in the Informational Interviewing handout link. This network is **the most likely** source for finding contacts that will lead to actual jobs.

Contact the Alumni Association and sort the database (the Compass) and request contact information for alumni who work in areas you are interested in.

http://www.willamette.edu/alumni/career_network/index.html - Alumni Network

Best networking sources:

<http://www.linkedinintelligence.com/smart-ways-to-use-linkedin/> – look for the “Willamette University Alumni” group in LinkedIn

http://www.linkedin.com/groups?mostPopular=&qid=61921&goback=.gdr_1236364897733_1
www.Facebook.com – let friends and family know you are searching

5. Be Patient and Persistent:

The hiring process never happens on *your* timetable. In a tight economy, the process may drag on longer than usual as companies and departments sort out their budgets and proceed extra cautiously. No matter how useful you think it is, procrastinating hurts you. Make a call, send an email, surf the web today and every day until you get the job you want.

Check out the three most popular job sites:

JobCat: <http://willamette.edu/dept/careers/vcc/index.html>

MonsterTRAK: <http://www.monstertrak.com/>

Career Builder: <http://www.careerbuilder.com/>

Bottom Line: A tough economy is tough on everyone, so take the smart approach by using the best strategies, and be patient. You *will* find a job sooner or later (although hardly ever soon enough). The recession is a psychological phenomena based on confidence. Use it to your advantage. Have the confidence that if you use the best practices available you will find opportunities. Bearcats always do.

Here are some links to job search resources:

<http://willamette.edu/dept/careers/students/index.html>