



This is “Your Life Dictates Your Job Search, Not the Reverse”, chapter 1 from the book [Job Searching in Six Steps \(index.html\)](#) (v. 1.0).

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Chapter 1

Your Life Dictates Your Job Search, Not the Reverse

If you've picked up this book, you are looking for a job. You might be launching a job search at this exact moment for many reasons:

You are a student:

- You are a student who is graduating into the workforce full time.
- You are a student looking for an **internship**¹ for next semester or the summer.

You have experience:

- You lost your job or took time off and are looking to reenter the workforce.
- You have a job but want to move into a different industry or have a different role.
- You want to relocate, and your current employer doesn't have an office where you will be moving.

The reason you are looking for a job is important because it changes what you need to find in your next job, as illustrated in [Table 1.1 "Reasons You Are Looking for a Job"](#).

Table 1.1 Reasons You Are Looking for a Job

Why You Are Looking	What You Need from Your Next Job
Student: Graduating from school	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Create a foundation for your career by gaining solid experience and developing skills• Become financially self-sufficient

1. A job set up for the purpose of learning or developing the intern. While the employer also benefits, the difference between an internship and a regular job is that the primary purpose of the internship should be the intern's development.

Why You Are Looking	What You Need from Your Next Job
Student: Looking for an internship	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Earn credit for a class or earn money for school • Gain experience in anticipation of a full-time job search • Convert your internship into a full-time job
Experienced candidate: Returning to workforce	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Close the gap in your employment history • Catch up on current skills, expertise, and network • Create financial stability
Experienced candidate: Changing careers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Get a chance to try a different industry or function • Find a role that transitions nicely from what you did before to what you want to do going forward
Experienced candidate: Relocating	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Get to your new desired location with little disruption to your career from the move

Why you look for a job also influences the constraints you face when you look:

Timing and deadlines. On one extreme, you have the internship search with a tight, inflexible time frame. If you need an **internship for credit**² next semester, you either get the job by the time of registration or do not. You may need to relocate by a certain date. Your savings may be running out, so you may need to return to the workforce within a definite timetable.

2. Internship where you are receiving school credit in exchange for performing the internship. The credit is usually in lieu of receiving a wage.

On the other hand, you may have a job that is secure, so you can take your time with your search. You may be an ambitious freshman or sophomore with several years before you graduate and need that full-time job.

Access to resources. When you are in school, you most likely have a dedicated career services office. If you have graduated and have been out of the workforce for some time, you may have little contact with a professional network or support system. You can join an industry association, participate in networking groups, or hire a **career coach**³ to help you create that professional network and support system. Your options for job search support will be different depending on where you live and how much you can invest in your search. People in busy urban areas can more easily find a chapter of a professional organization that matches their interests, like-minded people with whom to network, and career coaches and other professional support resources for hire. In a less-populated geography, you may have to rely on virtual access to professional organizations, networks, and resources. Similarly, your level of financial investment dictates which and how many organizations and networks you can join and what outside resources you can hire. Free or low-cost guidance is available from alumni associations, government agencies focused on workforce issues, and online job boards or career sites that offer guidance and expertise.

Emotional constraints. Certain industries, such as banking and consulting, have very regimented and competitive campus recruiting seasons. Pressure is high as soon as you hit the campus. Someone returning to the workforce after a gap may feel more anxiety or fear than a job seeker with continuous employment. A career changer may feel frustrated at having to break through to a new industry or function. Table 1.2 "Job Search Considerations" summarizes each of these considerations as it applies both to students and experienced candidates.

Table 1.2 Job Search Considerations

Considerations	Students	Experienced Candidates
Timing and deadlines	<p>Internships have tight deadlines that must be adhered to, often with no room for vacation days or personal plans</p> <p>You may have to relocate for your internship, which can conflict with dorm room requirements</p>	<p>When reentering the workforce, having as few gaps as possible is helpful and requires less explaining and messaging</p> <p>Relocating adds time to a job search, in addition to expense. Traveling to the desired location is both time consuming and expensive</p>

3. Someone who works with you on your job search. Typical activities include helping you select appropriate jobs and careers to pursue, helping with résumés and other marketing, practicing interviewing and networking, and keeping the search on track.

Considerations	Students	Experienced Candidates
	<p>Your savings may dictate that you find a summer job, versus an internship, especially if that internship is nonpaid (you may or may not receive school credit)</p> <p>On the other hand, you may be a student who has a financial cushion, and you need not rush into a job just for the compensation it provides</p>	<p>Savings may dictate the length of your search and when timing is tight, you may have fewer options to consider</p> <p>Candidates should always consider their “financial cushion,” which can provide more options in a search</p>
Access to resources	<p>When in school, you have access to career services, which can function as a career coach of sorts</p> <p>Perhaps your school does not have extensive career services offerings. Perhaps it's best to enlist the services of a professional career coach</p> <p>Investing in a career coach may yield exceptional results that can be paid for using a fraction of your first paycheck</p>	<p>Where you live and how much you choose to invest change your options for job search guidance. Metro areas are more likely to have professional associations and networking groups in your area of interest</p> <p>Free or low-cost guidance is available from alumni associations, government agencies focused on workforce issues, and online job boards or career sites that offer guidance and expertise</p>
Emotional constraints	Certain industries have inflexible time constraints	When seeking to reenter the workforce, you need to craft a

Considerations	Students	Experienced Candidates
	<p>(e.g., investment banking, management consulting), so the time pressure is significant</p> <p>Other industries are more flexible and hire throughout the year (e.g., media, communications, technology), but there is still the pressure of networking events, interviews, and follow-ups</p> <p>Some industries (e.g., education, health care) may not come on campus at all, so you would have to manage the entire calendar yourself</p>	<p>message to explain timing and reasons, which can sometimes be emotional. Harnessing emotion can help develop rapport but it also needs to be balanced with remaining professional</p> <p>Career changers can feel a great amount of frustration trying to break into a new area</p>

It is important that you understand your life situation and how it might influence your search before you begin any job search. The mechanics of a job search are similar across the different scenarios, and we begin the six-step job search process in the next chapter. In this chapter, we outline the impact of your life situation on your job search:

- How your job search changes depending on your specific life situation
- How you can maximize your inherent advantages
- How you can minimize any constraints

1.1 Students: Graduating from School

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

1. Understand exactly what you need to do to secure a full-time job, if you are a senior who either had or did not have a summer internship prior to graduation.
2. Determine a potential career path if you are a senior with a liberal arts degree, or any type of degree, and you haven't a clue as to what you want to do when you graduate.



Your ability to enjoy your senior year in college can be directly correlated to whether or not you have a full-time job waiting for you when you graduate. You will have four possible scenarios in your senior year:

- **Scenario 1.** You had a summer internship, and you received a full-time offer.
- **Scenario 2.** You had a summer internship, and you have not received a full-time offer.
- **Scenario 3.** You did not have a summer internship, and you need a full-time job.

- **Scenario 4.** You did not have a summer internship, and you do not need a full-time job.

Let's explore each scenario to consider what your next steps should be.

Scenario 1: You Had a Summer Internship, and You Received a Full-Time Offer

If you had a summer internship and have received a full-time offer, you are in a great position. Hopefully, you enjoyed your summer internship and you will accept the offer you've received. If you will choose not to accept that offer, you'll be in a great position to explore other options. But don't waste time, as you'll have a deadline to accept the first offer extended to you.

Next Steps

If you decide to accept your summer offer, your next steps will be to ensure that you complete all of your new hire paper work and that you have all the details necessary to begin working full time. In addition, you should continue to learn more about the company, the industry, the function, and the department in which you will work. Focus on increasing your network. Find other classmates at your school who might be involved in the same function and department as yours, and perhaps some who are joining the same industry. Join a **LinkedIn**⁴ Group that focuses on your industry and your function and start a discussion. Conduct a Google Alert on your job, your industry, and your company so you are more knowledgeable about them.

Ask about **entry-level training**⁵ if it is offered. If it is, perhaps you can prepare ahead of time for what you will be taught. Some companies not only administer entry-level training but also grade your performance and then share your grades with your manager. You will make the best impression possible if you are ranked at the very top of your class after training.

If you choose not to accept this offer, quickly launch into a search for a full-time job. Your summer internship should have let you know exactly what you liked and did not like about the company you worked with. Use that information to move your job search forward and find the company and industry you are most interested in.

It is rare that a student will decline an offer if they don't have another, but that does happen. If that is the case, [Table 1.3 "On-Campus Recruiting Calendar: Seniors](#)

4. Social media site that is designed to share your professional information.

5. Represents the coursework given to new hires. Some larger firms have extensive entry-level training that can last for two months. Others have perhaps just one week, and others provide no upfront training and only on-the-job training.

and Advanced Degree Students" outlines the recruiting calendar for seniors and advanced-degree students in this position. Also make sure to consult career services or a trusted advisor, taking into account all potential next steps.

Table 1.3 On-Campus Recruiting Calendar: Seniors and Advanced Degree Students

School Calendar		On-Campus Recruiting for Full-Time Opportunities: Seniors Only
Aug.	School begins	Seniors receive or do not receive a full-time offer from summer employers
Sept.	Semester in full swing	Seniors without offers participate in full-time marketing events
Oct.	Midterms	Seniors without offers participate in full-time interviewing
Nov.	Preparation for end of semester; finals next month	Seniors must accept or decline full-time offers
Dec.	Semester ends; winter break begins	
Jan.	Winter break, classes begin mid-to late Jan.	Interviewing for full-time positions begins
Feb.	Semester in full swing	Interviewing for full-time positions are in full swing
Mar.	Midterms	Some interviewing takes place
Apr.	Semester winding down; finals next month	New hire paper work sent to future employees
May	Classes end; some internships begin	New hire paper work due
June	Summer internships begin and are soon in full swing	
July	Summer internships in full swing, ending early Aug.	Full-time job begins
<p>Note: Calendar includes general time frames. Consult with your career services office and employers regarding specific dates/months.</p>		

Scenario 2: You Had a Summer Internship, and You Have Not Received a Full-Time Offer

You've strengthened your résumé with a solid internship, but unfortunately, that internship did not convert to a full-time job. This is not necessarily a reflection of your internship performance. Many companies can't predict hiring needs so far in advance that they can offer a job to a student who isn't graduating until months or even a year into the future. It's not the end of the world; you can still achieve your goal of receiving a full-time offer.

Next Steps

The most important thing to know at this point is why you did not receive an offer. Ask for feedback, and ask that it be specific. Recruiters and hiring managers rarely give you interview feedback because our society is **litigious**⁶, but your past employer should give you very specific feedback. Perhaps you need to ramp up a particular skill. Perhaps you need to be more well read on a particular topic. Troubleshooting to address any feedback you receive will help in the long run.

Check with your career services office. Ensure you know exactly which companies are coming on campus during the year. Research those companies and attend their marketing events. Talk to everyone you can about opportunities and be focused on exactly what you want to do.

Conduct an off-campus job search. Conducting both an on-campus and off-campus job search ensures that you consider all of the companies in the **employable universe**⁷. Remember, of course, to focus sharply on your target.

When you interview for a full-time position, the interviewer may ask about your prior summer and why you did not get an offer. While answering, always speak very positively about the experience and emphasize your contributions. Given that, you need to be honest about why you did not get an offer yet at the same time not harm your candidacy. Perhaps it was not the best fit because the company focuses on a market or product outside your areas of interest. For example, perhaps you were a research intern assigned to analyze the technology industry, but you now want to focus on health care. Perhaps your internship was in the right industry but you'd rather do something else within that interest. For example, you were a talent scout, and you now want to be more involved in the technology side of moviemaking. Think of something that enhances your candidacy with the organizations you are targeting now, especially if that something is not relevant to your summer employer.

6. Prone to litigation. A society is litigious when its people are apt to sue quickly and often.

7. A fun way of referring to every company who is hiring.

If you get stuck on this issue, speak to career services or a professional career coach. This could be a tricky situation and you want to avoid losing an opportunity because you didn't have a well-thought-out response.

Scenario 3: You Did Not Have a Summer Internship, and You Need a Full-Time Job

You didn't have a summer internship, but did you do any of the following?

- Did you have a job of any kind during the summer (painting houses, lawn care, working in a retail store, etc.)? Did you volunteer or do any unpaid work? If so, how did you help your employer or organization achieve their objectives? Were you recognized for special achievements, or did you reach any milestones?
- Did you take an interesting class (that pertains to your major?) or did you work on learning another language?
- Did you do an independent project for a professor?

Represent what you did do on your résumé, listing results-oriented achievements.

Next Steps

Determine what you want to do when you graduate. If you do not know, work with career services to identify potential careers.

If you are a liberal arts major, your area of concentration may not translate to a specific job (e.g., philosophy to philosopher), so you may not be sure about your next career step.

A liberal arts education offers much to employers, including communication, research, critical thinking skills, teamwork and leadership skills, flexibility, a global focus, and many, many other skills and strengths. All of these skills can be applied to industries such as advertising, education, health care, manufacturing, media and entertainment, even areas associated with the business majors (financial services, accounting, consulting, and so forth).

If you've studied English, history, religion, philosophy, or psychology, you have honed your critical thinking skills (for example, comparative literature), you have been innovative in your learning (for example, art history, East meets West), and your writing skills are advanced because many of these courses require extensive research reports.

If you’ve studied the arts, you could be innovative, have strong presentation skills, be flexible in your thinking, and have an eye for design and graphics.

If you’ve studied languages, political science, or international relations, your focus is global and you can appreciate the **juxtaposition**⁸ and **convergence**⁹ of the profit and nonprofit sectors.

Economics and technical sciences test your analytical and quantitative skills, in addition to teamwork because many of the courses require group projects.

Although they are not considered “majors,” extracurricular activities enhance many of the just-noted skills—creativity, communication and presentation, working with different people and cultures, and teamwork—along with a competitive winning spirit and drive, organization, and dedication.

Table 1.4 "Translating Your College Major to Potential Jobs" may help identify exactly what you want to do.

Table 1.4 Translating Your College Major to Potential Jobs

Major	Your Strategy	Your Ability and Your Focus
English, history, religion, philosophy, psychology	Promote the soft skills and critical thinking that are the hallmark of liberal arts	Research, communication skills, context, critical thinking
Dance, art, music, theater	Demonstrate your creativity and the value of creativity in the workplace	Innovation, flexibility, importance of design
Languages, political science, international relations	Emphasize the value of global studies and cultural awareness	Globalization, convergence of profit and nonprofit
Economics and the technical sciences	Do not take for granted that recruiters know your value, so highlight your analytical skills and market knowledge	Quantitative and analytical skills, business-specific projects and classes
Extracurricular activities	Position competitive sports, student government, and special interest clubs as opportunities to develop teamwork,	Teamwork, organizational skills, leadership, ancillary

8. Means the comparison or union of two opposing forces.

9. To come together from opposite sides and meet or join.

Major	Your Strategy	Your Ability and Your Focus
	leadership, and a multidimensional background	skills (fund-raising, budgeting, event planning)

Scenario 4: You Did Not Have a Summer Internship, and You Do Not Need a Full-Time Job

You might have many reasons for not having a summer internship and not needing a full-time job. Perhaps you are graduating college and you plan to go directly into graduate school. You may not need a full-time job; however, it would be worthwhile for an aspiring law student to have a summer internship in a law firm that specializes in an area of law you find especially interesting. Perhaps you want to know what it's like to be a litigator, and eventually a judge, so working in the court system would be a tremendous learning opportunity for you, and a tremendous networking opportunity as well.

No matter what your plans are after school, internships can always help expose you to different opportunities. You may be surprised to discover an interest you didn't think you had. They are certainly invaluable tools for networking. At the very least, you can earn some money, which is always helpful!

KEY TAKEAWAYS

- When you are graduating, you likely will have four different scenarios: you received a full-time offer from your summer employer, you did not receive an offer, you didn't have a summer internship, and lastly, you didn't have a summer internship and you are not looking for a full-time offer. No matter which is your situation, you can take follow-up steps to strengthen your position.
- Business and technical majors may have a clearer idea of what career they want by virtue of having selected a major that translates into specific careers. Liberal arts majors may not have as clear an idea, but there are ways to leverage the strength of a liberal arts education.

EXERCISES

1. If you know exactly what industry you will enter, what “next steps” should you take to better position yourself?
2. If you have a liberal arts education, pair up with another liberal arts major and brainstorm about what industries and jobs could use your strengths. Business majors should do the same.
3. If you are a junior and you received a full-time offer from your summer employer, ensure you know what your next steps are.
4. If you are looking for a summer internship, identify the top ten companies in which you are most interested and use the six-step job search process outlined in the remainder of this book to obtain an offer from your dream employer.

1.2 Students: Pursuing an Internship

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

1. Understand that internships are extremely helpful in your career because they support what you think you want to do, give you ideas of what you might like to do, or identify exactly what you do not want to do.
2. Understand the timing of the on-campus internship season and maximize your efforts to find a job.

Reasons to Pursue an Internship

Internships are some of the most important experiences you can have while you are in college because they either confirm the career you want or confirm the careers you know you do not want! Students can pursue internships at every stage of their college career. However, the majority of firms focus on juniors or graduate students because they are the feeder pool to a firm's full-time hires. In some large firms in specific industries such as banking and management consulting, 80–90 percent of the summer class receive a full-time offer. The most important internship is the one you secure for the summer of your junior year or between years of graduate school because that internship will most likely result in the extension of a full-time offer. Internships are available for freshmen and sophomores but may require a bit more work to secure because companies are more prone to hiring juniors. Smaller firms or organizations still focus on juniors, but sophomores and freshman have a chance to impress as well.

Timing Considerations

The most common internship is a summer internship, which lasts approximately ten weeks and begins in mid- to late May or very early June and ends in early to mid-August. The ten-week period usually begins with an orientation, and then you will be hard at work pursuing your deliverables. You may or may not have some training sprinkled throughout the ten weeks, but at the very least you should have several opportunities to network throughout the summer.

It is worth noting that some internship opportunities extend past the summer, and others are exclusively labeled fall, winter, or spring internships. Whatever the season, the experience you will garner from such opportunities can be extremely

helpful to your full-time job search and will go a long way toward strengthening your résumé and value proposition to your future employer.

Table 1.5 "On-Campus Recruiting Calendar: Juniors, Sophomores, and Freshmen as well as First-Year MBA Students" outlines the recruiting calendar for internships. It may be helpful to use this and sync the dates and months with your school calendar and potential employers so you know exactly what to do at every turn.

Table 1.5 On-Campus Recruiting Calendar: Juniors, Sophomores, and Freshmen as well as First-Year MBA Students

School Calendar		On-Campus Recruiting Schedule
Aug.	School begins	Companies begin screening résumés for summer internships.
Sept.	Semester in full swing	Companies begin marketing opportunities on campus and continue to screen résumés.
Oct.	Midterms	Companies begin on-campus interviewing and some summer offers are extended.
Nov.	Preparation for end of semester; finals next month	Some summer offers must be accepted or declined. Summer intern candidates send résumés and apply for positions.
Dec.	Semester ends; winter break begins	Summer candidates continue to apply for summer opportunities; some are contacted for interviews.
Jan.	Winter break, classes begin mid- to late Jan.	Summer candidates are contacted for on-campus interviews. Interviews begin. Some offers are extended.
<p>Note: Certain industries have more aggressive recruiting timelines than others. For example, investment banking, sales and trading, and consulting are typically the first industries to conduct on-campus interviewing in both the fall (September and October) and the spring (January and February). All other industries typically recruit later in the academic year: technology, marketing, communications, teaching, and so forth. It's best to check with career services, and with your classmates one or two years ahead of you, regarding this schedule, so you are best prepared. Note also that this chart represents only those companies that come to your campus to recruit. A vast number of opportunities are available, but not every opportunity will be listed with your career services office. Searches in the field of health care, teaching, and communications, to name a few, have to be managed off campus, where you are responsible for networking with decision makers, sending your marketing materials (your résumé, cover letter, and so forth), and obtaining interviews. This is challenging, but using the six-step job search process outlined in this book will help keep you on track.</p>		

School Calendar		On-Campus Recruiting Schedule
Feb.	Semester in full swing	Some offer deadlines are extended. Interviews continue. Some have deadline acceptance dates.
Mar.	Midterms	Interviews trail off. Most summer opportunities have been accepted or declined.
Apr.	Semester winding down; finals next month	Summer new hire paper work sent to future interns.
May	Classes end; some internships begin	Some summer internships begin.
June	Summer internships begin and are soon in full swing	Remaining summer internships begin and are soon in full swing.
July	Summer internships in full swing, ending early Aug.	Summer internships in full swing, ending in early Aug.

Note: Certain industries have more aggressive recruiting timelines than others. For example, investment banking, sales and trading, and consulting are typically the first industries to conduct on-campus interviewing in both the fall (September and October) and the spring (January and February). All other industries typically recruit later in the academic year: technology, marketing, communications, teaching, and so forth. It's best to check with career services, and with your classmates one or two years ahead of you, regarding this schedule, so you are best prepared. Note also that this chart represents only those companies that come to your campus to recruit. A vast number of opportunities are available, but not every opportunity will be listed with your career services office. Searches in the field of health care, teaching, and communications, to name a few, have to be managed off campus, where you are responsible for networking with decision makers, sending your marketing materials (your résumé, cover letter, and so forth), and obtaining interviews. This is challenging, but using the six-step job search process outlined in this book will help keep you on track.

Internship Performance

It's wise to understand your **performance measures**¹⁰ during your internship. You might be evaluated on certain skills such as teamwork, communication, specific knowledge, and so on. Larger companies are more likely to have a formal performance review process. They sometimes share the performance metrics with you at the beginning of the summer, so there are no surprises. Some larger corporations also have other interns rate your performance because teamwork is so important. The more you know about your performance measurement, the more likely you are to succeed.

10. Skills on which you are evaluated, like teamwork, communication, specific knowledge, and so on.

Internship Compensation

The best-case scenario would be to have a paid internship in your chosen field, so you can build upon the skills necessary to position yourself for a full-time job offer. However, in some industries, such as the arts, advertising, media and entertainment, public relations (PR), nonprofit, and government, unpaid internships or those that pay only a stipend are standard. In down economies, even industries that formerly offered predominately paid internships offer unpaid internships. Unpaid internships require that you receive credit for the internship. Research the credit aspect in advance. Each school produces a form or letter on school letterhead that confirms the school's approval in advance of you receiving credit for an internship. Some organizations do not check for proper credit authorization, but many do, so it's best to sort out credit requirements before you start your search.

Paid internships can vary from minimum wage up to a summer salary **commensurate**¹¹ with a full-time salary. Some companies pay according to your year in school, for example, some pay \$10 per hour for a freshman, \$12 per hour for a sophomore, \$15 for a junior. The range is wide and varies by industry, size of company, role or functional area of intern, and geography, as illustrated in [Table 1.6 "Internship Salary Differentiators"](#).

Table 1.6 Internship Salary Differentiators

Differentiating Factor	How Salaries Differ
Industry	Private sector often pays more than public sector or nonprofit Banking, consulting, and technology often pay more than advertising, retail, or entertainment
Size of company	Big companies are more likely to have structured programs with higher pay (That said, sometimes small companies offer higher pay to stay competitive.)
Role or functional area of intern	Technical jobs (e.g., IT, engineering, graphic design) often pay more than other roles
Geography	Major metros often pay more than smaller geographies

11. Equal to.

KEY TAKEAWAYS

- The larger the company, the more structured the internship program may be.
- Summer Internships last approximately ten weeks, roughly from late May or early June until early August.
- Other seasonal internships exist, but by far, the summer internship is the most popular. All should be explored, however.

EXERCISES

1. Look up three or four summer internship job descriptions in your area of interest that recruit on campus at your school and determine if you would like to apply. Learn what you need to do to apply via on-campus recruiting. Be especially mindful of deadlines.
2. Identify two or three summer internship job descriptions, in your area of interest, from companies that do not recruit at your school. Learn what you need to do to apply. Be especially mindful of deadlines.

1.3 Returning to the Workforce

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

1. Understand how gaps in employment history affect your hiring potential.
2. Develop strategies for how to talk about gaps in a truthful and positive way.
3. Learn how to overcome other potential obstacles relating to employment gaps.

Employment Gaps Raise Questions about Your Qualifications



Many perfectly good reasons can explain a gap in your work history:

- unemployment, especially in a down market, where job searches take longer
- family leave

- medical leave
- personal leave (e.g., to travel or try something new)

An employment gap raises questions about whether your skills are current, whether your industry expertise or functional knowledge is outdated, and if your network is still intact. When employers hire experienced people, it is often to use their skills right away, to take advantage of their up-to-date knowledge, and to get access to their network. If your skills, expertise, and network are questionable, and an employment gap weakens these three areas, then your value to the employer is weakened. Even if a prospective employer does not view you negatively because of a gap, all things being equal, the employer prefers a candidate with continuous work history to the one with a gap.

Because most of the downside of any gap is related to the job candidate being stale or having out-of-date skills, the length of the gap is very important. A gap of several months is much more easily overcome than that of several years. Multiple gaps also might give employers the impression that your career lacks forward progress and momentum.

The reason for the gap is also important. If you attribute the gap to being unable to find a job, the employer may question how desirable you are to its competitors. If the gap is for family leave, the employer may wonder if you are fully committed. If medical reasons kept you from working, the employer can legally only verify you are able to do the job in question, but this doesn't mean the employer won't wonder silently if you will be at your best. Finally, if your gap is due to personal pursuits, the employer may wonder if you are truly back for good or just biding time until your next adventure.

Take Control of the Message behind Your Gap

The more an employer wonders what's behind your employment gap, the more negatively they might view your circumstances. You must be specific and deliberate in how you message the reasons behind your gap.

Be empowered about your choice to leave. When you talk about why you took time off, don't sound sheepish. Don't denigrate your experience. If it was a layoff, employers aren't expecting you to be happy about being laid off, but you should, at the very least, stay composed and matter-of-fact. Simply state there was a layoff. Then move the conversation onto the present in a positive manner. Reiterate your interest in the current opportunity, rather than showing regret, anger, or any other lingering connection with your previous employer.

If your leave was medically related, you do not need to give details. Simply state you had a medical issue that needed to be taken care of, but, thankfully, you are well now! A future employer welcomes hearing that type of message.

Give detailed examples of what you accomplished and learned. If your gap is due to a layoff, don't talk about your job search activity as the sole focus of your time. Talk about how you are keeping your skills and network current. Talk about what you've read recently as a signal that you are keeping abreast of the industry. Stress the positive in all that you have been doing.

Translate your time off into experience your prospective employer will appreciate. If you took a family leave, don't focus on your parenting skills unless you are interviewing for a relevant position with children. Focus on how you coordinated playgroups, which shows organization, management, and attention to detail. Mention your fund-raising for school programs, which shows sales skills. If you took a leave to pursue a personal interest, make a case for how that experience contributes to your next role, for example, extensive travel might translate to international awareness and cross-cultural savvy.

Whatever the reason behind your gap, position it in a positive, optimistic, forward-thinking way. Perhaps the gap gave you the perfect opportunity to redirect your career to exactly what you are now most interested in. Use the reasons for your gap to make the case for why you are a strong candidate.

If you are having a tough time explaining a gap of any kind, find a resource, such as your school's career services office, mentor, or coach to help you craft a meaningful, impactful message.

Convince Yourself First to Help Convince Prospective Employers



Are you 100 percent convinced that you are ready to return to the workforce after your time away? If you are looking for a return job to be a place where you can learn on someone else's payroll, then you are not making the most compelling case for why a prospective employer should hire you. Get ready to work before you return to work.

Make sure your skills, expertise, and network are up to date. Use Excel to maintain your household budget so you can keep that skill up to date. Read trade journals dedicated to your industry and functional area. Join professional associations in your industry and functional area. You may want to volunteer so that you update your skills, expertise, and network in a working environment. These suggestions are useful to everybody in the job search, but for a candidate with a gap in employment, maintenance of your skills, expertise, and network is even more critical.

Make sure you have the financial cushion to sustain a longer search. It may take a while to rebuild your skills, expertise, and network and to convince prospective employers this has occurred. You may want to take temporary or project work even in an area unrelated to your target field to ensure you can support your financial obligations during your search.

Do you show the confidence that results from being 100 percent convinced you are ready to return to the workforce after your time away? If you doubt your own skills,

it will be difficult to convince others. Make sure that you work on your story, examples, and reasons for why you are the best candidate for your target job.

If you are just settling back into your field after time away, your personal support network might have fallen away. You might not have a daily routine in place that keeps you motivated and active. Make sure you rebuild your environment to support your job search. Professional associations, networking groups, alumni chapters, mentors, or coaches may help with your confidence and emotional support.

If you have unresolved personal issues or extreme anxiety, frustration, or other emotional constraints, then you might consider enlisting a therapist or counselor to help you deal with these issues. Remember that it is not just the tactical issues of your job search that need care and attention. Make sure you tend to your emotional needs.

KEY TAKEAWAYS

- You have reasonable explanations for taking time off from your career, including a layoff, medical leave, family leave, or personal leave.
- Your skills, expertise, or network might become out of date in your absence, or prospective employers might assume that has happened.
- You need to make a strong case for why you took time off, how you benefited, and how the employer will benefit.
- You also need to make sure you have skills, expertise, a network, financial cushion, confidence, and a support structure to make a successful return to the workforce.
- You might consider seeing a therapist or counselor if you have unresolved emotional issues pertaining to your leave.

EXERCISES

1. If you are returning from the workforce, write your story about why you took time off. Then edit your story by half and again by half, until you have the three top points of your time away. This is your compelling and concise message.
2. Review your time off month by month or year by year and itemize specific accomplishments. Use a job description for a job you are targeting and make a case for how your accomplishments during the gap translate to the target job.

1.4 Changing Careers

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

1. Understand how career change is different from a traditional job search.
2. Get strategies for how to modify your job search to account for a career change.

Transitioning from School to Work Is the First Career Change

In a way, we are all career changers because the transition from school to work is a career change. You have a different role (from student to whatever your new job is). You are in a different environment (unless your new employer is an institute of higher education). You might even be in a different geography because many people go to school in a different place from where they settle.

Sometimes the career change is more pronounced, such as an executive who decides after decades of experience that she wants to try something new. Martha Stewart's early jobs were in financial services, not hospitality. You may have built up your expertise and accomplishments in an area very different from where you want to be working.

Changing Careers Is Different from Changing Jobs

When you change jobs, you do essentially the same role in the same industry. If you are a hotel concierge for a Hilton property and then move to a Sheraton hotel, this is a job change. If you are a hotel concierge for Hilton and become an office manager for an architecture firm, this is a career change—you are doing a different role in a different industry.

In the subsequent chapters on job search, you need to execute the same six steps as other job seekers. In the areas of marketing yourself and talking about yourself in networking and interviewing situations, however, you won't be able to rely on your past track record for examples or evidence of how you are suitable for the job. This doesn't mean you should simply ask prospective employers to take a leap of faith and trust that you will learn. Instead, you should do enough preparation that you fit in with the new area you are targeting.

Changing Careers Successfully Means You Look Like You Aren't Changing Careers

Essentially, you want to make yourself equal to someone already doing the job, so you don't want to appear like a career changer, but rather already a career insider. While you might not have a specific employment situation to point to, you can develop the skills and expertise of an insider by volunteering or consulting in that new job area.

A student might point to her work as a tutor when she interviews with schools for teaching positions. An aspiring marketer might highlight his role in the advertising campaign for his school's homecoming event. A more experienced executive who doesn't have the campus opportunities of clubs and extracurricular activities can look at community organizations for opportunities to volunteer.

As you go along the six-step job search process, pay close attention to Step 3, Conduct In-Depth Research. If you can showcase your understanding of your new target area by your exhaustive research and grasp of trends, challenges, and competitor information, then you will be valuable to prospective employers.

Changing Careers Requires Additional Search Skills Compared to Changing Jobs

Career changers have more convincing to do and need additional search skills. This means that the career changer's job search will be different:

It will likely take longer. You have to establish a track record in your new area. You have to find people who will listen to your story. Students should start their job search long before graduation. They can use the years in school to build a track record in areas where they might want to work after graduation. In the six-step job search process, step 5 includes strategies for maintaining long-term motivation, which also would be particularly helpful when changing careers.

It may be more expensive. A longer search means that you have no money coming in from your new job. If you have another job while you are looking, that might be fine, but if you are unemployed you have to factor in enough cash to last throughout the longer search.

It might require additional education or training. Depending on the new job requirements, you might need a specific degree or certification you don't already have. Experienced professionals might consider taking advantage of tuition benefits

at their current employer to learn new skills while still at their old career. Students should look at specific courses they can take before graduation to enhance their marketability.

You have to hustle more. Because you don't have the track record in other workplaces, your résumé won't demonstrate a track record. If all prospective employers know about you is your résumé, you likely will not be seen. Therefore, you must network and get in front of people to have a chance to tell your story. In the six-step job search process, step 4 focuses on networking and interviewing, which will help with the hustling, as well as crafting a compelling story about your career change.

KEY TAKEAWAYS

- Changing careers is different from finding a new job in the same area, but we have all done it at least once, when we moved from school to the workplace.
- Changing careers requires you to convince prospective employers that you can do the job even though you don't have a track record at another workplace.
- Making a compelling case is easier when you are already doing the job (e.g., as a volunteer or consultant) and have the skills, expertise, and network in your new area.
- Having additional search resources and skills will help you successfully execute a career change. You need more time, more money, more (or different) credentials, and more hustle.

EXERCISES

1. If you are a student, take out your transcript and résumé to date and think about what types of jobs your history suggests. If you are not sure, get a group of students to do this exercise together or ask a trusted mentor to join you. If the answers you get are not areas of interest, list related courses you can take or experiences you can get before you graduate.
2. If you are an experienced professional considering a career change, map your existing résumé to a job description in the area you are targeting. What is missing? Make a list of action items with a timetable for how you can fill in the gaps.
3. If you have assumed that you need specific job experience or a specific degree, call a professional association for your area of interest and ask about typical member profiles. Check your assumptions before adding items to your to-do list, especially additional schooling.

1.5 Relocating

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

1. Understand what is different when you are looking for a job based in a location other than where you are.
2. Get strategies for how to successfully complete a long-distance search.

Conducting a Job Search from a Different Location Presents Unique Challenges



You might be attending school in a location that is different from where you want to live after graduation. You might have personal reasons for wanting to relocate now. You might want to experience working in a different country. A number of positive explanations might exist for why you need to conduct a long-distance job search. This doesn't make it any less challenging:

Your network and support system may be smaller. Your contacts are more likely to be where you live. In the case of a long-distance search, you won't have as big or strong a network in your target geography.

You have additional planning and scheduling constraints due to travel. You need to travel to your target geography several times during your search. Phone interviews and networking meetings are fine to start, but you absolutely have to meet people in person during your search. Planning and accommodating travel into your schedule are concerns you must address if you are a job seeker who is relocating.

Your long-distance search can be expensive. Some employers will pay for interview travel, but even then, only at the later stages of an interview. For networking or exploratory interviews, you need to foot the bill. In addition, some but not all employers pay for relocation. National conferences or career fairs in your target geography give you a chance to meet and possibly interview with prospective employers. You need to budget and plan for the fees and travel accompanying these resources.

If you are relocating internationally, you have the added complexity of different time zones, different currencies, different employment laws, and different job search protocols. Imagine a search for someone in Asia wanting to work in the United States or vice versa—even the simplest phone call needs to be planned due to the time difference. When you research salaries or even company or industry revenues, you will be dealing with a different currency. You also have to check how you will be classified when working abroad—sometimes you can be paid in your home currency. You need to research what visa or other authorization you need to work in a different country. Finally, your job search tactics need to take into account cultural norms abroad.

For those students who wish to return to their home country, perhaps you have friends and family who can help to make connections. You will want to use your time wisely when you travel back home during breaks and holidays, and arrange interviews and meetings far in advance. International students who want to stay in the United States after graduation are presented an entirely new set of issues. Obtaining permanent authorization to work in the United States can be complex because the government has caps on work permits that are often reached by the vast number of international students who want to stay in the United States. In addition, certain visas allow for one year of work in the United States (H1B), and extensions can come with those visas. Students should speak to the person in charge of international students or to career services for advice on these issues. You might also consult an employment lawyer who is well versed in visa requirements.

A good job search strategy would include researching and then targeting companies that will hire international students who are not authorized to work in the United States on a full-time basis.

Searching Long-Distance Requires Extra Time, Expense, and Activities

You still need to execute the six steps of the job search process, but with these additions:

Plan time and budget to visit your target geography several times over the course of your search. If you are a student, consider using your academic breaks in your target geography. If you are employed, set aside vacation time to make these trips. Budget for these additional travel expenses as you plan your job search.

Set specific dates for when you will be in the target geography. It is helpful if prospective employers know when you will be in the area. You might convince employers or at least networking targets to meet with you because you are rarely in the area.

Make sure you are clear about time zones. You want to correspond during normal business hours for your target. If you are in the United States and targeting Asia, this means you have late-evening search activities. When you are scheduling within a different time zone, be vigilant about expressing what time zone you are referring to when you propose or confirm times.

Research visa, work authorization, and other legal issues as soon as your target geography is identified. Paper work often takes longer to process than you expect, and you do not want to find out you have expended effort for an inaccessible location. Remember to consult with international student affairs, career services, or an employment lawyer well before you start your search.

Research cultural nuances and exactly how the job search is conducted in the geography you are targeting. This might be obvious for international searches, but there might also be nuances in different regions of the same country.

Account for extra time to be deliberate in your search. When you are in a different geography, you will not have the luxury to drop in at a networking event you heard about at the last minute. Conferences and career fairs have deadlines for registration. The immediate people around you will likely not be connected to your

target geography. You will need to be proactive and find resources relating to your long-distance search.

Consider Moving before You Get a Long-Distance Job

Employers do not want to waste their time on candidates who then decide not to move. If you have a specific date for when your move will happen, this helps convince prospective employers how serious you are about moving. If you offer to pay for your interview travel, this also signals to employers that you are serious about their geography. (Employers don't always pay for interview travel, anyway.)

Some job seekers might make their move contingent on getting a job in the area, and financially, this may make sense, but it presents the chicken-and-egg problem: employers want to know you will definitely move before they consider hiring you, but you want to know they will give you a job before you consider moving. People do get jobs before they have physically moved. However, if your job search has stalled, you might want to consider moving to your target geography because it is easier to look for a job in the same place you live.

Getting an address or phone number that reflects your future geography can signal to employers that you are already there. This helps you with employers who won't consider out-of-area candidates. However, this may hurt your chances for relocation reimbursement if you need to move for the job and would otherwise have qualified had you not suggested you were already there.

Even hypothetically planning the move will help you personally, as it confirms whether you can indeed move. If you own a home, can you sell it in a timely way? Have you run the numbers on relocation costs and your new cost of living in the target geography? Are you emotionally prepared to uproot? It's one thing to imagine that you would be open to relocating, but once you are in the thick of your job search, you want to be sure that you are spending time on geographies that are feasible options for you.

KEY TAKEAWAYS

- A long-distance job search adds complexity to your time and budget for your job search.
- Plans for travel or even an advance move to your target geography are things you must consider.
- For international job searches, be careful of different time zones as you plan, and be prepared to accommodate for different employment laws and cultural norms.
- With proper planning and the willingness to accommodate the additional work of visiting and researching your target geography, a long-distance job search can be successful.

EXERCISES

1. Make a list of the geographies you are considering for your search. How serious are you about moving there? For the strong contenders, run the numbers on travel to and from the area. Plan a trip so you know where you would stay and how you would get there. Look at a local paper for the geography (or online at Craigslist if it's available for the area) and check prices for housing, food, and so forth.
2. Find networking and support resources in your target geography. Bookmark the Chamber of Commerce sites or find local chapters of national industry or functional associations. Join a local chapter of a professional association so you can start building a network in that geography.
3. Research the visa and work authorization issues if you are considering international relocation. Make a list of resources you can consult for the legal information you need.

1.6 Chapter Review and Exercises

This book will give you the tools necessary to execute any kind of job search you need at any point in your life. A successful job search begins with understanding your current life situation. Knowing your goals and how each job can help you reach those goals is critical to your confidence and emotional level during a job search. Your current life situation and the reason for your job search represent the variables in your search. The six-step job search process that is covered in the subsequent chapters represents the constant, or the framework, from which you launch your search.

Whether you are a student interested in a summer internship or your first full-time job or an experienced professional returning from a leave or changing careers, this book gives you a job search methodology to get that next job.

There is much to consider when making a change of any kind in your life and career. Timing is important, such as campus recruiting deadlines or a specific moving date. Timing is a factor in another sense for individuals with gaps of employment on their résumé. Access to resources varies over time because you may be a student with great career services support or out of the professional workplace on a leave and feeling more isolated. Emotions vary because some job searches are more stressful than others: the regimented campus recruiting programs of banking and consulting firms; the career changer looking to fit in; the unemployed worker under a cash crunch.

Remember that your job search changes depending on your specific life situation. Knowing that your life influences your job search, adapt your strategy accordingly. Maximize your inherent advantages. Minimize any constraints.

Chapter Takeaways

- You can find yourself conducting a job search at multiple times in your college career. In your freshman, sophomore, and junior years, you will be searching for internships. The internship of your junior year can lead to a full-time job offer.
- While in college, you should know about and adhere to a recruiting schedule because it can facilitate getting internships and full-time jobs more easily.
- Liberal arts majors, by nature of a wide curriculum, may have a more difficult time deciding what career will be best for them. A liberal arts education affords many strengths that can be used in a job search, when positioned properly.
- Summer internships can be structured or unstructured. The most structured internships include an orientation and performance reviews, with multiple performance measurements.
- Gaps in your employment history can affect your hiring potential, but that risk is mitigated when you explain them strategically.
- Career changes are possible when you bridge the gap with skills you have developed in your current job with those same skills needed in your desired job.
- Long-distance job searches can be complex and you need to budget time and effort to execute them successfully. International job searches are even more complex because you need to take into account different time zones and different employment laws.

Chapter Review

1. Why do your life situation and needs dictate your job search and not the reverse?
2. What is the most important internship of your college career? Does it occur in your freshman, sophomore, or junior year?
3. What should you do if your summer internship in your junior year does not convert to a full-time job offer?
4. What should you do if you aren't sure what you can do in terms of a career?
5. If you've left the workforce to care for a parent or family member, what is the best way to explain the gap in your employment history?
6. Why is becoming a career insider the best way to change careers?
7. How would you go about changing industries? For example, how could you move from the communications industry to the financial services industry?
8. How can you execute a long-distance job search successfully?
9. What are some key factors to keep in mind if you want to conduct an international search?