

Create an effective resume and job search strategy

Interview for T target jobs

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Practice Quiz Get the Interview Questions

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How to get Interviews

HOW TO GET INTERVIEWS

This guide is designed to help job seekers get more interviews. If you're eager to increase the number of interviews you're currently getting, we have some tips and strategies for you that will make a big difference in your results and help you overcome some of the challenges associated with job boards, such as not all of them being used and those application volumes that can make it hard to stand out.

The guide will help you address the challenges of job boards through networking. Because the idea of networking can seem daunting for many, this guide will focus on four actionable steps you can take to make the most of your networking efforts. We'll be providing you with four steps to help you connect with and have a pleasant and easy experience for important conversations, to what to talk about and how to follow up if none of these strategies and actions feel challenging or fine, don't worry, they get easier over time. Plus, you'll be getting more interviews, so it will all be worth it!

The Importance of Networking

Learning how to network effectively is a really valuable skill with a wide range of benefits. It's something you'll want to continue to focus on, and the connections you make and maintain through strategic networking can have long-lasting positive effects on your career advancement.

For our purposes here, we want to focus specifically on how strategic networking can help you overcome some of the challenges associated with online job applications. Benefits include:

- **Getting accurate information about job availability.** The fact that a role is posted online doesn't mean that the hiring team is actively reviewing applications. There is often a delay between the time a role is posted and the time it's posted online, as well as the time it's filled and taken down from online job boards. At the same time, there are also open positions that are not yet posted online for a variety of reasons. Networking can help you get more up-to-date information.
- **Learning more details about the role.** Job descriptions are not always precise. As a result, you might end up applying for roles that you think are a good fit but are, in fact, not. Or, you might fail to properly value your application to meet the needs of the hiring team. Inside information via networking can help you understand what the team is really looking for.
- **Building out your network.** Once a job is posted in a job board, there are often other roles or even hundreds of people applying for it, so it can be difficult to stand out. Networking can help you get an early jump on a new opportunity before it's posted.

The networking section described in this guide can help you address all these challenges.

Through a short and focused conversation with someone at your target company—who has insider knowledge of about opportunities—you will be able to:

- Understand the requirements for your target role at that specific company. Jobs with the same title can vary greatly from company to company, and the actual requirements are not always obvious from job descriptions.
- Gain insight into the company's organizational structure and learn culture clues about what is required for success, and understand how best to position yourself if your application materials and interview.
- Learn ways to monitor and apply for opportunities at that specific company, so you can know exactly what is available and how to best position your application to the hiring team. You might even be able to get a referral.
- Establish a relationship with a professional who might be able to help you in your current job search and be a part of your professional network moving forward.

Networking for Your Job Search: The Process

How to connect with the right people

The process of networking for your job search begins with identifying the right people to network with. Because you are looking for insider information on the role and its application process—as well as other relevant opportunities—you need to connect with insiders.

People you are going to network with must work in, or close to, your target role at a company you are interested in working for. These people will have the information you need. Beyond what's publicly posted online. They will understand the exact skills and expertise the hiring team is looking for. They'll know the status of currently open roles and upcoming openings, and they might even be able to connect you directly to the hiring team.

If you are already connected to the right people, you can jump straight to Step 3 below. If you don't currently know such people, begin with finding and connecting with them as described in Step 1.

Step 1: Finding the right people

Begin by putting together a list of the companies you're interested in. The more companies you have on your list, the more people you will be able to reach out to, and the more opportunities that will be available to you. Don't limit yourself to your company list; go as far as you can. It might sound like a lot, but remember that not every company will have the right role available when you need it.

If you are not sure how to identify target companies for your job search, consider the following ideas:

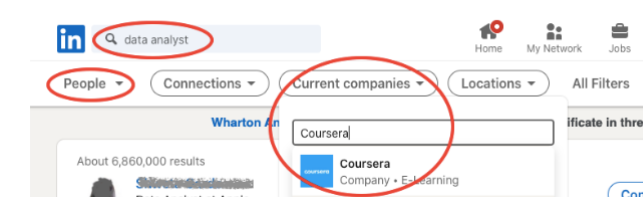
- **Search job boards for openings.** If a company has never posted a relevant role, it's worth exploring further.
- **Go through your existing contacts and research the companies where they work.** Even if you don't know anyone in your target role, your personal and professional contacts might be able to introduce you to their relevant contacts.
- **Identify a target industry (e.g., online education, medical supplies, entertainment).** If you know one company within an industry, you can quickly search for companies in that industry.
- **Map out companies located in your area** (or companies with a remote application). If you are looking to work remotely, this may be a good idea to make sure you can definitely be considered for any opportunities you uncover.

Remember, your target companies do not need to have open jobs posted—you will find out exactly when a vacancy is available through your networking conversations.

Step 2: Connecting via LinkedIn

Once you make the companies you are interested in, you can start connecting with relevant people. The method described here uses LinkedIn because it's accessible to most people. You can also ask for introductions from mutual connections, attend professional events to meet people, post in networking communities online, or use any other way you prefer.

To find people through LinkedIn, begin with performing a LinkedIn People Search using your target job title as the search string, and setting a filter for "Current Companies." See below for an example searching for a Sales Manager at Coursera.



Review the profiles that come up to identify people you want to reach out to. Focus on people you'll like to learn from and/or you think you can build a rapport with based on their background, interests, and what they're all communicating. Keep in mind that people with well-developed LinkedIn profiles—including profile photos, summaries, and other details—are more likely to reply to you than those who have very thin profiles, because they are likely to be more active LinkedIn users.

Once you identify a person you might be interested in speaking to, send them a connection request with a note explaining why you are reaching out.

Here is a sample LinkedIn outreach message:

Hi [name], I discovered your profile because of the interesting work you do as a [role] at [company]. I appreciate an opportunity to ask you a few questions to learn more about roles you do and what it's like to work at [company]. Thank you in advance for connecting with me!

Note that some of your connection requests may go unanswered. Don't get discouraged or take it personally. Many people are too busy to simply don't answer their LinkedIn messages. The good thing is that LinkedIn provides you with access to a large number of professionals, and it's a good idea to reach out to a lot of people.

Step 3: Schedule and prepare for the conversation

Once you've established the connection, you can ask your new contact for a time to speak. It is important to be open to communicating to the connection's preferred approach (in person, video, phone, or writing, etc.), but ideally, you want to schedule a live conversation. It's generally a more effective way to build a relationship, and it can often make it easier to get your specific questions answered.

Make scheduling easy by suggesting a specific time to speak, offering to work around their calendar, and sending out a calendar invitation with information on how you will connect (phone, video conference, etc.).

Here is a sample meeting request message:

Thank you for accepting my connection request. As I mentioned, I reached out because I'm researching [industry/company], and I would really appreciate an opportunity to ask you a few questions about your experience in [role, company]. Would you be open to scheduling a 15-minute video or phone call on [date, time]? I'm also happy to adjust to your schedule if you prefer another time.

Note that some people find it easier to provide information in writing. If you don't get a response to your original request for a conversation, you can follow up by asking whether it would be easier for them to answer a few questions over email. Remember, everyone is busy and it's important to be polite and adjust to the style of the person you are reaching out to!

Don't be discouraged if someone does not reply to you immediately. People are busy. Once you have already established a connection, it's a good idea to follow up after a few days, and then again a week later to give them a chance to reply.

If you still don't hear back after a couple of follow-ups, you can assume this person is too busy at this time to speak with you and move on to other potential contacts. Remember that while this is a process of developing personal connections, it is also a numbers game, and you should plan to reach out to a lot of people.

Before moving on, acknowledge your decision to your new contact—a quick note will help ensure there is no awkwardness as you reach out more in the future.

Here is a sample closing message:

I'm sorry we haven't been able to connect. I definitely don't want to flood your inbox with requests, so I just wanted to thank you again for connecting with me, and if you do end up having some time to chat, please let me know.

Preparation

Once the conversation is on the calendar, it's time to prepare. Remember, your focus should be on learning about your target role at the company and determining the best ways to connect to new opportunities. Things you'll want to focus on include:

- **What's the day-to-day like in the role?** What is the team structure, how are priorities decided, what do they like about their work, and what do they struggle with?
- **What skills and experiences do the hiring team look for?** What is essential, and what is nice to have?
- **Do they think your skills and background are a good fit for the role, or are there ways you can improve your abilities through education or experience?**
- **What's the best way to monitor and apply for opportunities?** Is there anything coming up that is not yet posted on the company page?
- **Are there any other people they can recommend that you speak with?**

To inform your questions, you'll want to conduct thorough research on the person you are speaking with, the company they work at, and your target role. Consider the following questions to inform you:

- **Your contact's LinkedIn profile, and any information LinkedIn** Look for information to inform your questions as well as anything that can help you build rapport, such as shared volunteering interests, hobbies, school experiences, etc.
- **Job descriptions for your target role at the company** (if available). During the conversation, you'll have an opportunity to clarify requirements and responsibilities.
- **LinkedIn profiles of people working in your target role at the company.** You want to understand their skill sets and which aspects to get additional insights into what is valued in this role.
- **Company website.** You should have a good understanding of the company's mission, business, and anything else that is relevant to the public.
- **Company reviews in platforms such as Glassdoor.** It's a good idea to see what people are saying about the company, so you can ask more specific questions about the culture.
- **News about the company.** Just in case there's something significant happening at the company, you want to be aware of it.
- **Company career page.** Make sure you know which roles are currently posted so that you can ask about the team, and about applying to them directly.

Step 4: Speak with your new contact

Speaking with a new contact does not come naturally to many people. If you are feeling uncomfortable before or during your first live conversation, that's completely normal and will get easier with time as you develop the valuable skill of networking.

Remember that the other person is also going into a conversation with a stranger (and might not know who to expect). To make both of you comfortable and to help build rapport, be ready to lead the discussion for the conversation.

- **Provided them about who you are, why you reached out, and what your goals are for the conversation.** In this part, you will need to make sure that you are prepared for the conversation. For your new contact, you might not have had the time to look at your profile and don't know who exactly you reached out. Help them out by starting with a brief overview of your background and the reason for the conversation.
- **Weather time.** Conversation like this generally last 15–20 minutes. Make sure you respect the other person's time by keeping the meeting to the length you had originally agreed upon, unless the other person wants to continue talking.
- **Make it about them.** Since you are there to learn from the person you are speaking to, it is being generous with their time, and it is your responsibility to make sure they feel valued and appreciated. Consider who you would look back to them and how the meeting you've done. Instead of just asking questions, you can also share your own experiences and insights.
- **Listen more than talk.** Since you are there to learn about their experience and company, the primary focus of the conversation should be on the other person. Some people might be more talkative, while others may need more time for you to ask questions. Make sure they are speaking for 80% of the time. The primary focus should be on short pauses, and be respectful and patient if they need time to gather their thoughts.
- **Take notes of action items as you go along.** There are many action items that can come out of a conversation like this. You might need to ask the other person for more info, they might offer to connect you with someone else, or you might need to ask the other person for more info. Make sure you are taking notes of all the action items that come out of the conversation, so you can follow up on your promises and make it easy for the other person to remember the details.
- **Close the conversation by clarifying what's next.** Thank them for their time, summarize what you have learned, and give your action items from the conversation. The goal is to make the other person feel valued and appreciated—after all, they've been generous with their time.

Asking for a referral

Getting a referral is an ideal outcome for a networking conversation. However, not every conversation will end in a referral. Sometimes there will be no referral, and sometimes the person might not be ready to refer you to a variety of reasons. It's important to respect their boundaries and understand that it is also important to keep the conversation without the expectation of a referral. Focusing on learning about the role and getting advice from your new connection will help the process go off as smoothly as possible.

During the course of the conversation, you confirm that there is a role available that you are qualified for, the company is doing well, and you should be able to refer the person to the company. If the other person is unable to provide a referral, it's important to respect their boundaries and understand that it is also important to keep the conversation without the expectation