

Job Link

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JOB QUEST: 5 STEPS TO YOUR NEXT JOB

by Amy Lindgren and from *ivillage.com*

Missing one or more of these steps means you have no direction, or no market research, or perhaps that you're under-qualified. Or maybe not enough people know about your job search, or you have no real strategy for your job search.

Whatever your weak spot is, this guide will help you to strengthen it. If you follow these steps, you will get offers. The quality of the offers will depend on how well you follow each step. Old-fashioned luck will also play a part, but remember: with few exceptions, you make your own luck. Keep reading to find out how. And - good luck!

STEP ONE: Setting Your Goals

What's so hard about that?

Sounds simple, doesn't it? So why do we have so much trouble explaining what kind of job we want? Because goal setting, especially when it relates to jobs, is a very emotional process. Our jobs are not just a place to work. They determine our standard of living, our place in society, and our personal identity. In America, it seems, you **are** what you **do**.

Goal setting can be very complex, depending on the circumstances of your life. This section will give you an outline on the process, as it relates to job search.

Want a good job? Set a good goal.

Remember the old saying, "If you don't know where you're going, how will you know when you get there?" This is especially true of job search. If you don't decide the kind of job you want, you may not recognize it when it comes along. Even worse, other people won't recognize it. And since most job leads come from friends and family, it's very important that they can recognize a good fit when they see it. Getting leads from other people is part of the hidden job market, and that is where you will find the action.

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NOTABLE QUOTABLE

**"Obstacles are those
frightful things you see
when you take your
eyes off your goals."**

—Anonymous



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GOOOOOOAAAAALLLL !

The article that we are featuring this month and next focuses on the importance directing your job search in a methodical and productive manner, starting with, setting a goal. Many people start their job search with a vague idea of what they want, but this does not really help you when you get into the thick of your job search because, as it says in the article, if you say "I'll take anything." that is exactly what you will get.

Go through these steps as described, even with a pad and pencil to jot down your answers as they occur to you. If you have a hard time focusing or narrowing your criteria, talk to your NRI Recruiter. Sometimes an objective opinion of your criteria and your skills in relation to the current market can help you set realistic goals.

This applies to temporary positions, as well. Temping can give you exposure to different kinds of work in different companies. Once you know what you want to do, it is good for both you and your temporary employer if you are focused on accepting temporary positions that can do, are good at and in which you have an interest. When these things come into play, you create better work product.

But there is a caveat; one very important aspect that the article does not mention is **F-L-E-X-I-B-L-I-T-Y**. Setting goals and criteria is very important, but make sure you are willing to be flexible on certain aspects if everything else is what you want. This is especially important in a rough economy where ideal jobs are more scarce. If a permanent position is available in the industry you want, near your home with a good salary and benefits, would you turn it down if it was not the title you wanted but the

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Goal setting is also important from the employer's point of view. If you don't know what you want, how will they? An employer today will not take the time to "fit you in" to their company. You must decide what you can - and want to - do for them, then sell them on the data.

Last, a good goal is important for your own happiness. Remember the saying, "Be careful what you ask for - you may get it"? Well, if you say you will take "anything," those are the kinds of offers you will get. And very few of those jobs will fit your real goals for salary, location, co-workers or promotion.

1. Job Title: Position Desired

The job title or position desired is the most important part of a job search goal. Without this you don't know what to ask an employer for. Imagine shopping for a car without any idea what you want. Should it be a family car or a sports car? New or used? What model do you prefer? Without this basic information, you don't even know which car lot to visit. It would be so much easier if you knew that you wanted say, a late-model Ford with four doors and cruise control. Now you can start shopping! Your job search will be most effective if you have a job title in mind. Then your friends can keep their eyes open, employers can tell you if that job is likely to open up, and you can ask for help from temporary

agencies, job hotlines, job search counselors and headhunters. This will shave months off your job search. If you can't settle on a job title, you can at least name the industry or department you are interested in. It's fine to have more than one job title in mind, but keep it down to two or three. Too many job goals are the same as having none at all! Remember, you can always change your goal if the first one doesn't work out.

2. Salary Needed (not desired)

Wages are the most emotional part of the goal setting process. No one wants to work for less than they are worth. Still, sometimes you have to take less in order to get the job you want. Before you can do that, you need to know your absolute bottom line - based on your needs, not your pride. This figure is not for the employer, but for you. You need to know your range. Otherwise, you may lose opportunities in your job search

3. Geographic Area to Work

If you are willing to relocate, pick your top three cities to work in, then rank them. Start your job search by concentrating on your first choice city, then expand to the second choice city as your job search goes on. If you don't plan to move, define the range you want to work within. Do you want to work close to your home so you can walk to

GOOOOOOAAAAALLLL ! . . . CONTINUED

opportunity for advancement was there? Would you refuse a temporary assignment if it was paying what you need, and it was work you *can* do but did not necessarily *want* to do if it were a choice of that assignment or not working for the day? The logical answer to both of these questions is, "No." Your goal is important, but sometimes it is *more* important to step back and look at the big picture. If making a few compromises in your criteria does not completely derail you from your

goal, it may help you in the long run to make the compromises. In other words, have your goals and criteria in mind, but do hold them so hard and fast that you blind yourself to other opportunities as they come along.

Your quest is our quest at NRI; to help you find a position that not only fulfills your wallet, but also fulfills you. Use our experience to give you perspective and help you reach your goals.

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work? Then this is your target area. 40- Would you draw the line at a mile commute to work? Then this is your outside ring of job search.

4. Work Conditions

The work conditions you want are usually closely tied to the job title or industry you choose. For example, a person who chooses to be a truck driver already knows they will be on the road a lot, will often work alone, and will wear casual work clothes. Sometimes deciding the work conditions can help you choose job titles.

Use this short list of work conditions to get started. Note the conditions you would like most in your next job. Then, add more of your own:

- Indoor work/Outdoor work
- Travel
- Talking with many people
- To work at a desk
- Work on a computer
- Physical labor
- Work alone/Work on a team
- Help people
- Stable schedule/Flexible hours
- Casual dress

STEP TWO: Gathering Information

Your next step is to learn more about the position or industry you have chosen. Before you spend time and money on your job search, you need to find out.

- Is this a good field to go into?
- Do these jobs exist in my area?
- What are the average wages?
- What skills do jobs like this require?
- Is it a growing field?
- Where is the growth concentrated?
- Where will this field be in the future?

There are many ways to get information about a job or industry. The most accurate up to date information will come from speaking to people. You can also gain a broad understanding by reading about a company or industry.

Informational Interviews

An informational interview is a conversation (interview) where the goal is information. It's not a job interview. That comes later.

Instead, it's a short meeting, maybe 20 minutes, with a person in the company or industry that you are interested in. It's your chance to get first hand information, such as: Where is this industry heading? How much do entry-level people usually make in this field? What are the skills employers most want for this work? Is a degree needed?

It's not uncommon for job seekers to get offers after an informational interview. If the meeting goes well, your new friend will remember you when an opening comes up.

STEP THREE: Getting Skilled

From your research you will know which skills employers value most in your target job area. Do you have those skills? In not, you have three choices:

1. Negotiate a compromise with the employer
2. Get the skills
3. Choose another goal

The best job search uses a combination of the first and second options. Sometimes it makes sense to change goals, but before you do, find out if options one or two are possible for you.

Negotiate a Compromise

Examples of compromise include:

- Starting at a lower wage until you know the job
- Taking evening classes while you're working
- Starting in a lower position and working your way up
- Starting part time and advancing to full-time
- Changing the job to remove the things you can't do

These are options to explore in your

Informational interviews. (Example: "Do you think an employer would ever take on an apprentice?") If the compromise seems possible, go ahead and try for the jobs. Then propose your compromise in the job interview.

Get the Skills

If you're serious about the field, and the skills you lack are important, you'll want to get training. Some of your options include:

- *Formal Training*: a certificate or degree program at a local school.
- *Customized Training*: a special mix of classes you design with your school advisor to fill the gaps in your experience.
- *On the Job Training*: an agreement with the employer to train you while you work.
- *Internship*: an agreement with the employer to teach you specific tasks for a certain length of time. There is usually little or no pay, and no promise of employment. These are often arranged through a school, although you can also arrange your own.
- *Association Meetings*: Do you want to learn to make sales presentations? Join Toastmasters, or a sales club. Are you interested in accounting? An accounting club will host speakers to teach members about the field. These meetings are less formal than a class, but you pick up tips from the experts- people who hold jobs like the one you want.
- *Seminars, Conferences, Short Classes*: Often offered by professional associations and community centers. These classes vary in quality and length. Often they are the only choice for training in a new or changing field.

The conclusion of this article will appear next month.

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