

KFORCE 2020 *JOB SEARCH GUIDE*



**Expert Advice on
What it Takes
TO GET A JOB IN 2020**

KFORCE

How to get a job in 2020

Searching for a new job is tough. The application process can be daunting and take longer than you might expect. Going through interview after interview can feel like climbing Mount Everest.

Landing a new job in the 21st century requires skills you may not even realize you have.

Conquering every step in the journey requires a modern job search strategy. We've got you covered with our third annual Kforce Job Search Guide—filled to the brim with advice from our recruiting experts.



50+ Years

At Kforce, our vision is *To Have A Meaningful Impact on All The Lives We Serve®*, and this includes you. Our job search guide shares expert advice backed by our 50 plus years of experience hiring tens of thousands of professionals like you. Whether you are going through this process alone or [working with a recruiter](#), we're here to help you during every stage of your job search.

We'll help you conquer your job hunt, one victory at a time. Let's get started!

Knowing how to find a job you love will serve you repeatedly over the course of your career.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

OPTIMIZE YOUR PERSONAL BRAND

- 4 Importance of your personal brand
- 5 Proving your skills and experience
- 6 Establishing your professional values
- 6 Presenting your personal brand
- 7 Caring about your personal brand
- 8 Leveraging social media

BUILD A NETWORK

- 9 How to network for the job search
- 9 Tips for building a professional network

PARTNER WITH A RECRUITER

- 12 Tips for working with a recruiter

CREATE A COMPELLING RESUME

- 15 Importance of high-quality resumes
- 15 Resume tips for finding a job in 2020
- 17 How long your resume should be
- 18 The definition of a master resume
- 18 How to create a master resume
- 18 Writing your resume for ATS
- 19 Creating a bot-friendly resume
- 19 Resume testing for ATS format
- 20 Writing your resume for SEO
- 20 How context trumps keywords
- 21 Writing a career change resume

SEARCH FOR JOBS

- 23 Determining your job search strategy
- 23 Methods for nailing your job search

APPLY FOR JOBS

- 27 The best time to apply for a job
- 30 Chatbots are changing recruiting
- 32 How to apply for your next role

MASTER THE INTERVIEW

- 34 Learning intel about the company
- 34 How to research your interviewers
- 35 Preparing for a behavioral interview
- 36 Top behavioral questions to know
- 38 Crafting your perfect elevator pitch
- 39 Auditing your digital footprint
- 39 The significance of first impressions
- 40 Ways to properly exude confidence
- 40 Preparing for a video interview
- 41 What's new about video interviews
- 42 Don't forget the thank-you notes

ACCEPT THE JOB OFFER

- 44 Remembering that you're worth it
- 45 Understanding what's expected of you
- 45 Job offers aren't one-size-fits-all
- 46 How to master the art of the ask
- 47 When it's time to accept the job offer

Optimize Your Personal Brand

Whether you're going on a first date or a job interview, chances are someone is going to Google you.

In the olden days, businesses advertised jobs in the classifieds, and job seekers physically submitted their resume via mail or in person. The internet, Google and social media did not exist. If you literally looked good on paper, you might get an interview.

Times have certainly changed.

Gone are the days when your resume accounted for the bulk of landing a new job. Many factors determine which candidates get selected. Resumes are essential, and you need to have a strong one. But recruiters are research savvy, and they know how to evaluate your entire professional brand. They don't stop at your resume—they're Googling you and viewing your social media profiles and activity.

Throughout your journey as a job candidate, you must control your narrative—the overarching story your online persona illustrates. Don't let your online reputation take on a life of its own. A recruiter's first impression of you is no longer only made in the interview room: it's also made online.

Every company has a brand, and it either contributes to the company's success or hinders it. Every person has a professional brand that either elevates their career success or doesn't.

Your professional brand (also referred to as your personal brand) encompasses your past experiences, who you are, what you do, your attitudes, habits, beliefs and where you're headed. One's professional brand can be broken down into skills and experience, professional values and behavior.

Later in this section we will go through each of the above and show you how to demonstrate them online.

Importance of your personal brand

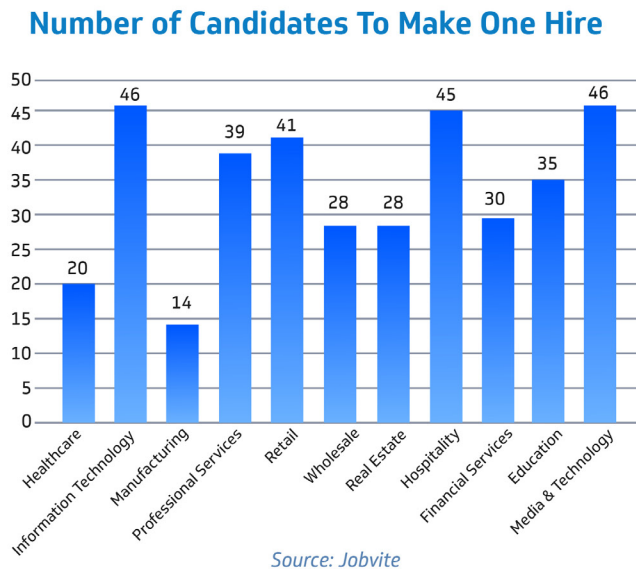
Although the United States unemployment rate is at a historical low, you'd think landing your dream job would be easy.

Not so.

As companies embrace "alternative work," the talent pool continues to expand. The alternative workforce includes contractors, freelancers, independent workers, gig workers and people with second jobs (often part-time). Deloitte's latest millennial study found that 64% of full-time workers want to do "[side hustles](#)" to make extra money. In 2020, the number of self-employed workers is [projected to triple](#) to 42 million people, with freelance and contract workers making up 43% of the U.S. workforce.

Optimize Your Personal Brand

This expanded talent pool means more competition for every open job. Now more than ever, you need to differentiate yourself from other candidates.



To ensure job security, you must cultivate a professional brand, as most recruiters use social media and other online resources to assess your candidacy.

Now, let's dive into crafting a positive professional brand to help you to rise above the pack.

Proving your skills and experience

The first step when creating or updating your resume and/or social media profiles is to analyze your skills and past experiences.

Begin by analyzing the required preferred skills and experience of your target job. As you craft your professional brand, paint a holistic picture using your entire digital persona. Demonstrate why you are the best fit for your ideal job. Skills to articulate and demonstrate are:

Hard skills: These are technical competencies that you need to complete tasks efficiently and successfully. They often are a minimum job requirement and vary by occupation. Examples include proficiency in programming languages, using test automation tools and working with graphic design programs.

Soft skills: You need this set of skills to successfully execute the technical skills of your job. Examples include time management, written communication, project management and presentation skills.

Visit other sections of this guide on how to showcase your skills and experience on your [resume](#) and [LinkedIn](#).

Establishing your professional values

Professional values are “business-related beliefs or principles that guide professional behavior. Values may reflect ethics, practices, standards and other norms within a commercial environment,” [according to Business Dictionary](#). These beliefs enable you to make judgment calls at work to ensure the best interest of the department and the employer are promoted.

Examples include accountability, integrity, teamwork, transparency, commitment to your profession and continued learning.

Infusing your professional values into your digital persona requires focus and effort. We'll show you how to accomplish this next.

Suggested Reading:

[The Best Skills to Include on Your Resume](#)

[99 Key Skills for a Resume \(Best List of Examples for All Types of Jobs\)](#)

[Impressive Skills to Include on Your Resume](#)

Presenting your personal brand

To show potential employers that you possess the skills and the professional values they desire in a new employee, it's worth your time to focus on a few key areas.



Continued learning: Showing your commitment to continuous learning will attract potential employers. Manifest this trait by engaging with content on social media. Let's say a peer posts about a new technology poised to disrupt your industry. Join the conversation by posting a thoughtful comment, asking a question or sharing related content with your network. Demonstrate your knowledge of trends that impact your profession, industry, employer or customers.

Professional achievements: Highlight your achievements to showcase your strong work ethic and why you are an asset in the workplace. Awards like Employee of the Quarter or Rookie of the Year can give a hiring manager insight into the impact you can have at any organization. It's also an effective way to bolster your profile and resume.

Teamwork: No matter your role or career level, nothing is possible without teamwork. Demonstrate to potential employers that you have strong collaboration skills by showcasing team projects on your resume and LinkedIn profile.

Optimize Your Personal Brand

Commitment: Passion for your work can be the one trait that sets you apart from the competition. Hiring managers hire team members who are committed and devoted! Think about your coworkers. Isn't it more enjoyable to work with people who bring enthusiasm to the office? In today's digital world, it is easy for recruiters to spot passion for one's work. Make it a point to share content and participate in discussions about trends and issues impacting your field. Provide value to others within your industry and to those entering it. Be an advocate for your profession.

Now that we have discussed what crafting a positive professional brand entails, let's talk about why you should care.



Caring about your personal brand

1. It's not all about your resume

Recruiters don't hire resumes; they hire human beings. Think beyond the resume and view your professional brand as a singular, unique entity. Recruiters are assessing your fit for their company culture, your potential to advance the company's purpose and how well-rounded you are—not just on the job, but also outside of work. They're looking for qualities, experience and skills that cannot be conveyed on a resume alone.

2. Employers often hire for potential

The majority of employers will hire and train people who may not have all the skills they need, but have potential, according to [CareerBuilder](#). Fifty-nine percent of all employers surveyed plan to train low-skill workers who don't have experience in their field and hire them for higher-skill jobs.

Use social media to demonstrate what your resume can't. Resumes are static and limiting. You can't represent your potential on a resume. They don't live and breathe as your professional brand does.

Use social media to network with other professionals in your field. Commit to developing long-term relationships with potential mentors, partners or employers. This can help you develop your skill set, stay current on the latest trends and stand out from other applicants.

Most industries change rapidly, and to remain competitive and grow professionally, it's important to focus on self-study and continuously push yourself to learn new things.

3. What happens in Vegas could cost you a job

Recruiters and talent sourcers are savvy at internet research and can find just about anything online—whether you think it is private or not. Google yourself online. What do you see? Now

Optimize Your Personal Brand

Imagine you are highly-trained in [conducting x-ray searches](#) and uncovering “private” information online. Your online activity can cost you a job. What’s posted on the internet is written in permanent ink. In the physical world, there is context. In the digital world, there is not. Something you may find funny or innocuous may resonate differently to someone else.

Leveraging social media

What’s the best way to use your personal brand to get a new job? There is a long answer to that short question, and we don’t have enough room on this page to cover it all here.

Check out these in-depth articles below for channel-specific strategies to optimize your professional brand on Twitter, LinkedIn and Instagram.

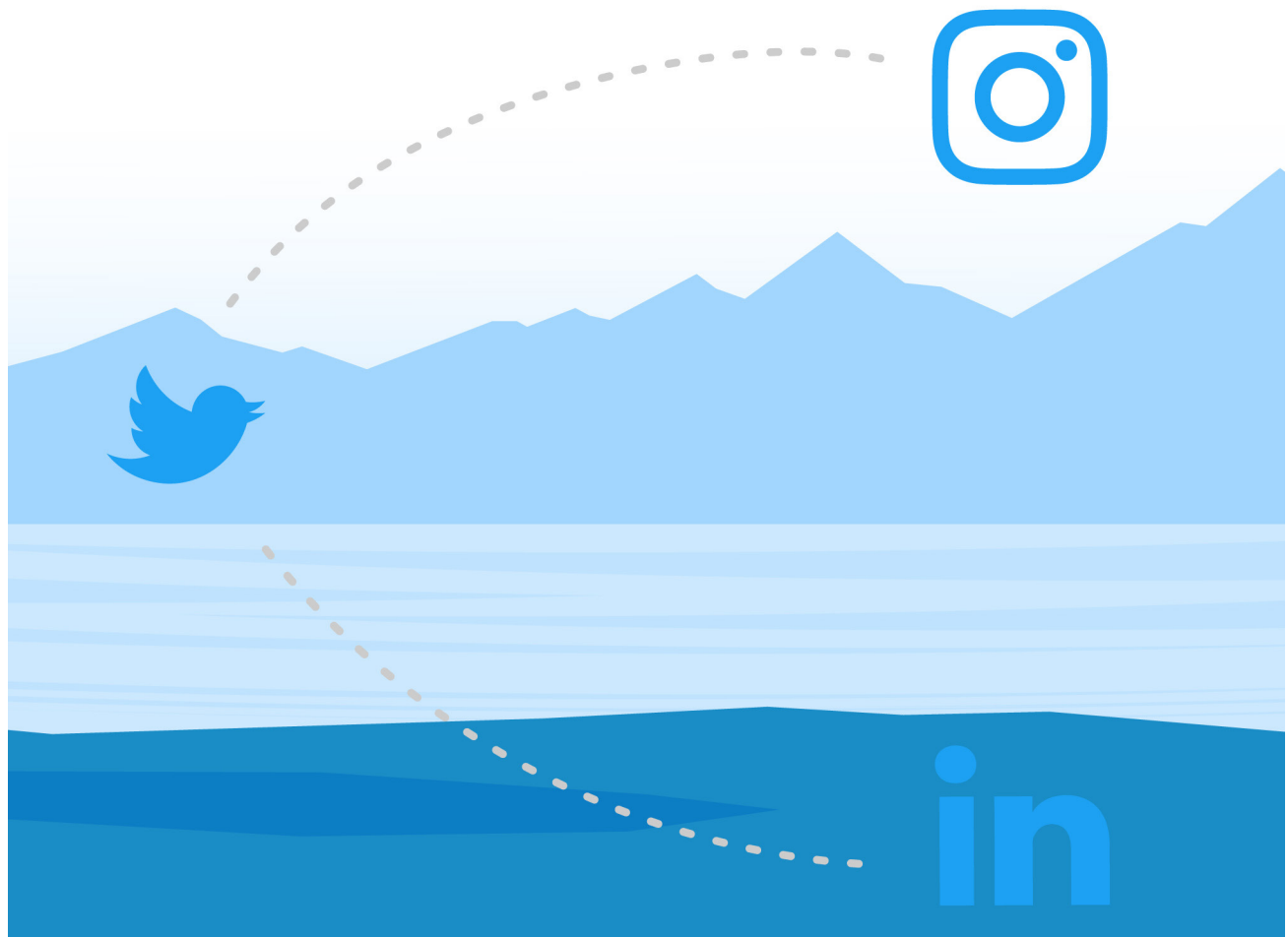
Suggested Reading:

[How to Optimize Your LinkedIn Profile](#)

[How to Use Twitter to Find a Job](#)

[Twitter: How to Stay Updated on Industry Trends](#)

[How to Use Instagram During the Job Search](#)



Build a Network

How to network for the job search

In today's job market, submitting a resume isn't enough to land that coveted role you've been dreaming about. The majority of people [surveyed by LinkedIn](#) consider networking vital to career success, and we agree: establishing relationships is a vital component of upward mobility.

To network successfully, planning is essential. And we're here to be your guiding light. That's why we've prepared seven tips to help you master the networking stage of your job search journey.

Tips for building a professional network

Mastering the art of networking can be a challenging and uncomfortable experience, regardless of your career level. Put your worries at ease with these simple steps:

1. Attend networking events

No one wants to be the person handing out candy stapled to personal business cards on Halloween. There's a time and a place for that—networking events. Prepare to get out of your comfort zone and have your elevator pitch ready. Who knows? You might meet someone who can change the course of your career after just a quick conversation.

Try to make connections before the actual event via email or LinkedIn. This will help boost your confidence and start the process of building rapport with new connections. You can also check if the event has a hashtag on Twitter to see who is discussing the event, agenda, etc. and start establishing your network early on.

Pro Tip: Use [LinkedIn's "find nearby" feature](#) to connect with people at your networking event. Simply activate Bluetooth on your device, press on "My Network" in the bottom menu followed by "Connect" and then select "Find Nearby." This is a great starting point for building professional relationships within a matter of minutes.

2. Join a local professional group

What better way to find open positions in your field than to build relationships with industry professionals in your area? A professional group is a great way to find a mentor to help you reach your career goals or get your foot through the door at your dream company. The vast access to career resources, training material and industry knowledge doesn't hurt either.



OF PEOPLE BUILD STRONGER, MORE MEANINGFUL
RELATIONSHIPS IN PERSON.

Source: Forbes

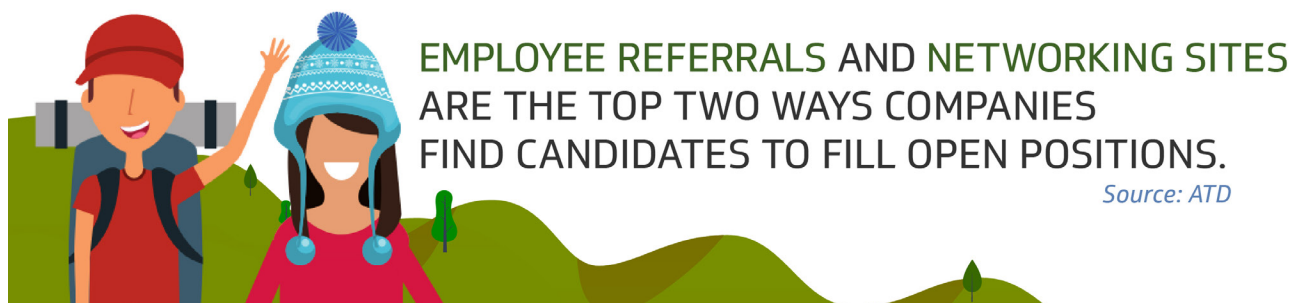
3. Leverage your alumni association

Your alumni association isn't just responsible for those annual fundraising calls you receive each year. Consider your alma mater as an opportunity to gain access to all things job search related, such as exclusive job boards, networking events and classmates from a wide variety of backgrounds. This vast resource can also help you build rapport with individuals who share your pride of graduating from the same school, establishing a lifelong bond.

Pro Tip: A university will typically have an online directory with information on each alumni's current place of employment. Leverage this resource to connect with contacts who work at your employer of choice. This may just be your next stepping stone to nailing your dream job.

4. Spark a conversation through your social networking sites

Your social media connections are good for more than just puppy pictures. Over a third of [professionals around the world](#) report having casual conversations on LinkedIn Messaging create new career opportunities. For instance, a coworker you used to work with or a contact you made at a conference may have a shared connection at the company you just applied to. Take the time to remind them where you met and ask them for an introduction, rather than resorting to a cold outreach approach.



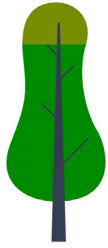
5. Follow up with your connections

Don't be a one-and-done connector after meeting someone at a conference or professional organization. Holding on to long-term relationships is all about maintaining connections and showing appreciation for their time. Remember, a charming handwritten note or thank-you email goes a long way when it comes to building your network. You'd be surprised how few of your competition overlook this simple but effective approach.

Pro Tip: If you don't receive a response within a few days, don't hesitate to pick up the phone. Once you have them on the phone, ask whether they have any tips or referrals to help you in your search.

6. Volunteer in the community

Volunteering is an excellent way to create bonds with like-minded individuals who share your passion for [serving the community](#). Not only does it teach you new skills you can take back to a potential employer, but it also is helpful for those who are more introverted to develop their sociability and broaden their network, while giving back to a great cause. Data indicates employers are also more likely to choose a [candidate with volunteering experience](#) on their resume—creating yet another great reason to help those in need.



**92% OF PEOPLE BELIEVE VOLUNTEERING
IMPROVES AN EMPLOYEE'S PROFESSIONAL SKILLS.**

Source: Deloitte

7. Create mutually-beneficial relationships

Remember, building networks isn't just to advance your career. It's about creating meaningful relationships to help each other succeed. When speaking with a connection, make sure to really listen. Think about who you can introduce your contact to based on their career aspirations or how you can help them develop a skill set. This method will secure your relationship for years to come.

Pro Tip: Set up reoccurring calls with your close contacts to discuss any new industry developments, opportunities for advancement and professionals to sync up with to assist with the job search journey.

So, what are you waiting for? Go out and put these methods into use!

You've put in a lot of work up to this point in optimizing your professional brand. Now let's turn our attention to creating a powerful resume that answers why YOU are the best person for the job.



Partner with a Recruiter

Tips for working with a recruiter

It's no secret that searching for a job is hard.

Whether it's looking for the best time to apply, coordinating interviews or playing the waiting game to hear back from an employer, finding your next career stop requires tremendous work and good faith.

While some job seekers embark on the job search journey alone, others find support alongside seasoned career advocates known as recruiters.

Partnering with a recruiter from a [staffing company](#) can be a vast resource when trying to find your next role. Establishing a relationship with a recruiter presents endless opportunities, such as access to an expanded network, hidden job markets, resume help, salary negotiation assistance and a streamlined job search.

Looking for a job on your own can be difficult amid mounting competition and the fluctuating job market. If a role is not a good fit, candidates are often out of luck. On the other hand, agency recruiters work on multiple jobs across various companies and industries at a time. If one opportunity doesn't pan out, chances are that a recruiter still has something for you that could be a better fit.

Imagine entering a drive-through restaurant with one menu opposed to a mall food court filled with multiple restaurants. With recruiters, you have options—a buffet of possibilities.

“The nice part about working with a staffing services firm is that you are essentially crowdsourcing your job search efforts.”

– Ryan Lynch, Kforce Client Relationship Executive

And the best perk of all—it's free!

Benefits of partnering with a recruiter:

- Expanded network for your job search
- Access to hidden job markets and jobs that may not be posted publicly
- Candidate advocacy
- Salary negotiation
- Free of charge

The benefits of partnering with a recruiter are endless, but you should know how to work with one effectively. As a job seeker, it's vital to prepare for working with a recruiter. Check out these five tips to aid your recruiter in finding the job of your dreams:

1. Ask questions

Have you ever worked with a recruiter? If not, ask about their process and current roles to set realistic expectations. Asking the right questions will help you gain valuable insight into job opportunities, potential employers and how a recruiter operates.

Being inquisitive will enable you to make informed decisions about whether a recruiter, job and/or employer is right for you. Knowledge is power. Consider the following questions the next time you speak to a recruiter:

- What type of roles do you fill?
- What industries do you work in?
- Do you work with a team of recruiters?
- How long has this position been open, and when will it close?
- What is the need for this role?
- How would you describe this position or employer?
- What are the top reasons candidates haven't been chosen?
- What kind of candidate is this employer looking for?

2. Showcase your professionalism

The job market is competitive. And to ensure that you're always in the running, it's imperative that [your brand](#) illustrates your potential and what people envision when working with you.

Treat every encounter like a job interview.

As a potential job candidate, you'll be representing your recruiter and their firm during interviews and employment. It's imperative to always be on your best footing. Consider the following suggestions when showcasing your professionalism:

- When meeting a recruiter or employer, always dress appropriately.
- On the phone, hold yourself professionally in the same regard.
- During interviews, be courteous and prepared.
- Be energetic and enthusiastic.
- Be accountable and reliable.

3. Be honest about your motivators

It's also critical to remember when working with a recruiter to be transparent about your wants and needs in a role. Honesty is always the best policy, and the same applies to recruiters. All relationships flourish with open communication.

Recruiters ultimately want you to be happy in your dream job. To achieve this, you'll have to do a little soul searching. You'll also have to communicate your desires effectively. Think of a recruiter as your tailor. No one wants a new dress or suit that's too baggy or small. We all want the perfect fit. That's why it's critical to leave nothing up to interpretation. Consider the following questions when figuring out your job motivators:

Partner with a Recruiter

- What are your non-negotiables?
- What company culture, environment and benefits do you desire?
- What are your salary requirements?
- What is your desired commute?
- What are your short- and long-term goals?
- What is your job search timeline?

4. Be available

We all live busy lives, and work isn't an exception. Having a productive relationship with a recruiter requires commitment, and that means being responsive.

While recruiters will try to accommodate your schedule, it's a best practice that you make yourself reasonably available. The employment landscape moves at an incredible rate, and often employers need talent sooner than later. Opportunities pass quickly, so be ready when they arise. Here are some tips to ensure you're as accessible as possible:

- Check your email and voicemails regularly.
- Follow up promptly when communicated with.
- Establish a preferred communication model.
- Identify the best times for contact.



5. Keep them updated

[Meaningful relationships](#) don't happen without frequent communication. If you seek a lifelong career advocate, attempt to stay in touch with your recruiter. Wherever you are in your job search, it's essential to maintain a strong relationship. Consider the following activities to keep your recruiter in the know:

- Stay in touch about your job search progress.
- Schedule regular, but courteous check-ins.
- Approach your recruiter with any issues or concerns.
- Provide feedback about how things are going.
- Share recent promotions, acquired skills and new positions.
- Be proactive in sharing your current resume and career goals.

Create a Compelling Resume

Some recruiters spend as little as six seconds scanning your resume.

That's not a lot of time to make a positive impression on a recruiter. This section will show you how to use your resume as your sales pitch in order to win over a recruiter and get the interview. The tips below will increase the likelihood of your resume falling into the short stack of "yes" candidates.

Importance of high-quality resumes

Though recruiters and hiring managers will study your LinkedIn profile, blog or recent tweets when considering your candidacy for a job, your resume will often be the very first item they review. It may be the deciding factor that either rules you in or out of the running. You need to have a high-quality resume that tells your story—with a focus on how you will add value to your future employer.

Resume tips for finding a job in 2020

1. Think like a recruiter

When writing your resume, think through the lens of the recruiter. They are busy with many resumes to scan weekly. Ensure your resume is easy to navigate and doesn't try to be too fancy. Stick to commonly used fonts, use bullets instead of long sentences and include easily understandable language.

2. Tailor your resume to the job you're applying to

Instead of casting a wide net and applying to multiple jobs at once, narrow your selection to focus on the jobs you truly want. Then, tailor your resume to that specific job. Include real examples of past experiences and accomplishments that align with every bullet on the job description.

James Smith		Email james.smith@mail.com
		Address 1234 Moby Avenue Orlando, Florida 33512
		Phone (123) 456-7890
<hr/>		
Experience		
Mobile App Developer	<ul style="list-style-type: none">- Designed company's mobile application to support bitcoin and Ethereum payments- Developed backend platform to pull transactions from a cloud database- Improved user experience by 35% through debugging and optimizing applications- Ensured smooth deployment of product release and updates	
ABC Company		
June 2017 - August 2018		
<i>Include real examples for the specific job you're applying to</i>		

3. Consider a video resume

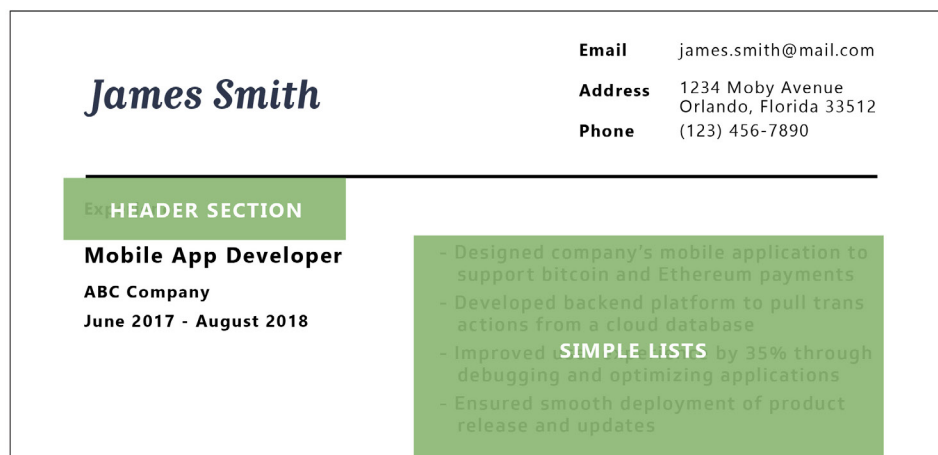
In addition to your print resume, [create a short video](#) to stand out to prospective employers. Target the video to each position or company you are applying to. Show off your personality, highlight your experiences and market why you are the best candidate for the job. You may be allowed to upload the video resume directly to your job profile.

4. Develop a keyword strategy

Before applying for a job, carefully dissect the job posting and create a list of skills, knowledge, etc. required. Hiring managers spend a good deal of time skimming through resumes to identify keywords that match the job description. We recommend including keywords and phrases 2-3 times in your resume to ensure it is found when employers use [applicant tracking systems](#).

5. Organize your resume

Make your resume easy to read by including header sections, concise information and simple lists. Order your resume by the information that you want to spotlight first. This will allow hiring managers to quickly scan your resume and find the qualifications they are looking for.



6. Include only relevant information

Don't waste time including unnecessary details or jobs on your resume that don't illustrate skills needed for the role. Avoid overused words that don't differentiate yourself from your competitors, like "energetic" or "good communicator."

7. Validate your experience

Show the impact you had in your previous roles by detailing your accomplishments, quantifiable metrics and context. Give credibility to your work experience and skill set by providing links to relevant resources, including personal websites, your LinkedIn profile and digital portfolios. It's best to hyperlink words, instead of including a long, ugly link on your resume. If you plan on having a printed version of your resume, use a link shortener like Bitly for a cleaner look.

8. Check for spelling and grammar

Before submitting a resume, always conduct a spelling and grammar check. Your resume is your first impression with a prospective employer. And, we can't forget the age-old adage—first impressions matter! Enlist the help of free online grammar tools to avoid mistakes.

9. Be honest

Always be truthful about your past work experience, including what you did in a role and how long you were there. Hiring managers and recruiters can spot inconsistencies in resumes. According to a [CareerBuilder study](#) of about 2,000 hiring managers, 57% of respondents said the most common lie they catch on a resume is an embellished skill set.

10. Show career progression

Your resume is prime real estate for sharing your story. Hiring managers are looking for someone who has grown in their career. Outline the key responsibilities you've held in each position and how they've contributed to your overall career success.

11. Think holistically about your professional brand

Most hiring managers want to understand you as a total package—in and out of the office. Demonstrate your understanding of the company and share how your volunteer experiences, passions and hobbies align with the company's purpose.

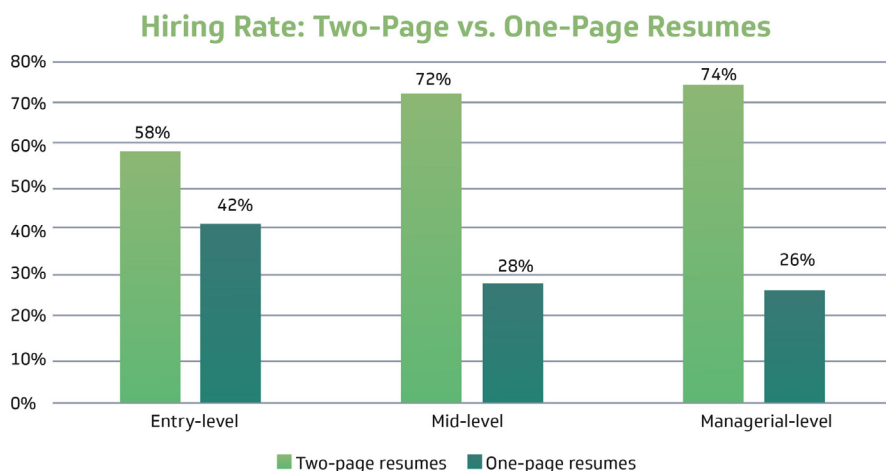
Suggested Reading:

[Here's How to Highlight STEM Experience on a Resume](#)
[The Ultimate Guide to Resumes](#)
[How to Get Your Resume Noticed by Employers](#)

How long your resume should be

Resume length has been a hot debate for years. Those who believe resumes should be on a single page typically claim that recruiters and hiring managers will lose patience when reading an unnecessarily long resume. Proponents of longer resumes say they want more details about a candidate's work experiences, accomplishments and skills.

Professional resume writing service [ResumeGo](#) conducted a study to discover the optimal length for a resume. Out of the 7,712 resumes that participants chose in the simulated hiring process, a whopping 5,375 of these resumes were two pages in length. This means that recruiters were 2.3x as likely to prefer two-page resumes over one-page resumes.



Source: ResumeGo Institute

Create a Compelling Resume

The study also found that the benefits of including a second page increased the more senior the role. Candidates with longer resumes were hired more than 70% of the time for mid-level or managerial-level roles.

We don't recommend that you stuff your resume with irrelevant information to span two pages. As you're creating your resume, ensure you are including the experiences and skills pertinent to the job you are applying for. But, don't cut out necessary information. Embrace the second page if you need it.

The definition of a master resume

You've got tons of work experience with plenty of awards and accomplishments to match. However, when compiled, your extensive 4-page resume exceeds the recommended 1-2 pages. While listing all your accomplishments may seem like a good idea, employers are looking for candidates with specific skill sets.

Enter the master resume.

A master resume is a chronological record of your entire work history. It is used as a springboard to create tailored resumes to submit for each job you apply to.

How to create a master resume

1. First, gather job descriptions for jobs that interest you—regardless of whether you are going to apply to those jobs. Good sites to try:

- Indeed.com
- Careerbuilder.com
- Simplyhired.com
- Glassdoor.com

2. Compile the keywords and phrases from the job descriptions into one long list.

3. Combine your long list with descriptions of your past experiences, education, certifications, etc. to create one long master resume.

Don't submit your master resume when applying to jobs. Instead, take your most relevant job experiences from your master resume and tailor it to each job you're applying to.

Writing your resume for ATS

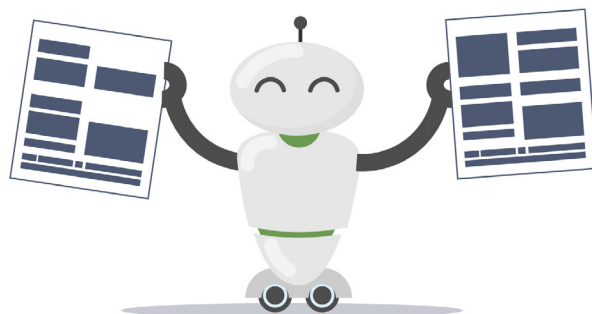
Thanks to technology, applying online is easy and fast. The result for employers is a mountain of job applications for every open role. On average, large corporate [companies receive up to 250 resumes for each job they post](#), according to Zety.

Create a Compelling Resume

Recruiters and hiring managers utilize artificial intelligence, automation and machine learning to sort through thousands of applications they receive. Software known as an ATS, short for applicant tracking system, scans and filters submitted resumes based on specified criteria before being viewed by an actual human. These systems automatically filter out candidates who aren't a close match for a role.

If you haven't been contacted after submitting a resume, an ATS may have something to do with it. Your resume should be crafted to attract a robot recruiter to increase your chances of landing an interview in 2020.

Creating a bot-friendly resume



- Use standard fonts like Times, Arial, Georgia, Tahoma and Verdana.
- When using lists in your resume, stick to bullets. Avoid symbols like arrows, check marks and hyphens to prevent information scrambling.
- Use header sections like Summary, Professional Skills, Experience and Education.
- Do not include pertinent information such as skills, contact information or links in the header or footer. Not every ATS can read information in these document sections.
- Save your resume in a compatible format: .doc, .docx or .txt.
- Avoid PDFs. Some older ATS software interprets PDF information as one single image.
- Spell out all terms alongside abbreviations and acronyms [i.e., project manager (PM)].
- Use relevant, targeted keywords and phrases.
- Keep graphics and design elements to a minimum.

Resume testing for ATS format

Convert your resume to a plain-text document

We recommend checking your resume for ATS compliance before submitting it to an ATS. Copy content from your resume and paste it into a plain-text document. Missing information, scrambled characters and unorganized information can signal that your resume needs some refinement to best suit an ATS. For example, the dates of your employment might appear next to the wrong job entry or your summary section appears in the middle of your education. These are easy fixes—but you need to discover these issues first in order to resolve them.

Use a web-based software to score your resume

There are some fantastic tools that predict your resume's likelihood of being viewed by a human through an ATS. Check out online software systems such as [Resunate](#) and [Jobscan](#) to score your resume like an applicant tracking system would. These features can take your resume from zero to hero, giving you recommendations to fix your resume and improve your overall score.

Writing your resume for SEO

A crucial step in getting your resume into a recruiter's "yes" pile is making it search engine optimized. [SEO works](#) by implementing a keyword strategy including words and phrases that help get your resume found—whether it is online or in an ATS.

In resume writing for SEO, you'll need to include industry keywords that show you're the right person for the job. Not sure which keywords to use? Review the descriptions of the positions you want. Create a list of common keywords and phrases used throughout. The right keyword can be a defining factor in an employer finding your resume.

During your research, keep the following questions in mind when building your keyword strategy:

- **Job titles:** What relevant job titles are being used that describe your skill set? What are all the variant titles used for similar roles?
- **Skills:** What are the specific skills required for the job(s) you seek?
- **Industry:** Is the employer looking for a candidate with a specific background?
- **Location:** Does your address match the location of the position you're applying for?
- **Technologies:** Which technologies should you be proficient in?
- **Certifications:** Are there any specific certifications or education requirements?

How context trumps keywords

Most applicant tracking systems ignore extra instances of keywords. Avoid stuffing your resume with repetitive keywords, and only use them where they make logical sense.

Also, don't forget that keywords are nothing without context. You'll need to provide relevant experience and compelling details that illustrate your abilities around these keywords. Make sure your resume answers the who, what, where and why to convince hiring managers and employers that your skills can "walk the talk."

Example:

If you're a *[job title]*, don't say you're familiar with "*[keyword/skill]*." Say instead, "I worked for *[company]* on a large *[specific project]* and achieved *[solution]*."

Create a Compelling Resume

Pro Tip: Visit LinkedIn and research other professionals who have the job you're trying to land. It doesn't matter if they are at your current company or in an entirely different industry. Study how they communicate their skill sets and experiences and take note when crafting your resume. Sometimes, the best inspiration can be found by exemplary professionals in your field!

Writing a career change resume

There are many reasons some of us make mid-career transitions. Whether it's due to changes to our industry, the economy, or a shift in our professional interests, we may need to change course.



Trying new jobs is becoming the norm in today's gig economy. Some say the career ladder has been replaced by career scaffolding.

So how do you write a resume for a role that is different than your current and past work?

Searching for a job outside of your industry requires more leg work on your part. But you've got this! Start by creating a career change resume that highlights your transferrable skills, uses the right keywords and showcases relevant educational experiences.

Highlight your transferable skills

A career change resume tells the story of your transferable skills to a recruiter and/or a hiring manager. Your goal is to explain how your qualifications from previous jobs are applicable to the new position you're seeking.

Start by thinking outside of your current and past job titles. Highlight your transferable skills and areas of competence on your resume to downplay your work titles. Skills such as training, customer service and project management can position you for a wide variety of jobs in an array of industries. When writing your work experience section, focus less on the job duties and more on the hard and soft skills you've developed that are likely most appealing to the hiring manager.

Use the right keywords on your resume

This is when your master resume will help. Pay close attention to how a responsibility, requirement or qualification is described by the employer. Take the exact words and phrases used in the job descriptions for roles you are applying to and weave them into your resume. Keywords are your chance to show the recruiter and hiring manager that you are a match for the position. They also help applicant tracking systems identify *your* resume out of the pack as a possible match.

Create a Compelling Resume

Emphasize your education, trade programs, certifications and more

Hiring managers sometimes prefer to hire people outside of their industry. They seek fresh perspectives and ideas from their new hires. When considering applicants, hiring managers look for specific hard and soft skills, which can be acquired across a wide range of industries.

When switching industries, it's important to highlight what you've learned over the course of your career that is relevant to what you'll be doing in your next role. Listing previous coursework, certifications, workshops, etc. demonstrate your focus on continued education—which will be quite appealing to your future boss.

We also learn outside of the classroom and the office. Think through your volunteer experiences. What skills did you pick up that are relevant to the job you're applying to? Highlight what you've learned and what you've accomplished as a volunteer on your resume wherever applicable.

Suggested Reading:

[Resume Writing Tips for Changing Careers](#)
[Functional Resume Tips and Examples](#)



Search for Jobs

Determining your job search strategy

Out of all the steps to land a new job, searching for jobs to apply to can be a real doozy.

There has never been such an excess of information available at our fingertips in the history of humankind. When you start searching for a new job, you're faced with an avalanche of information about employers and jobs. Finding the right job to apply to feels like trying to find a polar bear in a snowstorm.

Without a smart strategy, your job search efforts can quickly grow cold. (See what we did there?)

If you haven't searched for a job recently, you may encounter some surprises in 2020. Technology continues to penetrate multiple areas of our lives in this digital age—and the job hunt is no exception.

With the emergence of company review sites, chatbots that interact with job seekers and the ever-increasing application of artificial intelligence, traditional tactics like reviewing classifieds, cold calling and visiting brick and mortar locations have nearly gone extinct.



To find a job, you need a plan. You are busy, with a finite amount of time to search for jobs.

Scarcity of time may be a significant obstacle for those of us who currently have full-time jobs. Many people say the job hunt often feels like a second full-time job. If this is you, we feel your pain.

We'll show you how to create a job search plan that is targeted, efficient and aligns with modern technology and trends.

Methods for nailing your job search

Tip 1: Define what you want out of a job

- **Roles and responsibilities:** What are your desired daily duties? How will you contribute to an employer's success? Will you be an individual contributor or a manager? Are you looking for a lateral or vertical career move? What are the education requirements for this role?

Search for Jobs

- **Companies:** What's the company's purpose? Does it align with yours? What do employees say about culture, benefits and work? Do you prefer a small, medium or large company? Is there a specific industry you want to be in?
- **Geography:** Where do you want to live and work? Do you prefer to work remote, in an office or both? How far are you willing to commute? Are you open to relocating?

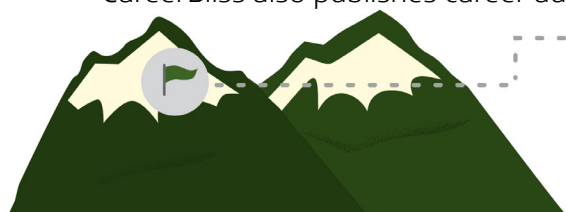
Tip 2: Visit peer review sites

People typically don't make important buying decisions without reading peer reviews.

Finding a job has become very similar to online shopping. And we understand why. Think about how much more important your career is than what restaurant you'll choose for date night. When searching for a job, check as many review sites to learn what employees are saying about the work environment, culture, leadership and more.

Popular employer review sites include:

- **Glassdoor:** This platform is perhaps the most widely-known website for employee reviews. Here, visitors can view pros and cons of working at a company, company profiles, interview tips, CEO approval ratings and more.
- **Indeed:** Best known as a job aggregator site, Indeed also provides company reviews submitted by current and past employees broken down by a rating system based on several factors like work-life balance, compensation, management, culture and more.
- **Fairygodboss:** Fairygodboss describes itself as the largest career community for women. The site shares anonymous company reviews from female employees as well as career advice. It also provides an online forum to discuss issues facing women in the workplace.
- **CareerBliss:** This site shares company reviews, salary information and job postings. CareerBliss also publishes career advice content.



83% OF JOB SEEKERS ARE LIKELY TO
RESEARCH COMPANY REVIEWS WHEN
APPLYING FOR A JOB.

-GLASSDOOR

Additionally, people read Google reviews from employees and customers to gather a holistic view of how a company operates internally and with their customers.

Social media and peer review sites give everyone a voice. Keep an open mind when reading reviews; people can say whatever they like about a company. Taking reviews into consideration is an important part of your research process, but don't let them be the determining factor on whether you apply for the job.

Tip 3: Use social media

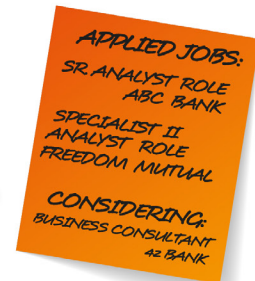
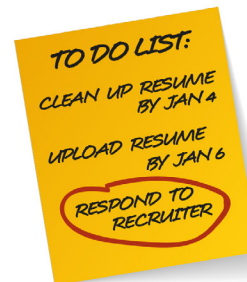
During your job search, take full advantage of social media. This digital space is the cornerstone of online networking. Thanks to social media, you can access thousands of people and jobs globally. LinkedIn is an excellent resource for [uncovering potential connections](#) that you might already have at the company to which you're applying. A quick search of a company name on LinkedIn will give you a list of employees. Then, you can search to see your connections. Turn those contacts into conversations and hopefully into an inside referral. This personal touch can give you a leg up over other applicants!

Twitter is also often considered an [untapped resource](#) for job seekers. It's free and easy to use, even from your phone. [Create a Twitter list](#) that includes recruiters, hiring managers, job search websites and your target companies. Then check their tweets daily for job posts.

Tip 4: Make a daily habit of job searching

Like so many things in life, you'll get out of your job search what you put into it. Job searching requires focused effort and being proactive—and a routine can help achieve that. When creating your job search strategy, stick to a daily schedule to remain productive.

JANUARY 2020						
SUNDAY	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY
			1	2	3	4
5	6	7 JOB SEARCHING	8	9 JOB SEARCHING	10	11
12	13	14 JOB SEARCHING	15	16 JOB SEARCHING	17	18
19	20	21 JOB SEARCHING	22	23 JOB SEARCHING	24	25
26	27	28 JOB SEARCHING	29	30 JOB SEARCHING	31	



Here are activities you can start now:

- **Create a to-do list:** Working toward a goal calls for organization. Planning allows you to maximize efforts by prioritizing your job search activities and completing tasks in a timely manner.
- **Block off time on your calendar:** Job seekers need every precious minute to find their dream job. That's why it's important to devote daily and uninterrupted time blocks for your job search.
- **Dedicate certain days for specific activities:** Working on one activity at a time might be in your best interest. Consider breaking different parts of your job search across days of the week to complete tasks efficiently.
- **Track your job search:** Document your job search on a spreadsheet by recording jobs

Search for Jobs

you've applied to and those you're considering. Tracking your progress helps you avoid applying to duplicate jobs. Bonus: you'll track your wins throughout your job search journey, which will motivate you to carry on, even on the most stressful days.

Tip 5: Keep an open mind

When looking for the right job opportunity, it's important to be open and not limit your hunt too narrowly. If you are not flexible, you may miss out on a rewarding career.

These tips will help you keep an open mind during your job search:

- **Vary your keyword search**

When finding a job online, think outside of the confines of your job title.

Job titles vary from company to company, so ensure you are searching for a variety of titles. For example, if you're a software engineer, don't limit your options by only viewing jobs with a "software engineer" title. Searching for jobs with alternate titles like application developer, software developer and web developer will expand your possibilities.

Complete a quick Google search of your job title to see what other jobs are returned in your search. Then skim the job descriptions to see if jobs with different titles are just as fitting.

- **Suggested jobs are good too**

Have you ever bought something unexpected because it was under "Customers who viewed this item also viewed" on Amazon? This can happen during your job hunt, too. Look into suggested or recommended jobs that populate in your search results. You might be surprised to find something that piques your interest outside of a specific search.

- **Remember salary talks are on the table**

Imagine this: you're looking for jobs online, scrolling through the different postings, and you find THE ONE—the job you've been looking for. It seems like the perfect match...except the salary. If the compensation is slightly lower than you'd like, apply for the job anyway! In many cases, [salary is negotiable](#) for the right candidate.

Check out sites like [Salary](#) and [Paysa](#) to see what these jobs pay and what to ask for. Find more on this topic in [Accept the Job Offer](#).

Now that you've found what seems like the perfect job for you, it's time to apply!

Apply for Jobs

You've tackled a lot in your job search to get to this point. Now that you've optimized your personal brand, polished your resume and searched for available opportunities, it's time to apply for jobs!

The best time to apply for a job

Finding a job can be overwhelming.

Landing your next role can even feel like a second job. During August 2019, the [Bureau of Labor Statistics](#) reported that the average duration of unemployment was 22 weeks. That's nearly five months of work to land a job and twice as long as it took Christopher Columbus to sail to the Americas.

There's no doubt job seekers spend countless hours while on the hunt for their next career opportunity. Optimizing your professional brand, creating a compelling resume and applying for jobs require a tremendous amount of work.

Now more than ever, timing can be critical when getting your resume in front of the right person at the right moment.

Many of us often ask: *When is the best time to look for a job?*

Luckily, there's hiring data you can leverage to maximize your job search. Check out these data-driven optimal times below.

1. Q1

As the year rolls in, it may be in your best interest to start your job search in January.

January reportedly is the busiest month for employment search, according to [Monster's 2018 Year in Jobs Report](#). In fact, eight out of the top 10 days for job searching occurs in the first month of the year.

JANUARY 2020						
SUNDAY	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY
			1	2	3	4
5	6	7	8	9	10	11
12	13	14	15	16	17	18
19	20	21	22	23	24	25
26	27	28	29	30	31	

8 OUT OF THE TOP 10 DAYS FOR JOB SEARCHING OCCURS IN THE FIRST MONTH OF THE YEAR.

- *Monster*

Apply for Jobs

So, why is January such a peak time of year? Seasonal occurrences may be of some influence. During the beginning months of the year, employees return from holiday vacation, and companies begin to ramp up to achieve goals for the new year.

At the start of the year, new company budgets have been established and hiring managers are empowered to fill positions since money is typically available. This hiring activity differs dramatically compared to the end of the year hiring period, as talent acquisition declines amid dwindling funds.

Experts suggest applying for jobs in mid-January once business is back in full gear.

Other thoughts behind this phenomenon include the general cultural attitudes surrounding the previous year's close and the new year. As people often live out the mantra, "new year, new job," companies may experience increased talent demand stemming from employee departure.

2. Fall

Ready to fall into a new career? *(Pun intended)*

If so, the leaves changing color may indicate it's time to shed your job. According to research, the season of pumpkin-spice and football are great months to find a new gig.

In October, hiring is at an all-time high on [LinkedIn](#) compared to any other month, the social networking site reports. Moreover, hiring times are shorter, with a whopping 89% of hiring managers filling a role in less than four weeks.

Employment cycles during fall typically peak due to the end of summer vacations. Once people return to the office, it allows interview scheduling to run smoothly. Nonetheless, companies increase hiring efforts to fill vacant roles before budgets close and the holiday season arrives. Employers might also seek talent to achieve year-end goals.

With hiring in full swing and a shortened process, take advantage of the fall season while your competition comes off of summer break.

3. Between 6 to 10 a.m.

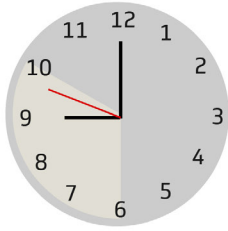
While seasonality plays a big part in hiring trends, there are optimal times of the day to apply for jobs.

[TalentWorks](#) reports that applications received after 7:30 p.m. are less than 3% likely to make it to the interview round. While job seekers often apply for positions after their 9-to-5 jobs, the same analysis reported that applicants also had a reduced chance for call-backs at 5% or less.

While afternoon and evening hours seem to be at odds with getting to the top of the resume stack, TalentWorks did find that 6 to 10 a.m. is the best time to send a job application, increasing the likelihood of job seekers securing an interview by 5x. Every 30 minutes after decreases the odds by 10%.

Be sure that your resume hits an employer's desk either first thing in the morning or right before lunchtime.

DID YOU KNOW?



Applications submitted between **6 to 10 a.m.** have the **highest chance**, at 13% of getting an interview.

The **worst time** to send an application is **7:30 p.m.** when your chances of landing an interview drop to just 3%.

Source: TalentWorks

4. Tuesday at 11 a.m.

While the start of the workday may be in your favor to send applications, you may be wondering:

What's the best day and time of the week to find a job?

It isn't Monday despite popular belief. A study conducted by [SmartRecruiters](#) examined more than 270,000 jobs over two years and found that Tuesday at 11 a.m. is ripe with job promise. While this is an oddly specific time, research has proven that the longer you wait to apply to a role, the less your odds are for landing a job.

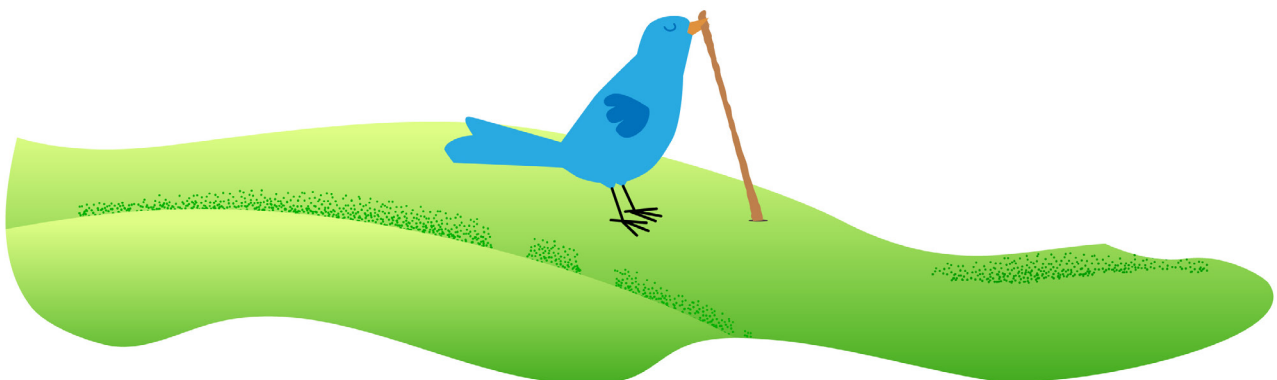
5. Early

The age-old saying, "The early bird gets the worm" has never been truer for the job search. It's generally a best practice to apply early when a job is first posted.

A [TalentWorks](#) survey found that candidates who submitted applications within 96 hours of a job posting were 8x more likely to schedule an interview.

It was also discovered that by applying within four days of a job posting, candidates had a higher chance of beating their competition by 64.7%, according to [SmartRecruiters](#).

Undeniably, if job seekers want to avoid the infamous resume black hole, they need to apply as soon as possible. To be cognizant of your timing when applying to roles, check the time stamp listed on job postings. These dates can be found in various placements, but it's always in your best interest to take note of them to ensure you're optimizing your job search.



6. Today

If you're considering the job search, time is of the essence. It's essential to seize the day. Unemployment is at a historic record low of 3.7%, according to the [BLS](#).

Hiring is in full effect, and that puts job seekers in the driver's seat. That means competitive compensation, employee-focused work environments and efficient hiring processes for candidates.

So, get out there today. Hit the ground running and snag the perfect job for you!

Chatbots are changing recruiting

We've become accustomed to interacting with robots in our daily lives.

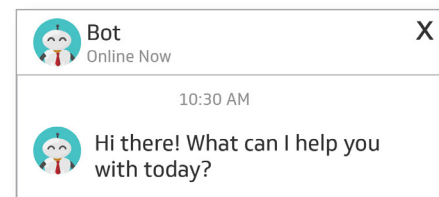
We ask Siri to find restaurants near our current location. We tell Alexa to deliver paper towels and dish detergent to our house the very same day. Whether it's online customer support or buying concert tickets—chances are we're dealing with a chatbot.

Chatbots have become so advanced that often you don't realize you're not interacting with a human. It's estimated that [80% of enterprises will use chatbots by 2020](#). And we're starting to see similar adoption within the recruiting industry.



THERE WAS A 69% INCREASE IN UTILIZING CHATBOTS ON CAREER SITES IN 2018.

Source: Talent Board



What is a recruitment chatbot?

Simply put, a recruitment chatbot is a software application using AI technology designed to replicate human conversational abilities in a variety of places along the recruiting process.

Imagine a recruitment chatbot as a virtual assistant to a recruiter, except 1000x more efficient. They can be used to answer questions about a job you may have applied for, conduct an initial pre-screening to ensure you have the right skills for the role or even schedule an interview. Leveraging natural language processing, machine learning and context, chatbots are becoming smarter and more sophisticated at a record pace.

How can recruitment chatbots help you?

Most people who have searched for a job and applied to numerous positions are familiar with the "resume blackhole." According to a CareerBuilder survey, [75% of job applicants never hear back from employers](#).

Apply for Jobs

Although this isn't a positive candidate experience, it's almost impossible and very impractical for a single recruiter to follow up with every candidate who applies to a particular job.

Let's say a recruiter is working on three jobs, and each of those jobs has 200 applications. If the recruiter spent 10 minutes on the phone speaking to each applicant, screening skills, clarifying work history and answering questions, that would require at least 100 hours. Clearly, this isn't a scalable or efficient process.

Queue the recruitment chatbot! In this scenario, applicants can engage with a chatbot directly after applying by answering essential questions for a recruiter to determine they're the right fit for the job.

It's abundantly clear that chatbots are beneficial to recruiters, but they're also beneficial to you as a job seeker. Unfortunately, we've all been a victim to the "resume blackhole," waiting for a response from a recruiter and wondering if we were qualified for the job at hand. The truth is you may have been the ideal candidate for the job, but the recruiter only got to application #37 out of 100. However, if a chatbot was inserted into the application process, you would have a chance to emphasize your skills, accomplishments and expertise through a series of qualifying questions prompted by the bot. If your answers aligned with job requirements, your application would be fast-tracked to the top of the stack.

Thanks to recruitment chatbots, it no longer matters if you're application #1 or #100. The resume blackhole is closing little by little every day!



Be ready for the bots

Most likely you're going to be interacting with a recruitment chatbot at some point during your job search, whether you realize it or not. Check out the following tips to keep in mind:

- **Remember, chatbots are robots:** Even though they've come a long way over the last several years, chatbots will never be human. When interacting with a recruitment chatbot during the application process, try to be as clear and concise with your answers as possible. Avoid excessive slang and fluff. Instead, focus on showcasing specific skills, software proficiencies, etc.

Apply for Jobs

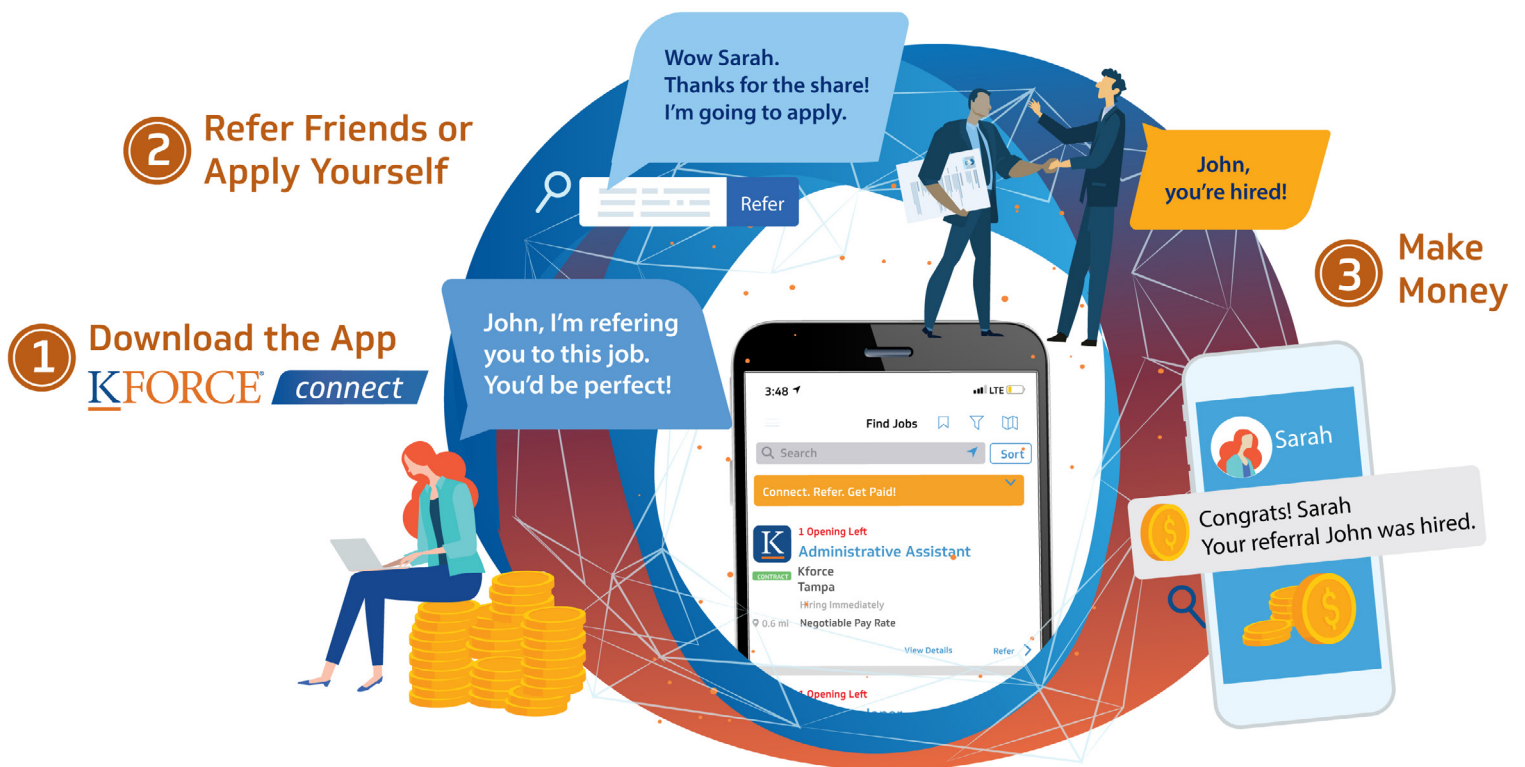
- **Have your calendar accessible:** Some recruitment bots are programmed to schedule in-person interviews if the scoring on the pre-qualifying questions is high enough. You don't want to miss out on an interview opportunity, so make sure your calendar is handy and up to date.

How to apply for your next role

Saving a profile with your resume on a job board can make applying for a job as easy as one click! Most job boards have an app these days, so download the app and browse for jobs at your own pace. If you're not ready to apply right then, most job sites will give you the option to save the job and apply later.

Embrace technology for an easier job search. For example, when you're searching for jobs on various job boards, most offer the ability to set up an email alert. Any new jobs that fit your search criteria will be sent directly to your inbox as soon as they're posted. Let the jobs come to you!

Kforce has a free job referral app called KFORCEconnect. You can use the app to refer friends, family and colleagues to apply for Kforce jobs. Once your referral is hired, you get paid! For more information and to download it today, click [here](#).





89% OF JOB SEEKERS THINK MOBILE DEVICES PLAY A CRITICAL ROLE IN THE JOB-HUNTING PROCESS

Source: Undercover Recruiter

You may be searching for and applying to jobs in micro-moments—on your commute, waiting at the doctor's office or on a commercial break while watching your favorite TV show. To seamlessly apply on the go, consider uploading your resume to free services like [Dropbox](#), [iCloud](#) or [Google Drive](#).

Suggested Reading:

[Tips for Using Your Phone to Job Search](#)

[6 Ways to Use Your Phone to Land Your Dream Job](#)

Now, let's get you ready for the next step—the interview!



Master the Interview

To successfully land a new job, you need to master the interview. This important step in the application process can make or break the decision to hire you. Therefore, this is your opportunity to demonstrate why you are the best person for the job.

In one word, the secret to nailing an interview is pretty simple: prepare.

Putting in the time will boost your confidence during the interview, allowing you to shine as an expert throughout the interview process. Check out these awesome ways you can prepare below.

Learning intel about the company

And we don't mean just the night before. Dedicate plenty of time to utilize multiple sources to get an understanding of who the company is and what major initiatives, technology and products are on their plate.

Here's how:

- Thoroughly review the company's website, paying attention to service offerings, products, their mission and other general information.
- Scroll through their social media activity to get a sense of what they're sharing and what's important to them. Are they excited about a new product release, a stellar quarter or a new member of the executive team? Did they recently win an award?
- If the company is public, listen to their latest earnings call or review their SEC filings to understand their financial position as well as the goals and commitments they're communicating to Wall Street.
- Identify their top three competitors and understand their similarities and differences.
- Prepare 3-5 questions based on your research to ask the interviewer. For example, if you noticed the company just received an award, you could ask the interviewer what the award means to him or her. This shows that you've done your homework, and more importantly, that you are genuinely interested in the company and this opportunity.

How to research your interviewers

It's important to research your interviewer prior to the big day. The name of your interviewer will likely be shared with you in advance. If not, ask your recruiter who you'll be speaking with.

LinkedIn profiles are a great place to conduct online research to arm you with information to build rapport and plan questions for your interviewer. When reviewing your interviewers' profiles, think about the following:

Master the Interview

- How long have they been at the company?
- Do you have common interests?
- Have they worked their way up to management?
- Do you have shared connections?
- Do they describe key projects and initiatives?
- Do they mention volunteer experiences?

Here's an example of how to use this type of research during the interview:

"I recently saw on LinkedIn that you volunteered with your company at a local shelter. That's great! Can you tell me what else your company does for stewardship?"

Preparing for a behavioral interview

Congratulations on landing an interview! You've had to [update your resume](#), [search for jobs](#) and [apply](#), among other tasks. The job search can be tough to navigate—and your journey isn't finished yet.

Now it's time to ace your behavioral interview.

Before you reach the final stage of the interview process, the interviewer needs to establish your core competencies through a series of behavioral questions that assess your skills. This is the moment that will set you apart from other candidates based on your ability to communicate scenarios from your past performances.

Now, this isn't an opportunity to break out your humblebragging skills. The answers to behavioral interviews should be a balance between confidently explaining how you masterfully handled a situation without coming across arrogant.

We know how intimidating it can be to think on the fly during a behavioral interview. Take the time to strategically plan your responses using quantifiable examples that reflect your accomplishments, applicable skills and any obstacles you've had to overcome to achieve success in your role.

During your behavioral interview, utilize the STAR Method (situation, task, action and result) to set your strategy in motion. This interview technique is designed to help you organize your thoughts and answers concisely, so you stand out from the competition.

The STAR Method

S - Situation

T - Task

A - Action

R - Result

Master the Interview

Begin by explaining a **situation** from a prior company or a relevant event with the proper context for the interviewer to evaluate your abilities. Next, go into the **task** that establishes the objectives of the project and your specific role in that situation. After giving the interviewer some background information, describe the **action** you took to complete the task successfully. Then, bring it home by presenting the **result** based on your actions and what you took away from the experience. To add credibility to your story, include quantitative data.

Practice your interviewing skills by applying the STAR interview method to the top five behavioral interview questions below.

Top behavioral questions to know

Now that you've familiarized yourself with the STAR method, let's jump into the behavioral questions you should know and how to answer them properly through this four-part process:

1. What is your greatest weakness?

We all dread this question, and your response can be the differentiator of whether you make it to the next interview round. It's important not to let yourself get tripped up when discussing your flaws. The best way to approach this question is to outline a minor weakness that won't interfere with the job at hand and that you are already making strides toward improving.

Sample response:

S: During project testing, I occasionally don't elaborate enough on why a particular approach will have a low likelihood of success to junior data scientists on my team.

T: As a senior data scientist, I am tasked with mentoring my direct reports and communicating effectively to avoid pitfalls during projects.

A: To strengthen my abilities, I started taking a course on "Giving Helpful Feedback" from Coursera to expand my leadership skills and help those under me grow their expertise.

R: By doing this, I was able to build more formidable relationships with my team and achieve superior business results.

2. What is the biggest challenge you have faced, and what steps did you take to overcome it?

This question is typically used as a follow-up after evaluating your weakness. During this time, the interviewer is assessing your problem-solving skills and how you handle stress. So, choose wisely. Instead of focusing on how you were fazed by the demanding nature of a previous role, respond with a specific project that not only describes an obstacle but also how you handled it.

Sample response:

S: The executives at my last company wanted to make better data-driven decisions.

T: I was directed to streamline a dozen reports for our monthly executive briefing.

A: I used data visualization tools to create a real-time comprehensive, automated dashboard.

R: My approach saved the team over 25 hours monthly, helping them focus on more strategic projects.

3. “Tell me a time...”

Undoubtedly, this is a question that almost always comes up, so preparation is key. The goal of this question is to explain how you strategically solved something to deliver excellent results. Identify 3 to 5 power stories to use as an example of past experiences that can be tailored to the specific behavioral question asked. These stories should cover the top attributes highlighted in your elevator pitch as well as transferrable skills for the role you’re interviewing for. Remember to keep it short and to the point. Consider different examples to a question like, “Tell me a time when you had to deal with a tight timeline and how you exceeded expectations.”

Sample response:

S: The previous organization I worked in required an update to their learning management system due to new regulations on data privacy.

T: My manager presented me with a strict deadline to complete the software update in less than 48 hours to ensure we remained compliant.

A: I worked with key stakeholders to update the user interface on all systems with information on data tracking, what the data is used for and options for users to remove their data.

R: I was able to update all the systems before the deadline and came in under budget by 15%.

4. Why do you think you are a good fit for this position?

This isn’t your chance to tell an employer about how you’re looking for a salary bump or that you can’t stand your current company. Potential employers seek candidates who are aligned with their organization via shared values, aspirations and relevant experience.

Stick to the facts and write down a few top reasons based on your research of why your background matches up with the expected job scope and responsibilities.

Sample response:

S: I am a performance-driven inbound marketing professional with a demonstrated history in creating successful campaigns.

T: For example, my previous role focused on optimizing lead generation and lead nurturing processes through high quality and targeted content.

A: I created and executed email marketing, website updates and social media campaigns to grow customer acquisition.

R: These multi-channel marketing campaigns resulted in tripled conversion rates. I believe my proficiency in converting qualified leads into customers would make me an asset to your organization, and I would be eager to continue growing my expertise alongside your highly skilled team.

5. What accomplishment are you most proud of, and why?

Make a list of specific achievements you have accomplished and then narrow it down to relevant examples for your desired role. Don't be afraid to share an example that gives the interviewer insight into who you are outside of work. Consider providing examples from previous jobs, promotions, academics, sports, philanthropy and goals obtained through passion and hard work. If you choose to explain a personal accomplishment, tie it back to how it can be applied in that particular company.

Sample response:

S: At my last company, I noticed there was no formal development program to help my peers that were promoted to a supervisor role for the first time.

T: I spoke to my manager about starting a leadership boot camp, and he told me to challenge my thinking and come up with a strategy to implement it.

A: After collaborating with my leader and business partners, I was able to formulate a curriculum for a leadership development track, teaching my peers fundamental leadership skills and how to manage their teams efficiently.

R: I was able to successfully bring the program to life, allowing me to channel my passion for leadership while serving the community. Given the opportunity as your firm's organizational development manager, I would love to carry the invaluable skills I learned to help future leaders at your organization.

Crafting your perfect elevator pitch

Quick—in 60 seconds or less, describe why you are the perfect person for the job!

Did you do it? If you fumbled through this exercise, you are not alone. Promoting your accomplishments and why you're the perfect candidate can be awkward and intimidating. Picture this. You happen to be in the same elevator as a hiring manager you've been desperately

Master the Interview

trying to get in front of. What would you tell the hiring manager in the time it takes to get from the lobby to the 10th floor? How will you make the best use of this time?

That example demonstrates how the “elevator pitch” got its name. An elevator pitch is a concise way to sell yourself and highlight your most compelling attributes, accomplishments and unique strengths—in the brief time it takes to ride an elevator.

Create an elevator pitch that will be ready for whenever and wherever you need it. Here are some tips:

- Draft a pitch with no more than 5-6 sentences to ensure it’s less than a minute.
- Include who you are, what you do and the credentials that qualify you for the job.
- Tailor your elevator pitch to the job you are interviewing for.
- Express your interest and desire for the role. The four words “I want this job” go a long way when selling yourself for a position.

Auditing your digital footprint

Just as you’re researching the people who will be interviewing you, count on them to research you too.

During your job search, your personal brand is in the spotlight. Earlier in this guide, we covered how to optimize your [personal brand online](#). In this digital age, an abundance of information is readily accessible to potential employers at a push of a button. The first impression no longer occurs in the interview room; interviewers form an opinion of you after reviewing your social media activity before you even step foot into the office.

We recommend doing an audit of your professional brand before starting your job search. Here are some tips for auditing your personal brand:

- Delete any questionable photos that may portray you in an undesirable light. Don’t forget about the photos you are tagged in too.
- Avoid highly controversial “soapbox posts,” such as political opinions.
- Google search yourself to ensure there are no surprises that may come up.
- Review your social media privacy settings and be aware of what the public sees.
- Update your content online to accurately reflect current information about you. This is a good time to [update your LinkedIn profile](#), online resume, email address and other contact information.
- Ensure that your email address is professional. You may want to create a new email address (preferably one that includes your full name) to use during your job search.

The significance of first impressions

You’ve undoubtedly heard the phrase “It’s all in the details.” This is especially true when it comes to first impressions during your interview.

Master the Interview

Here are some timeless tips to ensure you're putting your best foot forward:

- Don't wait until the last minute to pick out what you're going to wear. Plan your outfit the day before and pack a back-up in case of an emergency.
- Arrive early to avoid any unforeseen event that would make you late. Arriving even just one or two minutes late does not give a good first impression. In addition, if you are anxious because you arrived late, you won't be at your best during the interview.
- Don't speak negatively of previous managers or employers. If you are asked about your current manager and have a less than perfect relationship with him or her, be prepared to put a positive spin on anything negative that has occurred.
- Compliment the interviewer and/or the company about something you discovered in your research to show that you've done your homework before the interview.

Ways to properly exude confidence

Preparation leads to confidence, and confidence helps get you hired! When you are feeling confident, you will naturally come across as a subject matter expert.

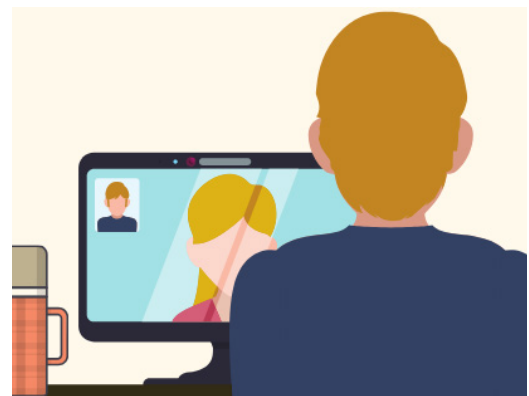
Check out these simple ways to show your confidence:

- Remember, there is a big difference between confidence and cockiness.
- Don't ramble. Instead, talk at a reasonable pace and focus on answering each question with one concise thought at a time.
- Nail your elevator pitch with the best response when probed and find an opportunity for it when not explicitly asked.
- Pay attention to your body language. Be engaged, sit up straight and genuinely enjoy the process.
- Lastly, start and end your interview with a firm handshake and a smile.

Preparing for a video interview

Video interviews are now commonplace in the job search process. Job seekers should be prepared for them if the opportunity arises. When participating in either format, consider the above and below tips:

- Use a quiet place to avoid interruptions and background noises.
- Gather proper lighting for optimal visuals during your video call.
- Silence any electronics that may cause disruption.
- Keep your resume, notepad and pen close.



Master the Interview

- If using a webcam, test your computer's audio and camera prior to the call.
- Use a headset or earbuds to avoid echoes.
- Ensure your internet connection is strong and stable.

What's new about video interviews

Technology continues to redefine the job search, including video interviews. In recent years, the workplace has focused on flexibility to accommodate the modern worker. At the same time, technology has made huge advancements that have transformed the way we work. Artificial intelligence, internet of things, virtual reality and smart devices are revolutionizing the way business is done, including the job search.



Digital disruption has undeniably allowed the [gig economy to flourish](#). As remote work grows in popularity, so has remote video job interviews. Employers don't want to miss the opportunity to interview as many talented candidates as possible. As a result, new developments within video interviews have taken the job search by storm.

Skill assessments and simulations

Video interview platforms continue to emerge in the recruitment space. Employers currently have the ability to implement comprehensive video interviewing, which includes assessments and simulations that take the guesswork out of hiring talent.

Some recent developments in the video assessment and simulation space include live coding tests, where interviewers watch candidates develop and test code in shared, online environments. Live scenarios where prospective employees perform day-to-day challenges are also growing in popularity for sales and customer service roles.

Video technology is likewise allowing companies to record candidate interviews, screen applicants and blindly grade responses according to custom criteria before recruiters see them. Companies are now empowered to make quick, informed decisions on the best applicants for the job at hand.

Robo recruiters are coming

As organizations continue to eliminate human bias from the hiring process during candidate screenings, some businesses are implementing technology to screen calls using robo-video interviews with voice recognition and video recording.

Master the Interview

Candidates now can record videos using a computer or smart device and are prompted to answer questions just like a real interview. This AI-led approach to recruiting has enabled technology to assess a candidate's behavior and whether they're a cultural fit for firms. Today, businesses are [saving more than 20 hours](#) of work with recruitment bots interviewing candidates.



Advice for job seekers

Working with technology requires finesse, and the same applies to modern video interviews. Check out these tips below to ensure you're ready for your next video interview.

- **Stay charged and connected:** There's much on the line during interviews. Employers use this time to weed out candidates, so it's always in your best interest to avoid any possible electronic issues. Make sure your laptop or smart device is fully charged when you're scheduled for a video interview. Prepare for worst case scenarios, including internet failure. In the event of this, try to have a backup device that has additional internet access, whether a smartphone or network card.
- **Use timeless interview tips:** You still have to make a positive first impression even when completing an interview from the comfort of your home. Treat all video interviews as you would a regular interview. Dress professionally, maintain eye contact and be articulate in your answers. Moreover, preparation is key to nailing an interview, especially when technology may be screening you out of the running for a job. Practice [answering common interview questions](#) and prepare for live assessments that may be indicative of your line of work. The work you put into preparation will always show when it's go-time for an interview.

Don't forget the thank-you note

You've nailed the job interview! But your work in leaving a positive, lasting impression isn't done yet. Immediately after your interview, send a thank-you note to the interviewer. In the message, thank the person or party and express your excitement to learn more about the opportunity. Now that your interview is over, take a deep breath. Continue your job search as you wait for the golden ticket—the job offer.

Master the Interview

Hi *[Interviewer's Name]*,

It was a pleasure meeting you today. I enjoyed learning more about the team and *[title of the position you're applying to]* position. It was amazing to hear that *[something recalled from your interview]*.

I'm excited about the opportunity to join *[company name]* and help *[the solution your role assists in part of the company's goal]*.

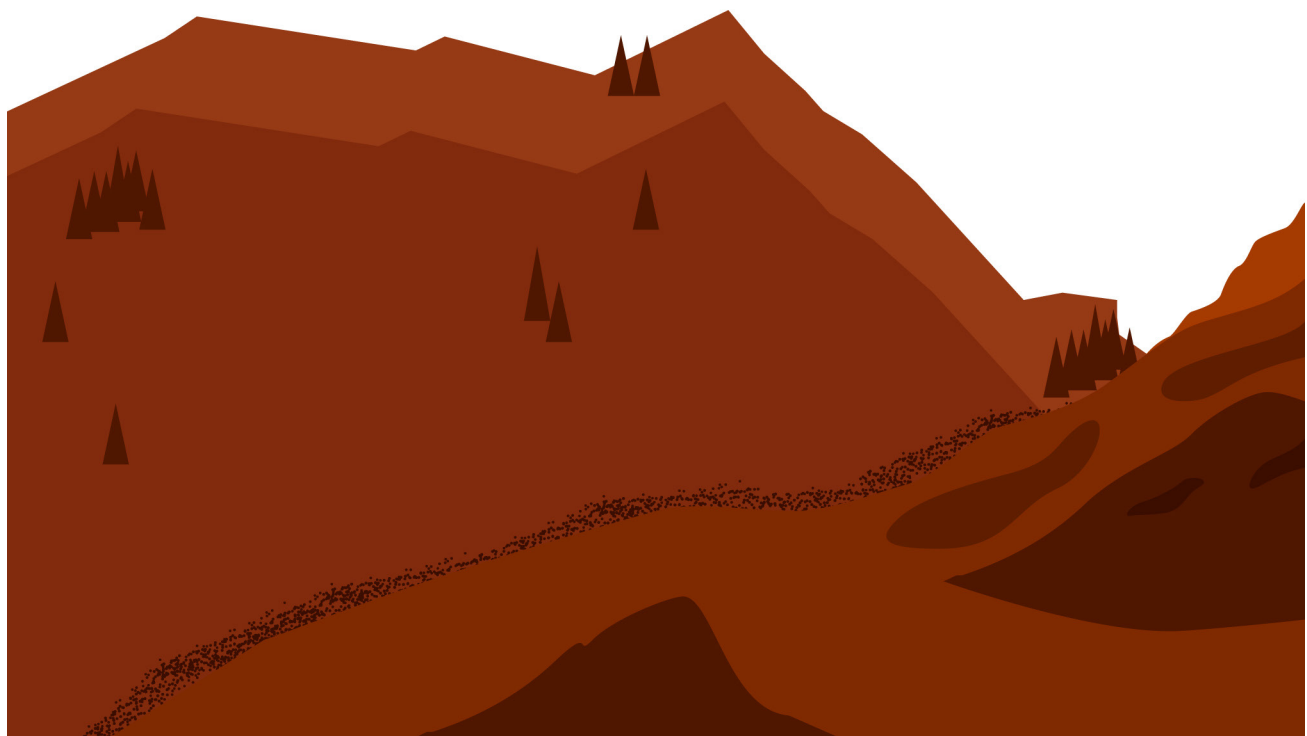
I look forward to hearing from you. Please do not hesitate to contact me if I can provide additional information.

Best regards,
[Your Name]



Suggested Reading:

[50+ Interview Tips that Work: Best Advice for a Successful Job Interview](#)
[Must-Know Job Interview Tips for 2018 and Beyond](#)
[10 Awesome Interview Tips from Actual Hiring Managers](#)

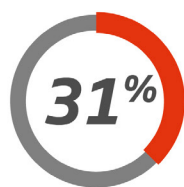


Accept the Job Offer

Congratulations, you got the job offer!

How do you feel about what they offered you? Did you know that most companies are willing to negotiate salary?

Just thinking about negotiating a job offer is enough to cause some people to run and hide. Most job seekers view it as the scariest part of the entire job search process. Because of this, you may avoid it altogether. In fact, just a third of candidates negotiate their salary according to [Jobvite](#).



31% OF JOB SEEKERS NEGOTIATED THEIR SALARY AT THEIR CURRENT OR MOST RECENT JOB.

Source: Jobvite

Don't give in to fear. Take control of negotiating your best possible job offer with these tips.

Remembering that you're worth it

Now's the time to conduct some research. Utilize sites like [PayScale](#) or [Glassdoor](#) to get a data-driven understanding of what others in your field are currently compensated. Knowledge is power—especially when it comes to salary negotiations.

In addition to market research, before starting any negotiation conversations, it's critical that YOU understand your value.

Think through your specific skills, technology expertise, certifications, industry experience, etc. How can your skills and knowledge help an employer?

Don't take negotiating personally

Your desired salary shouldn't be calculated by what you need to earn monthly to pay your bills. Of course, you'll want to make sure that your living and personal expenses are covered. But, it's critical to understand that your salary is independent of your monthly expenses—it is a monetary value attached to your level of contribution to a company.

Factors that contribute to your salary include:

- Years of experience
- Industry knowledge

Accept the Job Offer

- Proficiency with specific technology
- Management expertise

Failure to consider these factors will cause you to leave money on the table during offer negotiations. And who wants that?

Understanding what's expected of you

You never want to put the cart before the horse. Be sure to understand all the details and components of your new role. Doing so will allow you to gain insight into the salary you deserve. Ask questions to gain a better understanding of the job including:

- What would I be directly responsible for?
- Is this a leadership position?
- How is my success measured?
- Will travel be required?
- How much exposure will I have to senior executives?

Now consider the answers. You may find that the responsibilities and overall scope of the role are more significant than you initially thought.

Though it doesn't happen often, roles can change in scope during the interview process as the hiring manager speaks with candidates about their experience and capabilities. Perhaps the hiring manager noticed that your skills went above and beyond the requirements in the job description. For example, you interviewed for a staff accountant role, but after the hiring manager learned you had management experience, he/she tells you that you'd be supervising three associates. The role changes from a staff accountant position to a senior staff accountant position—and thus the salary should be higher given the additional responsibility.

If the role changes during the interview process, speak with the recruiter. It's important to understand exactly what is expected of you in this new role so you can make an informed decision to accept, decline or negotiate the offer package.

Job offers aren't one-size-fits-all

First and foremost, it's important to remember that negotiating a job offer is not the same as negotiating a salary. Your salary is just one component of job offer negotiations.

For some individuals, salary is by far the most important thing. For others, a flexible work schedule might be equally as important for someone trying to juggle family responsibilities.

Other factors you may want to consider in your negotiations apart from your base salary are:

- Vacation time
- Your new job title

Accept the Job Offer

- Tuition reimbursement
- Flexibility in your work schedule
- The ability to work from home
- Relocation assistance
- Sign-on bonus

During these conversations, it's imperative to consider what's most important to you. Once you've done that, prioritize one or two of these items during negotiations.

Suggested Reading:

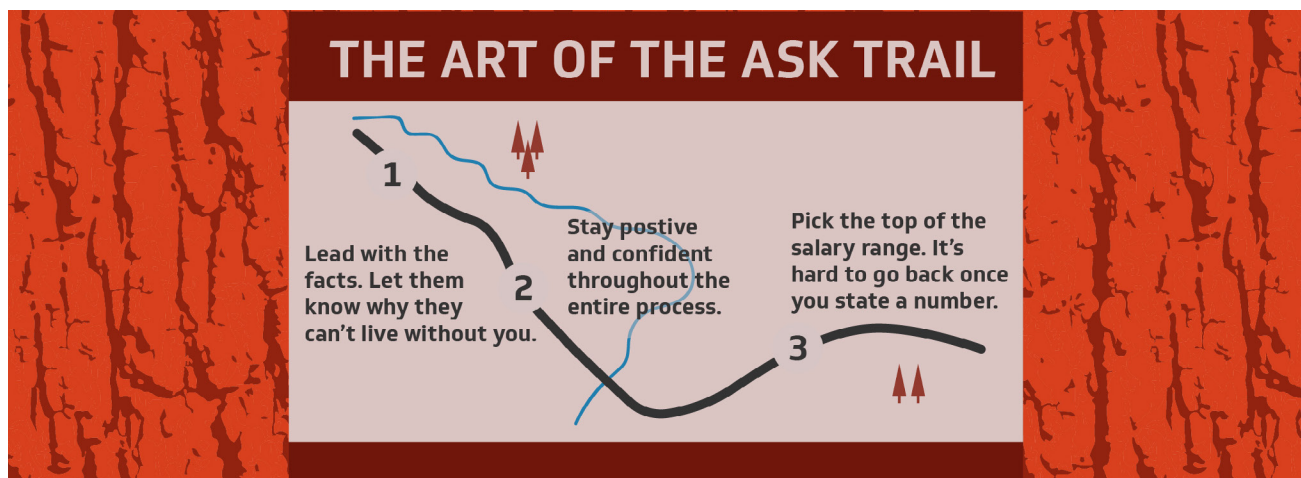
[9 Things to Never Say in a Salary Negotiation](#)

[How to Negotiate, Accept, or Decline a Job Offer](#)

[How to Be an Ace Salary Negotiator \(Even if You Hate Conflict\)](#)

[How to Handle a Salary Counter Offer](#)

How to master the art of the ask



Offer negotiations are challenging. Many people never receive formal negotiation training. Nonetheless, most job seekers don't realize that strategy goes into offer negotiations on both sides of the table.

Remember the following tips:

- Lead with what you've done and what you can offer. Then, talk numbers.
- Be positive and confident throughout the entire process.
- Pick the top of the range because it's nearly impossible to increase a number once you state it.

It's in your best interest to have a polite and professional conversation with your hiring manager to increase your odds of getting the offer you desire.

When it's time to accept the job offer

Before you sign on the dotted line, take time to ensure you understand the offer and the details listed in your offer letter. In most cases, it is considered a best practice to at least “sleep on it” and give your decision the following day.

Before putting pen to paper, confirm you can answer “yes” to the following checklist items:

- Do I understand my compensation package (including base pay, bonus potential, pay frequency, employer 401k match, etc.)?
- Am I clear on the reporting structure (including leadership, direct reports or any dotted-line relationships, etc.)?
- Do I understand the benefits package (including when I'll be able to sign up for benefits, company contribution, etc.)?
- Is my title finalized?

New beginnings are in order

Congratulations! Your job offer has been signed and submitted. You've successfully reached the top of the mountain. The journey had its twists and turns, but you've trailed through to reach your final destination. It's time to celebrate—enjoy your new role!

