

November 1999

Home & Family Finance **online**

Brought to You by Your Credit Union



What's Your Credit Quotient?

Sorting Through the Brave New TV Formats

"Network" Your Way to Your Dream Job

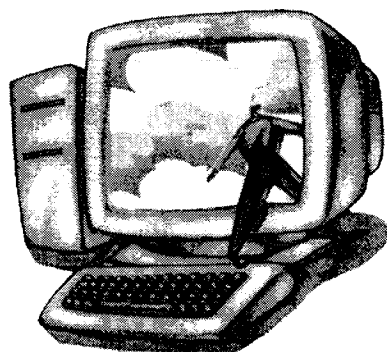
FAST FACTS	CAR FACTS
Credit	Automotive Clubs

©1999 Credit Union National Association Inc.

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

"Network" Your Way to Your Dream Job

by Jennifer Erhard



The traditional job search rules are about the same—see what jobs are out there, learn if your qualifications match the requirements, and make contact with employers. But with a wide range of methods available to help you today, the question is where to start your journey to the perfect job.

Special interest FAQs

If you're considering pounding the pavement virtually, you're not alone. According to a poll conducted by Weddle's, a Web site about the on-line job search, 65% of on-line job hunters hail from nontechnical professions. Job hunters have good reason to stalk the Web—it offers instant access to job openings in any field, anywhere in the world, as well as swift contact with potential employers. And the statistics are staggering—an estimated 100,000 employment-related sites exist in cyberspace, listing more than 30 million jobs.

For more information

But, there's a distinction between finding a job via the Internet and using the Internet to help you land a job.

These answers to some frequently asked questions can help you land the position you want.

- **When is the Internet an effective job search tool?**
- **How can college and trade school students use cyberspace resources to launch careers?**
- **Where is the best place to begin a job search?**
- **Can I trust on-line career information?**
- **How much time should I spend searching the Internet?**

- **Any tips for established professionals looking to switch jobs or enter a new field?**
- **What strategies can make my job search a success?**
- **Are some job search resources a waste of time?**
- **How can recruiters help job hunters?**
- **How can I be my own headhunter?**

When is the Internet an effective job search tool?

Recognize that the Internet's power lies in providing access to information.

Using the Internet as a "career exploration" tool is a good strategy, says Barbara Reinhold, director of Smith College's Career Development Office in Northhampton, Mass., and on-line expert and columnist for Monster.com, the largest career management site on the Web.



"Job seekers who use only the 'click to find jobs posted' aspect of the Internet will almost always be disappointed," Reinhold says. "Unfortunately, it's the instant gratification aspect of clicking on a site and finding jobs listed that gets most of the attention—when the real treasure of the Web is the ability to research organizations and fields."

How can college and trade school students use cyberspace resources to launch careers?

As an on-line expert for Monster.com, Reinhold encounters many students who believe they have no access to career counseling. "They feel so lost and panicked," she says. "They're trying to begin a trip to their future with no map and no fuel."

"I recommend they prepare for their journey by finding out what resources are available to them on campus, and augmenting those college career center services with the 'Campus Zone' on Monster.com." There, students will find self-assessment exercises, jobs, and, more important, articles and advice about networking, interviewing, cover letters, and resumes.

Where is the best place to begin a job search?

Take advantage of opportunities like job fairs and alumni associations, recommends Marjorie Brody, a professional speaker, author, and executive coach in Elkins Park, Pa., who works with professionals wanting to create a positive image. "It's very competitive right now, so college students can get an edge by talking to parents' friends, high-school and college classmates, and alumni in order to determine the direction they want to take in the future," Brody says.



Brody advises that older professionals get in touch with former co-workers, do nonprofit work, coach, or serve on committees and boards to get involved and make connections in the community.

Can I trust on-line career information?

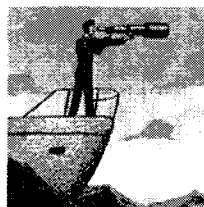
Reinhold thinks the rules are clear about the importance of accuracy in the information Web sites provide job seekers. "There's no way to have bad data or information without being exposed in due time," she says.

How much time should I spend searching the Internet?

Reinhold recommends a three-to-one split for budgeting the time you spend on the Web: "For every hour you give to the Internet, spend three networking. At Smith College we tell students and alumni there are only two choices: networking or not working."

Any tips for established professionals looking to switch jobs or enter a new field?

Dr. Laurence Stybel, co-founder of Stybel Peabody Lincolnshire, a Boston outplacement consulting firm for senior-level professionals, offers two techniques for career changers: 1) Take a direct approach to the job search by answering want ads; visiting www.careerpath.com to learn "buzzwords"—key words describing skills employers are looking for—to use in a cover letter and resume; and going back to school if you've lost the edge in technical skills. 2) Create your own internship. For example, is a lack of technical experience holding you back? Call a start-up Internet company or other small business and offer to work for free. In return, you will obtain a good reference and the credentials necessary to enter a different field.



Most people stick to traditional job hunting techniques. "But it's a very fluid economy, so it's not just education alone that can supply the skills you need—internships can create the experience and skills," Stybel says. "The key to a successful internship is establishing very specific goals with a clear time frame for reaching them."

For more information

On-line:

- For researching job opportunities, companies, and career fields, go to: [Monster.com](#)—The largest career management site on the Web; great for general searching
[Vault Reports Hoover's On-line Career Path](#)
[Smith College Career Research Page](#)—Offers field-specific listings
- For self-assessment tests, check out: [Keirsey Temperament Sorter](#)—personality assessment
[The Platinum Rule](#)—personality assessment
["What Color is Your Parachute: The Net Guide"](#)—Career author Richard Bolles includes pointers about career counseling and self-assessment tools
[Career Assessment Tests](#)
- Practice ahead of time for that big interview at: [Monster.com Virtual Interview](#)
- If you're interested in nonprofits, visit: [Chronicle of Philanthropy](#)
[National Opportunity NOCS](#)

What strategies can make my job search a success?

Start with [self-assessment](#)—inside research—and then move to [outside research](#), which involves determining what jobs are available and what each would be like.

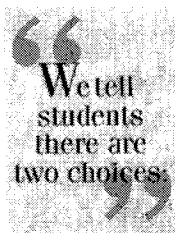
Networking is key throughout this process—more than 94% of jobs are obtained through networking, according to *The Wall Street Journal*.

Cherie Kerr, a public relations professional and author in Santa Ana, Calif., describes networking as an activity that enables you to access and link up to appropriate and useful connections in her book, "Networking Skills That Will Get You the Job You Want" (ISBN 1558705015).

Kerr believes anyone can build a list of networking contacts—it just takes time and organization. Kerr suggests adding a name to your contact list every day to grow a huge networking base; create organized information files about your contacts and use those records to follow up with people throughout your career.

"There's not a lot of trust today," says Kerr. "People hire people who come with recommendations. That's critical."

Marjorie Brody agrees that a personal recommendation counts for a lot. She says networking opportunities abound. "Talk to everyone. As Malcolm Forbes said, 'There are no unimportant people.'"



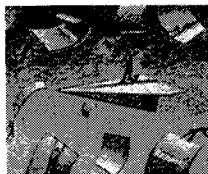
Are some job search resources a waste of time? Search firms are questionable, because job seekers see them as "quick fixes." "[Job seekers] tell themselves that if a headhunter has their resume then they must be up all night finding them the perfect job," says Brody. "Not so. In fact, most headhunters end up making people feel less marketable rather than more. There's just no substitute for research and networking."

How can recruiters help job hunters?

They can't, Stybel says. This common misconception serves as a source of great frustration for job hunters. "Recruiters are hired by companies looking for qualified people and are given narrowly defined qualifications to seek out," explains Stybel. "Their loyalty is to the company, not to the job hunter."

How can I be my own headhunter?

Do as a headhunter does. Know inside information about the company and the position you're after—and what employers are looking for in job candidates. Stybel advises that job hunters check out [CareerPath.com](#), a career management site that posts want ads from major national papers and features "cliches du jour"—current buzzwords you should include in your resume to describe your skills and expertise. Stybel recommends using as many appropriate buzzwords as possible and updating them regularly, as they change with the times.



And the times, they are a changing. Reinhold predicts that the Internet will continue to expand its job search role. "The hard parts—self-assessment, research, networking, effective presentation skills—will always be there, no matter how many millions of jobs flit by on the screen," Reinhold says. "In addition, as more people turn to free agency as a solution to their concerns about work, the attitude that you can plop yourself down in front of a screen with a baited hook and hope to have just the right job bite for you is going to be even more damaging. It's hard work finding the right job—and nothing is ever going to change that."

- An informational interview—Send a typed or neatly handwritten thank you note.
- A job interview—Send a thank you note reviewing some of the interview and how you could add value to the company—recall key words used during the discussion.
- Sending a resume and cover letter—Call three to five days after you think the person should have received your information.

And at the end of the process, if you don't get the job, ask why. "After all, you're interviewing them, too," says Brody. "Make sure you learn from the feedback."

Books:

- "Networking Skills That Will Get You the Job You Want" (ISBN 1558705015), by Cherie Kerr, list price \$14.99
- "The 1999 What Color is Your Parachute? A Practical

Special interest FAQs

- [Should I post my resume on-line?](#)
- [How do I network without seeming pushy or desperate?](#)
- [How can I write a winning cover letter and resume?](#)
- [What is the proper etiquette for following-up?](#)

Should I post my resume on-line?

There are risks when posting your resume in cyberspace. "You must consider whether you want your current employer to know you're fishing for another job," says Reinhold. "More than once, people have had their resume forwarded to their current employer."

An alternative is registering with a "job agent" service—available on sites like [Vault Reports](#), based in New York City, and [CareerBuilder Network](#), based in Reston, Va.—that sends e-mail notification of job openings to your personal computer.

How do I network without seeming pushy or desperate?

Brody says using common courtesy is the key, and offers tips for success:

- Don't say, "Can I have a job?" Instead, conduct informational interviews with professionals in your field of interest to make the contacts and find the information that could get your foot in the door in the long run.
- Don't use a company's 800 number when calling for information.
- If you take your contact to lunch, pick up the tab.
- Say thank you and write follow-up letters to maintain contact.
- Remember that networking is a two-way street—approach the person from a "What can I do for you?" perspective.

How can I write a winning cover letter and resume?

Brody outlines basic guidelines:

- Pay attention to detail—check and recheck spelling and make sure you address the letter to the right person.
- Do research on the company ahead of time—go on-line to investigate.
- Write your letter from the "here are ways I can serve you ..." standpoint.
- Underscore your accomplishments and bring references to the interview.

What is the proper etiquette for following-up?