



Reprinted from the April 2015 issue of BIC

How to succeed in today's job market

Planning to search for a job soon? Well, get ready for more challenges than ever before — loads of competition, a technology-driven hiring process, time-consuming online applications, applicant tracking systems, no company response to receipt of your résumé/cover letter, the hiring process takes longer, the use of social media networking and I could go on and on. Yet, with all that being said, understanding how to conduct a successful job search in today's climate is a skill every applicant needs to sharpen.

- **Networking** — It pays to connect. Networking is still the most powerful strategy for finding a job. As you may be aware, many job opportunities are filled by candidates already known to the company through networking contacts. With today's job search being so technology-driven, I urge you to build and expand your network.

- **LinkedIn** — This social media networking tool of choice for professionals is an incredibly important strategy in conducting your job search. In fact, many hiring managers are reviewing your LinkedIn profile prior to your résumé, as well as requesting you apply for a position via your LinkedIn account. So, if you aren't on LinkedIn, it's time to take the plunge. As many users will tell you, a profile presence is easy to create and maintain, and can reap many benefits for your career.

- **Résumé** — I recently read "relevance" is the most important factor in determining what goes into your targeted résumé and cover letter. No

longer does one résumé fit all job situations. It's becoming more and more critical to connect your skills, experience and accomplishments to the needs of the requirements identified in the job posting/ad for which you are applying. In other words, what value can you bring to this job? Be sure to identify the keywords and phrases that will help the Applicant Tracking System (ATS) filter your résumé through the scanning, scoring and sorting process into human hands, which generally means you are at least 50-percent a good fit for the job. Formatting of your résumé is also important. You'll need one format to process through an ATS, one for attachment purposes and another for copy-paste uploading. You're probably thinking, why not just use a PDF format? Well, many organizations prefer Microsoft Word files with the formatting instead. Just one more challenge to deal with.

- **Cover letters** — Preparing your résumé is only the beginning. A well-written cover letter, when requested or optional, is your chance to make the case for why you are a unique fit for the position. Letters can be powerful, persuasive, useful tools in your job search. Use an abbreviated form of the letter as the transmittal message when emailing your résumé as an attachment. For best results, three to four paragraphs that sell your background for the position for which you are applying will do the job, and your résumé serves as icing on the cake.

- **Interview** — The interview process is one of the most important milestones in your job search. The more prepared you are, the less anxious and more confident you will be to continually emphasize your background, key qualifications and value to the interviewer as they relate to the needs of the position and the organization.

- **Thank you note** — Send an email or handwritten brief, well-worded note. This simple act, believe it or not, can be a deciding factor in the final

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hiring decision. The thank you note puts your name in front of the hiring manager again and gives you another opportunity to sell yourself as the ideal candidate for the position. Ideally, send the note within 24-48 hours after the interview.

Finally, keep in mind those who are hired are not always the most qualified. They are those who *are qualified*, as well as skilled in the art of the job search. Being successful takes an extra measure of initiative, resourcefulness, preparedness and persistence. Good luck!

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