

## **Recession Readying Your Job Search**

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Those of you nearing graduation may be concerned about your future prospects as the economy continues to slow. This is acceptable; being concerned means you are aware. Yes, the job market right now is competitive, but it is still possible for many graduates to find a job. It may just take a little longer and a more concerted effort on your part to find and obtain the job you want. With some careful planning, you can be at the top of your game when you go out into the job market. The key is to know what you want, and to work toward that goal.

Jobs are going to be highly competitive, but they are not nonexistent. It is unrealistic to expect a job to fall out of the sky; you are actually going to have to search deeper for jobs in this market. That means going past the classifieds or just a simple keyword search on Google. A good way to start your job search is to look at websites like JobCat (made available to you at <http://careers.wcu.edu>) and CareerBuilder.com and find a job similar to what you are looking for. What are the terms they use to describe the job? Use those specific terms to do a broader search for similar positions in other companies. But this is just a start. An article on [careerbuilder.msn.com](http://careerbuilder.msn.com), entitled "5 Ways to Get the Job You Want – in Any Economy," says that "most of the jobs available are not advertised. They are hidden and waiting for you to discover them." This means it is going to take effort on your part, and you are going to have to work to find work. Research the options you find or think that you would like to explore. Be aware of what the economy looks like, and which companies and industries are still hiring even in the recession. Target your search to include those jobs in areas of the economy that have potential for hiring and growth in the near future. Right now, according to CareerBuilder.com, the areas of education, health care, government, information, technology, and food service are still growing in the job market. These fields are very broad and potentially hire everyone from English majors to graduates with more specific degrees.

Once you've narrowed your focus, start thinking about what you can offer to a company that other candidates can't. How has your education prepared you for this position? What are your strengths and weaknesses? Identify your skills and then sharpen them, building on them as necessary. If you think your communications skills or your computer skills need some improvement, don't be afraid to take that extra class to gain an edge in your field.

This economy is competitive, so you have to know your field and use your resources to your advantage. Your resources include professors, past employers, internships, your family, friends, and people at your church, amid a myriad of other possibilities. Utilize these networking contacts, and if you don't have them, start building them. Knowing someone inside the market you are trying to break into is a valuable asset to your job search. Start meeting people early; go to career fairs and career events, and get to know what qualities employers expect in their employees. Look for intern and co-op opportunities in your field; it's a great way to get your foot in the door and make a real impression on potential employers. Volunteering is another good way to make connections and gain valuable experience in your field. These experiences look great on your resume, and they also allow you that added bonus of forming key relationships and connections with people who can help.

It can take some time to find a job in a recession, so be flexible. Take on a part-time job in a company where you want to work; it can open doors later on. It can also allow you to "try on a job for size" to see if it is really a good fit for you. It will also give you the chance to network more effectively if you are already working within your field. In some fields, it is possible to freelance. This will get your name and your talents or skills on the radar of future employers, as well as build your portfolio and resume. Keep an upbeat attitude, sharpen your skills, and stay flexible. It will take some time, but with effort on your part, you can land a job that can become the next step of a career.

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