



Training Manual

Job Search Strategy

Iraq's largest Virtual Job Fair

Presented by:

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Working for a Better Future

Introduction

Job hunting is tough. It certainly is not a walk in the park. It can get boring & frustrating and the last thing you want to do - especially when you have had a tiring day at work. It can feel as if you are competing with thousands of job seekers for a distant finish line. In this **Job Search Strategy Guide**, we aim to go over advice that will prove to be useful in accelerating your job search and enabling you to successfully plan and strategize and take you a step closer toward your dream job.

Getting Started

Polls and surveys indicate that **recruiters and HR managers spend less than 30 seconds scanning your CV before making an instant decision regarding your suitability for an available vacancy.**

30 seconds is a very small window during which you can either engage your future boss and score an interview or fail to engage your audience and end up in the 'rejection pile'.

Employer expectations are changing and so is the recruitment landscape. Your job search strategies need to evolve and adapt to be successful. This guide aims to explain how you can benefit from a focused and well-planned job search strategy. It aims to reveal how you can discover your work personality and channel that knowledge to land a job you are deeply passionate about.

Let us delve into a step-by-step analysis of a focused job-search strategy.

Need for Planning

An effective and successful job search is the product of time and effort invested in understanding yourself, your skills, your connections, resources and your personal deadlines.

A successful Job Search requires three things:

- Research
- Planning
- Preparation

Tip 1: Self-Analysis – A successful job search is directly proportional to the time and effort you invest in yourself. Spend some time analyzing yourself to discover your desires and passions, your best skills, your top achievements, the resources at your disposal and any connections within your networks that can become part of your job search strategy. At this point you also want to consider your sense of urgency so appropriate timelines can be defined.

The analysis will help you discover what you want to do with your life, what you are good at and whether you have the resources (educational qualifications, experience, geographical factors etc.) to pursue your career goals realistically. The next step is to take learning outcomes from this self-analysis exercise and put them into a logical sequence of tasks. This stage is called **Planning**.

Tip 2: Plan & Strategize –A good career plan is essentially a strategy to help you discover and create opportunities consistent with your career goals and aspirations. Planning helps you pursue your goals while keeping in view your strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and constraints.

Planning & self-analysis involves finding answers to these basic questions before you proceed with your job search.

1. Who am I and what jobs should I be targeting?

2. What is important to me in my career?

The answers could vary from: seniority or responsibilities of a particular role, work culture, employer brand/identity, salary structure and benefits etc.

3. What is my preferred style? How do I naturally approach things?

You may be a thinker, an out-of-the box creative type who looks for creative outcomes as opposed to a structured thinker who approaches and confronts tasks in a hands-on, standard manner. You may look at the bigger picture instinctively VS being detailed-oriented.

Answering these questions is important because they help you examine your personality and temperament in microscopic detail. This clarity will in turn help you understand the kinds of roles and work environments that will stimulate your productivity and improve your job satisfaction.

Tip 3: Position yourself –Knowing your personality, past performance, skills and work attributes helps you be in better control of your job search as it allows you to position yourself as a strong match for an organization. A knowledge of your own tendencies, strengths and weaknesses equips you better and puts you in the driving seat of your career. **You can then easily reflect this self-knowledge in your CV, during job interviews and at networking events to attract the right career opportunities.**

There are numerous online evaluations and assessments that can help you uncover your personality type. Some of the most popular ones are: **Myers Briggs Type Indicator (MBTI)** and **Five-Factor model**. Many of these assessments are now readily available over the internet, free of cost and we would encourage you to look them up.

Other assessments such as the **Holland Code** or **RIASEC** assessment help you figure out your interests/skills so you can better articulate them in your conversations and CV.

Tip 4: Importance of Self-Analysis – Self-analysis helps you distinguish yourself from a large pool of qualified candidates. It enables you to make meaningful connections between your personality and the organizational / occupational values.

Once you understand yourself, your capabilities and goals better – you can start establishing a connection between your capabilities and an employer’s requirements or needs.

These unique capabilities or **skills** are key in establishing a candidate’s suitability for an advertised role. All job descriptions advertised by employers can be read from the perspective of identifying and disaggregating the **skills** required to perform and excel at the role.

Employers scan CVs to find candidates who possess the requisite skills as an indicator of their relevance for the available vacancy. If a candidate is an ideal match but his CV does not effectively communicate his skills - his chances of being shortlisted or noticed will be drastically reduced.

It is good practice to identify and highlight skills that appear in a job description and then compare them against the contents of your CV. It is also important to notice and mimic the language of the recruiter to give your application a further boost, provided you possess the necessary skills.

These skills can be **technical or specialized skills**, which are niche and acquired through education, training or experience. Examples of technical skills are web development, graphic design, Java programmer etc. On the other hand, some skills are not derived or niche, and may be used in multiple career paths in diverse situations. These are **transferable skills** and some examples include teamwork, leadership, time-management etc.

Tip 5: Connect skills with employer needs – The presentation of your skills is the key to stand out from the crowd. Establish strong, solid connections between your skills and an employer’s needs / organizational values. Better still, provide evidence by quoting examples or achievements that highlight your aptitude and skills.

Market Research

Now that you’re geared up, it’s time to touch upon the next step in the job search process, i.e. researching and understanding the job market.

Some primary questions you should look to answer during this stage are:

- What are the opportunities available to me in the current job market?
- How many organizations are hiring in my target region in the next 1 month, 3-6 months or even 1 year?
- Which industries are hiring (or growing) most actively?
- Which are the top employers in these industries?
- How many positions are they planning to fill?
This will give you an idea of the kind of competition you should expect.
- Which career levels are they looking for and where do I fit?
- What are the key, in-demand occupations across these industries?

It also pays off to research some key elements of the job seeker's universe:

This includes an evaluation the following factors:

- How competitive is the job?
- Why are so many applicants attracted to this industry or position?
The answers can vary from: work-life balance, higher salary, employer of choice, positive work environment, low barriers to entry etc.
- How does a company reward success? What are the values, vision and mission?
- Does the company invest in a strong workplace culture?
- What are my growth prospects in a certain company or industry?

Tip 6: Market Research pays-off - Based on your research, prepare a list of what you're good at, what you like doing, how favorable/unfavorable the odds are and how you can exploit your strengths to your advantage in the current situation. Then list specific occupations, industries, and top employers to target and you're good to go. It is recommended to have a list of at least 20 companies you would like to work for and then keep a close eye on their recruitment cycles.

With this basic groundwork in place, you are in a good position to proceed with your actual job hunt.

Hiring managers always give preference to applicants who have done their research about the company, role, projects and anticipated ventures as a sign of greater diligence and proactive interest in the position. More often than not, interview calls are received by well-informed candidates who are able to successfully communicate their eagerness and interest in working for the employer by demonstrating good knowledge about the employer. Understanding a company will also make it easy for you to align your unique value proposition to the company's vision and mission.

Job Search Channels: where to look?

Through planning and preparation you have laid a solid and robust ground for your job search. The next question is - where do I look for these coveted jobs?

Employers utilize various diverse channels to advertise their open and certain confidential positions. Most employers use a combination of mediums to maximize their reach and gather a rich pool of qualified candidates.

The following are the most common channels where companies publish their vacancies. This is by no means an exhaustive list, nevertheless covers a major chunk of job sources.

Newspapers

Local newspapers are a good place to start your job search. Different newspapers advertise jobs on different days and for different types of work. Newspapers also keep you up to date on which companies are moving into an area or expanding operations. You can use this information and send your CV to these companies before they advertise to see if there are any jobs available. In addition some government

organizations and companies mandate publishing their vacancies on local and national newspapers to meet certain legal requirements. Newspaper will always remain a great source of researching available and upcoming opportunities.

Industry Journals and Specialist Publications

Niche associations, trade publications and newsletters often publish adverts for jobs in their particular field. Such magazines also give you information on top organizations hiring in a particular industry and jobs in high demand within the industry.

Job-Boards and Job-Search Engines

Employers increasingly prefer online channels to advertise their vacancies. The reasons vary from reduced costs, faster access, wider reach and more manageable shortlisting and recruitment processes. Job-boards and job-engines are the most-widely used channels to publish job vacancies today. 70 per cent of all recruitment activity is carried out online on job sites and job boards. With this shift in preference, employer expectations from candidates are also changing.

To make the most out of your online job search, **it is vital to have an impressive and well-crafted online CV and cover letter as a starting point to get noticed by employers.** Your online CV is your marketing tool and you need to invest some time in drafting a CV that performs well on job boards. Your MS Word/PDF CV cannot substitute or double as your online CV since the performance metrics for an online CV are completely different.

An online CV is not limited in length and needs to mention the right keywords, skills and qualifications to give your applications more visibility. You need to make sure your CV is keyword friendly and includes any alternative job titles or industry variants. For example, recruiter A and B could both be looking for candidates with sales experience. Recruiter A could enter a search query for 'business development' while Recruiter B could specify 'sales and relationship management'. If your CV does not mention these variations, you could be overlooked by the search and eliminated easily. The same logic applies to skills, qualifications and your work experience. Draft your online CV keeping in mind the search techniques available to employers.

Job boards are useful for learning what types of openings are available in your industry and what skills are required to qualify for these jobs. These sites provide a convenient way of analyzing the range of opportunities available and identifying companies and recruitment agencies with vacancies of interest.

Job-sites such as Foras-Tamaal (<http://jobs.foras-iq.tazmal.com/>) as well as job engines such as Indeed.com and CareerJet.com are some examples. Most of these sites provide the opportunity to post your CV to their site. However, don't expect this simple task to result in a flood of approaches from employers. It's a bit like sticking your CV in a shop window and hoping the right employer will walk past and notice it. If you want to be successful in your job search, you need to be more proactive in reaching out to employers the right way. Most of these sites will allow you to program job alerts so you can receive notifications whenever a relevant job is advertised.

Top companies in any region have registrations with job boards and job sites. Some employers prefer to search for talent proactively instead of advertising vacancies and waiting for the right applicants to apply. It is important to maintain a current, professional and updated online CV reflecting your true capabilities on such mediums to allow employers to find you easily.

Tip 7: Keep your online profile up-to-date and easily searchable, shareable- We suggest uploading the CV in PDF format to ensure that your formatting gets preserved, if that is not an option, uploading the CV as a word file will fulfill the purpose as needed. This will also make it easy for them to download your CV and share the information amongst themselves faster, without you having to compromise on the layout and format that you have worked so hard on perfecting to make that memorable first impression.

Recruitment Agencies

Recruitment Agencies can also prove useful in your job search. They can provide a gateway to unadvertised jobs and some specialized posts. Some large companies outsource recruitment to agencies to pre-screen candidates.

Recruitment agencies work closely with employers and they'll match you to a job if you have the right skills and qualifications for the role. There are some points you should keep in mind while registering with an agency:

- You should avoid being talked into taking unsuitable jobs.
- Be wary if a recruitment consultant provides no information about the company or the job.
- Keep in touch with your agency and take any advice about improving your CV.
- Talk to them if they're not finding roles for you. If there is a lack of jobs you are interested in, you may need to think about other types of work, or registering with a different agency.
- Register with more than one agency – 3 or 4 is probably a manageable number. There's no limit to how many agencies you can use to help you get a job, so use a few.
- Recruitment consultants tend to be very upbeat about finding you a job, but sometimes seem to forget about you as soon as you leave their office so be proactive and follow up with them regularly.

Social Media

The latest medium that has sprung up for employers to publish their vacancies is via their online, social handles. Recent research suggests that many companies are either using or are planning to use social media as a key part of their recruitment strategy.

The benefit of social media for job-seekers is that it enables two-way communication between the employer and a candidate. Since the information you receive is live, you can directly contact and interact with the employer, which is not the case with most other channels.

Tip 8: Indispensable social media- Use social media to your advantage in order to stay updated with online job market trends and industry forecasts. Learn about new and interesting developments with your top employers, their operations, expansion into new territories, mergers and acquisitions, connect with their HR function and brush-up your knowledge of new research, articles and blogs that are relevant to the industry.

Even if there are no vacancies advertised, just by using your research skills you will be able to get a head start on your job search and can plan ahead on customizing your CV for upcoming application submissions as soon as doors open.

You should also use professional networking site like LinkedIn. Make sure you have a recruiter friendly LinkedIn profile with a strong professional headline, for example, "Mohamed Fezzan" – experienced chartered accountant". Use plenty of keywords and phrases that relate to your particular skills set and experience. Recruiters routinely search LinkedIn looking for candidates for their unadvertised jobs; having a well-written profile ensures they can easily find your details and contact you.

You can also join some professional groups on LinkedIn. There are hundreds of professional networking groups covering almost every job category and profession. Mention in your introduction that you are looking for work; other members may get in touch if they have a suitable opportunity and by participating in conversations, you will also pick up useful information about possible openings.

Twitter and Facebook are also excellent sources of jobs. They are not conventional mediums for job advertisements but a quick search will demonstrate that there is plenty of tweeting going on between jobseekers and recruiters.

It's easy to join Twitter and start following potential employers and their recruiters. You can make direct contacts with other subscribers and tweet the managing director or recruitment manager of an organization and ask them directly if they have any suitable vacancies (don't forget to include a link to your LinkedIn profile). You will not always get a response, but these are friendly platforms and some senior managers may be impressed by your initiative.

Your Personal Brand: stand out from the crowd

Research carried out in the job seeker domain reveals that the biggest challenge and pain point for job seekers is to successfully differentiate and distinguish themselves from the rest of the qualified talent pool. The answer to this is to **conduct your job search like a marketing campaign, where the product you have to market is 'You.'**

The traditional job seeker approach is to search for open positions posted online and follow a formal application procedure to be considered. But with thousands of job seekers applying for the same positions, the competition can be overwhelming.

The only way to beat the odds is to actively market yourself and pursue any potential opportunities with vigor. Marketing yourself as a job seeker means locating people who can offer or lead you to opportunities and telling them what you are capable of, over and over. You have to actively seek out these connections - you can't wait for them to find you. There are many ways of telling them what you can do -- in person, in writing, by phone -- but you must tell them.

And you have to tell them over and over. No one will remember you if they hear from you only once.

Just as any company selling a product or service follows a strategic marketing plan with defined tactics to reach the right audience with the right message - so should you. In this case, you are the product. **Finding job opportunities takes a disciplined approach using strategies that are proven to work.**

There are six different approaches to conducting your job search like a marketing campaign. Here they are, listed in order of effectiveness:

1. Networking and referral-building

Networking has become almost indispensable to effective job-search in current times. **Networking aims at building mutually beneficial relationships with your network- friends, family, colleagues, and influencers.**

These days many companies pay bonus to employees who can introduce a new member of staff. Companies prefer to do this because they can save on expensive advertising and agency fees. Employees who have been offered this bounty will be glad to hear from friends or former colleagues who are looking for work.

If there are jobs in the pipeline that have not been published, assuming you have the right skills and experience, these incentivized employees will most likely be keen to help. Build a brand for yourself — so a job will come to you, rather than the other way around.

Tip 8: Network like a Pro! - Make sure that all your friends (including your Facebook friends), neighbors, former colleagues or business associates know that you are looking for a new position. Networking and referral-building will provide you with the maximum number of contacts, referrals, and leads, so this approach is almost always the most effective.



Other channels that can help you grow your network, apart from online mediums and social media (Facebook/Twitter/LinkedIn) are:

- Family and Friends
- Co-workers & former co-workers
- Clients
- Neighbours (current & past)
- Teachers & professors
- Career counselors
- Previous employers
- Sport teams and activities
- Classmates or other students
- Community/religious gatherings
- Members of professional groups or associations
- People you meet at professional networking events

Contact potential employers directly

If you hear about a possible job opportunity then you can directly approach the company. Don't send speculative applications to the HR manager or recruitment manager as you are unlikely to get a response. Take some time to research the company using Google or LinkedIn and try to identify the person within that organization who might be hiring for that vacancy; then send a personalized application letter and your CV to them.

Tip 9: Personalize – Address emails with the name of the person you're writing to. Don't send out a blanket mail shot to 100 companies. Identify just a few organizations and send a customized application to each of them. Remember a little more effort goes a long way. 😊 Try and keep your tone conversational when you write the email. Conversational emails that reflect your personality are far more interesting than standard, monotone messages.

Attend trade fairs and conferences

These are events where potentially the leading employers in your field are gathered in one location. You can find out about upcoming events in the press and on the internet. The same applies to job fairs (physical and online). When you attend these events take plenty of copies of your CV and some business cards, and start networking.

The key is to take control of your job search and be pro-active.

Get alerts about potential jobs straight to your inbox

Use Google Alerts to get regular email notifications of events that might lead to a job opportunity. For example, placing the simple search string: 'marketing, jobs, Iraq' on Google Alerts can lead you to a news

item referring to a large conglomerate group that is planning to open an office in Erbil, Iraq creating over 300 new jobs for marketing professionals. Think of that scenario!

Most of the job-boards today also allow you to set up job-alerts and save your searches so that you're notified of new vacancies which match your preference and criteria. Setting up your personal press cuttings service in this way is useful to identify potential unadvertised job opportunities. This is a great way to stay ahead of the job search game.

Recap of Job Search Strategy & Best Practices

Let us now quickly recap some key strategies and best practices you should keep in mind to jumpstart a successful job search.

Planning your Job Search

1. **Plan out your job search strategy.** Identify your key strengths and skills and build connections between these and employer's needs.
2. **Identify Employers.** Make a list of employers for targeted, focused mailings with a specialized resume and personalized cover letter.
3. **Identify Resources for Job Postings.** Identify job-boards, job-engines, trade associations, leading newspapers and publications, industry-specific magazines, professional newsletters, and social media channels.
4. **Network, Network, Network:** Make a list of contacts. Start with your family, friends, colleagues, acquaintances, professors and other professionals who you can contact to help you in your search, either with leads, openings or information.

Initiating the job search

Apply to Job Postings. Use online resources such as <http://www.foras-iq.ta3mal.com/>, other job boards and job search engines such as Indeed and CareerJet.

Tip 9: We recommend using websites such as: <http://www.foras-iq.ta3mal.com/> to structure online profiles or CVs with your education, experience, skills and memberships to increase your visibility on widely-popular automated applicant tracking systems.

1. **Send out Targeted Mailings.** Send focused and customized cover letters and resumes to the list of potential employers you have identified. Follow-up with employers, via phone or email, if you have not heard from them in 2 weeks.
2. **Conduct Informational Interviews.** Gather information from your contacts, alums, and other contacts in your field of interest.
3. **Attend Career Fairs and Conferences.** At some job fairs, interviews are conducted on site. You can also make new contacts and identify new employers of interest. Virtual job fairs are also a great way to connect with employers from the comfort of your home or office. Prioritize your attendance in virtual job fairs and networking events to expand your opportunities.

- 4. Network: Build and Maintain Your Contacts.** Attend events, and join professional networking websites such as www.Linkedin.com, to expand, manage and organize your network. Use networking as an asset to build a strong web of friends and family in their professional fields because that can be your bridge towards getting a career advancing introduction to a potential employer. Use features such as headlines and announcements to put yourself on the radar as a viable candidate available for projects and job roles.

Managing your job search

- 1. Manage your search.** Keep an attentive track of all applications submitted, CVs uploaded, and personal networking contacts to facilitate ease in referencing and referral when needed. There are a wide range of widgets, applications and websites built to cater to this specific purpose and can aid in helping you save precious time and perfect your application management skills in the long run.
- 1. Follow-up with Employers and Leads.** The job search is an on-going process. If you do not hear from an employer after 2 weeks of submitting your CV, call or email to inquire about the status of your application. If your contacts have given you leads, investigate those leads and set up appointments for informational interviews.
- 2. Write Thank You Notes and Letters.** After each interview, meeting, or lead received, be sure to send a handwritten thank you note, card, or letter. You will stand out from the rest of the pack if you mail your note instead of just sending an email.
- 3. Continue to Research Employers.** As you research employers and refine your search, remember to update your resume, cover letter, references and writing sample(s) as necessary.

In conclusion, use your time focusing on your job search mission and research the best niche sources that can help you accomplish the goals that we discussed in this guide. Your target should be to leave no stone unturned in your strategy so you can remain on the forefront of all opportunities and trends that surface.

We wish you the best of luck with your Job Search!