

Get Ready for the Adventure

“Every single journey that I’ve embarked on, I’ve learned something new.” —Shailene Woodley

While on your job search adventure, you’ll probably vacillate between periods of excitement when new possibilities arise and periods of emotional upheaval and doubts. Job seekers rarely talk about these negative feelings publicly because it is important to show a positive face when networking. If you are unsatisfied in your current position, you may have to pretend that you still find selling socks meaningful. Or, if you’re unemployed, you may hate being constantly asked how the search is going. You may say, breezily, “I’m enjoying spending quality time with the kids, and there are several interesting options that I am exploring.” You might wish you could groan deeply and say frankly, “I am binge watching *Mad Men* for the third time.”

This section helps you prepare in ways much like getting ready for a new adventure. The first task is to consider your emotional preparation: identifying, for instance, frightening unknowns. To offset any emotional challenges it is important to assess your resources, review your self-care needs, and stay in contact with those who provide positive support or fun respite when you feel worn down.

Our first article, ***Surviving and Thriving***, introduces you to several tools to help you identify practical and technical items you’ll need for a successful job search. In addition to the practical stuff, this article prompts you to consider your emotional needs and challenges while undertaking the job search adventure. The second article, ***Pack Your Tool Bag***, organizes these tools into a handy checklist to identify and track your preparations.

The final article, ***Build Technical and Social Media Skills***, will motivate you to improve critical technical skills so that you will be current and competitive in your field. We also emphasize creating or improving your LinkedIn profile because most prospective employers seriously considering you will look you up on LinkedIn.

If you are currently employed, we understand that you won’t have time to implement all of the tools; you will need to determine which ones are most relevant to your unique job search adventure. If you are unemployed, we encourage you to dive deeper into this section, returning to it to add more tools and refine others to hone your readiness and gain momentum. Happy Trails!

SURVIVING AND THRIVING

Some experts claim that job seeking is a full-time job. We disagree. We think it is an excellent time to develop a schedule that balances job-seeking tasks at the computer, enjoyable networking, skill building, self-care, and pleasure. It is also a wonderful time to engage in physical, spiritual, and social play that won't fit as easily into your schedule after you have a job.

We created the checklist *Pack Your Tool Bag* on the next page to help start your job search with a positive mindset. The checklist has four categories of tools: practical elements that support your search, technology and social media tools you'll want to consider learning, elements of spiritual/emotional support, and means for engagement in community. These are discussed briefly here.

PRACTICAL ELEMENTS

We start the checklist with practical tools, particularly the importance of creating and stocking an attractive area in which to work. Vicki's father, a small-business consultant, advised, "You'll work best with a clean desk that only includes three items: your immediate task, a picture of someone you love, and something living...like a plant or goldfish."

TECHNOLOGY TOOLS

Being up-to-date on the latest software and social media trends can be most beneficial to your job search. Do you want to brush up on Google Docs or Microsoft Office? We highly recommend engaging in social media, especially LinkedIn, to research jobs and employers as well as network with other professionals who share your desired job title or work at your target company. Now is the time to hone your expertise with these tools.

SPIRITUAL/EMOTIONAL SUPPORT

We next turn to tools that will strengthen you internally and help you invite joy, peace, and meaning into your process. It is a time to review the tools that have helped you through other life challenges—from journaling to golf. It is a time to find and strengthen your connections to people who can both share the inside journey and support the outward tasks of the search.

In addition to supportive family and friends, you might consider working with a job search coach and/or resume writer. We can help you clarify your employment must-haves, overcome doubts and fears, and provide practical tools such as resume and interview help. Almost all of us provide at least a free 15-minute phone consultation and have personal websites. Some of you may sense already that your progress will be faster and more sure-footed with professional help in designing your job search plan. Minimally, it's time to call when you have tried your own strategies and feel stuck.

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

If you are unemployed, you may have lost the community of coworkers you engaged with on a daily basis. Belonging to communities—even taking time to meet your neighbors—provides support at a challenging time. Community engagement also provides networking opportunities that are integral to the successful job search.

Now it's time to pack your tool bag and get underway!

PACK YOUR TOOL BAG

Reflect on each tool and select an action item that fits your style and schedule. Then, review your list and assign a number from 1 to 4 with 1 being the highest priority and 4 being the lowest. Finish by transferring your most important action items to your calendar or "to do" list.

If you are employed full-time, choose a few that will have the most impact. If you are unemployed, you have the luxury of spending more time on skill building and taking care of your emotional and social life. Clip or dog-ear this page so you can return to repack your bags, if needed, until you receive that hot job offer.

TOOLS	Action	Priority Rank
1. PRACTICAL TOOLS		
<i>Inviting work area</i>		
<i>Dedicated workspace</i>		
<i>Do Not Disturb conversation/sign</i>		
<i>File and folder system</i>		
<i>Financial review</i>		
<i>Locate old resume(s)</i>		
<i>Other:</i>		
2. TECHNOLOGY TOOLS		
<i>Software skills</i>		
<i>LinkedIn and social media</i>		
<i>Update and engage contacts</i>		
<i>Calendar app</i>		
<i>Other</i>		
3. SPIRITUAL/EMOTIONAL TOOLS		
<i>Books and movies</i>		
<i>Podcasts</i>		
<i>Dates with friends</i>		
<i>Creative expression</i>		
<i>Getaways</i>		
<i>Career counselor/job search</i>		
<i>Other</i>		
4. COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT		
<i>Professional associations</i>		
<i>Strategic volunteering</i>		
<i>Spiritual affiliation</i>		
<i>Meetups</i>		
<i>Other</i>		

1. PRACTICAL ELEMENTS

Inviting work area – Set up an office area and make it a place where you want to spend time. Decorate with plants, motivational quotes, or pictures of loved ones.

Dedicated workspace – Create a space that will allow you to work without interruption, preferably a place where you can close the door and work quietly and store materials.

Do Not Disturb conversation/sign – If you are unemployed, everyone will assume that you are now available to mow the lawn, pick up your brother-in-law from the airport, and cheerfully make time for every errand. Talk to people in your life to let them know that you must commit focused time to your job search. Make it clear when you are not to be disturbed. If you have a dedicated space with a door, you might want to hang a *Do Not Disturb* sign on the door handle.

File and folder system – Develop an information-storage system with clear labels for easy access. If you like to have things on paper, you can create a binder or series of folders, one for each section of this handbook. In addition to saving position announcements and resume drafts, you can collect articles and links to resources that inform and energize your job search.

Financial review – If you are unemployed, you need to review your finances and possibly make tough decisions. Do I need to cancel our vacation? Should I tap emergency funds to find the ideal job? Can I work part-time while I search for a job? Do I have relatives or friends to tap if things get tight? If you have a spouse or partner, set aside time for a discussion about money matters. Imagine your most comfortable job search journey with a quick and soft landing to a great destination. Also develop a plan B

for a less direct route to employment. After reviewing the facts, set a salary goal as well as the lowest amount you are willing to accept if other factors, such as benefits and vacation time, are ideal.

Locate old resumes – Don't worry too much about polishing your resume just yet, but do dig up your latest version—as well as positive performance reviews—so that they are easily accessible when needed. Add your most recent position to your resume if you have not done so already. Reviewing your resumes may also remind you of your accomplishments and boost your confidence.

2. TECHNOLOGY TOOLS

Software skills – Now is the time to take your Google Docs and Microsoft Office skills to the next level. Many websites offer clear step-by-step computer training (see *Build Technical and Social Media Skills* for a list). If you prefer a brick-and-mortar classroom setting, community colleges and workforce centers offer free and low cost- training. If it's relevant to your job goal, add a database program or specialized software program. If you are in a creative field, improve your portfolio while building skills in the Adobe Creative Suite programs.

LinkedIn and social media – Because 93 percent of hiring managers use LinkedIn and a staggering number of people (over two billion as of January 2018) are using Facebook, it makes sense to join the bandwagon so your network can assist you in your job search. See *Facebook for Job Search* and *LinkedIn for Job Research* to learn more.

Update and engage contacts – You will be tapping your colleagues and friends in many ways—from providing leads to offering comfort when you blow an interview. Before you start making requests, touch base with your key connections and supporters. If you have a drawer full of business cards from events

you've attended, update your email, social media, and LinkedIn contact lists.

Calendar app – If you do not have an effective electronic calendar application in place, prioritize this activity. We like Google Calendar, but Microsoft Outlook and Apple's iCal are also popular. Whether you go high-tech or old-school with a paper planner, be sure to block out time for self-care, reflection, coffee dates, and getaways.

3. SPIRITUAL/EMOTIONAL TOOLS

Books and movies – Most heroes and heroines show grit and resolve when overcoming obstacles to fulfilling their dreams. By engaging in their stories, we become inspired and muster our courage and motivation to confront our own barriers. Vicki and Leslie were inspired by watching *RBG*, the story of how Ruth Bader Ginsberg overcame serious odds (as well as two bouts with cancer) to serve on the Supreme Court. Tifini gains inspiration by watching movies and reading books based on true stories of inspiration where the underdog prevails, such as the film *The Blind Side* and the book *The Girl with No Name*.

Podcasts – These are great for expanding your horizons while doing the dishes or walking the dog. Vicki was surprised to learn from *Eat, Pray, Love* author Elizabeth Gilbert that following your passion, while perfect in some cases, can have serious unintended consequences. Leslie loves listening to NPR's Radiolab with her husband while driving their daughter to college in Boulder, Colorado. She discovers new technologies, learns about obscure current events, and hears a variety of perspectives on timely topics.

Dates with friends – This is something we don't always think to chisel into our schedules, especially if we're spending a lot of time at home. Make time for

friends and don't hesitate to ask for their help and insights about you. You may discover some pleasant surprises!

Getaways – We are big fans of road trips, but if this proves impossible, little day trips are invaluable at this time to relax and expand your thinking. Take yourself to those places that offer mindful appreciation of the world and provide a psychological reboot. Vicki's favorite spots include the wetlands of Sauvie Island and Manzanita; Leslie enjoys exploring Tryon Creek and taking urban walks in different Portland neighborhoods. Tifini, who lives on a rustic mountaintop, enjoys getaways to the beach where she can walk along the shoreline and hike the coastal range.

Creative expression – You do not need to be a Picasso or virtuoso pianist to express yourself creatively. Creative expression could be as simple as keeping a brief diary or singing in the shower—both of which are shown to have therapeutic benefits. Ignoring your creative side can lead to depression and anxiety, especially if you need creative expression to feel like a human. During tough times Vicki makes *Soul Collage Cards* on topics such as endurance and acceptance. Leslie raises her voice with others in the Portland Interfaith Gospel Choir and plays bass guitar in a band with her husband. Tifini gets out her bead collection to craft beautiful gifts for others.

Career counselor/job search coach – Your friends and family can help you only to a point. When it's time for skilled assistance with a robust, contemporary job search, a career counselor or job search coach can provide expert guidance.

4. COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

Professional associations – Attending networking groups and the meetings of professional associations

is a great way to make contacts and learn more about different job titles, companies, and self-employment options. When you attend, collect business cards and then follow up by connecting on LinkedIn or other social media. If you had a particularly good connection, set up a coffee date.

Strategic volunteering – Nonprofits, professional associations, and civic organizations are constantly looking for people to help with marketing, social media, events, and community outreach. Volunteer for tasks that build your skills or give you the opportunity to meet professionals in your field.

Spiritual affiliation – If you have a place of worship, consider ways to deepen your involvement. Reach out to more members of your spiritual community and engage in practices that will bolster your spirit during challenging periods. You may find kindred spirits add strength in nontraditional settings such as a martial arts studio, a hiking club, or a 12-Step group.

Meetups – Whatever your interest, there is a meetup for you. You can attend meetups to practice and improve a certain skill (for example, Spanish at Lunch) or you can connect with other professionals at meetups like Portland Wellness Practitioners or Beers with Engineers. Of course, you can choose a meetup to foster a hobby, for emotional vitalization through creativity, or just for convening with others in nature (The Meditation, Joy, and Tea Meetup is one of the hundreds to choose from).

Work steadily on this checklist but don't let its lack of completion keep you from moving forward. You can take practical steps in your job search while using and building on the tools you think are helpful. We want you to take advantage of your internal momentum as it builds!

“Take what you can use and let the rest go by.” —Ken Kesey

Tip

You don't need to use all the tools—that could be a bit overwhelming. You know what tools will serve you best

Like it or not, the technological revolution has had a major impact on how we work and personally interact. As of January 2018, 467 million people are on LinkedIn, the foremost professional social media site with over 11 million active job listings. While the pressure to engage in social media platforms can feel oppressive, it helps to remember that there is a platform for everyone.

Think of social media platforms as some of the stranded passengers on Gilligan's Island—LinkedIn is the Professor, stately and a little stiff but very intelligent; Twitter is the Skipper, all goofiness but little self-awareness; Gilligan is Facebook, the bungling yet loveable linchpin of the group, bringing everyone together but often giving you ample cause to throw him off the island; Ginger is Instagram, glamorous and lovely to look at but not likely to hold a conversation for long; and Pinterest is Mary Ann, conventionally useful in many ways and always cheerfully creative. (Sorry that we didn't fit you into the metaphor, Mr. and Mrs. Howell, but the world isn't quite ready for a social media platform suited to you.)

Note: As of this writing Facebook, with 2.13 billion members and counting, is the winner and is starting to dip its toe into the recruiting world by listing job postings. It remains to be seen if this new feature will take hold, but it seems likely Facebook could capture a market of people for whom LinkedIn holds little or no appeal.

NOW IS THE TIME TO BUILD YOUR SKILLS

You may be hesitant to spend time on building technical skills, believing that you are a fast learner able to master these skills after you are hired. This belief may be buoyed by managers who say that communication skills and critical thinking abilities play a larger role in their hiring decisions than specific technical skills that can be learned. Such comments often mislead job applicants to apply to jobs for which they do not have the required technical skills.

Keep in mind the resume screeners are the gatekeepers and tend to be more concrete and literal than the managers. In fact, over 80 percent of midsized and larger companies use applicant tracking software (ATS) to score resumes based on keywords and technical skills (for more information, see *Applicant Tracking Software* in **Step 3: Plan Your Resume and Cover Letter**). Only a small subset of those that make it through the system—those that best match the qualifications for years of experience and technical skills—are presented to the hiring manager. Managers then make their more holistic assessment based on interpersonal and other soft skills.

In short, unless you have some well-developed pipelines to hiring managers, use time during your job search to upgrade your technical skills.

FIND THE RIGHT ENVIRONMENT

Begin by reflecting on what kind of environment will help you achieve optimal mental clarity so that you can stick to the task of building your technical skills. If you've experienced resistance in the past, explore

this task as a learning experiment. Try something new, like inviting your computer-obsessed nephew over to help you learn and grasp social media. Notice if this process was enjoyable and productive for you. If not, try something else...maybe a workshop.

FACTORS THAT INCREASE SUCCESS	Helpful	Somewhat Helpful	Not Helpful
<i>Working at home</i>			
<i>Working at a coffee shop</i>			
<i>Working alongside a friend</i>			
<i>Online courses and tutorials</i>			
<i>Classes/workshops (in-person)</i>			
<i>Help from technologically-savvy friend or relative</i>			
<i>Blocking out regular time in your calendar</i>			
<i>Other:</i>			

RESOURCES TO BUILD YOUR TECHNOLOGY SKILLS

If you need help assessing your level of competency and creating a structure for training, we've found these sites to be extremely friendly, affordable, and effective:

- **LinkedIn.com/Learning** (formerly **Lynda.com**) has 63,000 video tutorials, from basic to advanced skill levels. Topics include audio, business, design, photography, video, web + interactive and more. For a basic fee you can determine your current level and use as many tutorials as you like. Training is broken down into microlessons, so you can learn in ten-minute bites or focus on a course for several hours.

- **Office.com** offers free training and troubleshooting tutorials for all Microsoft products in the form of videos and downloadable PDFs. Microsoft also offers a wide range of certification trainings through third-party vendors for a fee. These certifications can help you develop skills for positions in administration and project management as well as add to your qualifications for any career.

- **TeamTreehouse.com** can help you build your programming skills for a fraction of the price of formal computer education classes. Acquire specialized training in tools like Javascript and Python and even earn certifications you can put on your resume. **Udacity.com**, **OReilly.com**, and **LearnToProgram.tv** offer similar services.

- **Coursera.com** offers over 2,000 courses and certificates from schools like Stanford and Yale. Build career skills in data science, computer science, and business. Most are free and feature feedback from other course participants.

Assessing and building technical and social media skills can feel like a daunting task, especially if the technical/social media train has left you behind at the station. Now is a great time to take a break and refresh.



HERE ARE A FEW GIFTS TO GIVE YOURSELF TO HELP YOU REFRESH

- *Take an afternoon nap.*
- *Treat yourself to a relaxing massage.*
- *Draw a picture, even if you don't think you can, or try an adult coloring book--they are quite relaxing.*
- *Take a walk in your favorite neighborhood or park and see if you notice something new.*
- *Visit Powell's and pick out a good novel. Order your favorite beverage in their cafe and enjoy your new find.*
- *Read about someone whose life had purpose or changed our world. Examples include Rachel Ignatofsky's **Women in Science**, Walter Isaacson's **Steve Jobs**, or Ron Chernow's **Hamilton**.*
- *Visit a tourist site or historic building in your city. In Portland, we like our downtown library and aerial tram. If you live in a rural area, make a trip to the big city, or go on a tour of vintage barns.*

JOB SEARCH CHECKLIST

When you consider the entire job search process it is easy to get overwhelmed. That's why we've developed the following checklist. It helps clients break up their job search into manageable tasks.

I. IDENTIFY EMPLOYER/JOB CHARACTERISTICS

- Where could the employer be located? _____
- Which sector or industry? _____
- What is your desired salary range? _____
- What schedule do you want to work? How many hours? _____
- Does it need to have health benefits? _____
- What is most important to you in the work culture? _____
- Any other traits must the job or employer have? _____
- Identify possible job titles and/or keywords that match your current skills and expertise.

1. _____ 3. _____
 2. _____ 4. _____

II. RESEARCH JOB TITLES AND LOCATE POSITION ANNOUNCEMENT

- Learn to use **Indeed** to locate appropriate position announcements.
- Use **LinkedIn's** Jobs search function.
- Identify **additional job sites** most likely to post in your field and review regularly.

1. _____ 3. _____
 2. _____ 4. _____

- Research **desirable employers** (you can list up to 20 on another piece of paper)

1. _____ 6. _____
 2. _____ 7. _____
 3. _____ 8. _____
 4. _____ 9. _____
 5. _____ 10. _____

III. PREPARE RESUME AND LINKEDIN PROFILE

- Target your first **resume** to a specific job announcement, using keywords and requirements.
- Write your first compelling **cover letter**.
- Create a **LinkedIn profile**.

IV. CHOOSE A NETWORKING STYLE

- Create a **basic message** for in-person networking that identifies what you are seeking.
- Stay in touch with **connections** in your network who may hear of job openings.
- Get to know your **targeted employers** by networking with past or current employees.
- Volunteer** and/or **intern** strategically to build contacts in your field.
- Join and participate in **professional organizations or groups** that match your career objective(s). Consider a mix of live meetings and LinkedIn groups.

V. APPLY AND INTERVIEW CONFIDENTLY

- Customize each resume**, especially the profile and keywords at the top for each job posting.
- Customize each cover letter** and align your skills with the employer's needs.
- Contact LinkedIn connections** who may know the decision makers in the company.
- Develop CAR (Challenge, Action, Results) stories** to use in the interview.
- Practice interviewing**.