



## Looking for a Job?

### Part 1: Three Critical Steps to Finding Your Next Job

By Jennifer Anderson

Searching for a job can be a long and challenging process. Regardless if you are a recent college graduate or an experienced engineer, read on to learn about the three critical steps that will result in a more productive and helpful job search.

When you are looking for a new job, there are universal truths that apply to the search process, no matter your age, years of experience, or location. The search process typically includes these stages:

- The application process
- Candidate evaluation process with an interview(s), reference checking, skill evaluation, etc.
- Acceptance or rejection of an offer

Most people think about these stages as the only parts of a job search, but these are actually the last stages of the process. The job search starts as early as when you recognize that you want to make a job change. From that moment, you are on a path to define a significant change in your life, one that will likely impact your immediate family, too. Do not take a job search lightly; there is much at stake.

When you are ready to make a job change, here are three crucial steps that will provide more clarity when you get to the application, interview and offer stages of the job search.

#### Step 1: Define your Goals

**Be clear about what you want to accomplish with your professional career.** I ask my clients, “When you get to the end of your life, what do you want to be known for?” – a simple, yet significant question. Imagine a life behind you; what do you want to be known for in your professional roles? What would you want your friends and closest professional associates to say about you? It is difficult to be a different person at work and at home, so aim to uncover what you want to be known for in both scenarios. It will help you to feel and be more synchronized in all roles of your life. This is also known as your personal brand.

For example, I have a client who wants to be known for helping his peers have access to useful information. This may seem like a simple thing to be known for but, if you stop to think about it, the results are enormous. He has noticed that when co-workers hoard information, they put the firm and their clients at risks. Whereas, when he can help team members communicate with each

other and share information, the feeling of camaraderie and unity is stronger. So, he looks for roles where he can help build trusting relationships between and amongst peers. When he decided to make a job change, he focused on firms with an established culture of collaboration that would provide greater opportunities to work in roles involving open communication and information sharing. This focus enabled my client to find work he loves with a firm which is a good fit. Without this focus going into the job search, he may have found himself again dissatisfied working for yet another company that does not champion collaboration and information sharing.

My client’s personal brand is consistently present in his home life, where he looks for ways to be connected to his family and community by also sharing helpful information. He loves to read, travel, and learn about different cultures. He often seeks ways to connect various people and learn from a broad swath of society. I hope that, through his example, you see how a simple focus – being clear about what you want to be known for – is helpful to your job search. Do not skip this first step; be clear about the personal brand you are developing in all areas of your life.

#### Step 2: Manage your Network

Once you understand what you want to be known for, **manage your network effectively for proper introductions to your ideal firm.** If you are job searching by application to online job posts, you will find it very difficult to move the ball down the field. Filling out an online application is usually one of the steps in applying for a job, but it is not the best way to begin your introduction to a new firm. Instead, identify firms that you are interested in interviewing with and then evaluate your network to see who has connections at that firm. Leverage your connections to get a personal introduction to a manager at the firm; the job search will progress much more effectively than relying on an application sitting in an online applicant tracking system.

#### Step 3: Research

**Take the time to research companies, managers, and projects.** As you understand the focus



of a firm, it will be easier to know if you are interested in working for the firm and help you to be confident that the company, their culture, managers, teams, and projects are a good match for your personal brand. This is not to suggest that you will stay with the company for the rest of your working career. That is unrealistic in today’s work culture, but it is still essential that your next employer is a good match for how you want to build your career. Each of the companies you work for are going to make an impact on your overall career.

With research and deeper digging to truly understand a company, you will be better poised to ask insightful questions during the interview process and decide if the company will support where you want your career to go – and ensure that you are choosing a company that will enable you to build your personal brand. Without the research, you are not going to stand out from the other candidates.

#### Conclusion

Remember that, during your job search, you still must jump through the red tape of applying online, interviewing, and deciding to accept/reject an offer. You will be more effective in making a solid decision if you clarify what you want to be known for, network your way into a company, and thoroughly research the potential new employer.

A future article will cover specifics of how to better interview and research prospective companies. I hope that you take to heart the three critical steps of the job search; both you and your new employer need you to be clear, focused, and on target with your job change. I wish you good luck and encourage you to be yourself through the job search process!▪

*Born into a family of engineers but focusing on the people side of engineering, Jennifer Anderson ([www.CareerCoachJen.com](http://www.CareerCoachJen.com)) has nearly 20 years helping companies hire and retain the right talent. She may be reached at [jen@careercoachjen.com](mailto:jen@careercoachjen.com).*