**The Online Job Search**

The job application process can be difficult to navigate if you are unsure of the steps and tasks involved with the process. Throughout this handout, you will learn how to approach the job search and application process including: where to find and apply for jobs, how to best work with applicant tracking systems, different kinds of talent assessments, job scam information and more.

*Where will you apply?*

The first step of the job search process is to find job postings/openings in line with your search. You can find job postings in many ways. One of the best places to find job postings is the Pennsylvania CareerLink® at pacareerlink.pa.gov. Our site has job postings approved by CareerLink® staff who work directly with employers so that you can rest assured that these postings are worthwhile and safe. Our staff also sources job opportunities from many different industries and high priority occupations.

Where else can you apply? Another great option is LinkedIn®. LinkedIn® is the world’s largest professional social networking site on the planet boasting more than 630 million professionals, 40% of which are decision makers for their companies (a.k.a. approximately 190 million people who could hire you!). Employers are finding more and more qualified candidates from LinkedIn® than they are from other sites, so they are beginning to post their jobs here first. This has given rise to the now 20+ million jobs currently on LinkedIn®. LinkedIn® also has the benefit of helping you stand out from the crowd. The job search function on their website will alert you to your direct connections that are at that place of employment. While LinkedIn’s® platform will not be concretely covered within this workshop, it is an imperative tool to have for any working professional regardless of field. Please consider attending Building & Maintaining a LinkedIn® Profile to learn more about creating an account.

There are some other job search engines and websites you may visit, as well. A job search engine or job search board is a location where various different employers can post various different kinds of jobs. Think of a job search engine akin to a job postings sections you may find in a newspaper. Some job search engines/boards include:

* Indeed.com
* Glassdoor.com
* Monster.com
* Ziprecruiter.com
* Careerbuilder.com
* USAJOBS.gov (Federal Government Employment site)
* Simplyhired.com
* Linkup.com
* Roberthalf.com

*Job Search & Keywords*

When you use job search websites, search for jobs in the most efficient manner as possible to cover the most ground. Use the most relevant keywords and refinements for the jobs you are applying. The break-down of these words are as follows:

1. Job title (*Customer Service Representative*)
2. Job type (*Customer Service*)
3. Company name (*ABC Company Inc.*)
4. Field or industry (*Retail, Healthcare, Food Service*)
5. Industry specific tools or verbiage (*Point-of-Sale Systems*)
6. Location (*Bethlehem-Allentown-Easton*)

The above keywords are listed in this order for a reason. Using a specific job title as a keyword (or search word) is generally the most efficient search. There may be, however, some circumstances when you want to search for a job by the company’s name or by the industry. Other keywords can be used to further narrow down your job search. For example, instead of simply looking for a job as a Customer Service Representative, you can refine that search by including a specific company you wish to apply to, a specific field you want to work in or a specific location you want to work around. Refining your search will help you save time scrolling through jobs that will not relate to you otherwise. Job search websites should all have some options available to refine your search.

*Job Application Checklist*

Pull together important information to have available during your search to save time and energy. Review the following checklist:

**□ Professional Email Address**

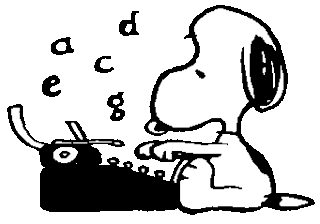
**□ Updated, Targeted Resume**

**□ Updated, Targeted Cover Letter**

**□ Updated List of References (3)**

**□ Employment History**

**□ Availability**

 Each of the above items are necessary for the job application process, so it is important to understand each thoroughly. Primarily, your resume is by far the most imperative document you will submit. Ensure that all of the information on your resume is correct and up-to-date. It will be apparent to an employer if it is not.

As it is at the very top of your resume, a professional email address is mandatory. Anything less could cost you an opportunity to interview. A professional email address should indicate who you are and come from a professional email server. Try using:

***First name.Last*** [***name@gmail.com***](mailto:name@gmail.com)

The employer will know exactly who they are contacting or being contacted by when they see this type of email address. However, this style of email address may take some creativity if you have a common name. Try your last name before your first name or include a middle initial. Do your best to avoid numbers or special characters, but if you have to, do your best to keep it minimal. Job seekers commonly use Gmail as their professional email provider. It has been slated has the ‘unofficial/official email for the job search’ by many. Yahoo, Hotmail or AOL email accounts, for example, may be viewed as outdated, by some.

Next, target or customize your resume to every job application. Review the job description and/or job posting, and use similar language and keywords to make your resume standout. The *Applicant Tracking Systems* section of this handout will cover this important information in detail.

A cover letter is also a very important tool in the job search process. Many job seekers choose to omit the cover letter, and this is generally a mistake. Always submit a cover letter when given the option, (i.e. Cover Letter Optional, Attach Additional Documents, etc.), as it can give you an edge over other applicants. A cover letter, in brief, outlines your qualifications and exactly why you are a great match for a position. It is, also, an opportunity to showcase your communication skills. In your cover letter, link your skills to the job description and write about a *specific time* from your work experience when you have proven those skills. Give a great example of your success! Discuss a specific story from your career that highlights the qualifications and expertise the employer is seeking. Do not rewrite your resume in the cover letter or sound redundant. Take the opportunity to shine! Follow the proper three-paragraph format of a cover letter, and keep it concise and targeted to the specific job.

An updated reference list should be readily available for any job application and especially for any interview. Create your reference list early in the application process to be able to submit the form immediately upon request as employers will likely ask for some form of reference in many hiring processes. Reach out to past supervisors, coworkers, volunteer or professional organization leaders to create a list of at least three *professional* references. The reference letter is its own document. Do not attach it to your resume or cover letter, and do not list “References Available Upon Request” on either form.

Also, collect the details of your employment history. While this may seem redundant since your resume lists this information, many applications require further employment history details as part of the formal application. Further requested details may include previous supervisors’ names and titles, company phone numbers and addresses, reasons for leaving, more details on your tasks, etc.

Lastly, applications may request weekly/bi-weekly/monthly availability. This is more common if you are applying for part-time or per diem work but can also apply to full-time positions. Some of the industries who typically request this information are food service, healthcare and retail, but many other fields and jobs may require varying availability, as well.

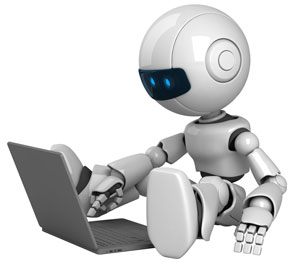
*Applicant Tracking Systems*

Applicant tracking systems are programs often used by mid-to-large sized companies and electronically scan through applications to find the best-suited candidates. Recruiters and hiring managers give the applicant tracking systems a list of keywords from their job descriptions and direct the systems to look for resumes with matching keywords. Resumes that have an appropriate number of matching keywords go into the “Yes” or “Review” category by the system and are then reviewed by recruiters or hiring managers. Resumes that do not have an appropriate number of matching keywords are placed into a “No” category and are not reviewed by a human.

It is important to recognize that these systems exist and to take the steps to have your resume reviewed by as many (human!) decision makers as possible. As previously stated, it is important to tailor your resume to the job description in the job posting. Use specific keywords on your resume that are in the job description to attract the system. The keywords are often skills necessary to do the job, so you should have them already! Avoid using any decorative templates, margins, or fonts, as these can confuse the system and automatically put your resume in the “No” pile. Type your own resume, stick to the standard 1” margins, and use the following recommended fonts: Arial, Verdana, Tahoma, and Calibri. Times New Roman was once an accepted font, but it is no longer accepted and can confuse applicant tracking systems.





Other items to avoid putting on a resume:

* A picture or graphic
* A background color other than white
* Color fonts other than black

**While the majority of companies who are using applicant tracking systems are on the larger size, it is important to recognize that these system are becoming more affordable and easier to use. Very small businesses may not use applicant tracking systems any time soon, but smaller-to-mid sized companies will as they decrease in price.**

*Talent Assessments*

Another common facet of the online job search and application process are talent assessments. There are many different types, but they primarily come in three distinct formats: personality tests, workplace aptitudes exams and job specific tests.

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| --- | --- | --- |
| **Personality Tests** | **Workplace Aptitudes Exams** | **Job Specific Test** |
| Used by many companies to see how an applicant may fit in their current company culture based on their personality type | Test general workplace knowledge and skills such as arithmetic, communication and reading comprehension | Simulate job specific functions to gain insight into how an applicant may behave on the job  *\*Not as common at this stage in the hiring process* |

Not every company will use pre-employment tests, but they can come up. So, it is important to be prepared. The personality test is likely to come up most often as many companies are highly concerned with how a new hire will fit within the role and the company as a whole. Typically, personality tests will ask you non-work related questions such as, “How do you interact in a social setting?” Tests may also pose statements such as, “I am **a.** regulated, structured or **b.** easygoing, “live” and “let live”. It is likely that a personality test will ask some of the same questions more than once with the wording changed to see if your answers are consistent with one-another. It is also likely that the prompt or proctor (if there is one) will instruct you to not think about your answers and respond off of instinct alone, again to gauge your genuine personality.

Workplace aptitudes exams and job specific tests are also important to consider, even if they are less likely to appear during the application process (pre-interview). Workplace aptitudes exams are similar to a general skills test and used to assess skills. The likelihood of seeing this kind of test will depend on the type of position you are applying. This is also the case for job specific tests. A test of this nature will mimic a workplace aptitudes test in many aspects but will be oriented for the job to which you are applying. Many of these tests will situate an applicant in the role of the position and provide real-world examples for role-play. Employers using these tests want to see how an applicant would act on the actual job in order to make better hiring decisions.

*Job Search Scams*

The online job search can be an exciting prospect because of the ease of accessibility in applying; however, there are potential dangers associated with online scams. Scams are used to trick job seekers into providing personal or sensitive information such as a social security numbers or credit card information through fake job postings. Some of these scams are also “bait-and-switch” job postings where the counterfeit “employer” is not trying to gain access to sensitive information but is advertising a job as something more enticing than it actually is. They attempt to fool people into applying for and accepting such positions. These kinds of scams are less common than the former.

There are several different types of job scams that can appear on job search engines or websites with requests for:

* Credit report information
* Money laundering
* Payment for a background check
* Work-at-home applicants
* Direct Deposits before interview
* Job applications that are fake
* Payment for training materials
* Payment for software
* Applications to Bait-and-switch jobs
* Recruiting/Phishing scams
* Unemployment claim filing information



There are clearly many scams that can be out there, and it is important to recognize the  
warning signs:

* The job is too good to be true.
* The pay is great for little work.
* The recruiter contacted you first.
* The recruiter is incredibly eager to get you the job before an interview or with minor screening.
* The recruiter’s email address is unprofessional or a personal account such as

Gmail, Yahoo, AOL, etc.

* The “employer or recruiter” immediately begins to ask for personal information.
* They want you to pay for something.
* They send you a check and ask you to deposit it. Then, they want you to send the money back to them from your personal bank account. (TIP! The check they sent you will bounce.)
* The job description is vague.
* Their emails or company website contain spelling or grammatical errors.
* The interview is set up with an online messaging/chat service such as Google Hangouts.

If any of these warning signs appear, it is possible that the job you have applied for or considered applying for is a scam. Be on guard when submitting applications and conversing with recruiters. There are a few rules to follow during your search online. First, thoroughly research the company, especially if it is not a well-known or established brand. Scammers are extremely crafty when it comes to making their fronts look legitimate, but if you carefully investigate a company, you should be able to discern if it is genuine. Review their website, read reviews about the company on sites like Indeed and Glassdoor, ask your professional and personal network of their knowledge of the organization etc. If you complete your research and you are still unsure of the legitimacy of the company, Google the company’s name or the name of the recruiter(s) along with “scam” as this may bring up past allegations or stories surrounding the individuals in question.

Another key detail to pay close attention to is the email address of the recruiter/hiring manager as well as the company website address. Scammers can be extremely crafty and even pose as a representative of a company or organization in order to fool job seekers into letting their guard down when they see a familiar name. These scammers will change very minor details from a real email address to a false one. For example:

Company Name: XYZ Industries

* Real email address: [recruiter@xyzindustries.org](mailto:recruiter@xyzindustries.org)
* Fake email address: [recruiter@xyz**-**industries.org](mailto:recruiter@xyz-industries.org)
* Real website URL: Xyzindustries.org
* Fake website URL: Xyz**-**industries.org

The difference between a genuine recruiter/website and a scammer can be as minor as the hyphen above. It is critical to pay careful attention to detail when reviewing information about a company. Triple-check any email a recruiter sends to you, especially if the email contains attachments or hyperlinks. One particularly common measure a scammer may use over email is known as phishing. The scammer will try to ‘hook’ (hence the practice being called *phishing* (*fishing*)) you into something in order to access your sensitive information. Be cautious when deciding to open attachments or clicking on a hyperlink sent to you from a potentially harmful source. This can install malicious viruses on your device designed to access your personal information. Be wary of any suspicious looking emails or websites, and please contact a PA CareerLink® staff member if you feel you have received something of this nature.

You can help mitigate scammers contacting you by removing documents such as your resume from websites such as Indeed, Glassdoor, LinkedIn, etc. While having your resume for employers to view on these sites can be advantageous for the job search, it can also give scammers access to your contact information. Removing your resume from any of these accounts would be another roadblock for scammers. To this point, your resume should be targeted to the job(s) to which you are applying.

*How to Report Job Scammers*

If you feel as though you have come across a scam or have been scammed in the past, it is important to report it to one of the following agencies:

* Internet Crime Complaint Center: <https://www.ic3.gov/about/default.aspx>
* Federal Trade Commission (FTC): <https://www.ftc.gov/>
* Better Business Bureau (BBB): <https://www.bbb.org/>
* Report scams found on job search engines directly to the website where they are listed (i.e. visit the Contact Indeed page on Indeed.com)

If you are using PA CareerLink®’s website and feel as though you have come across a job scam, please let a staff member know as soon as possible in order to remove the job posting and fraudulent employer.