



Career Management & Work-Life Integration: Using Self-Assessment to Navigate Contemporary Careers

Finding Ideal Work

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In this new era, a key skill we all need is the ability to identify and secure good career opportunities. The days are long gone when a person would complete school, find her first job, and 20 years later say, "I haven't updated my résumé since I finished college." The facts are clear: People change jobs, employers, and even careers much more often than was the case for most of the 20th century. In fact, according to a recent study, new graduates probably will change jobs five to eight times during their first decade of employment. This short cycle time requires that regardless of our field of work, all of us have one career skill in common: job hunting.

There are three common positions from which most of us are looking for a job. First, you are new to the workforce or reentering the workforce after an extended absence. This is true for new graduates (both of undergraduate and graduate programs) and those who have had an extended period out of the workforce for other reasons (e.g., parents who take an extended break from working to focus on child rearing). Second, you are employed but making a conscious choice to pursue a different position. This could be a role with a new employer or simply a transfer or promotion in your current organization. Third, you have experienced job loss. Whether voluntarily or involuntarily, you often need to begin a job search because your current position has come to an end. Unfortunately, all too often this is a result of job elimination due to reorganization, downsizing, or mergers and acquisitions. Because this phenomenon has become so widespread and at some time touches nearly everyone, we will discuss job loss in some detail. Included in this discussion are its effects on individuals and families and thoughts on how to mitigate its impact. We treat the issue of job loss separately because it raises issues that are complex and different from the other catalysts for initiating a search.

This discussion is followed by an overview of the critical skills you need to market yourself effectively for the right position, whatever the reasons for your job search may be. This process involves more than simply having a good résumé and sending it out aggressively. To find and get the ideal role, it is important to

- *Identify good opportunities that are right for you:* Depending on what your career objectives are, this could range from a large employer to an organization of one (being self-employed). Knowing the market and how to locate job opportunities facilitates the process of exploration that sets the stage for your search.
- *Possess the basic tools of job search:* Despite improvements in technology that have greatly facilitated and perhaps complicated the job search, there are still three basic tools that you will need to master: references, résumés, and cover letters. These three tools, in addition to a summary and synthesis of some of your self-analysis exercises and your professional portfolio, will be your toolbox.
- *Use your network:* It is well documented that most people find jobs through some form of networking. Knowing who is in your network, whom it should include, and how to use your network most effectively will provide a window into a world of job opportunities. Your network can be an excellent source of information about jobs, in both learning what a job entails (through informational interviewing) and finding available opportunities (as a source of job leads).
- *Make effective career decisions:* Once you have generated potential opportunities and created interest, you are faced with the need to make the best choices.

Job Loss

It may seem odd to have a section on job loss begin the chapter about finding your ideal job, but many of us wouldn't be getting this good at job searching if job loss weren't becoming increasingly common. These days, it is the rare person who will not experience an unexpected job loss or unwelcome periods out of work. The goal is to know what to do when such an event or period occurs.

In 1980, William Bridges published a book that has become a classic in the career field—although it is not a career book per se—called *Transitions: Making Sense of Life's Changes*. The loss of a job certainly qualifies as one of these important life changes for many of us (although the pain can certainly be mitigated by a generous severance package). Bridges lays out a three-step process that is helpful for those who are going through such a transition. Ironically, the first step in the process is not called “beginnings,” as one might expect, but rather “endings.” One of the key points Bridges makes is that every transition begins with an ending, an idea that most of us find quite uncomfortable:

Considering that we have to deal with endings all our lives, most of us handle them very badly. This is in part because we misunderstand them and take them either too seriously or not seriously enough. ... Because they scare us we try to avoid them. Endings happen to us in unforeseeable ways that often seem devoid of any meaning—much less any positive meaning. Instead, they are simply events that we try to move beyond as quickly as possible. (Bridges, 1980, pp. 90–91)

Bridges goes on to suggest that our failure to see and deal with endings is a cultural phenomenon not shared by more traditional peoples. The notion that endings, which grow out of periods of disenchantment or disillusionment, are something to be embraced and even celebrated is antithetical to our “let's just move on” approach. But without such endings and the negative feelings that may come with them, moving on is often difficult or even impossible. As Bridges points out,

Divorces, deaths, job changes, moves, illnesses, and many lesser events disengage us from the contexts in which we have known ourselves. They break up the old cue-system that served to reinforce our roles and to pattern our old behavior. It isn't just the disappearance of the old system [that] forces us to devise a new one. ... It is rather a breakdown that as long as a system is working, it is very hard for any member of it to imagine an alternative way of life and an alternative identity. But, with disengagement, an inexorable process of change begins. Clarified, channeled, and supported, that change can lead toward development and renewal. (1980, pp. 95–96)

The following are some tips to consider when beginning a job search after losing your last position. First, avoid rushing into a job search before you are prepared. Despite financial pressures to begin your job search immediately, give yourself time to recover from the shock of job loss. This time can ease the negative emotions that will naturally follow from your job loss. Second, don't see losing your job as a stigma. Movements between jobs and gaps in employment are much more common than they once were. Finally, put your last job (and organization) behind you. Any resentment you feel toward your last employer will not help your efforts to create a new future. Negative responses that come to the surface in an interview will only cast you in a negative light (Gardella, 2000).

As we will continue to point out throughout this book, any change in one's job or career (either positive or negative) affects not only the employee but also his or her spouse or partner and family as a whole. Attaining a new job; getting acclimated to a new employer; receiving a promotion with added responsibilities, stress, and money; and transferring to a new location all have inescapable impacts on the employee's family. Perhaps no change affects the family more profoundly than job loss. In 1996, the Boston College Center for Work & Family partnered with an outplacement firm, Jandl Associates, to study this phenomenon. The result was a paper called “The Displaced Family: Job Loss, Family Supportiveness, and the Role of Outplacement Services.”

The study made a number of interesting points that are worth summarizing. Families play two critical roles in job loss situations: *standing beside* and *standing between* the employee and the situation. By *standing beside*, the authors mean that family members suffer along with the displaced worker. They feel the negative effects of job loss, they witness the trials of the displaced person in looking for a new role, and they suffer through the strains in roles, relationships, and economic loss, perhaps as much as the displaced person. *Standing between* refers to how families can serve as a buffer to limit the emotional impact on the individual. They give the displaced person strength and can provide emotional shelter from the dramatic ups and

downs one can feel from job loss and during the job search. In most ways the loss of a job is seen as simply a negative experience. However, families can turn the experience into a positive one if it gives a previously work-absorbed parent the opportunity to spend more time with his or her family. That said, the impact of job loss on children can be significant and can include such things as material deprivation, social stigma with peers, emotional instability, anxiety, and a higher incidence of depression.

The study looked at a number of families and, using a scale to assess family environment, identified some specific areas where families showed negative impacts from job loss. These areas included negative impacts on the following characteristics (in italics are the categories that were rated by scales in the study):

- The level of communication (*expressiveness*) lessens during this time.
- Job loss can undermine a sense of *cohesion* among family members.
- The level of *activity* for displaced families decreases. Often vacation plans or family outings are canceled in order to reduce spending to match reduced income levels.
- Job loss alters the sense of *organization* that families have. The structure and schedule that a work role provides, for the worker and the family, are lost. This can create a more amorphous structure within the family as roles and schedules are altered.

Although the families in the study seemed to be okay in other areas, such as conflict, this fact may not be altogether positive. The conflict score suggests that conflict decreases during times of job loss, but this may be the result of a “circling the wagons” phenomenon. Conflict avoidance may mean that healthy levels of conflict are suppressed because family members feel they are in a crisis, and this conflict avoidance may not be positive.

The study concluded that families that can keep activity, communication, and organization levels high during this period would be better off. Some suggestions on how to do this include the following:

Activity: Do not allow lack of funds to cause family activity to decline. Look for activities that do not cost a lot, such as picnics, trips to the beach, and free concerts.

Communication: Spouses and partners want to know about the job search but may be afraid to ask. It is often difficult to have discussions about these issues, but if these discussions occur, they will ultimately have a positive impact. Discuss how the search is going, what you are learning, and what positives have come out of this process.

Organization: Try to maintain and even improve organization during this amorphous time. Don't let schedules and routines diminish. Try to maintain a steady routine throughout.

Keep the family open: Maintain the family's ties with people outside. Do not cut yourselves off from neighbors, extended family and friends, and the community during this period.

Having reviewed the difficult starting point for a job search, we will now discuss the steps involved in finding ideal work. Before commencing job hunting, we recommend a number of information-gathering and career exploration steps. Time invested in these activities can often yield a broader set of potential job opportunities and a more successful outcome.

Assessing the Labor Market

Regardless of whether you are seeking a new job because of job loss or initial entry into the labor market, the process of identifying good job opportunities seems quite straightforward and follows a logical sequence:

1. Gathering data to explore all available options
2. Evaluating each option in terms of one's own utility function (e.g., values, needs, interests)
3. Deciding to pursue the one that fits you best

However, one of the dirty little secrets about careers is that people do not use much information about the job market and its opportunities when making career choices. In fact, most people probably spend more time deciding what kind of car to buy or what their next vacation will be than they do researching the job market.

But if a person does want to look for information to assess the job market, where should she go? There are authoritative sources such as the *Occupational Outlook Handbook* or official government publications, such as the U.S. Department of Labor's monthly reports on employment trends. However, these are not very user friendly and appear to be written more for researchers than for job seekers.

An important part of career management today is an ongoing process of *career exploration*. This encompasses activities directed toward enhancing knowledge of the self (self-exploration) and the external environment (external exploration), which a person engages in to foster progress in career development (Blustein, 1997). In this section we are focusing on the external aspect: scanning the employment market.

Because it is the responsibility of the individual to manage his or her own career, it is also incumbent on each of us to monitor demand for the services we can provide. Staying abreast of the changing dynamics of the labor market is a necessity in today's fast-changing world. Some of the sources of information that we would recommend include the following:

- Read the business press regularly for up-to-date information about the overall state of the economy, your own industry (or other industries that might interest you), and future trends. Good basic sources include *The Wall Street Journal*, *The Financial Times*, *The Economist*, *Business Week*, *Fortune*, and *The New York Times*. Look for trends in your industry or discipline. Are you entering a period of consolidation and mergers? Are companies outsourcing and exporting jobs? Is there a prediction of a war for talent? Watch for these macroeconomic trends that could affect your organization and your future career opportunities.
- Even if you are not looking for a job, do an occasional scan of the employment listings in your industry publications, newspapers, and relevant employment Web sites (those that focus on your industry or discipline). Believe it or not, employers and job seekers still use the want ads, and they do work.
- Get to know other online resources, such as <http://Monster.com> and <http://Craigslist.com>. Other sources include *The Wall Street Journal's* online job search area and recruiters such as Korn Ferry (<http://kornferry.com>) or Russell Reynolds (<http://www.russellreynolds.com>). In addition to classified job postings, many of these sites also contain discussion groups on various topics, housing information, personals, services, résumés, and other information from job seekers. For example, the following posting appeared in the résumé section on the Boston page for Craigslist:

Why Should You Hire Me?

1. These are but a few reasons from an almost endless list of my attributes. Enjoy!
2. I am not averse to working long hours with little to no recognition.
3. After working in retail for 7 years and being berated on a daily basis I can put up with anything and can take orders well.
4. Multi-tasking! I really can do 5 (or more) things at once.
5. I am often told that I am a "fast learner."
6. I am highly computer-literate. I can both word process AND make spread sheets!!
7. I have management experience, which means I have no problem telling people what to

do.

8. Alternately, I have no problem keeping my mouth shut and letting things go on inefficiently if it is not my job to tell people what to do.
9. I am charming and funny, and that alone should be reason enough to give me a job.

SOURCE: <http://Craigslist.com>, retrieved December 16, 2003, 11:08 a.m.

Tim's son Chip, who recently found a job through Craigslist, provided the following assessment of some of the online services:

I know out here (in the Bay Area) that people use something called Craig's List almost religiously (it is where I found my current job before it popped up in the Berkeley/Stanford job boards). It is a list of many things, but the jobs area is well trafficked, and it offers the spectrum of entry-level to VP. The problem is that the quality is hit-or-miss, but it does a really good job of serving local areas (since the locals are the ones who provide the content). Another thing that is just starting to get traction out here are "social networks" like LinkedIn where friends invite you to join online and you are able to electronically play the 6 degrees of separation game and work through buddies to gain new contacts. Check out: <https://www.linkedin.com/>. For this tool to succeed, it needs to really go national, but for now I know it is getting most of its attention from California (but if network effects kick-in, they should go national fast). ... In the end, my points are really analogous to networking in general: it is all about what you know and who you know (and then doing something about it!)

SOURCE: Chip Hall, personal communication, December 17, 2003.

- In addition to information about employers and job openings, a wealth of information about jobs and salaries in general is available. For example, a local tool called <http://BostonWorks.com> provides information about jobs and includes the ability to search by industry, location, job title, and level. You can search through hundreds of job descriptions that include responsibilities, qualifications, and salary ranges to get a better understanding not of specific job openings but of a field or industry about which you would like to gather more information.
- Finally, get to know your college or university's career Web site for alumni and use your college network, both undergraduate and graduate. As career networks are becoming more important resources for career development, networks of alumni are increasingly being tapped.

These are just a few of the options for you to use as part of your ongoing career exploration. We encourage you to find additional resources that work well for you. The important thing is to get into the habit of checking in on a regular basis and keeping in touch with the market.

Identifying the Right Opportunities for You

After you scan these sources and come up with some specific possibilities, how do you decide what's right for you? This is where the results of your self-assessment come in. Your preparation for identifying what is right for you is everything that you have been doing up to this point to get to know yourself better. Getting clear on just what you are looking for is the first step in knowing the right opportunity. Your choice may not be right for everybody, and your friends may question your choice (or maybe even your sanity), but if you know yourself, your interests, and preferences very well, you can be confident when you have found the right option for you.

When you are searching for a new job, as opposed to doing general career exploration, your search process becomes more focused. This is the time to use your Self-Assessment Summary Sheet (see [Table 3.1](#)) and

themes as a personal checklist to evaluate the features of a specific job. For each row in your Self-Assessment Summary Sheet, ask yourself, “How well does this opportunity fit with this aspect of me?”

This is the time to use the relationships you have built around this process. If you are working with a peer coach, a support or learning group, or a career coach, these people, who have come to know you well, can help you think through the pros and cons of various options. In addition to helping you evaluate options, they can also provide the emotional support and encouragement you will probably need during this stressful period.

Here are some of the factors you should think about as you go through the process of identifying the best options for you. They involve different aspects of your life. Some may apply to you, and others may not. We encourage you to add others that are important to you if they are not listed here:

Work Factors (for You and Your Spouse or Partner)

Your professional identity

Professional, career, and business contacts

Job security

Salary

The organization

The nature of the work itself

Your direct supervisor

Opportunities for travel or not

Colleagues

Customers, suppliers, other external stakeholders

The work environment and facilities

Future career opportunities

Lifestyle and Family Factors

Geographic location

Living areas accessible to work, commuting convenience

Types and cost of housing available

Neighborhoods (that you can afford)

Transportation

Schools

Cultural facilities

Recreational facilities

Local social norms, attitudes, subcultures (and how comfortable you feel with them)

Cost of living and unusual expenses

Sports

Local governments and politics

Community organizations

Accessibility or inaccessibility of parents, extended family

Baby-sitters and daycare facilities

Household and other help

Restaurants

Places of worship

Other special facilities or needs

Social relationships, friends

Media and communications

Personal and Individual Factors

Unique personal losses or gains involved in the choice

Giving up old friends

The energy needed to make the move

Emotional costs of readjusting to job changes

Emotional costs of readjusting to new social relationships

Emotional costs of integrating self into new neighborhood

Emotional costs of integrating self into new schools

Emotional costs of changes in family relationships

Anxiety about proving self in new job or environment

Excitement of new opportunities in new location

The Gut Factor

What are your subjective feelings about the choices?

What emotions do the choices elicit in you?

If you had to make the decision right now, what would you decide?

SOURCE: Adapted from Hall and Hall (1979).

Job Search Tools

The ability to find a job is a critical skill for any person. A person who is unskilled in this area is analogous to a company that knows how to design and build a product but has no capacity to market or sell it; such an organization would be out of business in a very short time. But perhaps never before has this skill been in greater demand. This analogy has become all the more clear in recent years as we have seen books published with the titles *You & Co.* and *We Are All Self-Employed*. As Bob Gardella states in *The Harvard Business School Guide to Finding Your Next Job* (2000),

Searching for a job is one of the most important things that professionals do and they are doing it much more frequently. The changing employer/employee contract, the lack of job security, the increasing pace of change in the workplace, advances in technology, globalization, and even the quest for better work-life balance are all creating significant movement in the marketplace for jobs. (p. xvii)

Gardella goes on to point out that although job search skills are of critical importance, for most professionals they are also “one of the most feared, misunderstood, and mishandled activities, even by otherwise intelligent, accomplished people” (p. xvii). Although this book does not give full treatment to the issue of finding and attaining jobs, it would be an oversight for us not to include a section on this critical step in the career process.

References

Although many organizations in the recent past have actively discouraged their managers from giving references on former employees, references continue to be an excellent source of information for hiring companies on applicants. For the applicant, references can also serve as great networking resource. Gardella (2000) suggests several guidelines for selecting references, including the following:

- *Select references carefully.* There is nothing like having a lukewarm reference (not to mention completely negative one) to throw a wet blanket on a job search, particularly one that is so close to being successful (references usually are checked near the end of the process). The key is to select your references carefully and prepare them well beforehand. Do not assume that people will serve as your references until you ask them.
- *Line up your references early, preferably as soon as you begin your job search.* References can be

more difficult to line up than you think. Problems can occur if you have been out of the labor market for a long time and have not maintained connections with your former managers or colleagues. Also, if you have been with one employer for a long time and would prefer that no one in that firm know you are looking, you may need to be more creative in identifying references. For these reasons and others, it pays to have references lined up well before a potential employer requests them.

- *Choose three or four people to serve as your references.* These people should know you well and preferably have worked with you. Consider asking former managers, supervisors, peers, direct reports, clients, and vendors. You may also want to include academic references (particularly if you recently graduated from a program or continue to have a strong relationship with a professor) and references from any volunteer activities.

Beyond simply choosing references, it is also important to prepare them, communicate with them regularly, and keep them apprised of your status. The following are some guidelines for preparing references:

- Give your references your current résumé, a list of organizations or positions that you would like to target, and anything else that you think will be helpful to them.
- If you haven't worked with your references for a while, be sure to refresh their memories on the type of work you did, whom you worked with, and so on.
- Talk with your references about what they will say about you. If there are certain characteristics you are trying to highlight by using particular references, this may help you assess the degree to which they will help you in that purpose.
- Communicate with your references in an ongoing manner. Contact references before or soon after you give out their names so they know they may be contacted and for what position. Follow up with references after they've been called to discuss how the conversation went if they were contacted. Keep them updated on your job search status (e.g., whether you were offered the job and whether you accepted). Finally, don't forget to enthusiastically thank your references after you have accepted a job.

If your references aren't kept up to date, it is not easy for them to be as helpful as they could be in your job search. Each time you interview for a job, you need to update your reference on what you are applying for and the characteristics you would like to accentuate. That way, your reference can frame her answers in a way that is consistent with your answers and most helpful to the hiring manager (Gardella, 2000).

Résumés

Although the world has changed dramatically in the past decade, and many new tools are available for job searching on the Web, the basic tools are much the same. The résumé is still essential. It is a brief way to make clear your areas of interest, summarize your experience and education, and highlight your accomplishments relevant to your aspirations.

Don't think of your résumé as simply a piece of paper or a computer file that you need to update to get your foot in the door for an interview. Instead, think of the creation of your résumé as a valuable process that emotionally and intellectually prepares you for your job search. For these reasons, it is important to write your own résumé and seek feedback rather than relying on someone else to write it for you.

A good résumé clearly and succinctly outlines your skills, education, experience, and accomplishments. Remember that your résumé is not a place to be bashful. Review each of your jobs and be sure to list your main accomplishments for each job in bullet point form. One approach is to outline, perhaps in bullet form, the challenges or problems you encountered, the actions you took to address these challenges, and the results

you achieved. Wherever possible, quantify the results you achieved in business terms (e.g., dollars saved, productivity or revenue increase) (Gardella, 2000).

At the same time, you'll want to make sure that your résumé is not overly detailed; hiring managers don't need a play-by-play of all of your jobs. What they need is just enough information to verify that you have the skills and experiences that make you worth their time to screen for what *they* need.

Besides content, the success of your résumé depends on how it looks and reads. Keep your formatting simple by limiting your résumé to two pages or less, and consider organizing your résumé into four or five major sections, listing subcontents in reverse chronological order. Major section headings for your résumé might include

- A *header* (with your name and contact information)
- An *objective* or *summary* section that provides readers with a sense of what you are looking for and what you have to offer
- An *experience* or *work history* section that cites organizations and job titles, with beginning and end dates, and describes tasks, responsibilities, and accomplishments
- A *formal education* section that lists higher education and degrees earned in reverse chronological order, beginning with most recent degrees
- An *other* section that includes other potentially relevant information (e.g., specific computer skills, foreign language fluency, professional affiliations)

Once you have created your résumé, don't forget to get feedback from a number of different sources. At least one person other than yourself should review your résumé carefully for appearance, grammar, and spelling. Feedback should focus primarily on how the résumé looks and reads.

Finally, if you need to e-mail your résumé or post it online, be sure to check your formatting to ensure that it still looks good. Occasionally you may be asked for a plain text version to cut and paste into a Web site. For samples of effective résumés, go to your university career center or job search Web sites.

A number of cautions with résumés are worth noting. Many people overemphasize the importance of a résumé and put too much stock in it as a tool in their job search. In his classic *What Color Is Your Parachute?* Richard Bolles (2007) offers the following three cautions. First, don't confuse the résumé with yourself. Just because your résumé doesn't work in attaining you a job, don't assume there is something wrong with *you*. Second, résumés can make you feel as if you are aggressively pursuing jobs when in fact they may be lying dormant somewhere. The fact that you posted your résumé doesn't mean it is generating much action. Finally, depending too much on a résumé may cause you to give up, assuming that there simply are no jobs available. If sending out résumés is your entire job search strategy, you are likely to be disappointed.

Starting a Professional Portfolio

In addition to helping you with your career planning, some of your self-assessment information might be used as part of a *professional portfolio*. A portfolio is a way of summarizing and capturing information that presents you and samples of your professional work to prospective employers or clients. It is a way of documenting who you are and what you can do. Put another way, it is a way of marketing yourself. If you have seen an artist's, architect's, or model's portfolio, then you have an idea of what we are getting at. Portfolios are becoming more common in many fields.

To decide what kind of material from your self-assessment you might want to put into your portfolio, you might

anticipate what sorts of questions an employer might ask you in a job interview. And you could select and adapt material for your portfolio that you could pull out and show the interviewer to help answer that question. At the very least, you will become very clear in your interview responses. Some typical job interview questions include the following:

- What kind of work are you passionate about? (Use your Campbell Interest and Skills Survey, Strong Interest Inventory, or Career Leader results.)
- What are your strengths and weaknesses? (Use your Skill Assessment results.)
- Can you describe an experience or a project where you demonstrated
 - Leadership?
 - Distinctive technical contribution?
 - Analytic skills?
 - Strategic analysis?
 - Team leadership? (Use your personal biography for all of these.)
- Where do you see yourself in 5 (or 10) years? (Use your 10-Years-Out Exercise.)
- What are you looking for in an employer? (Use your Career Values Card Sort Exercise.)

To get more a more concrete idea of what a career portfolio looks like, we refer you to the work done at Florida State University. The Web site for their career center shows what a portfolio looks like, with examples of award-winning portfolios, a study analyzing the value of portfolios, and other useful information (see <http://www.career.fsu.edu/portfolio/>).

Cover Letters

Cover letters provide an introduction to your résumé. They accomplish this by stating the reason you are sending the résumé (often in response to a specific opening but not always), highlighting your reasons for being interested in a position, and aspects of your background that are particularly relevant to the position you are seeking. Although it is important to write clear and concise cover letters, it is also important to remember that many cover letters are skimmed or never read. The majority of busy managers or screeners often flip to the résumé first and may read the cover letter later.

The following are some key points that Gardella (2000) believes are important to keep in mind when writing job search letters:

- Personalize your cover letter for each position for which you apply. Do not send blanket letters addressed to “Dear Sir or Madam.” It suggests that you have not done a thorough job in researching your potential employer.
- When faxing or e-mailing your cover letter and résumé, consider sending along a hard copy that same day (unless you are clearly instructed not to).
- Keep your cover letters to one page or less, and write each letter in terms of the hiring organization's needs.
- Always include a sentence at the end of your cover letter stating that you will follow up on inquiry if you haven't heard back from them in a few weeks.
- In most cases, you'll want to include a résumé with your cover letter.
- As with your résumé, check your spelling, grammar, and punctuation.
- Over time, develop key phrases and paragraphs that you can reuse in your job search letters.
- Spend time writing a good cover letter, but if it takes more than an hour to write one, you're taking too much time.

You should keep your cover letter to about four paragraphs. The first paragraph explains why you are writing and might include additional information about the job you are applying for and what makes that position or the employing organization of particular interest to you. The second and third paragraphs should highlight areas of your résumé you want to call attention to or discuss specific experiences you have had that are clearly relevant to the position requirements. The final paragraph should be a call to action. Often this paragraph includes a sentence such as, “I will call your office late next week to determine the status of my application” or something to that effect (unless you are instructed not to call). Now, you are ready to launch your job search campaign.

Conducting the Job Search

Planning and pacing your job search campaign is critical. For those who are employed, failure to set aside time and establish milestones could result in a job search that never gets started or falters. For those who are unemployed, too much intensity in the early days can leave people feeling emotionally spent after a short period. For these reasons and others, it is important to develop a strategy for finding a job.

According to Bolles (2007), some of the best ways to execute a job search are to ask for job leads from everyone you know, knock on the door of any organization that interests you whether or not they have an advertised opening, and form or join a job club. Bolles states that some of the worst strategies for finding a job are mailing out résumés, answering ads in newspapers or professional journals, and going to private employment agencies. Ironically, these often are the first strategies job seekers use.

The key to being effective in this phase is to be as organized and professional as you would be at work. Maintaining a set routine around job search activities such as sending thank-you notes, making phone calls, and updating your references on your progress will help you maintain focus and be efficient and ultimately successful.

Networking and the Job Search

By now you have done a rigorous self-assessment and have a fairly clear idea about what you want in a job, a career, and your life. You have gathered information on the labor market and job opportunities and have clarity about where your opportunities for further exploration will be. You have put in place some of the key job search tools—résumé, cover letter, and references—that have helped you begin to launch an effective job campaign. You have also set up a schedule for your job search activities. You are ready for the next phase.

In this phase you will assess some of the key resources you already have available to you: people you already know who might be able to connect you with the right job. Studies have shown that for the majority of successful job searchers the key person that helped them find that job was someone they knew *before* they started their search. Take a moment to consider the meaning of that statement. Someone you already know probably will turn out to be the person who will help you get your next job. All you have to do is figure out who that person is and how she or he can help you.

Your circle of career-related relationships is called your *career network*. It is a set of people you know from various walks of life. It includes family members, friends from school, people in your neighborhood and religious communities, professional associations, clients and customers, current and former co-workers, bosses, and subordinates. This network is important because these people, collectively, hold a vast amount of information about various job opportunities. Moreover, they can also connect you to formal sources of career information. These could include a very broad range of resources including Web sites, employers, people to

contact for informational and job interviews, and recruiters. They may also know of people who are about to leave an interesting job or people who have recently moved into a management position and will be hiring new people. In short, any kind of information you might want or need in this stage of the job search might be available from your network.

Monica Higgins, a professor at Harvard Business School, and Professor Kathy Kram, a faculty member at Boston University's School of Management, report that career networks represent the “new mentoring” in today's complex business environment (we will discuss Higgins and Kram's work in greater detail in [Chapter 5](#)). Rather than the traditional one-on-one junior—senior mentoring relationships, the new kind of interpersonal career assistance is delivered through these larger career networks. And the two most critical qualities of a good career network are *size* and *diversity*. Size matters because the more people you are connected to, the more likely it is that one of these connections will lead to a job. Diversity is important because it connects you to all kinds of different job possibilities. If your network is more homogeneous, you may have many different people all trying to connect you to the same small set of potential jobs. The following activities will help you to analyze your network's size and diversity.

Tapping the Potential of Your Network

The first step in working with your current network is to gain a clearer understanding of whom it includes. Take a few minutes to fill out the network form in [Table 4.1](#) to see who is currently in your network.

Table 4.1 My Current Network

<i>Where Do I Go for Contacts?</i>	<i>Advantages and Disadvantages of Sources</i>
Friends and relatives	
Faculty and administrators	
Former and current colleagues	
Former and current employers	
Directories of companies and associations	
Fellow or former students	
Networking events	
Community and civic leaders	
Professionals working in my field of interest	
Professional association members	
People in newspapers and magazines	
Alumni of each school I attended	
Government representatives	

The second step is to develop ways to expand your career network. One way to do this is by gaining a better understanding of your interaction style and how you can use it most effectively. For example, if you are an extrovert, getting out to professional gatherings or calling a stranger to request an informational interview might be second nature to you. On the other hand, if you are a strong introvert, these activities would be about as attractive as a root canal. The following activity will help you think about your networking style and how to make the most of it.

Network Expansion Worksheet

The purpose of this activity is to

- Help you assess and enhance (extend or strengthen) your developmental network relative to major challenges and opportunities you will face in the next 1–3 years
- Help you develop a networking strategy that will work for you
- Help you develop a specific plan to pursue over the next 6 months to 1 year
- Create an accountability mechanism

Assessing Your Network

Research on leadership development has demonstrated that people benefit from a variety of developmental relationships, including short-term and long-term alliances with bosses, peers, senior executives, coaches, subordinates, and family members. The more diversity and depth there is in your developmental network, the better. Depending on our dominant learning tactics, we are more or less likely to pay attention to the quality of our developmental network.

This handout was adapted by Professor Kathy E. Kram from a worksheet developed by Professor Deborah Kolb, Simmons Graduate School of Management. Adapted by permission.

As you think about the major changes that are likely to take place at your place of work in the next few years, what major challenges and opportunities do you foresee that you will need to deal with in the next 1–3 years? List them here.

Given these challenges and opportunities, what type of help are you most likely to need?

- a. Help in getting the job done_____
- b. Help in advancing my career_____
- c. Emotional support_____
- d. All of the above_____

A. If your major challenge or opportunity is related to your work, how well positioned are you to get information, advice, and resources about new opportunities and possibilities?

Very well_____

Okay_____

Need to expand my network_____

Who can help?

B. If your major challenge or opportunity means making a move into a leadership position, do you have relationships with people who can give you advice and effectively advocate or champion you for important assignments or other developmental activities?

Yes_____

No_____

Who can help?

C. If your challenge or opportunity means that you will need emotional support, to what extent do you have people who can give you support?

I have a strong support network to help me._____

I don't have people who can help me through changes I will have to make._____

Who can help?

D. If your challenge or opportunity means that you will need help in getting the job done, advancing your career, and getting emotional support, do you have people in your network who can fulfill these functions?

Yes____

No____

Who can help?

What is your approach to building relationships? How are you at initiating relationships? In what settings are you most comfortable meeting people?

Joint or shared work, projects, and committees_____

One-on-one appointments, with specific agendas_____

Informal “no-agenda” social settings_____

Going for coffee, lunch, or drinks_____

Leisure activities such as golf, tennis, or theater_____

Other_____

What is your preferred style?

Occasional phone calls or e-mails just to ask “how are you?”_____

Phone calls, e-mails, or visits with specific requests or questions_____

Holiday cards and letters_____

Dropping in or calling when you're in the neighborhood_____

Arranging in advance to get together at professional meetings_____

Relying on the chance that your paths will cross_____

Inviting people to join you for lunch, coffee, golf, and so on_____

Contacting people when you find some information, an article, or an opportunity that might interest them_____

Other_____

Action Planning

What are you going to do, specifically, to get things started? Specify how you will initiate contact or enhance existing relationships. Where will you start the process? What approaches will you use? Will this be part of your leadership development plan?

Share what you have learned in completing this exercise with your peer coach. Each of you commit to the actions you will take in the next 3–6 months to expand your network in ways that position you to move in the direction you identified above. Set a time for follow-up.

Producing Your Own Networking Snapshot

As you are engaging in networking activities and informational interviews, you will find it helpful to communicate a lot of information about yourself in a concise format. Randi Bussin, a career development specialist, has developed what she calls a networking snapshot that will let members of your network obtain a quick, current picture of you. To give you an idea of what such a snapshot looks like, we have reproduced a copy of Tim's.

Tim Hall

Professional: I am a faculty member in the Organizational Behavior Department in the School of Management at Boston University. My other major role at BU is as director of the Executive Development Roundtable, a School of Management research center that does research on leader development. Last year on my sabbatical I spent the fall semester as a visiting scholar at the Boston College Center for Work & Family and the spring semester as a visiting Erskine fellow at the University of Canterbury in Christchurch, New Zealand (it's 15 degrees in Boston this morning—I wanna go back!!!).

Professional Interests: My research centers on various processes related to career experiences: careers in organizations, executive succession programs, career change, spirituality and careers, and work-life integration. I am interested in learning how people can make protean career adaptations without losing their own calling or path with a heart. My teaching interests include careers, leadership, international management, and organizational behavior. Most of my consulting has dealt with helping large organizations create better processes for helping people do self-assessment and create systemic career management processes.

Past Employers: Before coming to BU I was at the Kellogg School of Management at Northwestern, where I held the Earl Dean Howard Chair in Organizational Behavior and served as department chair. Earlier appointments were at Michigan State, York, and Yale. I also held visiting positions at the U.S. Military Academy at West Point and at the University of Minnesota.

Residence: West Newton, MA

Education: B.S. in engineering, Yale University

S.M. in management, Sloan School, MIT

Ph.D. in management (organization studies), Sloan School, MIT

Family: I am married to Marcy Cray, who is on the management faculty at Bentley College, where she teaches the management of diversity and the freshman seminar. I have three children, Liz, Chip, and Mary Luran. I also have three grandchildren, Matthew (3) and Megan (1), kids of Liz and her husband, Scott; and Sabrina (2), daughter of Chip and his wife, Christina. Liz and Scott live nearby in Wellesley, and Chip and Christina are in San Francisco. Mary Luran is a freshman at Newton North High School, where she just made the improv troupe "SponGen," which is staging its annual performance at the end of February. (See me for tickets!)

Hobbies: I dabble in clarinet playing and photography (digital and black-and-white film). We are now building a darkroom in the basement because Marcy and Mary Luran are also interested in photography. I also enjoy reading and walking our dog, Farley, with Marcy.

How to Contact Me: The best way is e-mail: (office). Telephone: (office number) and (home number). Fax: (office fax number) and (home fax number).

Informational Interviews

One likely result of successful networking (as well as a continuing form of networking) is the informational interview. Informational interviews are exactly what the name implies: structured conversations to gather information. Unlike job interviews, where you are the interviewee (i.e., the one being asked questions in order to provide information), in this instance you are the interviewer gathering information about what is important to you. Informational interviews provide great opportunities to educate yourself on an industry, if not a company itself, and develop a strong relationship with your contact. You may also want to schedule an informational interview to

- Obtain data about a particular career and what it takes to do well in that field
- Receive feedback on and support for your potential to succeed in this career field
- Obtain market-based information on what job opportunities exist in a given field, industry, or market
- Have your résumé evaluated for its selling value to prospective employers
- Practice the art of describing your skills and goals in a nonthreatening situation

Like a job interview, an informational interview can lead to a successful outcome only with the appropriate level of preparation. In the case of an informational interview, most of the time a successful outcome is not a job offer but rather a much clearer sense of what a job entails or what an organization is like to work for and how these match up with your self-assessment, values, and priorities.

Guidelines for Conducting an Informational Interview

In doing informational interviews, it is important to keep in mind a number of guidelines.

- *Have a specific agenda in mind for your meeting.* Your contact is giving you valuable time, so don't waste it. Have one to three clear objectives in mind for the outcome you are looking for. If possible, e-mail these objectives to your contact in advance.
- *Review the results of your self-assessment.* You have already done an extensive self-assessment to better know who you are, what you can do, and why you believe in your potential to succeed. This information will be very helpful as you begin informational interviewing.
- *Be proactive in scheduling an informational interview.* Don't wait for someone else to suggest it. An informational interview may be scheduled when you first contact a person or as a follow-up to an earlier conversation. Along the same lines, always make an appointment. This approach puts the conversation on a more businesslike footing and helps decrease the likelihood of interruptions.
- *Do your homework.* Learn everything you can about the person, the organization, and the field. Know what you want to ask and come prepared with a solid list of 20–30 questions (but don't feel the need to ask all of them in the interview; you can always ask questions in a follow-up e-mail). Two good final questions might be, “Is there anything else you think I should know about this field or this company?” and “Whom else do you think I should contact?”
- *Respect your contact's time.* Don't be apologetic, but do plan a manageable agenda. Do not wear out your welcome.
- *Remember at all times that you are not asking for a job.* You are gathering information on which to base future decisions. Make sure your contact understands this. Also, although it may be appropriate to ask whether the person knows of jobs in your field or what kinds of organizations offer certain kinds of positions, it is not appropriate to shift gears in the interview and ask the person about hiring in his or her specific department or group (unless the person brings it up first).

Questions to Ask

Always prepare a list of questions. You are there not only to learn but also to impress.

- What do you do in a typical workday?
- What kinds of problems do you deal with?
- What kinds of decisions do you make?
- How does your job fit into the organization or department?
- What are your major responsibilities?
- How did you enter the field? How long have you been in it?
- How did you reach your current position?
- What skills, education, and experience are required?
- What are typical jobs appropriate for my level of experience in your field?
- What courses or work experience would you recommend?
- What do you find most satisfying or frustrating about the job?
- What are the toughest problems you face?
- What obligations, outside of normal hours, come with the job?
- How many hours do you work during an average week?
- What kinds of changes are occurring in your field?
- What is the career path in your field or organization?
- Can you recommend any publications or associations?
- Any suggestions for how to conduct my job search?
- What is the job market like in your field?
- What industry trends do you foresee over 5 or 10 years?
- What kind of growth or job outlook do you anticipate?
- Whom should I contact for additional information?

SOURCE: Reproduced by permission of the author, Randi Bussin.

- *Recognize that everyone has his or her own attitudes, biases, and feelings that must be evaluated.* Making judgments about a job or an organization based on discussions with one person is premature. Talk to a number of people to flesh out a clear and less biased picture of what you are considering.
- *Ask for referrals.* It's always good to expand your network. Ask for names of people who work in another area of the company, have experiences similar to your own, attended your college or university, belong to a related professional organization, or might just be good contacts. It is not unusual to receive two or three names out of one original contact.
- *Be sure to send a thank-you note* after the informational interview.
- *Keep your contacts informed.* Let them know of job interviews and offers, especially if you believe they have taken an interest in your career or if it is within their organization.
- *Ask your contacts for a business card and keep a record of people you have met.* Maintaining such contacts is an ongoing process that will help you throughout your career.

In conclusion, networking and informational interviewing are processes that grow easier with practice. You will find that the more you engage in intentional networking activities, the more comfortable you will feel doing them. In fact, with time you may come to enjoy them. After all, this is just a process of meeting new friends. Moreover, networking is naturally a *mutual helping process*. That is, as you ask for help from others, think of ways you might help them. And you will want to help them. In this way, you begin to repay specific people for their generosity.

Identifying the Ideal Employer

Like identifying the ideal job, identifying the ideal employer is a task that includes many of the same elements: using your network, conducting informational interviews, doing research through other channels such as business periodicals and company Web sites, and synthesizing the information. The work you have done in your self-assessment should be particularly helpful in identifying the kinds of employers that might be ideal for you.

A number of years ago, IBM ran an advertisement for college recruitment. It suggested that the candidate use a checklist (they provided) to determine who might be an ideal employer for the potential recruit. The questions on the checklist included the following:

Will the employer allow me to work in up-to-date facilities and with state-of-the-art equipment?

Will my co-workers be intelligent and supportive colleagues to work with?

Will the organization invest in ongoing education programs so that I will be continuously learning?

At the end of the checklist, the implication was that if you answered “yes” to most or all of the questions, you should work for that employer, and, of course, that employer happened to sound a lot like IBM. What we need to do now is develop our own checklist for our ideal employer. Rather than using the list in the IBM advertisement, which was effective but biased toward a particular employer, we can use the information gathered up to this point to customize our own checklist.

Ideal Organization Exercise

Once you establish what job or function you want to work at, it is at least as important to decide in what environment you want to work. After a short period, many (perhaps most) graduates will find themselves in new jobs or different functional areas. So the organization in which you work may have a greater bearing on your long-term satisfaction.

Write a one-page description or checklist of your ideal organization. In your description, be specific about the characteristics in the following chart. You may also include other characteristics that are important to you. The description or checklist should not exceed one page.

Activity: Ideal Organization Exercise

Products and Services

- What industry or sector is the enterprise involved in?
- What markets does it serve?
- Who are its customers?
- Does it provide products or services?

Structure

- Are you working in an organization or are you self-employed?
- What size is the organization?
- Does it have a single organization or is it made up of multiple sub-organizations (i.e., divisions, business units, etc.)?
- Does the organization operate in a local, national, or global market?
- Is the organization for-profit, not-for-profit, or government?
- If for profit, is it publicly traded or privately held?

Culture

- What is the organization's vision and mission?
- How do they communicate these to employees?
- What is the working atmosphere like?

Management Style

- How do you prefer to be supervised?
- How should management ensure accountability and quality work?
- Is the organization more formal or informal in terms of its ways of operating?

Job Scope

- What do you see yourself doing in the organization?
- What level of responsibility do you have?
- Will you be supervising the work of others?

Values

- How does the organization interact with its employees?
- What does the organization do to interact with the community and the environment?
- What values are important to the organization?
- How would it embody those values?

Evaluation Methods

- How frequently will I be evaluated?
- What methodology will be used?
- Are evaluations by supervisors, peers, both?

Reward Systems

- How does the organization reward its members?
- What are its policies for compensation, promotions, and benefits?
- Will it provide performance-related incentives in the form of raises, bonuses, stock options, etc?

Sample Ideal Organization Checklist

Products and Services

- Would be in the healthcare industry.

- Would serve healthcare providers and patients worldwide with state of the art medical technology.
- Products would be used for diagnosis and treatment.

Structure

- The organization would be quite large (at least 10,000 employees).
- It would have revenues of more than \$2 billion per year and would be for-profit.
- There would be multiple business units within the organization.
- Business units would be located in a broad range of markets, with offices in many countries around the world.
- Our products and services would serve a worldwide market.

Culture

- The company's mission and vision would focus on the contribution we are making to improving the quality of patient care and health outcomes for-patients.
- We would have the goal of being a market leader and providing innovative, cost-effective products.
- Our values would reflect the important work we do, and they would include a strong emphasis on quality.
- The organization would hire top-notch people and invest in their ongoing training and development.

Management Style and Values

- The management style would be respectful of employees' needs, and power would be decentralized as much as possible.
- The work environment would be informal, managers would be on a first-name basis, and people would not need to dress in formal business attire on most days.
- Employees at all levels would be aware of strategy and encouraged to give input into the organization's plans and direction.

Job Scope

- The job would involve working on research projects with strategic partners.
- I would supervise a small team of other technical staff members.

Evaluation Methods and Rewards

- I would be evaluated twice a year formally but get regular feedback.
- At least once a year there would be a 360-degree evaluation process.
- Salary would be based on performance and would include some bonuses.
- There would be opportunities to buy stock in the company.

Special Challenges and Tips for International Students Who Want to Work in the United States

It can often seem to international students that there are many legal and cultural intricacies and barriers to working in the United States. However, this process often is not as challenging as people initially think, especially with some good homework and focused attention to the matter.

First, you want to check with your school's career center. It may have a dedicated international counselor who has experience helping international students and who can offer specialized support and advice. Services for international students might include the following:

- Workshops designed to address specific challenges facing international students
- One-on-one coaching on U.S. business practices, hiring procedures, and job search strategies
- Practical strategies for coping with cultural differences in the workplace, keeping you aware of the different attitudes and values that might pose barriers to your job search

A major issue is whether a company will sponsor you in your application for a work visa that will allow you to be employed in the United States. You should do a quick scan of companies that you might be interested in and then see which ones will sponsor international students. Some companies state clearly that they will, and others will not. You should focus your search on the companies that say they are interested in hiring international students. You can also obtain from your career center the names of companies that are known to have hired a number of international students in your field in recent years. The idea here is to go where it's easy. Focus on the companies that are actively seeking people with your international background.

Another great source of help will be your fellow students from your country or region. In this way, you can work on your internal network and gain access to your classmates' networks. Thus, your career network can grow exponentially.

One way to get some U.S. experience is to sign up for courses that include field projects, where you will work on course-related assignments in real companies. This will give you good experience in functioning in a U.S. corporate culture and also help you expand your career network.

Another idea is to look at U.S. or multinational companies that have a strong presence in your country. These companies probably are very interested in hiring local managers in your country who have been educated in the United States, and they will be prime candidates for your search. Network in those companies by contacting managers from your country who are working there now. Try to set up informational interviews with them to get suggestions about how to land a job in the organization.

As you are doing all of this, be aware that business is growing increasingly global and that your international perspective and experience are becoming more valuable all the time. Focus on the advantages that your international identity, experience, and skills bring to an employer, and use that understanding as you market yourself. Do not limit yourself by seeing your citizenship as a barrier. This is where self-confidence can really make a difference, and you want to create a positive self-fulfilling prophecy, not a negative one.

These ideas are summarized in the [Box 4.1](#). Make a copy of this box and keep it next to your computer as you work on your job search.

Box 4.1 Ten Tips for International Students Who Want to Work in the United States

- Check with your career center. Work with a counselor who has experience working with international students.
- Take any available workshops on job search for international students.
- Use any available one-on-one coaching on U.S. business practices, hiring procedures, and job search strategies.
- Take available cross-cultural or diversity workshops or use any other source that can help you learn about cultural differences between your home country and the United States. Work on developing practical strategies for coping with cultural differences and for helping you become aware of the different attitudes and values that might interfere with your job search.
- Find companies in your field that explicitly say they will sponsor international students for visas. Do not waste time with companies that say they will not consider international students.
- Find the names of companies that have a good history of hiring students from your country or region.
- Get peer coaching from other students from your country or region.
- Take elective courses that have corporate field projects, which will provide you with good experience operating in a U.S. corporate culture.
- Identify companies that have strong operations in your country. Network in those companies by contacting managers from your country who are working for those companies now. Try to get informational interviews with them to get suggestions about how to land a job there.
- Remember that business is growing increasingly global and that your international perspective and experience are becoming more valuable all the time. Focus on the advantages that your international identity, experience, and skills bring to an employer, and use that understanding as you market yourself.

Career Decision Making

You have now done extensive self-exploration, identified suitable employers, and applied and interviewed for positions. Ideally, by now you have some choices to make between jobs. Which one is the best fit for you? Refer back to the exercises you completed earlier when assessing how your personality will fit with a certain job or how your values around family, social background, and socioeconomic factors might influence your choice. Obviously, your life stage is an important factor to consider when sorting through the pros and cons of job alternatives. A role that might seem very attractive to a young, single person who is establishing his or her career identity might seem quite the opposite to someone who has reached greater maturity or has young children at home. Suddenly, the idea of working long hours and taking on extensive travel no longer has the same appeal.

Developing a Career Decision Matrix from Your Themes

An effective approach to using your self-assessment in career decision making is to use your themes directly to filter career choices by creating a matrix ([Table 4.2](#)). On the left-hand side of the matrix is a list of your themes. Across the top of the matrix is a list of jobs or job categories you are considering.

Table 4.2 Sample Career Decision Matrix

	<i>Career Option 1</i>	<i>Career Option 2</i>	<i>Career Option 3</i>	<i>Career Option 4</i>
Theme 1	High	High	Low	Low
Theme 2	High	Medium	High	Medium
Theme 3	High	Medium	Low	High
Theme 4	High	Medium	Medium	High
Theme 5	Medium	Low	Medium	Low
Theme 6	High	High	Low	Medium
Theme 7	High	High	Low	Medium
Theme 8	Medium	Medium	Low	Medium
Summary	High	Medium or high	Low	Medium

In each cell you rank the degree of consistency (high, medium, or low) between your life theme and the job or career you are considering. Clearly not every job will score high on every criterion (e.g., certain roles might maximize earnings but may demand long work days that are contrary to your hopes). However, you might find a number of roles that are good matches for you. Ultimately, the idea is to continue to look for the role that is most consistent with your life themes.

In this example, the job characteristics of Career Option 1 would show a high correlation with the life themes this person has identified. The information you have been collecting during this stage of the process about possible job opportunities will allow you to fill out the matrix with a high degree of confidence that you can assess each option accurately.

Summary

In this chapter we have outlined a process for using your career implications to find a job that meets your needs. We began by outlining ways to assess the labor market and to learn more about jobs and employers that might be of interest. We have discussed the most common job search tools—the résumé, cover letter, and references—and a job search tool that is less common but may be highly useful: the professional portfolio. Having gone through the self-assessment experiences and activities outlined in this book, you have a unique advantage over most job hunters: You have in-depth knowledge about who you are and what you are looking for.

We have noted the importance of having a career network in order to find your next job. Again and again, career experts emphasize that your network will be the major source of your next position. We have also discussed in detail an approach that can both expand your network and give you invaluable insights into careers and employers: the informational interview. When you have completed this extensive data gathering, you have two tools to use to assess your next job move: the Ideal Organization Exercise, which summarizes what you are looking for in your next employer, and a career decision matrix that will allow you to compare how well various options match up with your life themes.

Once you decide on the role you will take, the next step is to articulate a strategy for your own development within the organization. Although many people believe that a career development strategy is simply a career advancement strategy, this is no longer the case. In the next chapter we will discuss a number of different ways to frame your thinking about what career development means for you.

For Further Reading

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- job search
- résumé
- informational interview
- job loss
- self-assessment
- careers
- career centers

<http://dx.doi.org/10.4135/9781483329345.n4>