

## Seven Steps to Research and Prepare for Your Next Career Move

Whether you're in a position where you're unhappy with your current career choice, or you're simply ready for a change, there are some important factors to keep in mind when starting to research your next career move. Below is a handy checklist to live by regardless of the reason for your career search.

1. **Mentally prepare yourself.** Looking for a new job can be challenging, so it's important to prepare yourself for the process, from research to interviewing to networking, be sure to take care of you! Go into the search knowing it might take some time, but it will all be worth it when you land that next position that works for you!
2. **Understand what your passions are and what drives you. What are you looking for in your next position?** It's kind of hard to move forward if you don't know where you're going or want to go! Thus, one of the first steps you need to take is to evaluate what your passions and values are. What do you like or dislike about your current position? What's important to you? Don't leave anything out! Brainstorm everything that comes to mind (work hours, work ethic, culture, values, type of work, money, benefits, etc.). Then prioritize them and keep them with you at all times. Don't settle for less than what will make you happy!
3. **Network, network, network!** Marketing yourself is a business in itself, and you want to sell your strong points to the right people.
  - a. **The Internet:** With the internet, it's easy to post information about yourself and give others a good sense of your personality. You want to be careful and make sure you're sending the message you want to be sending. In other words, you may not want to post a lot of pictures that say, "I'm a crazy or partying fool!" Two popular social utilities that are more focused toward business networking are LinkedIn and Facebook. They're free and fairly simple to use.
  - b. **Networking events:** Most cities have several networking events that allow you to mingle and meet individuals face to face so you can sell yourself in person. In addition, networking events allow you to meet individuals who might know someone who might know someone that can help...
  - c. **Job Fairs:** This is often great if you're in or right out of college, but some job fairs are for experienced hires, as well. Watch for local listings.

4. **Be prepared to market yourself.** When you're networking, it's important to have the tools needed to professionally and appropriately market yourself.
  - a. **Resume:** You'll need a resume and should have it with you at all times, and how you prepare a resume is very important. I can't tell you how often HR professionals won't look at a resume that has too much info or is hard to read. I recommend researching resume writing resources for ideas and strategies on preparing your resume. You want to be sure to tailor your resume to match what the company's looking for, but you want to be honest as far as your skill set, experience and capabilities.
  - b. **Business card:** For social networking events, you'll want a good business card at a minimum. It can represent what you're doing where you currently work, or it can be as simple as your name, contact info and line of work.
  - c. **Cover letter:** A cover letter should be short, to the point and prepared in a way to catch someone's attention.
  
5. **Be selective.** Don't just apply to anything. Be sure to apply for only what truly seems to be an opportunity for which you'd be interested. Often, recruiters use the same posting boards and it sends the wrong signal if they see that someone is posting for every position. It screams 'Desperate!'
  
6. **Research, research, research!** Do as much research on the company as possible. If it's possible to find out information about the individual you'll be interviewing with, do it! Be prepared backwards and forwards. Look for good interviewing resources to help.
  
7. **Sell yourself.** Be clear on what you have to offer and what sets you apart from the competition. Know everything on your resume backwards and forwards. Be confident, but not cocky.

Have this list close by as you prepare for that career move and you'll be sure to be ready when opportunity meets preparedness. You have what it takes, so don't settle for less than what you should... Good luck!