

## **Don't be Distracted: Hunting for a Job is a Full-Time Job Itself**

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Being productive in a job search is a function of many factors -- your search strategy, time, emotions, family demands, doing the right things in the right quantity and finding good support to help hold your feet to the fire.

Looking for a job is a full-time job. **Devote 25 to 35 hours a week to your search.**

Some people with a high energy level can search 35 hours or more, but most will burn out at this rate because searching can be psychologically draining.

If you don't devote 25 to 35 hours to your search, you aren't stirring the waters enough to create the churn and interest in your talents and your availability.

Job searching is a slow, rude process. The internet will feel like a black hole because of the lack of response you'll get from it. Don't take it personally. Manage your adrenaline so it doesn't spike too high, and moderate your emotions so that you don't drop too low. Let yourself get really excited after you've negotiated the package that you like. Until then, do show excitement in interviews, but don't let your expectations get too high yet.

A two-pronged strategy for job searching is most effective, using direct and indirect approaches. The direct strategy consists of answering ads, using job boards, applying on companies' websites, working with recruiters and attending job fairs. It accounts for one in four jobs.

The indirect strategy is more commonly called networking -- using your contacts, their contacts and their contacts to help you explore companies and eventually get introduced to hiring managers (not someone in human resources, but the manager you would work for). ***The purpose of networking is not to hit people up for a job but to build relationships, be remembered and eventually be referred when a future position opens.***

Discuss with a hiring manager a business or work topic in which you can showcase your skills and show the value you would bring. This strategy accounts for three out of four jobs. It takes some time to cultivate the relationships, but it is the more productive strategy. You need both approaches, with more time devoted to networking since it produces more.

The pressure from your family, concerned about the loss of your income while you are unemployed, can easily interfere with your productivity. Family members don't understand how long it takes to find a job today. The days of dropping into a company to fill out an application and have an interview are long gone. Employers say that it easily takes three to four months from the time they place their ad to the time a candidate is in the job.

Some family members may ask you to baby-sit the little ones or give you a long "honey do" list (paint the kitchen, repair appliances) "because you have nothing to do." It is important to help your family understand the long, slow rhythm of a search: that your job is to find yourself a job, and that your priority is job-searching rather than helping out at home during this time. Offer to help in the evening or weekends, at a time that wouldn't interfere with your search.

You can measure your productivity by keeping track of your performance metrics. How many hours a week are you devoting to searching, 25 to 35? What percentage of time have you devoted to the direct and indirect approaches -- 25 percent and 75 percent-ish? How many new people are you talking with each week? Try to meet and eventually have search-related conversations with 15 new people a week, even old acquaintances you bump into at the grocery store.

Meeting and having in-depth work discussions with hiring managers is the most important measure. I learned from international outplacement giant Lee Hecht Harrison that you may have up to 26 conversations with hiring managers before you land your next job. Some of these will be through the direct route, some will be shallow networking explorations, and a few will develop into employment-oriented conversations. If you're talking with one hiring manager a week, that's good; two is great and three a week definitely will shorten your search.

The last key element to helping maintain your productivity is to be a member of a weekly job search support group. These groups are usually free and often run by local churches or at your library. A list of local networking events can be found at [blog.yoursearchlights.org](http://blog.yoursearchlights.org), under "Job Search Resources." The longest-running group in America meets in Princeton every Tuesday from 7:30 p.m. to 9:30 p.m. at Trinity Church. The focus of an effective group is on learning from each other how to conduct an effective search, discussing the progress (productivity metrics) of each member, and expanding your networks through each other.

The Department of Labor conducted research on this type of search support, finding that participation in such a group reduced the duration of a search between 20 and 63 percent. That's a lot more money in your pocket, a lot faster. Incorporating all these suggestions into your search and becoming a member of a support group will help improve your productivity and shorten your search.