



# Harrison Barnes

**Companion Exercises to 46 Actions**

**You Can Take to Optimize Your**

**Job Search and Career Today**

# Companion Exercises to 46 Actions You Can Take to Optimize Your Job Search and Career Today

When I used to apply for jobs myself, I would always go to the office supply store and buy the most expensive paper and envelopes available. The paper I used to purchase was so expensive that you could only buy 50 sheets of it at a time. The paper was so heavy that it was almost like cardboard and difficult to fit in the equally expensive envelopes that I purchased. This may seem ridiculous, however I have always believed in optimization in everything I do and the further along I have gotten in my career, the more important I have realized optimization is. Simply put, optimization means fine tuning every step of a process so that even the smallest details are done as perfectly as possible.

I have received well over 1,000,000 resumes in my recruiting firms over the past 10 years and I have never seen anyone use paper like this. I would have remembered it if I saw it. The paper I used was so heavy because it was made mostly of cotton. You could crumple it up and then iron it to get the creases out if you wanted to. The paper cost a fortune but it was something that really made my resume stand out. It could be sitting in a pile of 500 resumes and anyone who saw a letter on this paper would reach for it and pull the resume on it right out of the stack. This paper paid huge dividends for me in my job search. People spend thousands of dollars on clothing and cosmetics to make themselves look good when they are sitting there in person, but a resume sits in conference rooms and on the desks of hiring authorities before you show up for an interview and after. The resume better look good.

What does paper like this say about the applicant?

- The person takes the job seriously
- Quality is important to the person
- The person wants to make a good impression
- The employer is important to the person
- The person does things as best as they possibly can be done
- The person wants the job
- The person wants to be noticed
- The person pays attention to details
- The person wants to look good

You can make your own list. My point is that something as simple as the paper you use when you apply to a job can make a huge difference. Every single detail of your job search can be optimized the same way. The results you get in your job search and in your life will come down to details. The better you pay attention to and optimize various details, the better off you are likely to be in your job search.

I run recruiting firms as well, and make sure I use the best paper I can. I use good paper and stationery because I want the candidates at BCG Attorney Search to stand out. For several years, the paper we used was manufactured by a small company in Belgium and had to be special ordered from Europe. While we bought expensive paper for resumes and cover letters, all of our competitors were simply emailing and faxing out resumes. We continued to ensure that every resume went out

# Companion Exercises to 46 Actions You Can Take to Optimize Your Job Search and Career Today

on the best quality paper and, year after year, the company continued to grow while many of our competitors came and went. This happened not just because of the paper. It happened for many reasons, and most of this was about observing hundreds of little details like this and improving on each one constantly. Improving on just one little detail can make a difference in your job search and in your life, but I'm going to show you how to optimize every step of your job search.

Why am I telling you about paper? Certainly, your job search does not come down to just what sort of paper you use. Your job search is a process, and every step of that process can be optimized. The more you fine tune the details, the more successful you will be in the end.

I would like to ask you some questions about your job search. Each of these are points that you can optimize and improve. To help you fine tune your process, I've included a worksheet with some questions to ask yourself for each optimization tip.

## 1. How many different methods are you using to apply to jobs?

Most people are creatures of habit. They use one method to find a job because that's the method that worked for them the last time they were looking. If you are only using one method of searching for a job you are likely to miss out on thousands of opportunities. At the minimum you should be using multiple job boards as well as taking a direct proactive approach.

At [EmploymentCrossing](#) and [Hound](#), two job sites that I own, we use a team of researchers to track down and list jobs and between the two sites we have between three and four million jobs listed at any given time, and we add new jobs at the rate of a few thousand per day. If you're using only one job search board, chances are you are seeing only a small fraction of the number of jobs available.

Using job boards is a good way to find positions that companies advertise, but did you know that the vast majority of positions are never advertised anywhere and that the best way to get a job is through a direct approach? Companies like [Employment Authority](#) can help you devise a marketing strategy to put your resume directly into the hands of decision makers in thousands of companies that meet your career goals.

|   |
|---|
| How did you find your last job?                                   |
| Are you using the same method now?                                |
| Find at least three websites that you can use to search for jobs: |

## Companion Exercises to 46 Actions You Can Take to Optimize Your Job Search and Career Today

Identify 10 companies that you would like to work for, whether they have job openings or not:

Map out a plan to market yourself to those ten companies:

### 2. **Do you know what type of companies/organizations are interviewing you the most?**

In order to be proactive in your job search, you need to know the market. Make a list of the companies that are interviewing you and take note of anything they have in common. Different industries grow at different rates and times and you may discover that your skills are in demand somewhere you hadn't anticipated.

List the companies that have interviewed you and keep the list updated:

What commonalities do these companies share?

Are there any companies that share these traits that you haven't looked at yet?

Can you fine tune your resume and cover letter to make yourself more appealing to companies that share these traits?

## Companion Exercises to 46 Actions You Can Take to Optimize Your Job Search and Career Today

### 3. Are you asking places that cannot hire you for referrals?

This is a great strategy that alone could dramatically increase your job search success. If someone sends you a nice rejection letter in the mail after an interview (or even not), just give them a jingle on the phone and ask them to suggest other places you might look. If someone rejects you for a job, tell them that you really enjoyed talking to them. Tell them that you were impressed with them and liked their company so much that a recommendation from them of where to apply would be very meaningful to you. Occasionally they will be so impressed by your initiative that they will reconsider and offer you a job. If not, they may know of a job opening elsewhere that you're not currently aware of.

|   |
|---|
| Make a list of the contacts you have made from interviews, including contact information: |
|   |
| Contact each of them and ask for a referral.  |
| Follow up by sending a resume and a cover letter for each suggestion.                     |

### 4. Do you use the phone to contact potential employers?

Fear of rejection is so strong in most people that they hide behind their computer when contacting potential employers. Don't let fear keep you from getting the career you deserve. You need to pick up the phone and call every chance you get. One of the most effective strategies you can use is to call potential employers on the phone prior to sending a resume to express your interest, and then email the resume right after the conversation. People love this. Another great strategy is to leave a voicemail with an employer about how much you enjoyed meeting with them, or speak in person. Your voice is something that can convey more passion, excitement and connect more with most employers than an email. Whenever possible, personalize the contact by using the telephone.

|   |
|---|
| How often do you use the phone compared to email?                     |
|   |
| Why don't you use the phone more often?                               |
|   |
| How do you feel when someone takes the time to call you on the phone? |
|   |

## Companion Exercises to 46 Actions You Can Take to Optimize Your Job Search and Career Today

### 5. Do you notice what other job seekers are doing that appears to be working in the market?

Networking is an extremely important part of your job search. Among your network of friends, family members and business associates you probably have several people that are looking for a new job or have recently found one. Put their experience to work for you by asking them questions about their job search. Everyone likes to talk about themselves, particularly about things they are doing right. Your contacts can tell you about places they have interviewed and give you insight into what went right or wrong in the process.

Make a list of people you know that are looking for or have recently found a job:

Ask them for a list of places they interviewed:

Get as much information from the as possible about the interviewer. What did you learn that might be helpful?

Find out where they get information on job openings. Make a list of new places you can use to look for jobs:

Ask them what they did to prepare for the interview. Are there any tips they can provide that will optimize your own job search?

## Companion Exercises to 46 Actions You Can Take to Optimize Your Job Search and Career Today

### 6. Do you have special skills that you can make your potential employer aware of?

On at least one or two occasions that I can remember, I have been on the phone screening an attorney for a job, and they have started to tell me the most incredible things about themselves that were not on their resume—things like being a former basketball player at a major university, or even in one case being an Olympic athlete. On a couple of other occasions, I have met “child prodigies” that graduated from college at the age of 17 and then went to top 10 law schools. None of this was on their resumes. Being an Olympic athlete shows someone has a lot of drive. Being a child prodigy shows someone is smart. Other people may be gifted in doing computer coding despite being an attorney, for example. You never know what sorts of skills your potential employer may be interested in. You need to show them everything you’ve got!

What life experiences do you have that aren’t on your resume?

What special skills or talents do you have that you aren’t currently listing?

What do these experiences and skills tell someone about you?

How might these experiences and skills be of interest to a potential employer?

Add them to your resume or cover letter.

### 7. How much do you allow employers to talk about themselves in interviews?

People love to talk about themselves, and employers are no different. Allow employers to talk about themselves as much as possible during interviews. Ask questions which allow them to show their bright side so they feel good about themselves. Make yourself interesting by being as interested as possible in other people. Do this with conviction and sincerity. Allow the employer to open up and talk about themselves personally, as well, if possible. Find affinity between you and the interviewer.

Using information gained from other contacts or research you’ve done independently, anticipate some questions you might be able to use to get your next interviewer to open up about themselves:

## 8. Have you had your resume professionally reviewed?

Several years ago, I was sitting in an interview and the person interviewing me pointed out a grammatical error on my resume. I almost did not get the job. I had been using the same resume for years, and the mistake was an obscure grammatical rule that I was not even aware of, but an astute attorney interviewer was. As a former law professor I'm a well educated man but grammar has never been my strong suit. I am embarrassed to say that there are a lot of people out there who are simply much better with grammar than I am. Some people love this stuff! Even if your grammar is perfect, your resume could benefit from an extra pair of eyes, looking for areas of improvement. You do not need to have your resume professionally done, however, this can help. Professional resume writers not only have a great deal of experience writing fantastic resumes, they generally also have up to date information about the job market and the changing needs in various industries. That information can be used to tweak your documents to make you more marketable to potential employers. For most people, the fees charged by resume writers are tax deductible, making it a great investment in their careers. I have been running companies such as [Preferred Resumes](#) that help people get their resumes professionally done for years.

As an alternative to hiring a professional to write or tweak your resume, pick up a book on professional resume writing. Have three or four people look over your final document to make sure there are no mistakes. If possible, ask people who are experienced interviewers to review it and make suggestions.

|   |
|---|
| Research professional resume companies like Preferred Resumes. Are their fees tax deductible?                           |
| Compare sample resumes from professional resume services with your own documents. Can you benefit from their expertise? |
| Do you know anyone with experience as an interviewer? Ask them to review your resume.                                   |
| What kind of paper do you use for hard copies of your resume?   |

## Companion Exercises to 46 Actions You Can Take to Optimize Your Job Search and Career Today

### 9. Could you apply to even more jobs than you are right now?

Most people under market themselves. Avoid this mistake by applying to literally every potential job you can. If you are not casting a wide net, you are missing out on opportunities. Apply to everything. Interviewing for a job that you don't think you want is good interview practice and you may discover things about the company or organization that make you reconsider. Maybe the company has additional openings that are more suited to your needs. And if not, remember that an interview in no way commits you to working for the company. In all of my years in the career industry, not applying for as many jobs as possible is one of the largest mistakes I have seen people make.

Have you passed up any opportunities recently? List them:

What do you have to lose by applying for these jobs?

What do you have to gain by applying for these jobs?

### 10. Reapply to the same jobs.

When an employer puts a job on commercial websites like CareerBuilder and HotJobs that are publicly available for anyone to browse, they may receive thousands of applications. They receive so many applications that they cannot look at them all. They pick a few applications that look good and interview those candidates. If these do not work out, they look at some more. You can increase your odds of getting many jobs by simply reapplying. Reapplying can double or triple your odds of getting many jobs.

Make a list of jobs you applied for that did not contact you for an interview:

Check to see if these jobs are still open.

Resubmit your resume for any position that is still open along with a short note explaining that you've updated your resume and noticed the position is still open.

## Companion Exercises to 46 Actions You Can Take to Optimize Your Job Search and Career Today

### 11. Do you make your greatest achievements for your past employers visible on your resume?

You need to list some of your greatest achievements on your resume. If you receive an award from your past employer, list it. If you were told you had the highest sales numbers in the history of the company, put this on your resume. There is nothing wrong with tooting your own horn. You need to give people a compelling reason to hire you and “sound bites” they can use when they discuss you with others. Be ready to talk about them in an interview.

What awards or recognitions have you received from past employers?

Do you have other documentable achievements with past employers?

Are these things included on your resume?

### 12. Do you really believe you are the best candidate for most employers?

The power of positive thinking may be a cliché, but it’s a cliché for a reason. It works. What you think, what you feel, what you believe are all expressed in your face and your actions. Your mind is an incredibly powerful tool that you can put to your advantage. If you go into an interview convinced that you are the best candidate for the position, your interviewer will pick up on it and be more inclined to give you favorable consideration. Conversely, if you go into an interview unsure of yourself, that will be apparent as well.

Prior to an interview make a list of 5 reasons why you are the best candidate for the position:

### 13. Do you know the top reasons employers are not interviewing and hiring you?

Sometimes there are small reasons you are not getting the interviews and jobs you want; other times there are big reasons. One thing is for certain, though: You better know your biggest weaknesses in the job market. Your weakness may be you have had too many jobs, been unemployed for too long, got fired from your last job, or something else. Everyone who applies for any job is likely to have lots of weaknesses, just like you do. The best thing you can do with your weaknesses is ensure that you learn from them and that you are aware of them. The more you learn about your weaknesses, the better you can do your to steer conversations away from your weaknesses in interviews, and avoid aspects of your resume that may compel an employer to dive into your weaknesses. The more you know about your weaknesses, the better you can counteract questions about these weaknesses in interviews. Whenever possible, turn your weaknesses into strengths or learning experiences.

## Companion Exercises to 46 Actions You Can Take to Optimize Your Job Search and Career Today

|  |
|--|
| What are your largest weaknesses as a job candidate?   |
| Does your resume call undue attention to your weaknesses?  |
| Can you turn your weaknesses into strengths?   |
| What have you learned from your weaknesses that you can use to counter questions about them during interviews? |

### 14. Do you have compelling ways to address your weaknesses in your applications?

There is nothing wrong with losing a job or having other problems when applying for jobs. What is important, though, is what you do with the weaknesses you have in your applications and how you can address these weaknesses to the best of your ability when questioned about them. The secret to doing incredibly well in most interviews is making sure that you take these weaknesses and make them into strengths. You need to do your best to put a positive spin on all your weaknesses. One of the greatest marketing techniques is to lead with your weakness and get it out of the way up front. For example, the rental car Avis says "We're number 2, so we try harder ..." and other brands do similar things to make the most of their weaknesses. You need to address your weaknesses and always think through them and the best way to put a positive spin on them. This is a strategy that can pay massive dividends. If you have a major weakness, you better believe that the employer is thinking about this when they are interviewing you. You should make sure you can address it if it is something that cannot be avoided.

|   |
|---|
| Identify everything on your resume and in your job history that employers might see as red flags: |
| For each item above, how can you give it a positive spin?   |

## Companion Exercises to 46 Actions You Can Take to Optimize Your Job Search and Career Today

If you can't turn it into a strength, how can you make it seem irrelevant or less important?

Practice answering questions about each weakness you've identified.

### 15. Are you using a specific strategy instead of just being tactical in your job search?

Tactics are the methods we use to execute a strategy. Being tactical without having a strategy is a very inefficient way of getting results. To be strategic you need to have a complete system in place for tracking down jobs, following up, and making your applications stick out as much as possible. Very few people are strategic in how they go about doing their job searches and, due to this, they do not get the results they should. When you are strategic, you can get a lot more "bang for your buck" in everything you are doing. A complete strategy would involve using all of the methods in this list with a specific goal or goals in mind.

What are your career goals? Be specific – what kind of work do you want to do, where do you want to live, what working conditions are important to you and what kind of money do you want to make?

In which industries can you meet these goals?

What positions will let you meet these goals? Do some research and see if there are more types of positions that you haven't considered that will fit your objectives.

## Companion Exercises to 46 Actions You Can Take to Optimize Your Job Search and Career Today

Make a list of companies in these industries and find out which of them offer the kinds of work conditions and locations that meet your criteria:

Do you know anyone working for these companies? Do you know anyone that can introduce you to people in these companies? Are there any social or industry events at which you can meet people from these companies? Make a list:

### 16. Are you sharing your performance reviews, if possible?

If you received good performance reviews in your current or past position, and there is nothing that prohibits you from sharing these performance reviews with a potential new employer, do so. A good performance review shows what you are likely to do once you show up for work and is one of the most effective possible things you can show a potential new employer. A good performance review is like a testimonial—only stronger. It shows a potential employer that you are likely to make a very solid contribution with them as you have with another employer.

Do you have any documented performance reviews from past employers that are not confidential?

If so, attach them to your resume and bring them with you to interviews.

### 17. Have you ensured your appearance is the best it can possibly be for interviews?

This is a very, very easy thing to do but, for many people, a real deal killer. You need to look your absolute best! You need to be well-groomed, your shoes should be as well shined as possible, and your shirts should be well pressed. There are a million little things you can be doing to look your best and whatever it is you can do—do it. Your appearance should tell an interviewer that you care enough about the job to give it extra effort and that you pay attention to details. Small things like a fresh manicure or at the very least neatly groomed fingernails make a large difference. If the interview is late in the afternoon or early evening, then make sure your morning shave is fresh. If you are going on multiple interviews or leaving for an interview from somewhere other than home, carry a change of clothes with you that day just in case something happens. Not only will looking good help make a good first impression, it will also give you additional self confidence in an interview.

## Companion Exercises to 46 Actions You Can Take to Optimize Your Job Search and Career Today

What outfits do you look best in?

How do you feel when you look your best?

### 18. Do you have a prime prospect list of employers you can apply to even if they do not have openings?

If you believe a particular employer is a good fit for you, you should apply for a job even if they have no job openings. This is an incredibly powerful strategy because, regardless of what sort of work you do, there are likely to be numerous employers that are a “perfect fit” for your skill set. Who cares if they do not have an opening? Apply to all of these employers and get your resume on file. You have an obligation to them, and to yourself, to let them know you are available. They may find you such a compelling candidate that they will hire you anyway, and if not they may contact you in the future if a position becomes available. You can make a list of these employers at a local library by doing research, or you can find them by doing research online or purchasing various industry directories online. You need to find all the employers in your industry that are likely to be interested in you and hire you.

By now you should have developed a list of employers that you are interested in. Identify the ones with no job openings:

List 5 reasons they should consider hiring you anyway:

Write a cover letter that addresses those reasons and submit your resume for consideration.

### 19. Do you shop from or use your interviewer’s services (if appropriate), and do you let your interviewer know that?

Employers love it when you are very familiar with their product or service, particular if you are or have been a customer. In fact, I have hired countless people who have used one of our products at our companies and had good things to say about it in the interview. These sorts of people understand what you are doing, and they also can be incredible brand ambassadors. Also, when someone comes into speak with me, and they know a lot about what we do, I am flattered and like them. When I like them, I want to hire them. If possible, you should always be a consumer of the services of an employer you are interviewing with and be enthusiastic about the employer you are speaking with and what they are doing.

## Companion Exercises to 46 Actions You Can Take to Optimize Your Job Search and Career Today

For each interview you schedule, research the company's products or services.

Whenever practical, be a customer at least once.

When asked why you want to work for the company, include a story about a positive experience you have had with a product or a service from that company.

### 20. Do you write articles, take classes outside of work, participate in industry events, and do other things in your industry that employers know about?

The one ingredient that most job seekers are missing, and which they should address, is passion. Do you love the work you do? Applicants that are passionate about the work they do are far more likely to be long term performers. Being part of a industry organizations, taking classes related to your profession, writing articles for professional journals or being involved in other ways with your industry outside of work tells an interviewer that you see a job as something more than just a steady paycheck, and that will make you a more appealing candidate.

In what ways are you involved in your industry outside of work?

Are there additional things you can do to demonstrate passion about your profession?

Have you included these things on your resume?

### 21. Are you using multiple marketing methods to track down and find a job?

Nothing is worse than using only one way to apply for a job. You need to make sure you are using every possible marketing method out there. This includes using email to apply to jobs, using letters to apply for jobs, calling employers on the phone, sending faxes, showing up at career fairs, networking and more. The more marketing methods you use when you are applying for a job, the better off you are going to be. You need to do everything within your power to use as many marketing methods as you can think of.

## Companion Exercises to 46 Actions You Can Take to Optimize Your Job Search and Career Today

### 22. Have you thought about the reasons you are the best possible hire for employers?

In business, one of the things I love to do is create lists of various reasons that one of our companies is the best possible choice. For example, I might create a list like “The Top 100 Reasons You Should Use Our Company to Get a Job.” You should do the exact same thing with your job search. You should create a list of the most important reasons that you would be the best possible hire an employer could make for any job. You need to make a comprehensive list of all of your strengths and why you are the best person for any employer. Nothing is more important than being aware of all of your strengths, and the more strengths you are aware of, the more you can bring these up at the best possible time. In addition, the more strengths you are aware of, the more confident you will be. You need self confidence to get the best possible job. Empower yourself by being aware of all of your strengths.

### 23. Are you taking advantage of every networking opportunity you can during your job search?

Networking is incredible. All you need to do to network is find events and simply show up. You will meet an incredible variety of people, and these people can all assist you in your job search. Get involved in your church, synagogue, or mosque. Start participating in events you enjoy doing outside of the house. Volunteer with community organizations, coach a little league team, or work on a political campaign. It is incredibly important that you get out and meet as many people as possible and develop a network.

|  |
|--|
| Make a list of organizations to which you belong or that you would be interested in joining: |
|  |
| Choose a few events per week sponsored by these or other organizations and attend them.      |
|  |
| Commit yourself to meeting one to two people at each event and stay in contact with them.    |
|  |

### 24. Do you have a website that employers can look at for information about you?

If an employer is interested in hiring you, they will try to find information about you online. I have seen lots of people lately who have personal websites—whether they are blogs or simply sites dedicated to their interests. Many families even have websites. There are personal persona’s and there are professional persona’s. If you have a personal persona on the web that is likely to upset an employer, then the best thing you can often do is get it down. You need to be aware that an employer can and will find anything and everything about you online. Make sure there is nothing about you online that is likely to be offensive to a potential employer. I have seen countless people not get positions due to negative personal information that the person posted about themselves online. If there is a lot of information out there about you online, make sure that the information is something that the employer would want to see.

## Companion Exercises to 46 Actions You Can Take to Optimize Your Job Search and Career Today

Do you have a personal website or blog? If so, review it carefully for anything that a potential employer might find objectionable. In addition to content, check it for grammatical and spelling errors.

If you have a page on MySpace, facebook, or other social networking site, make sure that there are no pictures or comments that are risqué or in other ways objectionable.

Run a background check on yourself. For a relatively small cost, you can hire a company to dig up everything about you online.

Do a google search for your name. Look for anything that anyone else might have posted about you that would be embarrassing.

If you find anything about yourself online that is objectionable, contact the owner of the webpage and ask them to remove it.

### 25. Do you emphasize your benefits and not features?

One of the most important things you can do is make your application materials about the employer and not just you. Your skills and abilities are only relevant if they can add value to your employer's business. You need to tell the employer what you can do for them and how quickly, effectively and efficiently you can do all of these things. Focus on your benefits to your potential employer and not your features.

What skills do you list on your resume or cover letter?

How are those skills relevant to a potential employer?

Reword them to highlight the benefit to the employer.

## Companion Exercises to 46 Actions You Can Take to Optimize Your Job Search and Career Today

### 26. How often do you look for an excuse to follow up with an employer in an interview?

Often times applying for a job is like the courtship phase of a new relationship. Have you ever met someone you were interested in and looked for excuses to talk to them again? Successful job hunters always find reasons to follow up with a potential employer after an interview. During an interview, plant seeds that can be followed up on. There are lots of ways to do this. You can mention an interesting article you recently read, then after the interview send them a copy of the article along with a note. If you discussed social groups or organizations, follow up by letting them know about upcoming events. If you share common interests, invite them to meet someone else that shares those interests. Every time you make contact with the employer you stay fresh in their mind. You need to follow up, and having excuses to follow up can put you in a good light with the employer and make a huge difference.

Did you plant any seeds, intentionally or not, in recent interviews? Make a list:

Find ways to follow up on each of those seeds. Do so by telephone when possible. If you are emailing them something, contact them first to let them know it's coming.

### 27. Do you have a comprehensive database of everyone who has ever interviewed you for a job?

Keep a record of everyone you have ever spoken with when looking for a job. You can then follow up with these people periodically to see if they have openings. Sometimes, especially when you are a finalist for a job, the employer who does not hire you may be interested in hiring you later. This is just how things work out, and this can make a massive difference. Staying in touch can make a huge and profound difference in your job search.

Make a list of past interviews and if you no longer have the contact information, find a way to get it:

Add to this list as you continue your job search. Keep the list even after you find a job.

Contact everyone on this list periodically. The more people you have in your network, the better off you'll be in this and future job searches.

## 28. Are you applying to enough jobs?

That's right—apply to more jobs. Apply to every single job you can. Nothing will slow you down more when searching for a job than being overly selective. Apply for jobs first and then worry about whether or not you want to work there after you get an offer. Have you heard bad things about the employer? So what! An employer may have 100+ different departments and divisions, and each one may be different. You may be applying to work in the best division with the nicest group of people imaginable! You need to cast as wide a net as possible. Get yourself out there to as many employers as you can. I cannot tell you how many times I have seen employers hire people who applied even by accident. One time I was representing a guy in Texas who lived on a farm raising chickens and had never left the state. All of the applications for the firm he was applying to in Texas were reviewed at the firm's home office in Philadelphia. They ended up hiring him in Philadelphia, and he moved to the city and raised chickens in his backyard in Downtown Philadelphia.

Are you applying to every possible job?

What factors keep you from not applying to certain jobs?

Identify those factors which may be based on faulty assumptions:

Make a list of reasons to apply for jobs that you might not want:

## Companion Exercises to 46 Actions You Can Take to Optimize Your Job Search and Career Today

### 29. Are you using the fax, mail and email in applying for jobs?

Each innovation in communication technology has had an effect on how people communicate. When the fax machine was invented, people stopped sending printed letters. After email became widespread, people stopped sending faxes. You should be doing all three. Printed letters, faxes and emails are delivered differently and what might get buried in a flood of emails will stand out as a fax or a hand delivered letter. A fax is often delivered in a special envelope, and it has a sense of urgency in almost every company out there. If you fax someone something, they will almost always look at it. Printed letters are usually hand delivered and often get read first because of how unusual they are these days. Communicate in every possible way. Use all three methods. You want your stuff to get read, and it is better to overdo it than it is to underdo it. When a major advertiser goes on a campaign, it does not just advertise on the radio. It may do the radio, magazines, direct mail, television and public relations. The idea is that they get the word out in multiple ways. You too should get the word out in as many ways as possible. When you are applying for a job, you are advertising yourself.

Do you have access to a fax machine? Can your computer be configured to send a fax? Where else can you find a fax machine to use?

Do you have complete contact information for every contact on your list? If not, call the company and ask for a fax number or a street address.

### 30. Are you testing headlines in your email applications?

You should have powerful and compelling headlines in your email subject lines. Do not just say "Application for Position #14895". Instead, you can say "I Want This Job" or "I Can Excel in This Job!" or something along those lines. You need to be specific and draw the employer to open your application instead of just glancing it over. Some employers will receive thousands of applications for one position and will not even open all of the applications because it hurts their mouse finger too much after awhile. You need to get the attention of employers with compelling headlines that get your applications opened! You can test different combinations of headlines, as well, if you are applying for enough jobs.

Make a list of subject lines for job applications:

Are any of those more compelling? Why?

## Companion Exercises to 46 Actions You Can Take to Optimize Your Job Search and Career Today

Send yourself a batch of emails using the subject lines you've created. Check your inbox - do any of them jump out at you more than the others?

### 31. Are you following up after your interviews with thank you notes or additional information?

You should follow up after interviews when appropriate. Some companies may interview as many as 20 or 30 people for the average position. Make sure the employer remembers you, and that you are sticking out. Sending a short email or thank you note following an interview helps them remember you in a positive light. This can be incredibly effective if combined with following up on seeds planted during the interview as discussed above.

How often do you send thank you notes following an interview?

Would you rather receive a thank you note via email or a hard copy via mail? Which shows greater thought in your eyes?

### 32. Do you appear incredibly interested in your industry to employers?

Employers want to hire people who have passion. You need to appear interested in your industry to your employer. You should be able to talk about the events going on in your industry, and you should appear to have passion for your industry. You need to know who the key players are in your industry, and you need to know everything you can about your industry. People prefer to hire those who are very interested in their industry compared to those who are not.

What industry events have you attended recently that you can mention in an interview?

Are you part of any industry organization?

## Companion Exercises to 46 Actions You Can Take to Optimize Your Job Search and Career Today

Do you subscribe to any industry newsletters or magazines?

Do you have any prominent contacts in the industry?

### 33. Do you appear too desperate?

Employers want to believe that you are interested in them and the position they have open, and not just desperate for any job. Just like in dating, there needs to be a bit of a chase on both sides. Your employer should feel lucky to have you. Not only will this lead to more job offers, but it will also put you in a stronger bargaining position when it comes to salary and benefits.

Before every interview, ask yourself why you would be a "good catch" for this employer.

Why would an employer be lucky to have you as an employee?

Why do you want this job specifically?

### 34. Are you modifying your applications for each specific employer?

This is something that can make a huge difference. The more you modify your applications for each specific employer, the better off you are going to be, and the more jobs you are going to get. Instead of saying "I am seeking to work for a well-diversified conglomerate ..." your application should say "I have always thought that X company was my favorite producer of widgets. I have liked the people I have met from the company, especially X individual, and I am crazy about your new marketing campaign with the singing walrus!" When you personalize an application and show the employer you are interested in their company specifically, and are not just flooding the market with the same letter over and over again, this makes a difference. People are interested in people who are interested in them. The best way to do this is to have specific application materials for each employer.

Is your cover letter generic? If so, how can you modify it for individual applications?

Are there sections of your resume that can be tweaked for individual employers?

## Companion Exercises to 46 Actions You Can Take to Optimize Your Job Search and Career Today

### 35. Are you improving yourself through self-improvement education?

Getting the best job and getting ahead in your career requires that you constantly be improving. One of the secrets of star athletes and top performers across the spectrum is that they are constantly working on improving every aspect of what they do. It is incredibly important that you are constantly looking for new ways to improve at the things you do. I remember several years ago sending one of our employees to a sales training course that met weekly for several months. After taking this course, his sales close to doubled, and they stayed there permanently. You should continue improving at everything you are doing, and the best way to do this is to always be learning about self-improvement topics that interest you.

Research classes that you can take to improve your performance. Check local community colleges as well as professional organizations.

If relevant to the position for which you are applying, mention any classes you are taking or have taken on your resume or in your cover letter.

### 36. Are you looking for jobs in every geographic area where you would like to work?

This is one of the easiest ways to multiply your offers and get more jobs. If you can, one of the smartest things you can do is look at numerous geographic areas when looking for a job. Even in the worst of recessions, there are always areas that are going to be doing very well. I remember several years ago when I was starting out my career looking for a job in Detroit. It was not easy. Then, when I started looking for jobs in places like Los Angeles, New York, Chicago and other cities, the entire world opened up to me, and suddenly I was in incredible demand. When things are bad in one geographic location, they are good in others. You should be geographically open to numerous areas if this is possible.

Are there any reasons that prevent you from leaving your current location for the right job? List them:

If the perfect job was available elsewhere, how flexible are these reasons? Can you find a way to overcome them for the right job?

Where else would like to live? Are there any other geographical areas that are particularly appealing to you?

Have you applied for positions in these areas?

## Companion Exercises to 46 Actions You Can Take to Optimize Your Job Search and Career Today

### 37. Are you looking up old openings and applying to these, as well?

At [EmploymentCrossing](http://EmploymentCrossing.com) we have archives that allow people to look up every opening we have ever listed in every company. Some companies are just plain always hiring. Most law firms are always hiring attorneys of some kind. Engineering companies are generally always hiring engineers of some kind. There are positions which companies, just by their nature, generally have open at most points in time. I always counsel people to go out and find these positions that are always likely to be open. For example, a company may have advertised a position on a big job board a year ago. During the year, the position has been filled, but the person who took the job may have left. Or, the company may have grown and now needs more people in that line of work. Apply to the job even though it looks like it is no longer open.

Are you using a job board that has an archive of past listings? If not, try [employmentcrossing.com](http://employmentcrossing.com)

### 38. Are you using risk reversal where appropriate in your job search?

Risk reversal is a marketing technique used in sales to put the risk on the seller instead of the buyer as a way of getting wary consumers to try a product. It's often expressed in the form of a money back guarantee or a free trial period. As a sales technique, it's incredibly effective. You can harness the power of this method in your job search, particularly when applying for a job for which you are under qualified or with a company that seems reticent about hiring you. Express a strong desire to work for that particular company and offer to work for a period of time at a reduced salary, thereby reducing or eliminating any risk that company may perceive in hiring you.

Identify the jobs you are interested in for which you may appear under qualified:

Come up with a list of compelling reasons you want to work for that particular company and in that particular job:

Come up with a list of compelling reasons the company would benefit from having you in that job:

Determine what salary you would be willing to accept for how long, on a trial basis:

### 39. Are you committed and not a dabbler?

There are a ton of people out there who are dabblers and never really seem to get “off the ground” in anything that they do. They start this or that and do it for some time and then move on to something else. You can find people like this in every profession. I remember several years ago I was shopping at a men’s clothing store, and I met a salesman there who was in his mid-50’s. He had a special card made up and gave me a copy of his card. He took down my contact information including my email address and phone number. He then proceeded to call me every single time the store had a sale. He sent me Christmas cards and birthday cards. He emailed me from time to time about the store and events they were having. In a word, this guy stayed in touch and was always in touch with me. Other sales people in the store never did this. They were generally young, good-looking kids who had moved to Los Angeles to be actors and were “dabbling” in the job. There are different guys like this every time I go into the store. The guy I was dealing with, however, is still there and he has been there as long as I can remember. I am sure he makes a ton more money than the other sales guys. His secret is that he is not a dabbler. If you are going out to interview for a job, you should do so as someone who, in the eyes of the employer, and your eyes as well, could conceivably be doing the job for the rest of your career. These are the people employers want to hire because someone who is committed to a job, and not a dabbler, is always going to do a better job in almost every case.

|  |
|--|
| Are you applying for positions and companies that you could see yourself working at for years to come? |
|--|

|  |
|--|
| If so, find ways to communicate this through your cover letter and your interview. |
|--|

|  |
|--|
| If not, make sure you draw attention away from the fact. |
|--|

### 40. Are you using testimonials in your application materials?

Nothing sells more than showing the employer that your former employer and co-workers loved working with you. People are trained to instinctively question the things we say about ourselves; however, they are much more likely to believe things that others say about us. This is why, when you are watching television, you will see people paraded in front of the camera offering a testimonial. The advertisers show us these testimonials because they know that we are much more likely to be influenced by what someone else says about us rather than what we say about ourselves. If you have people, such as former employers, friends and others that can say good things about you, then put quotes and other information from them in your application materials. Testimonials also will humanize your application materials.

## Companion Exercises to 46 Actions You Can Take to Optimize Your Job Search and Career Today

Do you have letters of recommendation from former employers?

Make a list of employers or associates that you can ask for testimonials:

Include these testimonials with your other application materials.

### 41. Are you making it easy for employers to interview you?

I have seen more people lose potential jobs by being difficult to interview than anything else. If you want to work in Las Vegas and are not getting any interviews there, plan a trip to Las Vegas. Call everyone you applied to work with there before you leave, tell them when you will be there, and that you can talk to them at that time. If an employer wants to interview you at 10:00 am next Tuesday, do not tell them you have a doctor's appointment and play games with what time you will be there: Figure out a way to get there at 10:00 a.m. next Tuesday. You need to be accessible when an employer is expressing interest in speaking with you about a job. You need to be available and ready and willing to talk to the employer on their terms. If the policy of the employer is not to pay to fly you out to another city for interviews, then find a way to get out there. If the employer wants to meet you for coffee at 9:00 p.m. on a Saturday, then meet them on Saturday evening. When you are looking for a job, you need to show that you are ready and willing to meet anytime and at any place. When I call people to interview them and ask when they are available, and they say "I am 15 minutes from your office, so I can be there within 30 minutes ..." I am very excited. Not only do I know the person wants the job, but they are also sending the message that they are likely to be very responsive to the needs of the company if they come to work for us.

How easy is it for employers to interview you at their convenience?

What obstacles do you have to being more available for interviews?

What can you do to minimize those obstacles?

## Companion Exercises to 46 Actions You Can Take to Optimize Your Job Search and Career Today

### 42. Do you have a comprehensive database of people in your industry you can call for advice about finding a job?

There is nothing more powerful than calling people you know in your industry and asking them for advice about the job market. You need to create a database of everyone you meet in your industry and start staying in contact with them. People are one of your greatest resources in finding employment. When you have a large network of people, you can always call upon them when you are looking for a job. Even if you are unemployed, continue going to industry events and making sure that you get to know people in your industry. Make friends with these people. Have coffee. Go out to lunch. When you know people, they will also naturally ask you about your career. When you tell them you are unemployed and looking for work, they will be able to help you with contacts and other advice. This is something that can pay massive dividends for you and really assist you in your job search.

Make a list of industry contacts:

How can you expand this list?

Contact everyone on your list. Meet them for coffee or lunch, ask about upcoming events, talk to them about their family, or find some other reason for staying in touch.

### 43. Are you trying to just get your foot in the door?

Once you get your foot in the door, you can almost always move up when something better in the company opens up. I am sure that you have heard stories about people who start out in the mail room and then rise to become the head of a major company. This still happens, and a lot of it has to do with people having the ability to just get their foot in the door. If you are a hard worker, you can take advantage of other opportunities in any given company you are interested in working for as they open up. At many employers, you may be expected to start out at the bottom before you are allowed to rise. Going into an interview and telling the employer that you will take any job to have the opportunity for a better job when one opens up, because you like the company so much, is an incredible motivator. People generally and instinctively like people who also like them.

## Companion Exercises to 46 Actions You Can Take to Optimize Your Job Search and Career Today

Is pride keeping you from taking positions in strong companies that you feel are beneath you?

Do any of those positions offer strong opportunities for advancement?

### 44. Do you have one powerful thing about you and your candidacy that will stick out for potential employers?

In sales and marketing there is something called a Unique Selling Proposition (USP). A USP is something that is memorable about a product and defines the product in the customer's mind. For example, when you think of Volvo, you think of safety. Applying for a job is like a marketing campaign with you as the product, so you also need a USP. Your USP may be "fanatical attention to detail" or "gets along incredibly with others." It does not matter so much what your USP is as long as it is something that the employer believes will benefit them. An employer who is interviewing a large number of candidates is only going to remember one or two things about you the day after your interview. Your job in marketing yourself is to make sure that you control what sticks in the interviewer's mind.

What is your USP and how does it benefit employers?

Is your USP prominent in your resume and other application materials?

How can you work your USP into conversation during the interview?

### 45. Are you bonding with your interviewers?

One of the worst things that people can do in interviews is act too professional. I want to be clear that everyone is human. Everyone has human problems and everyone does human things. Avoid the tendency with most interviewers to not be too human. You will benefit in a major way when people see you like them. People who are human have problems, they have frustrations, they have pain and they endure various struggles. You can bond with your interviewers when you can share issues they have had and more. One of the best ways to get jobs is to bond with your interviewers on multiple levels. People want to help those who are like them. If you are invited out for drinks after the interview then go out for drinks. When people are making hiring decisions, they are often hiring people that they feel they could be friends with. They are working with the same person all day, every day and want to like the person and feel comfortable with them.

## Companion Exercises to 46 Actions You Can Take to Optimize Your Job Search and Career Today

As you expand your network, practice bonding with people by asking questions about them.

Use this experience in interviews to bond with potential employers.

### 46. Are you following the money in your job search?

One of the biggest mistakes that people make when they are looking for a job is they go after jobs and industries where there is no opportunity, or where the opportunity is diminishing. For example, if you were in the business of manufacturing vinyl records 30 years ago and were looking for a job, it might not be a good idea to seek a job doing this now. You could seek a job in the "music business," however. Similarly, if you are working in Detroit in the automotive business at the present moment, it might not be wise to seek a job there. You could seek a job in the transportation business instead. By "following the money" I mean that you need to see where the opportunity is and where people are making money. You want to be working in the industries where people are doing well and succeeding, and not in industries and jobs that are dying and going away. This applies to companies and geographical areas as well. It is better to get in on the ground floor of a company with the potential to become huge than to start working for a company that is past its prime. It is better to look for a job in areas of the country that are thriving and not areas that are on the decline.

Is your industry or your occupation on the decline? If so, how can you redefine it to be part of a larger and still prosperous industry?

Are you applying at prominent companies that have passed their prime? Are there other newer companies in the same industry that have the potential to become giants in the future?

Is your home area doing well economically? If not, where else can you consider working that is experiencing economic growth?

One of the best ways to get better at anything is to optimize what you are doing. When you optimize what you are doing, you can increase the effectiveness of anything—not a small amount, but by a massive amount over time. Very few people, for whatever reason, ever decide to do to optimize what they are doing.