

Locating the Job You Want

Smaller Employers

Most first-time or novice job seekers look to the large chemical employers—the big companies, government labs, hospitals, and nonprofit organizations. These large chemical companies and institutions are well known; they use campus recruiting as a main strategy, hiring professors as consultants to advise them on student hires. Often paying high salaries and providing other incentives, they are the objects of widely circulated stock market analyses and reports.

It's easy to find and target large employers, yet small companies are actually producing more jobs. (The US Department of Labor defines small companies as those with 50–500 employees; those with fewer than 50 are usually referred to as start-ups.)

Most small chemical companies are not household names. They tend to advertise jobs locally, their businesses often are quite specialized, and typically they don't have a human resources department to promote them.

Small companies are forming at rapid rates and are generating most new jobs in the US. Use local resources (such as radio and newspapers) as well as your contacts and websites to learn about small employers' hiring needs. Call the ACS Department of Career Services (800-227-5558) for more ideas and assistance.

Posted Jobs

A posted job is one that's advertised or somehow actively publicized by an employer to encourage applications—usually to fill the position as soon as possible.

Job postings can be direct or indirect:

- **Direct postings** are job descriptions that are made public, broadly or narrowly. Printed announcements often are internal postings on traditional or electronic bulletin boards to inform current employees. Jobs may be directly posted externally on the Internet, within the company's home page or another website section. Ads in local and/or national newspapers, journals and magazines (such as *Chemical & Engineering News*), data banks, or other Internet lists are also examples of direct postings.
- **Indirect postings** occur when an employer provides information about job openings to a third party—temporary employment agencies, headhunters, or faculty. Sometimes an available job will be intentionally leaked out to generate appropriate candidates. Jobs announced at employment clearinghouses sponsored by professional societies (ACS, Eastern Analytical Symposium, Pittsburgh Conference, and many



The Internet has created profound opportunities for all companies, large and small, to publicize themselves and their job openings. If your résumé is posted on major search engines, any employer can easily find it. Also be sure your networking efforts include large and small employers.



Don't be fooled by "temporary" jobs and "temporary" employment agencies. While some jobs truly are short term, it's common practice to hire new employees on a temporary basis to assess them for permanent employment.

others) are considered indirect postings because you must attend to learn about them. In addition, vendors at trade shows and technical meetings often have job opportunities to discuss, even if the opening isn't posted at all. (Remember that many vendors are small companies.)

Finding Posted Jobs

For directly posted jobs:

- Visit your sources regularly, including newspaper or magazine ads, Internet web pages, your network members, bulletin boards, and so forth
- Identify those jobs that seem to match your values, drivers, and skills (see Chapter 3)
- Follow instructions in the ad to apply for the job and line up an interview.

Because they are readily available to any applicant, competition is heavy for directly posted jobs.

To find indirect postings, you must go where the postings are placed:

- Call or visit temporary agencies and headhunters in your area to ask about jobs; remember, many temporary agencies have national and regional job lists, as well as local ones.
- Go to meetings that feature employment clearinghouses and visit the exhibitions area, where vendors display their products (ACS National Meetings hold the NECH twice per year).
- Be persistent in cold calling (more details later in this chapter).
- Bring résumés with you and hand them out.
- Try to do interviewing on the spot—encountering a potential employer in person can be a great advantage in the job search process.

Many candidates know about these techniques, so your competition may be heavy for indirectly posted jobs, too.

Career Transitions

Sometimes experienced chemists want to change their situation or field; these career transitions can include:

- Exchanging one lab research field for another
- Moving from a lab scientist's job to a nonlaboratory (or even management) position
- Going from a large company to a small one

- Shifting from a company office setting to a home office, and so on.

In a career transition, the job search process remains the same, but your target market is different. Your steps will include:

- Conducting a careful personal assessment (see Chapter 3) to be certain you have the values, drivers, and skills needed and to determine your new target employers
- Updating your skills list and training in any gaps that might keep you from your new position
- Adding to your network (see Chapter 5) practitioners in the field you're targeting; your current network members may not be useful in guiding you to new fields
- Changing your professional view of yourself by visualizing your future as already begun...label yourself as already performing in the new job; for example, if changing from an experimental organic chemist to an information specialist in the library, introduce yourself as a technical information specialist, and choose persons who work in that field for your network
- Revising your résumé to target your new field (and the specific job you want, when possible)
- Staying involved and alert to changes in yourself and your new field.



For a successful transition, stay tuned in to the changes needed in your skills and abilities, network, and professional identity.

Hidden Job Market

There's good evidence that, at any given time, around 2/3 of available jobs are "hidden"—meaning not advertised or posted—for a variety of reasons:

- Other jobs in the organization have higher priority for being filled
- The job is slated for budget approval, but not yet approved
- Particularly in smaller organizations, management is too busy to search for a needed employee
- Management has not yet recognized a serious need to hire.

Going after hidden jobs is well worth the effort because your competition may be unaware of them. You find hidden jobs by cold calling (described below) or networking (described separately in Chapter 5 to cover its numerous applications).

Cold Calling

Cold calling is the process of visiting an organization where you don't know anyone. Many salespersons use cold calls to introduce products or services or to provide information on new offerings or personnel changes. You can use this



Tapping into the "hidden" job market can increase job search success because you face less competition.

method to obtain a job with small and sometimes medium organizations (for large employers, the logistics are not as favorable).

The principle behind cold calling is that personal contact is much more effective than distant contact (calling, emailing, or blind mailing). Meeting with someone face to face to discuss the job and hand in your résumé demonstrates your genuine interest while enabling you to reinforce your value with a strong personal impression. Although cold calling can be very effective in selling your capabilities, unless you're comfortable approaching new people, it may not be successful. And if small talk is a problem for you, practice extensively with others before entering the door of a prospective employer. Also remember that in an era of heightened concern about security, an organization may be unwilling to meet with anyone without an appointment.

The process works like this:

- Decide on a locale where you'd like to live and work.
- Identify as many chemical employers in this location as you're willing to visit. Use your network, library, phone directories, the Internet, and other methods for locating organizations in your area of interest.
- Gather technical and business information about each employer. Access your library, the local Bureau of Labor office, Chamber of Commerce, and local newspapers as resources. For public companies, call and ask for their annual report; for others, call and ask for brochures or product/service information.
- Adjust your résumé to the employers' interests.
- Go to the main office of the organizations you've selected and ask to see the person who does the hiring. (You may not be fortunate enough to see this person at this visit, but be prepared for an interview.)
- Use "friendly small talk" to indicate to the person who receives you that you live in this area (or would like to), have heard good things about the organization, and believe you'd like to work for them.
- Get the receptionist's and the president's or CEO's name along with phone numbers for follow-up.
- Leave your résumé and ask that it be given to the CEO or person who does the hiring. Indicate that you'll call back in a few days.
- Follow up to determine the organization's interest in you. If they're not hiring, thank them for their consideration, ask if you can call back in a few months, and move on. If there is interest, try to arrange an interview.

- Be a bit assertive, always polite and tactful, throughout this process. Show interest and respect—and smile, using steady eye contact.

A variation of cold calling that's easily accomplished if you're attending a conference is visiting the exhibitors' area. Vendors are often available for chemists at ACS national and regional meetings, scientific society meetings such as EAS (Eastern Analytical Symposium), Pittcon (Pittsburgh Conference), ENC (Experimental Nuclear Magnetic Resonance Conference), ASMS (American Society for Mass Spectrometry), and others. Approach the exhibitor or vendor in much the same way as in cold calling; most will be happy to talk with you at their booth if they have a job opening and you have the appropriate skills.



Visiting exhibitors/vendors at a professional conference to inquire about jobs can be an easy form of cold calling.

Networking Is for Everyone

Networking is an important part of any job search and the source of many successful positions. This approach can help you in several ways:

- Members of a network obtain information about industry segments of interest and learn about the kinds of jobs available
- Each member generates and gathers ideas for brainstorming to help develop effective job-search strategies
- The networking process brings introductions to new people, who may then provide even more information, ideas, and introductions—expanding the process and the benefits.

Networking is a critical activity and it must be done actively, intelligently, and enthusiastically. If you think of your job search as a marketing exercise—selling your skills and abilities as a potential employee—then your network becomes the framework for your market development.

For targeting your job market, networking doesn't mean asking people to find you a job; it means engaging your network contacts to help you find a job through various communications and other strategies. In the end, *you* will identify and target the job and introduce yourself to an employer through personal meetings and your résumé. Occasionally, a network member may intervene directly with an employer for you, but this is not common.

Use your network to contact specific persons in the organization about the job and to give you an idea of corporate/institutional values. Ask positive, supportive network members if they'd be willing to speak up for you and serve as references. If so, give each a copy of your application and targeted résumé.

Building Your Network

Your network consists of everyone you know in the chemistry job marketplace plus everyone those people know, including:

- Colleagues you see regularly—supervisors, clients, professors, classmates, instrument vendors, service and repair people, neighbors, and relatives
- People you might see only occasionally, such as former classmates and colleagues, physicians, dentists, just to name a few.

Any of these individuals might have information or ideas you can use in your job search, but your professional contacts will normally be the most useful.

One approach for extending your network is to become active in professional associations. Link up with one or more that represent your fields of interest such



Networking is crucial to life-long career success.



Networking is regular communication between you and others for a specific purpose. Successful individuals have many overlapping networks in life—for work functions, hobbies, community activities, school, and others in addition to job searches.



Your network includes all the people you know, even if you interact only occasionally, and all the people they know.

as ACS, ASTM, AAAS, EAS, Pittcon, ENC, ASMS, and others (see page A-3). With ACS, for example, you can get involved by participating in some local section activities, then joining committees. You can also participate in Technical Divisions or submit a presentation/poster for an ACS regional or national meeting. Anything you can do to make yourself and your abilities visible will help in developing personal relationships and adding contacts to your network.

At meetings, you might talk to speakers after their presentations. Express interest in their work and ask for any suggestions in your job search. Have business cards to hand out as you meet and talk to people. In conversations, be prepared to tell people about your job search, your background, and your desired position. If you don't advertise yourself, no one else will.

Maintaining Your Network

Maintaining your network involves staying in touch for professional purposes. Helpful tips follow:

- Try using a card file, computer database, or electronic hand-held note pad to keep contact lists with addresses, phone numbers, and other useful information.
- Review your network records regularly to keep them current.
- Be sure to follow up on any leads suggested by your network members.
- Since networking is based on reciprocity, take every opportunity to assist others by referring people who have skills that a specific employer might find useful. Remember that someday you may call on them to return the favor.
- Keep your contacts informed about how your job search is progressing. Call them or send follow-up notes (handwritten or email to thank them for their time and willingness to help. If a job lead doesn't work out, go back and ask your contacts for the names of others who might help you to broaden your network and refine your job market targets.
- Reward others in your network by sharing job search techniques that have worked for you and job leads that you won't pursue.

Networking isn't just an occasional phone call—it is a vital element of professional life. To do your job search well, you need to multiply your visibility; networking is the only way to do that. By staying in touch with your network, and acknowledging each member regularly, and letting people know you take their job leads seriously, you can get a jump on the job market. There is abundant evidence that those who successfully rebound from job loss and make the best career transitions have an established network ready to help.