How do I even begin my job search given the current uncertainty?

You’ve probably asked yourself the above question in the current pandemic environment, which has brought a great deal of uncertainty to the job market. Employers are adapting, and you should be adapting, too. This guide provides tips for being strategic and setting yourself up for long-term success in these uncertain times.
1. Plan, prepare, connect, and apply

While you cannot control the current job market, you can control how you plan, prepare, connect and apply for your job search.

- **Plan:** Set a timeline for yourself with professional goals, such as resume review, networking and submitting applications. For many, it helps to create a weekly schedule with planned, tangible steps each day. Maybe you block out two hours a day to search and apply for jobs, make a goal to go on at least one virtual information interview a week, or you give yourself a deadline to apply to a certain number of jobs.

- **Prepare:** Schedule time to attend webinars and other virtual networking events that interest you. Additionally, take this time to make sure your application materials are in great shape. Your resume should highlight your skills and accomplishments as it matches to your desired position or field. Your cover letter should highlight one of those experiences without regurgitating your resume. The Glenn College career services office has many resources to help you develop stand-out application materials.

- **Connect:** Make a goal to go on at least one virtual networking coffee a week. Utilize the wide availability you have and be flexible to maximize your potential to connect with others online. People are always eager to help recent graduates when it comes to connecting and networking, and even more so now, given the current situation. You never know where an initial connection may lead. Using LinkedIn is a great way to get started. Find people that work at the organizations of greatest interest to you, or who have positions that you hope to obtain. Don’t forget to send a thank you email after you connect!

- **Apply:** There are still companies hiring full-time, entry-level employees, or this step may come a few months down the road. Whenever it comes time to apply, you will have your application materials ready to go because you planned, prepared, and connected with your network. Remember, the follow-up is important. A spreadsheet is a great way to keep track of deadlines, submission dates, and follow-ups. Especially in today’s environment, things can easily get lost in the shuffle. Be sure to follow up with the employer if you have not heard anything two weeks after the application closes or the deadline passes. Remember: you shouldn’t wait until the last second to apply. If there is a published deadline, don’t use that as an excuse to procrastinate—many employers see a good application and set-up an interview immediately, regardless of deadline.

2. Do an internship or micro-internship

While it doesn’t seem like a step in the right direction, doing an internship can be a great way to enhance your skills and build your network. Parker Dewey offers PAID micro-internships that you can do remotely. In a micro-internship, you work on one-off projects for an organization for as little as four hours to two-three months. There are also more traditional internships that organizations have moved to the virtual environment, allowing you to gain more experience and make further contacts (and possibly earn compensation). Don’t overlook internships as you navigate your next professional steps. Please view our Internship Guide or more information on landing an internship in the COVID-19 era.

3. Improve your digital presence

We live in the digital world now more than ever before. In this era, everyone is online for what seems like 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. Take advantage of this: you have greater access to alumni all over the country (and world) than ever before. When job searching, use LinkedIn. Join groups such as the John Glenn College of Public Affairs or The Ohio State University Buckeye Network to stay plugged into job postings, opportunities, and contacts. Having a commonality with someone is a great way to reach out (plus, many people have more availability now). Be bold! Reach to new contacts to set up virtual informational interviews. Make sure your LinkedIn is professional and searchable following these tips.

4. Revamp your resume

When employers either start posting jobs again, or make the switch to remote onboarding, you want to make sure you have your resume in tiptop shape and ready to go. Studies show that hiring after official quarantine will happen quickly and without much notice, so it’s important that you are prepared! Indeed recently published an article that laid out five steps you can do right now to revamp your resume. Take this time to create a master resume if you have not done so already. Your master resume should include every position you have ever had and your key accomplishments from those. This puts you in a great place to tailor your one-page resume to the specific employer and maximize your chances of getting an interview. Ask mentors and former supervisors to review your resume: use the time you have now to ensure a strong resume for the future.
5. Stay in touch

Remember that this situation developed very rapidly and many companies had to adapt to work from home models quickly. Unfortunately, that may mean your recent promising interview got pushed to the back of the hiring manager’s mind. The next steps for you would be to email them, acknowledge they may be overwhelmed with their new set-up, and to check in regarding the position for which you interviewed. For instance, your email could say: “I hope this email finds you well. I greatly enjoyed speaking about [POSITION] in February, and understand things have been challenging since then. I am looking forward to learning more about the position once you are able to share updates. Please let me know if I can provide anything further. Many thanks for your time and consideration.” It is important to demonstrate a thoughtful attitude. Additionally, remember to follow up with past supervisors to touch base and see if they need help with anything or if there are any open positions at their organization. You might set up a virtual coffee or phone call with previous supervisors to update them and seek their guidance.

6. Serve others

Serving others is a great way to stay active while you are in between positions. You can gain tangible transferable skills while showing future employers how you stayed busy during the pandemic, whether that be volunteering in your local community or for a political campaign or working a part-time job.

- **Serve your local community:** Apps like POINT connect you to local nonprofits who are searching for volunteers. Idealist also has virtual volunteering opportunities for those who would rather serve from their home.

- **Service jobs:** A great way to stay involved in your community and earn money. Customer service skills are transferable to any full-time jobs you may pursue.

- **Political campaigns:** As November approaches, volunteering with a local, state, and national political campaigns is a great way to stay involved and add to your resume. Not only that, but many campaign needs can be done remotely, such as phone banking.

7. Tap into your Alumni Association

The Bill and Susan Lhota Office of Alumni Career Management is an extremely valuable resource for Ohio State alumni. They offer job search assistance, professional development workshops, career growth counseling, and a live job board. Make an AlumniFire account, which is essentially LinkedIn for Buckeyes only. Through AlumniFire you can join groups, network, and seek mentorship. Additionally, the Office of Alumni Career Management is offering free webinars every week. They recently offered a webinar titled Staying Motivated in the Job Search. It is highly encouraged to utilize your built-in Buckeye network.

8. Take online courses to build out your skill set

Many certifications and training are being offered virtually and at discounted prices. Since you have the time and flexibility, take advantage of this. Coursera is a great resource to find relevant trainings and certification programs. There also are plenty of free online course including MOOCs (Massive Open Online Courses), EdX classes (featuring free courses from MIT and Harvard), and free Microsoft training and tutorials. Not only will this help build your skillset, but also employers will see how you took advantage of your time during the global pandemic.

9. Be flexible

It is more important than ever to understand that your career path will not be linear. Your first job will not be your last job. You may need to make a lateral move to move up eventually. Long story short, you have to learn to be flexible. Maybe you take time to serve others, look into temporary work, or take a certification course online. Focus on what you can control (plan, prepare, connect, apply) and utilize the resources available to you.

As recent graduates, you still have access to Glenn College resources. To make an appointment with Glenn College career services, please email glenn-110desk@osu.edu to get scheduled with a career coach. You can also make an appointment with Ohio State Career Services by going to http://ccss.osu.edu and scheduling online.

Additionally, the Glenn College will be hosting virtual professional development webinars every Wednesday this summer. You can view the full calendar for the Get Hired from Home series here.