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**Developing and Enhancing Students' Job Search Skills and Motivation:
An Online Job Search Intervention Training Module**

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Empirically-Supported Teaching Strategies Utilized in this Resource

Compared to other job search interventions reported in the research literature, this intervention is unique in that it is administered fully online. Online intervention delivery has several advantages. Online delivery is conducive to students' busy and varied schedules. Providing the intervention online allows students enrolled part-time, in extracurricular activities, or already working in non-professional roles equal opportunity to complete the activities. Moreover, using a web-based administration platform allows URLs, within the intervention, linked to information from multiple sources and in multiple formats. Perhaps most beneficial is the cost-effectiveness in terms of both fiscal and human capital of online compared to face-to-face interventions (McKimm, Jollie, & Cantillon, 2003; Noar, Pierce, & Black, 2010), which range in length from multiple hours (e.g., Koen et al., 2012) to multiple days (e.g., Latham & Budworth, 2006).

Yet the online delivery of interventions also presents unique challenges; for example, keeping participants interested in and attentive to the material. Online curricular materials benefit from the inclusion of graphics in the form of illustrations, diagrams, icons, and/or backgrounds (Chou & Tsai, 2002). Accordingly, this job search intervention incorporates clip art, visual examples of interactive exercises, and hyperlinks leading to additional resources. The approaches to the delivery of information also vary throughout the intervention. Participants read information, follow URLs, view graphical displays, and respond to interactive exercises. This variability should help to maintain participants' attention on the instructional material (Keller & Suzuki, 2004). Some scholars argue that attention is necessary but not sufficient for the motivated completion of online learning modules; that relevance is also required (Keller & Suzuki, 2004). This intervention repeatedly highlights how the completion of the interactive

exercises prepares participants for their upcoming job search experience. For example, information from the skills identification exercise feeds directly into participants' responses to a later exercise where they prepare a response to a common interviewer question.

This intervention also incorporates Brown et al.'s (2003) critical career intervention components. Participants complete written exercises and are provided resources useful for planning and tracking goals, which represents the first component. The closing reflection exercises allow for individualized interpretations (Component 2). After the intervention, participants reflect and record what they learned and how they will apply that information to their job search. Brown et al.'s (2003) third critical component involves providing opportunities to gain career option and labor market information. Both during the intervention and in the downloadable supplementary resources, participants are provided URLs and other resources for exploring their career options and gaining a better understanding of the labor market. Component four involves exposing trainees to models of others' strategies for successfully completing career transitions. In this intervention, participants read about fictional psychology students and how they developed and applied the skills the module trains. Consistent with social learning theory, this approach may increase participant self-efficacy following the exposure to successful models (for a review see Zimmerman, 2000).

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Overview

College students are often unprepared for the job market following graduation resulting in employment lapses or underemployment ("College Days, Reconsidered," 2014; Weissmann, 2013). Popular media commentators accuse universities of not adequately preparing undergraduate students for the job market, and even question the value of a degree that does not result in high quality employment (Downey, 2013). In fact, some students do appear underprepared as one-third of graduates reported that they should have started their pre-graduation job search much sooner ("College Days, Reconsidered," 2014). Equipping undergraduate students to navigate the job market is critical to their future career success. Across age groups, (young [<35 years], middle-aged [36-50 years], and older [50+ years]) job seekers benefit from job search interventions training general job search skills and motivation (Liu, Huang, & Wang, 2014). However, there is currently limited guidance for psychology instructors and internship advisors on how to provide effective and low-cost job search training for undergraduate students balancing academic work, possible employment, and family obligations, with job search activities focused on securing a professional position (Liu et al., 2014). Although this research area is emerging, current work tends to focus on interventions that are cost and labor intensive (e.g., El-Temtamy, O'Neill, & Midraj, 2016; McDow & Zabrucky, 2015). Yet given limited resources and the high cost of education, a low-labor and low-cost job search intervention could positively impact the majority of undergraduate students preparing for their job search.

To help improve psychology instructors' and internship advisors' ability to assist undergraduate students with preparing for their job search using a low-labor and low-cost approach, we first review the limited empirical information available concerning job search

behaviors in this population. We then discuss the components that make for an effective

intervention. Last, we provide a key resource for instructors and advisors wishing to embed job

search training within their courses or advising relationships (Appendix A). This resource is

designed to be easily modified and presented via online survey programs commonly used by

psychology faculty (e.g., Qualtrics, SurveyMonkey) and can be housed and deployed in learning

management systems, reducing the need for additional in-person class time.

This resource should be particularly valuable to internship advisors, instructors teaching

courses focused on understanding careers in psychology, and industrial-organizational

psychology courses that discuss application and selection processes. This learning module can

also be effectively used by any instructor interested in providing supplementary job search

training to their students.

Undergraduate Student Job Search Training: A Critical Element in Education

Providing undergraduate students job search training is critical to facilitating their future

career success after graduation. However, a recent meta-analysis on the job search intervention

literature found only nine intervention studies (of 47) focused on training college students (Liu et

al., 2014). However, some of those nine studies focused on students holding either more (e.g.,

M.A. students and graduates; Koen, Klehe, & Van Vianen, 2012) or less (e.g., high school

students; Latham & Budworth, 2006) education than undergraduate students typically have.

Other studies focused on at-risk student populations (e.g., special education students; Bergquist,

1982; Native North Americans; Latham & Budworth, 2006). Interventions that do focus on

college students tend to highlight interview skills training, rather than general job search skills

training (Hall, Gradt, Goetz, & Musu-Gillete, 2011; Jackson, Hall, Rowe, & Daniels, 2009). The

limited focus on general job search skills training is problematic because students must first

successfully identify potential openings and navigate the application process to receive an interview, and both younger and older job seekers especially benefit from interventions that focus on enhancing job search skills and motivation simultaneously (Liu et al., 2014).

Many college students tend to be younger than the average population (National Center for Educational Statistics, 2015) and newer entrants to the job market (Turban, Stevens, & Lee, 2009), and therefore, job search training seems especially necessary given their limited engagement with the professional employment market. Moreover, many students do not fit well within the typical four-year degree student stereotype. Some students, many who are older (i.e., nontraditional) and/or have dependents, require more than four years to complete their program, hold low-skill and low-wage employment while completing their degree, or return to seek professional positions following lengthy employment in low-skilled and low-wage jobs. Whereas younger job seekers lack experience in basic job search skills (Eby & Buch, 1995) and often possess unclear career goals (Werbel, 2000), older job seekers often lack experience with the modern job search process, such as online applications and selection interviews (Liu et al., 2014). Older and/or nontraditional students are also likely to be engaging in career transitions and may not be skilled in seeking jobs in new or different professional markets. Therefore, a good job search intervention should benefit most college students, regardless of age. The authors of a meta-analytic report noted that job search interventions significantly increased the employment odds of younger (4.05 times higher odds of securing employment), middle aged (1.80 times higher odds of securing employment), and older job seekers (8.80 times higher odds of securing employment), which was considerably higher than no intervention control condition participants (Liu et al., 2014). Thus, training college students on job search preparation and engagement should yield substantial benefits.

Job Search Intervention Components: Developing Skills and Enhancing Motivation

Many approaches to job search interventions exist. Interventions might rely on lecturing, role modeling, demonstration videos, or have an expert personally supervise an individual's job search activities (Liu et al., 2014). Past effective job search interventions have typically used a combination of methods to improve job seekers' employment outcomes (e.g., Koen et al., 2012; Latham & Budworth, 2006). However, the most effective interventions use a combination of methods and exercises focused on two key processes: developing job search skills *and* increasing job search motivation (Liu et al., 2014).

Job search skills. Job search skills involve both preparatory and active search activities. Preparatory behaviors can be divided further into macro-level and micro-level fit processes that facilitate active search behaviors. Macro-level fit processes facilitate the identification of a desired career path and how it aligns with an individual's training, interests, and values. Micro-level fit processes include skills such as how to identify specific job openings for which one's skills might be relevant and should include the use of multiple diverse sources to identify relevant job openings (e.g., online platforms, social networks).

Preparatory job search training should also convey information about effective self-presentation. Job seekers' self-presentation during the application and interview process is critical for influencing the odds of being hired or rejected (Higgins & Judge, 2004). Therefore, job search interventions that improve job seekers' self-presentation should increase their chances of being hired (Liu et al., 2014). Active job search behaviors include any actions completed specifically to further the goal of securing employment. Contacting organizations to arrange informational interviews, making "cold calls" or follow-up contacts about job opportunities, and seeking information about job prospects or referrals from former employers (Liu et al., 2014) are

each examples of active search behaviors. Proactivity during the job search associates with job search success (Brown et al., 2003; Schmit, Amel, & Ryan, 1993).

Job search skills training helps student job seekers understand how to prepare for and actively conduct their search activities. Increasing job seekers' task-relevant knowledge and skills should improve the quality of their job search behaviors. For example, the provided resource provides information about how students can best provide position-relevant information on applications and during interviews, as well as more effectively manage their time amongst competing responsibilities. Essentially, the job search skills training provided in this online job search learning module provides student job seekers with cognitive knowledge about how to scaffold and execute their job search activities.

Job search motivation. In addition to developing job search skills, job search interventions should increase career adapt-ability resources (CAARs) that are helpful for managing career transitions (Savickas & Porfeli, 2012). An adaptable student job seeker: 1) should be *concerned* about their career paths after graduating, 2) show *curiosity* by exploring multiple career options, 3) seize *control* by consistently executing job search activities, and 4) better understand their self, relative to the job market resulting in increased *confidence* (Savickas & Porfeli, 2012). Concern, curiosity, and control each can be conceptualized as motivational or affective self-regulatory resources. Concern motivates job seekers to select and commit to a clear goal. Curiosity prompts job seekers' exploration of various strategies and the formation of specific intentions to achieve the employment goal. Control fosters active goal striving during which job seekers must ignore distractions to focus on completing active job search behaviors.

An intervention with masters-level students reported CAAR increases following a job search intervention. Within individuals, an overall increase in concern, control, and curiosity was

observed post- relative to pre-intervention. Within the no intervention control group, concern did not increase over time and both curiosity and control declined after six months (Koen et al., 2012). Although a student-focused job search intervention might slightly increase job search motivation immediately, job search interventions' real benefit might be inoculation against declining motivation as the search extends over time (Koen et al., 201). Even if job seekers hold adequate job search knowledge and skills, their motivation might falter as the search lengthens. Therefore, the provided job search intervention focuses on enhancing motivation by increasing participants' CAARs via various interactive exercises that are described below.

The Necessity of Developing Job Search Skills and Motivation Simultaneously

Improving students' job search skills is only the first step in encouraging increased job search effort. In addition to job search skills, job seekers benefit from increased affective motivation. Developing participants' job search skills and motivation simultaneously is critical to an effective job search intervention (Liu et al., 2014). Although highly skilled job seekers might be confident in their ability to conduct an effective search, they might not be energized to act toward achieving their employment goals. For example, if job seekers are not concerned or do not experience heightened urgency to engage in their job search, high confidence levels are unlikely to energize persistent goal-directed behavior. Alternatively, only enhancing motivation might increase search behaviors, but those behaviors might still be low quality. Therefore, the provided online job search learning module provides students both requisite knowledge and skills to conduct a quality job search while enhancing affective motivation to energize search behaviors and foster persistence when completing activities directed toward achieving the employment goal. In sum, to be the most effective and to best promote job search behaviors, job

search interventions must focus on improving *both* job search skills and motivation

simultaneously (Liu et al., 2014).

The Online Job Search Intervention Module: Design and Delivery

This online job search intervention lasts approximately 60 minutes, depending on individual reading and exercise completion times. The following sections briefly describe each of the intervention's components and then report preliminary evidence of the intervention's effectiveness.

Section 1: The Job Search Experience

Student job seekers completing this intervention first read about the multi-step job search process. They read that to be successful in their job search they should: 1) reflect on their values, skills, and experiences, 2) explore various career options and job roles, 3) target specific openings of interest, and 4) perform actions in service of securing a targeted position (see Appendix A). Students read about common job search difficulties represented in the empirical literature, definitions of those difficulties, and examples of common ways those difficulties manifest during the job search process as identified by qualitative research (Wanberg, Basbug, Van Hooft, & Samtani, 2012). They then rank-order that information based on the degree that they expect to experience each of those challenges during their personal job search.

Section 2: Adaptive Job Search Behaviors

During the second section of the online job search intervention, students receive information pertaining to preparatory job search behaviors. They read about the value of exploring personal values, skills, and interests, and then are directed to consider how those factors relate to potential careers. Students complete a value and interest questionnaire, during which they rank-order their values and interests from most to least important. Next, students complete a skills identification exercise designed to identify their five major strengths, as well as concrete examples of when they have demonstrated those strengths in the past. Students also

identify two of their weaknesses and concrete examples of how they have overcome, improved, or have a plan to improve those areas. These responses feed into a later section where students are exposed to effective practices for responding to interviewers' questions.

The second half of this section trains active job search behaviors. Information on using multiple sources to locate potential job openings is provided; including but not limited to using campus career services, career fairs, community resources, social networks, and online job search platforms. Students also review information to note from job postings and organizational websites, such as the organization's mission statement, objectives, and history. They then view a method of aligning their qualifications with those presented in a job posting. Students also are provided methods of identifying and determining if they possess each of the required qualifications. They are taught to classify their qualifications relative to the job listing's requirements into "Green Light Qualifications, Yellow Light Qualifications," or "Red Light Qualifications." Students are encouraged to focus their job search efforts on those positions for which they have many Green Light Qualifications, or in other words, many highly developed skills and abilities required as documented in the job advertisement. Students are encouraged to avoid focusing on positions for which they have many Red Light Qualifications; that is, positions for which they lack many of the required skills and abilities as noted in the job advertisement. Next, they receive information about completing application materials and developing responses to common interviewer questions. This section ends with participants composing a response to a common interviewer question (see Appendix A) using the strengths they previously identified when completing the skills identification exercise.

Section 3: Staying Motivated

After learning about job search skills, the intervention focuses on effective strategies for enhancing motivation via two adaptive motivational practices: time management and goal setting. Given the multiple demands (e.g., course work, sports, clubs, employment) on student job seekers' time, time management and goal setting are discussed broadly to help students simultaneously manage their job search and other obligations. Students learn two task prioritization techniques. They first review a listing technique and then are introduced to the urgency-importance matrix. Students learn to organize their time so that the majority of their effort is expended toward important, but non-urgent tasks while limiting the number of tasks that reach both urgent and important status. Students also see examples of how spending time in each quadrant is likely to influence their goal pursuit (see Appendix A).

In this section students additionally are provided information about setting strong goals. They are shown how to use goals to generate action plans with a planner, either online (e.g., Google calendar) or in traditional formats (e.g., pocket planners). Students read about scheduling specific days and times dedicated to executing active job search behaviors. Linking clear priorities and deadlines with action plans improves attention and concentration while goal striving (Lawlor & Hornyak, 2012; Locke & Latham, 2002; Ouellette & Wood, 1998; Van Hooft, Wanberg, & Van Hoye, 2013). Therefore, students read about and review an action plan for completing a relevant example goal. Students see a schedule with two-hour blocks reserved for the first four weekdays to seek job openings. On the fifth day, students see two hours scheduled for completing and submitting applications and resumes. The remaining time slots are also completed to show students how job search activities might be structured without taking time from students' other demands (e.g., classes, studying, extra-curriculars, employment; see

Appendix A). Finally, students reflect on what they learned in this section and how they will assimilate this new information with their newly enhanced job search preparedness skills.

Section 4: Useful Resources, Descriptions, and Exercises

After completion of the job search intervention learning module, students can download a list of additional resources and their descriptions to assist their job search planning and execution. They receive more resources to help identify their interests, values, skills, and abilities (e.g., O*Net Interest Profiler). These materials also have resources to assist students with improving their understanding of the current and future job market (e.g., the Occupational Outlook Handbook Online), along with additional resources to facilitate interview preparation (e.g., Quint Careers' Ultimate Guide to Job Interview Preparation). A digital copy of these resources is provided that students can download for future reference.

<center>**Preliminary Evidence of Intervention Module Efficacy**</center>

To gather preliminary evidence of the effectiveness of this job search intervention we recruited upper-level undergraduate students ($n = 112$, $M_{age} = 23.74$, $SD_{age} = 4.05$; 53% white; 71% female) from a variety of disciplines ($N = 24$) in their final academic semester via university-wide mass emails. Participants completed assessments of their CAARs (Savickas & Porfeli, 2012), job search self-efficacy (Saks, Zikic, & Koen, 2015), job search behaviors (Blau, 1993; Saks & Ashforth, 1999), and job search outcomes (i.e., applications/resumes submitted, and interview offers received). Participants were randomly assigned to complete the job search intervention either one-week later or after the study's conclusion. Participants completing the intervention after the study's conclusion served as the wait-listed control condition. One week after completing the intervention (or two weeks after completing the premeasures for wait-list

control participants) and two months after the intervention, all participants completed the same

measures listed above.

We conducted independent means t-tests to examine job search-related outcomes both

one week and two months after completing the intervention module. At the one week follow-up,

results showed that compared to the wait-listed control condition participants, participants in the

intervention condition submitted significantly more resumes ($t[76] = -1.97$, $p = .05$) aligned with

their personal qualifications well ($t[59] = -2.68$, $p = .009$; see Table 1 for means and standard

deviations). Two-months after entering the study, the intervention condition participants

submitted significantly more job applications ($t[63] = -2.36$, $p = .02$) and resumes ($t[62] = -2.25$,

$p = .03$) that fit their career goals well compared to participants in the wait-listed control

condition; intervention participants also indicated having significantly more interview offers

($t[65] = -2.37$, $p = .02$) that fit with their qualifications ($t[60] = -2.72$, $p = .009$) and career goals

($t[60] = -2.38$, $p = .02$). The above findings provide preliminary evidence for the efficacy of this

intervention to improve undergraduate students' job search behaviors and outcomes.

Table 1. *Means and Standard Deviations of Reported Job Search Behaviors and Outcomes*

| | Mean (Standard Deviation) | |
	Intervention Condition	Control Condition
One-Week Post-Intervention Resumes	8.90 (1.60)	6.05 (0.88)
One-Week Post-Intervention Resume-Qualification Fit	7.27 (1.46)	3.80 (0.63)
Two Months Post-Intervention Job Application-Career Goal Fit	3.43 (0.65)	2.46 (0.40)
Two Months Post-Intervention Resume-Career Goal Fit	4.51 (0.87)	2.91 (0.48)
Two Months Post-Intervention Interview Offers	2.16 (0.40)	0.92 (0.15)
Two Months Post-Intervention Interview Offer-Qualification Fit	2.26 (0.44)	0.77 (0.13)
Two Months Post-Intervention Interview Offer-Career Goal Fit	2.00 (0.38)	1.00 (0.17)

Note. Means refer to the average number of items submitted (i.e., applications/resumes) or
received (i.e., interview offers). Control condition $n = 66$; intervention condition $n = 46$.

Conclusion

Student career and job search preparation is critical to students' future career success following their graduation. This resource provides an easily modifiable online learning module that can be housed on common survey administration website servers (e.g., Qualtrics, SurveyMonkey) or within instructors' learning management systems by using survey administration software for distribution. We hope this resource will benefit course instructors and internship advisors seeking to better prepare their students for their job search in preparation for graduation.

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Appendix A: The Online Job Search Intervention Module

Instructions:

This module takes approximately 60 minutes for students to complete, depending upon individual reading and exercise completion times. Instructors teaching industrial-organizational psychology could embed this exercise as an extant assignment when discussing topics such as selection and interviewing. Similarly, introductory psychology instructors might assign this module when introducing the topic of industrial-organizational psychology to their students or as a link between self-presentation (or judgment bias) topics to the real-world application of the job search and selection process. Alternatively, this intervention could be used as an extra-credit assignment by any instructor interested in helping to improve their students' job search knowledge and skills.

This module can be completed in one session as a stand-alone exercise but might be best presented as two separate assignments completed on different days. If incorporating the latter suggestion, we recommend splitting the module so that the first session ends just before the "Staying Motivated" page, and the second begins on that page. This will result in one session focused on job search skills training and one session focused on training the motivational elements of the job search. Internship advisors' students might also find this module helpful to complete prior to seeking their internship positions.

This module was designed for use and functions best when presented using Qualtrics, but the components can by copy/pasted into most common online survey administration platforms. This module might also be housed on university learning management systems, if they have the required capabilities to create the item types described in the module below.

Hyperlinks are embedded throughout the text; underlined and denoted by blue (red) font colors. Right clicking on the hyperlinks and selecting edit from the provided menu will allow the URLs associated with the hyperlinked text to be modified to reflect university specific web pages if desired. However, the hyperlinks already direct participants to valid job search related information and therefore do not require modification prior to use. Text and other colors can also be modified to match the students' university colors if desired.

The exact components and organization of the intervention module are provided on the following pages. Each page of the module below denotes a single survey page in the online survey administration software. Thus the following pages are both able to be copy/pasted into the online software directly, but they additionally represent the final display of the intervention page by page (similar to an enlarged screenshot). Some of the interactive exercises require specific item-types within the survey administration software. Instructions and suggestions for entering those items are provided when they appear in the text, and are contained within text boxes with a thick border. Those text boxes should not be included in the final intervention and are provided solely as additional guidance to aid entry into the online administration platform.

Welcome to the Job Search Intervention Learning Module!

Rob and Sarah became friends after being in several of the same classes. Typical college students, they were excited to be in their final year before graduation. Neither one had started looking for an internship or a post-graduation job. They believed that they had plenty of time to find work after they graduated. Besides, they weren't really sure where or how to start. Perhaps you find yourself in a similar position and having similar thoughts.

Research Note

50% *of college graduates said that they wished they had gained more work experience during their undergraduate years to help prepare them for the job they wanted.*

If you haven't begun looking for a job – either for an internship experience or post-graduation position – you are not alone. Students often feel unsure about how to even begin the job search process. Even if you have conducted a job search before, you can still benefit from improving your job search skills further. Skilled job seekers receive more job offers, have higher chances of finding quality employment, and higher salaries.

This learning module will help you make sure that you are better equipped for your upcoming job search, regardless of whether you are looking for internships or a full-time job after graduation.

Research Note

30% *of college graduates said that they wished they had started looking for work sooner.*

As a student looking for internship experiences or nearing graduation, you face unique challenges. You must find a job while balancing obligations from your remaining course requirements. However, you *can* overcome those challenges by using the tools provided in this module. Specifically, you will learn to:

1. **Understand common job search challenges**
2. **Prepare for, conduct, and be proactive in your job search**
3. **Stay motivated by using effective time management and goal setting techniques**

Completion Guidelines and Time Commitment: You should complete this module while sitting in a distraction-free environment where you will not be disturbed. The approximate completion time is 60 minutes, but this time may vary based on your reading speed, web navigation skills, and the time you spend completing the activities in this module. Please close all other software and windows (e.g., chat, email, video, music) before beginning. Open the module to full screen to minimize scrolling.
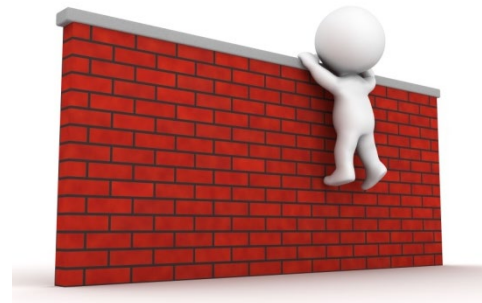
The Job Search Experience

Common Job Search Challenges

The job search can be very challenging. Conducting a job search means consistently setting aside time to look for jobs each day or week while having an effective organizational strategy. When done correctly, a job search can be easy to include among the many competing demands on your time.

However, you must be aware of and prepared for some common job search obstacles that might derail your job search. Carefully read the table below, which lists the most common difficulties job seekers report experiencing and examples of how those difficulties often manifest during the job search.

Job Search Difficulty	Definition	Examples
Lack of professionalism, competence, or efficiency	Lack of professionalism, knowledge, skill, helpfulness, and effectiveness of recruiters, interviewers, and human resources personnel	Last minute interview cancellations, slow process, failure to let job seekers know they were not selected
Inaccurate advertising and/or job descriptions/information	Lack of accurate, up-to-date, and informative job postings.	Misleading job descriptions, inaccurate information, changes in job information after posting job opening
Social network	Challenges related to a job seeker's social network of friends, colleagues, family, and other personal contacts	A network that is unwilling to help, not having access to the "right" people, difficulty finding good networking events
Depersonalization	Identifying and applying to jobs is primarily technology driven and involves little human contact	Computers screen applications and resumes rather than humans, rare to receive a reply unless contacted for an interview
Monotony	Doing boring and repetitive tasks	Completing multiple online applications, repeatedly researching organizations, inefficient online tools
Uncertainty	Unclear about how to perform many aspects of the job search	Unclear how to navigate an online job search, on how to best present skills and experience, how to get started
Repeated rejection	Challenges related to handling rejection, discouragement, frustration, and lack of motivation	Submitting multiple applications without a response, experiencing multiple rejections following interviews, temptation to engage in more enjoyable activities

The Job Search Experience

Common Job Search Challenges

What do you think will be most challenging for you personally? Drag and drop the items below so that they are listed in order from the challenges you think will be most difficult to overcome to those that will be least difficult to overcome during your job search.

– Rank-Order Item Goes Here –

After copy/pasting the above text into a unique survey page on the online administration platform, create a rank-order item using the categories listed in the table on the previous page under the column titled "Job Search Difficulty." *Note: This text box is instructional only and not to be included in the final online intervention module.*

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The Job Search Experience

The Multi-Step Job Search Process

Now that you have a clearer understanding of common job search challenges, the rest of module will cover information that will help you overcome them. First, you will read about the multi-step job search process. Then you will become familiar with adaptive job search behaviors, effective time management methods, and strategic goal setting techniques.

The job search is an overlapping multi-step process. As shown below, an effective job search requires job seekers to reflect, explore, target, and perform. Although the multi-step job search process begins with reflection, the steps are not sequential. You will repeatedly return to each step as you move through the process of securing employment.

Reflect
on your values, interests, skills, and abilities

Explore
career options, organizations, and job roles

Target
a specific job or jobs that interest you and match your qualifications.

Perform
behaviors that increase the likelihood of receiving an interview or job offer

Next Page
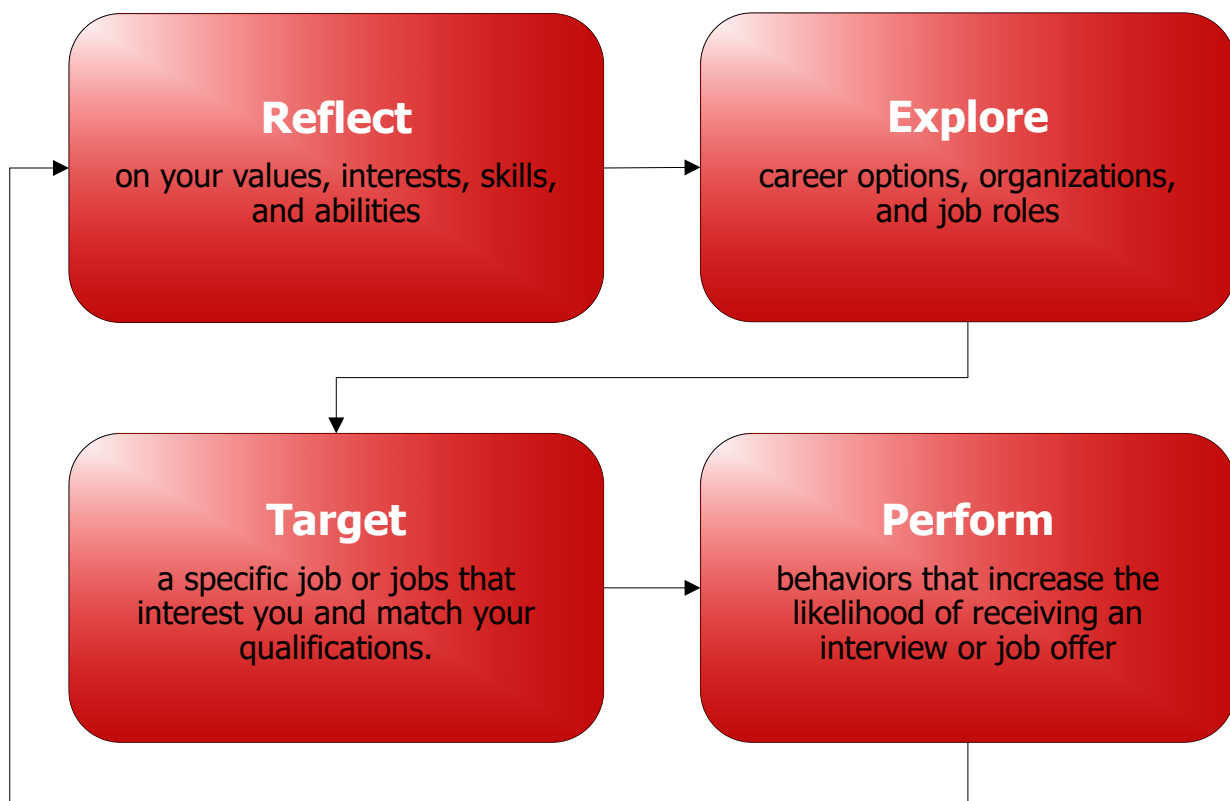
Adaptive Job Search Behaviors

Job search behaviors are either preparatory or active. *Preparatory behaviors* are part of the **reflection** and **exploration** job search process discussed earlier. Another way to think about preparatory behaviors is as career exploration, which involves getting information about yourself and your employment opportunities.

Active job search behaviors overlap with preparatory behaviors in the multi-step job search process. They reflect the intensity of your job search and include actions such as completing applications and contacting organizations. During your job search, preparatory behaviors will help you to determine the job positions that are likely to be a quality fit based on your interests and skills. Active job search behaviors will help you to secure employment in those positions.

Preparatory Job Search Behaviors

You must first learn about yourself before learning about possible careers. This section is designed to help you reflect on your personal values, interests, and skills. Then, you will consider how they relate to possible careers that interest you.

This requires some introspection and research. One of the primary outcomes of this step should be specific job positions—and even organizations—that provide a good fit for you.

On the following page, you will complete an exercise to help you understand how your values, interests, and skills relate to jobs for which you might apply. For more in-depth analyses of your values, interests, and skills refer to the resources provided in the "Useful Resources, Descriptions, and Exercises" section found at the end of this learning module.

Next Page
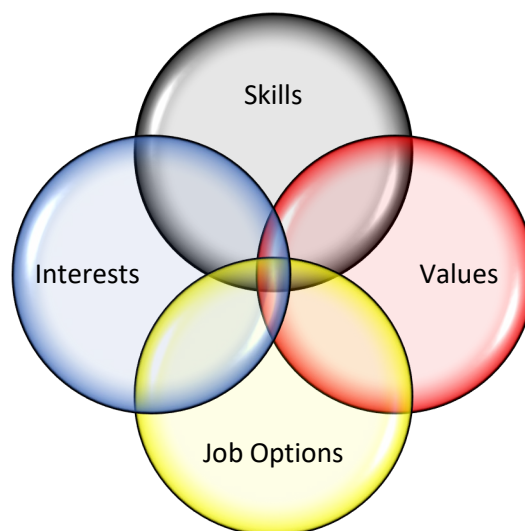
Adaptive Job Search Behaviors

Values and Interests Questionnaire

People are most satisfied in jobs where their interests and values match those of the organization for which they work. The following questions, although not exhaustive, provide a starting point for identifying and prioritizing your personal interests and values, as well as the values you prefer in an organization for which you work.

What five values are most important to you in your life and your career? Examples of potential values are listed below, but you may also come up with your own. Also, order your list from most (1) to least (5) important to you.

Example Values
Status
Work-Life Balance
Salary
Achievement
Personal Growth
Benefits
Help Others
Physically or Mentally Challenging
Influence
Advancement Opportunities
Affiliation
Variety
Creative Expression

– Rank-Order Item Goes Here –

After copy/pasting the above text into a unique survey page on the online administration platform, create a rank-order text entry item containing five boxes. Students enter their values using those provided in the Example Values box to generate ideas. They then drag-and-drop their responses so that they are ordered from most to least important. If a rank-order text entry item is not an option, a typical rank-order item can be created where students simply drag-and-drop the entire list provided in the Example Values box in order of importance from most to least. *Note: This text box is instructional only and not to be included in the final online intervention module.*

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What five workplace qualities are most important to you? Examples of potential values are listed below, but you may also come up with your own. Also, order your list from most (1) to least (5) important to you.

Example Work Qualities

Organizational Size

Flexibile Schedule

Recognition

Team vs. Individual Work

Formal vs. Casual Culture

Development-Focused

Relaxed vs. Competitive

Indoor vs. Outdoor Work

Opportunity for Telework

Family-Friendly

Fast vs. Slow Paced

– Rank-Order Item Goes Here –

After copy/pasting the above text into a unique survey page on the online administration platform, create a rank-order text entry item containing five boxes. Students enter their values using those provided in the Example Work Qualities box to generate ideas. They then drag-and-drop their responses so that they are ordered from most to least important. If a rank-order text entry item is not an option, a typical rank-order item can be created where students simply drag-and-drop the entire list provided in the Example Work Qualities box in order of importance from most to least. *Note: This text box is instructional only and not to be included in the final online intervention module.*

Adaptive Job Search Behaviors

Skills Identification Exercise

Identifying skills you have developed during your college career, which you can transfer to your future job, is critical for focusing your efforts on those jobs for which you qualify. In this exercise, list your five greatest strengths and your two weakest. You will then identify and record times in which you demonstrated your strengths and methods or plans to overcome your weaknesses.

Strengths

- *e.g., Organized and Detail-Oriented*
- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.
- 5.

Strengths Demonstrated

- *e.g., I planned, organized, scheduled, and directed a community play, which had record attendance.*
- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.
- 5.

Weaknesses

- *e.g., Procrastination*
- *1.*
- *2.*

Weaknesses Overcome

- *e.g., I prefer my work to be perfect and might spend too much time double-checking it. Therefore, I have created a system to make sure everything is done correctly the first time.*
- 1.
- 2.

Adaptive Job Search Behaviors

Values, Work Qualities, and Skills: Pulling It All Together

The values, workplace qualities, and skills you listed are useful for initially directing your job search.

For example, Sarah is an NIU psychology major. After completing those values, interests, and skills exercises she noted that she valued helping others, but preferred to work independently. Sarah began the exploration step of her job search by researching occupations that typically hire people with undergraduate psychology degrees.

> ### *— Multiple Text Entry Items Go Here —*
>
> Copy/paste the above titles and paragraph into a unique page. Then create a text entry item allowing five responses under the Strengths and Strengths Demonstrated headings, and allowing two responses under the Weaknesses and Weaknesses Overcome headings. Also include the provided example item for each heading. *Note: This text box is instructional only and not to be included in the final online intervention module.*

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Based on that exploration, she decided to focus her job search on nonprofit organizations and social service agencies. In fact, the Career Services Center at her university even had a list of social service agencies nearby. After learning names of potential agencies, she did more research by looking up their website. There, she found information about the type of work they do, where they are located, and whom she should contact for more information.

Some places even had job listings on their page. There, Sarah could read the job descriptions and reflect on the various roles within organizations. She identified positions that might be interesting to her based on her personal values and preferences.

Then, she narrowed down that list to those positions that specifically matched her skills, abilities, and qualifications.

Active Job Search Behaviors

Finding Available Positions

After adequately preparing for the job search, your next step is to begin actively seeking employment. First, focus on finding specific positions to apply for that are consistent with your values, interests, and skills. University students have a number of unique resources at their disposal. You can attend career fairs, utilize university job posting boards, or contact your university's career services to locate current job openings. You might find that you can obtain job leads through your social networks, such as through family, friends, or professors. Websites, such as Monster.com or LinkedIn.com, can also be useful tools for locating open positions. The best odds of securing quality employment result from using multiple sources to locate job openings.

Research Note

Job seekers who use multiple sources to find available job openings tend to gain higher quality employment with which they are more satisfied.

To find available openings, you must carefully read through many job advertisements. Focus on identifying the positions that seem to fit with your values, interests, and experiences the best. When reviewing job advertisements, take note of the following information.
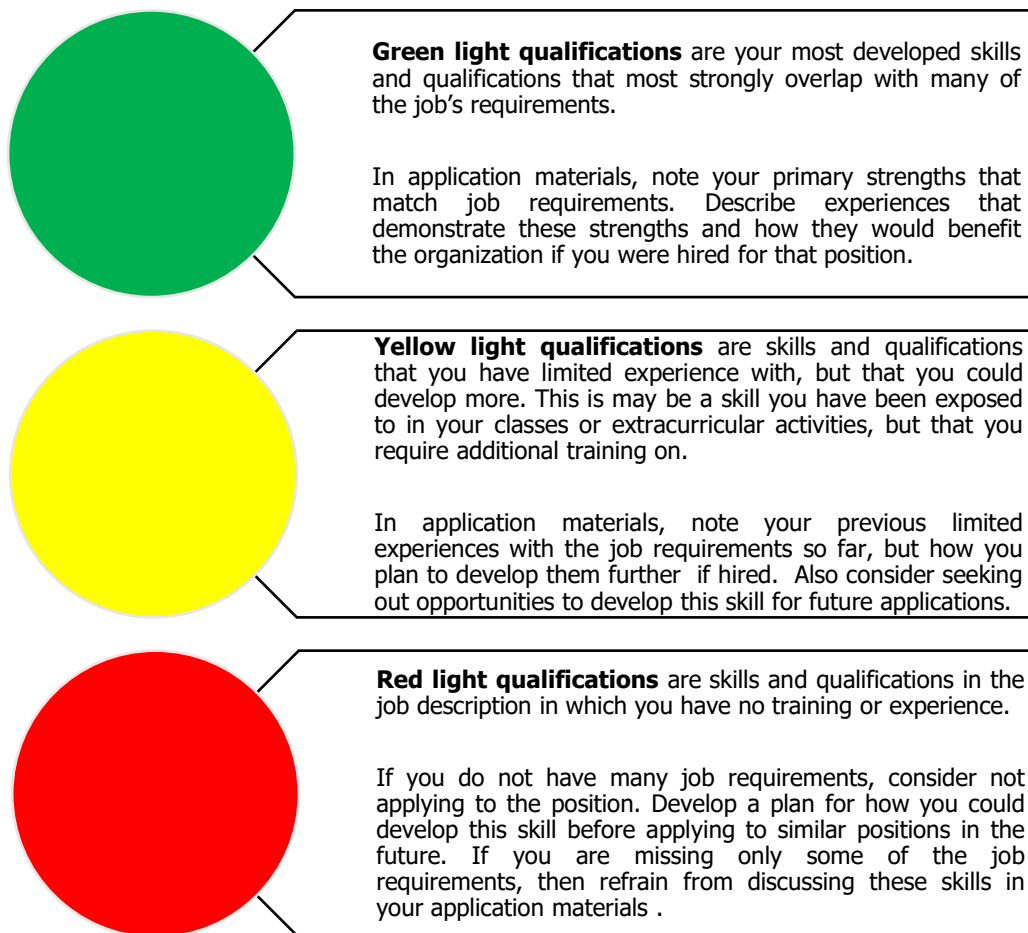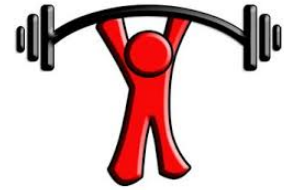
The organization's name	The organization's mission statement	The organization's goals and objectives (e.g., provide services or products)
The position's title	The position's job description	Any specified qualifications

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Active Job Search Behaviors

Categorizing Your Strengths

Job descriptions range in length. Some are very brief, and some are quite long. When reading a job's description, focus on identifying the job's responsibilities and required qualifications. Read thoroughly through the job's description and think about how your past experiences are like or different from the job's requirements. Then determine how your skills and strengths relate to those requirements. Based on the job's requirements, you can categorize your strengths as *Green Light Qualifications, Yellow Light Qualifications,* or *Red Light Qualifications.* Each of those categories is explained more fully below.

Green light qualifications are your most developed skills and qualifications that most strongly overlap with many of the job's requirements.

In application materials, note your primary strengths that match job requirements. Describe experiences that demonstrate these strengths and how they would benefit the organization if you were hired for that position.

Yellow light qualifications are skills and qualifications that you have limited experience with, but that you could develop more. This is may be a skill you have been exposed to in your classes or extracurricular activities, but that you require additional training on.

In application materials, note your previous limited experiences with the job requirements so far, but how you plan to develop them further if hired. Also consider seeking out opportunities to develop this skill for future applications.

Red light qualifications are skills and qualifications in the job description in which you have no training or experience.

If you do not have many job requirements, consider not applying to the position. Develop a plan for how you could develop this skill before applying to similar positions in the future. If you are missing only some of the job requirements, then refrain from discussing these skills in your application materials .

Focus on jobs for which you have many Green Light Qualifications, limited Yellow Light Qualifications, and few or no Red Light Qualifications. Using this method during your job search will make the application process easier and provide a base for preparing responses to common interview questions. A handout related to this information is in the "Useful Resources, Description, and Exercises" section for you to print or save for use in your job search.

Active Job Search Behaviors

Applying for Open Positions

When reading job postings and categorizing your strengths based on the job's requirements, it is useful to have a way to organize the information you gathered. For example, Sarah (an NIU major) used a spreadsheet for that purpose. A sample of her spreadsheet is below. As you examine her spreadsheet, pay particular attention to how the information from the various exercises is incorporated.

Job Posting Location	Organization's Name	Mission Statement	Goals & Objectives	Position's Title	Job Description Highlights
Monster.com	Generic University Student Life Office	Provide guidance and oversight to the Student Government & Campus Activities boards	Advise board leaders; Assist in problem solving various issues; Mentor board members	Student Engagement and Leadership Advisor	B.A./S. in Psychology; Good organizational skills; team-player; Strong oral/written communication skills; Experience with web design

Green Light Strengths & Examples	Yellow Light Strengths & Examples	Red Light Strengths & Examples	Status Updates
Organized & Detail-Oriented – *Planned, organized, scheduled, and directed a community play, which had record attendance.*	Teamwork -- *Participated in course-related teamwork during my university training.*	Web design – *Will enroll in a web design seminar.*	Application submitted (02/10/2016)
B.A. in Psychology – *Graduated with a 3.2 GPA.*	N/A	N/A	Phone Interview (08/16/2016);
Oral/Written Communication – *Have a minor in Business Communications that involved extensive training in oral presentation and written communication.*	N/A	N/A	On-site interview scheduled (09/03/2016)

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Active Job Search Behaviors

Completing Applications

After locating a number of positions that you would like to apply for, the next step is to submit applications for those positions. Job applications are typically completed online.

Search algorithms frequently are used as preliminary screening tools to determine if you possess the minimum qualifications. This is where good job search preparation is most beneficial. As you research the various organizations and job postings, notice how certain keywords are used for many similar positions (e.g., good organizational skills).

Screening algorithms search for those keywords in applications and resumes. Therefore, take note of keywords that relate to your position of interest and (if you possess them) include them on your applications and resume. Including relevant and accurate keywords can increase your chances of having your application pass any preliminary algorithm checks.

As you read earlier, the job search can be tedious. Often, you will have to re-enter the same information repeatedly. It is critically important to fill out all applications completely, even if you are submitting a resume containing the same information.

Never leave any information blank, unless the application specifically notes that information is not required. Search algorithms might ignore such applications as incomplete. Many hiring managers only review fully completed applications. Failing to fully complete an application might disqualify you from consideration immediately.

Quick Tip

Avoid completing and submitting applications in one sitting to reduce mistakes.

Complete materials on one day, then review them for accuracy and submit them another day.

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Active Job Search Behaviors

Interview Preparation

Most people experience some level of interview anxiety. One of the best ways to deal with anxiety is through problem-focused coping. When offered an interview, you will want to ensure that you are prepared both mentally and physically.

Concerning physical presentation, wear appropriate <u>business attire</u> and adhere to good personal hygiene. It is difficult to over dress for a professional interview, but also make sure that you are comfortable in your clothing and style. Tugging at uncomfortable clothing can make you look nervous. Additionally, wear shoes that allow you to walk long distances without problems; sometimes interviewers may give you an impromptu tour of the worksite.

If you bought new clothes for the interview, wear them for long periods of time a day or two beforehand to ensure that you will not experience any discomfort.

Concerning mental preparation, working through the multi-step job search process when locating and applying for that position will best help you to prepare. When researching the organization, you became familiar with the organization's mission statement, goals, objectives, and the position's requirements.

Additionally, you would benefit from becoming familiar with the organization's history, management structure, and corporate culture. Demonstrating your knowledge of the organization's history and goals will indicate to the interviewer that you are both interested in the organization and prepared for the interview. That preparation might also suggest a certain amount of conscientiousness, which is a quality many employers value.

People often find it helpful to develop responses to common questions when preparing for an interview. The table on the next page lists some common interview questions, the potential information interviewers hope those questions give, and things to consider when answering. Take some time now and review the list of common interviewer questions on the next page. Then, complete the exercise that follows.

<u>Quick Tip</u>

Give yourself plenty of time to travel to the interview to ensure you arrive early.

Arriving late (or on time) gives you less time to mentally prepare for interview questions.

Active Job Search Behaviors

Common Interview Questions

Common Interviewer Question	Why ask this question?	Factors to consider when answering
Tell me about yourself. How do you think a friend who knows you well would describe you? How do you work under pressure?	This is a quick and easy way for the interviewer to get an idea of your background, personality, and why they might choose to hire you.	Spend approximately 1 or 2 minutes answering this type of question. Prepare a list of three to five strengths that are required by the job as noted in the job posting. Have a short example of each strength and how you used it to accomplish an important or challenging task.
What are your greatest strengths and weaknesses? Describe a time when your work was criticized. How did you handle that criticism? What is success to you?	Questions like these help the interviewer understand how you get along with others, how you react to criticism, and how willing you are to learn and grow.	Present three strengths and how they relate to the job for which you are interviewing. Provide one example of a weakness. Describe how you plan to correct or have already corrected that weakness.
How has your college experience prepared you for this job? Which subjects did you like the best? The least? What was your GPA? Do you think your GPA is a good reflection of your academic achievement?	These and similar questions help the interviewer to understand how motivated you are and what your attitude toward work is. Your answer will indicate to some degree your level of maturity. The interviewer is likely seeking a response that demonstrates growth and achievement.	Discuss your best or favorite subjects and how those prepared you for the job. If you had average grades, focus on leadership activities or extracurricular roles that you held and how those prepared you for this job position. Focus on the strengths you developed during your college career and how those strengths will help you be successful in the job for which you are interviewing.
Give me an example of a time when you faced a major problem. How did you solve it? How would you handle a project deadline that was given to you at the last minute? Tell me about at time that you failed at a task. How did you handle it?	Interviewers gain an understanding of how you cope with difficult circumstances using questions similar to these. Your answer might suggest to the interviewer your level of control and poise when faced with challenging situations and difficult pressures in the workplace. Your response might also provide the interviewer some information about how you approach problems, and your problem-solving ability.	Discuss your past experiences dealing with a difficult situation that might be similar to situations you could face in the workplace. For example, this might include difficulty in managing group projects, persuading others to adopt a particular solution, or any other situations where you have displayed your problem solving ability.
What salary are you expecting? Will __ salary be okay with you? How much are you hoping to earn if we offer you this position?	As the interviewee, you should never be the first one to bring up salary. Rather salary should be negotiated once an offer is received. However, the interviewer might ask such questions to determine if you are aware of your own value in the workplace, or if you under or over value your worth. Your response to this question will also inform the interviewer whether you are aware of the current market in your field.	As part of your preparatory job search behaviors you should have identified the typical salary as well as the salary range common to your career and geographic location. If you don't know the market value, you should return the question by indicating you expect a fair salary based on job responsibilities, your experience, education, and skills, and the job's current market value. After that you should ask what salary range the organization has set for the job. It is important that you don't negotiate a salary until after receiving a formal job offer.

Active Job Search Behaviors

Preparing Responses to Common Interview Questions

When preparing for an interview, prepare short (approximately 3-5 sentence) answers for each of these types of questions. The best answers focus on presenting a personal strength (of which you identified five in the Skills Identification Exercise) and an example of when you displayed that strength in the past.

Now it is your turn to practice by preparing a response to one very common interviewer question. Write an answer to the question below. Think back to your responses to the Skills Identification Exercise when answering.

> What are your greatest strengths and how have you demonstrated those strengths in the past?

– Essay Text Entry Item Goes Here –

Copy/paste the above information into a unique survey page. Then create an essay box item allowing multiple lines of text for students' response to the provided common interview question. *Note: This text box is instructional only and not to be included in the final online intervention module.*

Active Job Search Behaviors

Be Proactive!

Proactive behaviors are focused on changing either yourself or your situation to solve a problem you are facing. You will need to be proactive when searching for employment opportunities.

Many proactive job search behaviors overlap with active job search behaviors, such as scheduling informational interviews, making "cold contacts" (e.g., calls or emails) or follow-up contacts about job opportunities, and seeking information about employment opportunities or referrals from your social network (e.g., friends, family, former or current professors).

However, it can often be difficult to find the time and motivation to complete the multi-step job search process. Next, you will read about two proactive behaviors that are especially important for job search motivation: time management and goal setting.

Research Note

Proactive job seekers tend to have greater job search success and secure higher quality employment.

Staying Motivated

Effective Time Management

You only have 24 hours, 1,440 minutes, or 86,400 seconds each day. Therefore, effective time management strategies are crucial to both your academic and career success. The picture below displays the benefits of effectively managing your time.

Effective Time Managers

- Are more productive
- Have more energy to apply to tasks
- Feel less stressed
- Accomplish more tasks
- Feel more positively about themselves

If you want to reap the benefits of effective time management strategies, you can determine how to effectively use your time in three easy steps.

List all tasks and behaviors you must accomplish in a given time frame

Determine the urgency and importance of each task or behavior

Re-order the list so that the most important and urgent tasks are first, followed by tasks decreasing in importance and urgency

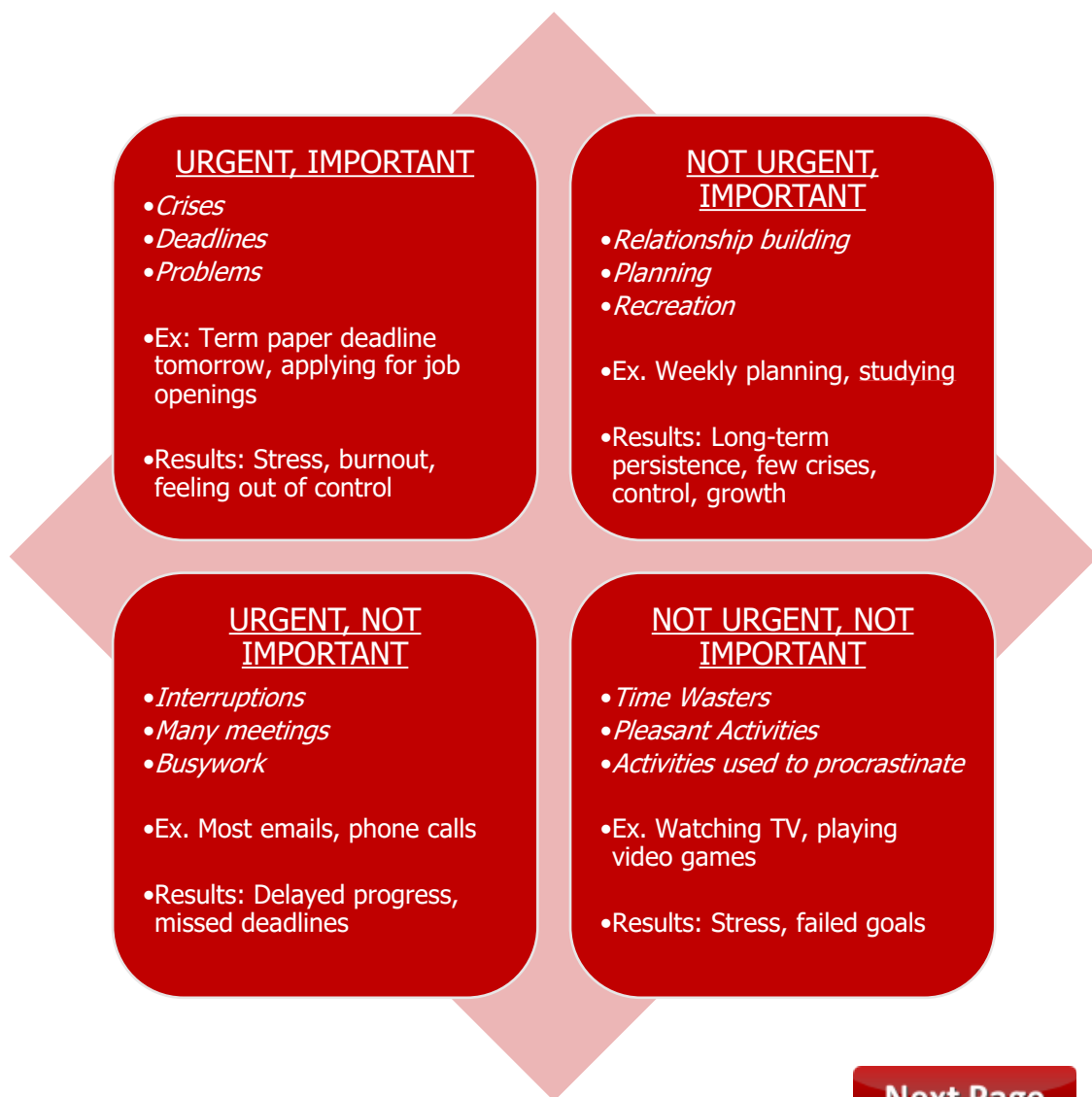Next Page

Staying Motivated

Using the Urgency-Importance Matrix

Beware the common trap of focusing primarily on urgent tasks at the expense of more important tasks. We often rush around putting out fires rather than preventing them in the first place. This is the essence of *reactivity* rather than *proactivity*.

To avoid the reactivity trap, use an urgency-importance matrix to organize your tasks. An example matrix that also displays the likely effects of spending too much time in any one quadrant is below. You can easily transfer your task list into the matrix to prioritize task completion.

Urgent and important tasks should receive priority; that is, they should be the first tasks completed. The idea is to complete the most urgent *and* important tasks first; not to check off the greatest number of tasks.

Once the urgent and important tasks are finished, then turn your attention to the other tasks. However, spend more time on the important rather than the urgent tasks. Focusing on important tasks first provides greater control over your time by reducing the number of important tasks that will eventually become urgent.

URGENT, IMPORTANT
- *Crises*
- *Deadlines*
- *Problems*

- Ex: Term paper deadline tomorrow, applying for job openings

- Results: Stress, burnout, feeling out of control

NOT URGENT, IMPORTANT
- *Relationship building*
- *Planning*
- *Recreation*

- Ex. Weekly planning, studying

- Results: Long-term persistence, few crises, control, growth

URGENT, NOT IMPORTANT
- *Interruptions*
- *Many meetings*
- *Busywork*

- Ex. Most emails, phone calls

- Results: Delayed progress, missed deadlines

NOT URGENT, NOT IMPORTANT
- *Time Wasters*
- *Pleasant Activities*
- *Activities used to procrastinate*

- Ex. Watching TV, playing video games

- Results: Stress, failed goals

Staying Motivated

Setting SMART Goals

The urgency-importance matrix is also a useful tool for setting SMART goals. SMART goals define a **S**pecific and concrete outcome that is **M**easureable and can be tracked. SMART goals are **A**ttainable but challenging, and **R**elevant in that they are important to you. Last, they are **T**ime-bound in that you set a specific deadline for completing your SMART goal.

Below is an example of the SMART goal setting process. This process can easily be applied to any aspect of your job search. You can also use SMART goals to assist you in completing any other tasks that you identified on your urgency-importance matrix.

Specific
- *"I want to apply for jobs in my field."*

Measureable
- *"I will apply for four jobs in my field."*

Attainable
- *"I will spend ten hours identifying and applying for jobs in my field."*

Relevant
- *"It is important that I find a quality job before graduating."*

Time-bound
- *"I will spend ten hours identifying and applying for jobs in my field this week."*

Final SMART Goal
- *"I will spend ten hours looking for jobs in my field this week, and apply for four jobs before the week ends."*

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Staying Motivated

Scheduling Time

After organizing your tasks and converting them into SMART goals, you must find the time to achieve those goals. A personal planning tool is especially helpful for the process of planning and scheduling time to complete your SMART goals.

A number of personal planning tools are available, but often only a simple calendar system is needed. With the prevalence of smart phones and other linked technology (e.g., tablets), online calendars are especially helpful (e.g., Google Calendar). Online calendars are available at all times, allow to-do lists, and are easily updated. If you do not have a smartphone or are technology adverse, a paper-based calendar is an equivalent alternative.

Regardless of which planning tool you chose, input time to devote to your SMART goals into your planner. Determine on which days and for how long you will work on each goal. As people tend to underestimate task completion times, you will benefit from slightly overestimating the time you think you will need. If the time you block out is too long, then you can easily adjust your plan to use that time toward one of your other goals.

Consider the example SMART goal that you viewed. To complete that goal, you could research jobs on Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday, and Thursday for two hours each day. Then on Friday, you could block off two hours specifically to apply to four of the previously identified job openings. After planning your job search for the week, then you can block off times to work on the other tasks in your urgency-importance matrix. You can use the completed example planner below as a template for your own planner.

Mon		Tue		Wed		Thur		Fri	
8	Research Jobs	8	Research Jobs	8	Research Jobs	8	Research Jobs	8	Apply for 2 Jobs
9	Research Jobs	9	Research Jobs	9	Research Jobs	9	Research Jobs	9	Apply for 2 Jobs
10	Break	10	Break	10	Break	10	Break	10	Break
11	Work on Term Paper	11	Work on Term Paper	11	Work on Term Paper	11	Work on Term Paper	11	Turn in Term Paper
12	Study	12	Study	12	Study	12	Study	12	Study
1	Lunch	1	Lunch	1	Lunch	1	Lunch	1	Lunch
2	Study	2	Study	2	Study	2	Study	2	Study
3	Class	3	Class	3	Class	3	Class	3	Class
4	Email	4	Class	4	Email	4	Class	4	Email
5	Class	5	Email	5	Class	5	Email	5	Plan for Next Week
Evening		Evening		Evening		Evening		Evening	

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Staying Motivated

Learning Module Reflection

You now have the essential preparation necessary to begin the multi-step job search process. In fact, you are now more prepared than many students are for their job search. You understand the challenges you will face, but you also hold the tools required to successfully meet and overcome those challenges.

Additionally, you have learned time management and goal setting skills that predict job search success. Those skills will ensure that you can find the necessary time to look for a job among your other competing responsibilities.

To finish the module, complete the exercise below. Think about the information and skills you learned in this module as well as how you will apply those skills to your job search.

Reflection Exercise

1. What new information about the job search did you learn from this module?
2. How will you apply that information to your job search?
3. What new job search skills did you learn from this module?
4. How will you apply those skills to your job search?

– Multiple Essay Box Entry Items Go Here –

Copy/paste the above text and figure into a unique survey page, ending with the Reflection Exercise heading. Then create four essay text box entry items – one essay box allowing a unique response to each of the questions listed above. *Note: This text box is instructional only and not to be included in the final online intervention module.*

Learning Module Complete

Great Job!!

You have successfully completed the job search learning module. By completing this module, you have already increased your chance of a successful job search. Following the multi-step job search process and using the tools you have been provided will increase your chances of success even further. With the knowledge and skills you have developed through this learning module, you are now better equipped than many other students for the job search.

For more in-depth reading about the information contained in this learning module and copies of all the exercises you completed, please click the link below to download the "Useful Resources, Descriptions, and Exercises" section for use during your job search.

– PDF Link for Supplementary Materials –

Good luck in your future job seeking!