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Social Work Job Search Strategies

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Social Work Job Search Strategies

Section 1: Introduction and Overview

This short, concise document is designed to assist social workers who are conducting a job search. Whether it is the reader's first or final search, the goal is to provide a brief overview of effective strategies that are important in any job search. This document is *not* a comprehensive guide and readers are strongly encouraged to pursue further information related to job search strategies, resources, and advice, which is available through the Internet, public and university libraries, and book stores. This document briefly addresses the following topics: preparing for the job search, researching salaries, preparing for interviews, overcoming common obstacles, creating a viable plan of action, the importance of networking, and the use of websites and other resources.

Clearly, every individual brings a unique set of qualifications, experiences, and career goals to the search, so it is paramount that they continually and objectively assess their skills and abilities related to job search. Consequently, job seekers are well-advised to research the latest job search strategies, expand their current job search skills, and seek support when needed. While job search can be challenging, finding the "right" match is well worth the time and effort, when considering the importance of a job that is enjoyable and lends itself to long-term career goals.

NASW California Career Center

The following documents (PDF) can be viewed and/or downloaded from the NASW-California website at www.naswca.org under the "Career Center" tab.

- Financial Aid Resources for Social Work Education (PDF)
- Social Work Job Search Strategies (PDF)
- Social Work Job Search Resources (PDF)

The NASW-California website also offers information about upcoming events, conferences, local and regional events, social networking sites, licensing in California, social action issues, and much more. Additionally, there are ten issues of the NASW-CA newsletter per year posted on the chapter's website, and often feature job announcements.

NASW National Career Center

The national office in Washington, DC offers a comprehensive career center with nationwide job listings, the ability to post a resume, a library of information related to job search, as well as links to additional resources. Visit www.socialworkers.org/joblinks/.

On the national NASW website, visitors can find a social work blog, social work chat room, information related to credentials, specialty practice sessions, links to social networking sites, free lunchtime webinars, and links to all NASW state chapters. Visit www.socialworkers.org.

Additional NASW Websites

Social Work Portal	www.socialworkers.org/swportal/
Help Starts Here	www.helpstartshere.org
NASW Assurance Services	www.naswassurance.org/index.php
Social Workers Speak	www.socialworkersspeak.org/

Section 2: Factors Impacting the Job Search

It is important to be realistic about the time it may take to find a job. As with most processes, it varies from individual to individual, is influenced by numerous factors (geographic location, economic trends, type of job, desired salary, etc.), and tends to take more time and effort than one expects. Most recently, in California, the **average time frame** has been nine to 12 months for a professional job search. However, the job search may be shorter or longer depending on a myriad of factors including, but not limited to, the job seeker's age, education, experience, qualifications, interviewing skills, professional and personal connections, motivation, dedication to job search activities, desired position, salary requirements, geographic location, ability to network effectively, ability to travel, ability to relocate, the local economy, etc. A few of the factors that impact the amount of time a job search requires are outlined in greater detail below:

A. Geographic Location

Generally speaking, the larger the city, the more jobs there are. However, this also means more competition and a higher cost of living. Prior to implementing a job search, it is critical to define and/or prioritize the desired geographic area or areas. Job seekers are encouraged to prioritize the top three geographic locations while keeping in mind that they must decide how far they are able (or willing) to travel to and from the worksite. Additionally, it is critical to research the number and type of jobs available, the median salary range for these jobs, and general economic trends for a specific city, county, or other geographic location. This is always a critical step in a job search, but doubly so if one is considering moving to a new city, state, or country.

B. Time of Year

Generally speaking, there are some months in which employer activity (job postings, interviews, hiring, etc) is lighter. There tends to be more activity from January through April, while activity from May to August slows down. Activity generally picks up again in September and October only to slow down from November 15 through January 10. Regardless of the amount of employer activity or time of year, job seekers are advised to dedicate the same amount of time to job search activities and not to slow their efforts.

C. Areas of Specialty and Special Skills

Researching demographic and labor market trends can tell the reader much about which specialty area may offer more job opportunities within a specific geographic location. For example, since the passage of the Mental Health Services Act (MHSA) in California, there has been a significant and growing need for social workers with expertise in mental health throughout the state. One of California's major employers

is the Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation (CDC-R), which expects to have up to 900 clinical social work positions available over the next few years. Child welfare and gerontology are other specialty areas that offer a number of job opportunities in California. Due to the diversity of the state's population, those who represent minority groups and who are bilingual are highly sought after. Job seekers must ensure that they hold the appropriate state credentials to work in specialized fields, such as substance abuse or school social work.

D. Time Dedicated to Job Search

Generally speaking, the amount of time dedicated to effective job search activities has a direct correlation to the amount of time spent in the job search. Unfortunately, many job seekers rely on strategies that are no longer viable (such as jobs listed in a local newspaper) or spend too much time participating in only one or two activities (such as applying to jobs but not actively networking). Initially, few job seekers are aware of the time it takes to implement an effective job search and/or find implementing the strategies challenging. Job search experts say that if a person is unemployed, he or she needs to plan on spending 30 to 40 hours per week in job search activities. Experts agree that the key to any job search is creating a plan of action and consistently dedicating sufficient time to a variety of evidence-based job search strategies. Job search is an activity that requires the job seeker to stay proactive, motivated, determined, dedicated, and focused on the desired outcome.

E. Professional and Personal Connections

Job search is generally easier and quicker for those who have widespread and active professional and community connections. Clearly, if a person has been working in a community for several years and is professionally well-connected, he or she will have more opportunities to network, hear about jobs, and is more likely to be given interviews. While it is always true that "who you know" is as important as what you know, it is often even more important in a tough economy where there are fewer jobs and increased competition.

F. Ability to Market One's Self

The ability to effectively and appropriately market one's self is obviously highly important in a job search. This includes being able to create dynamic cover letters and resumes that result in interviews, performing well during interviews (group interviews, panel interviews, multiple interviews, etc.), and taking advantage of every opportunity to network in a manner that results in job leads. All of which requires self-awareness, fore-thought, skill, and practice. These skills are not usually taught in school and, according to employers and recruiters, many job seekers fall short of effectively marketing or "selling" their unique abilities and expertise. There are plenty of stories where the job seeker appeared arrogant or too humble to clearly delineate how he or she is the best match for the position. There are many ways to learn and practice this skill and every job seeker is encouraged to objectively evaluate his or her current skill level and to find ways to improve. One example would be to video oneself performing a "mock interview" and ask a few respected friends or colleagues to provide feedback.

Section 3: Preparing for the Job Search

Aside from setting realistic goals related to the time it could take to find the right match and the number of hours required each week to implement job search activities, it is important to develop the following:

A. Complete a Self-Inventory

Whether this is the readers' second or fifteenth job search, the first and most important step is completing a thorough self-inventory of transferable skills, abilities, and expertise. Perhaps, to some readers this sounds simple, but never underestimate the power of being able to clearly and concisely define in details the job you are looking for and why it suits you to a tee. Job seekers need to be able to easily and effortlessly communicate what makes them special and how that matches their job goal. Family, friends, colleagues, co-workers, strangers, and employers respond positively to those who can verbally paint a clear picture of what they want to do, where they want to do it, and why they are passionate about this career path. For help with a self-inventory, the book *The Job-Hunter's Survival Guide*, or any book by Richard N. Bolles will be very helpful. Readers can also find an online list of skills at <http://online.onetcenter.org/skills>.

B. Customized Cover Letters

A cover letter must be customized to summarize one's education, experience, skills, and accomplishments as they specifically apply to the position and employer. Employers often receive several hundred resumes for any given position, and give each cover letter and resume about ten seconds before determining if the person is a potential candidate. Despite this fact being broadly publicized, the majority of job seekers neglect to customize cover letters and this oversight results in employers quickly moving on to the next potential candidate. It is important to remember that cover letters are used as a marketing tool and require time, thought, and customization.

C. Customized Resumes

Generally speaking, resumes are used to get in the door, i.e., to get the interview. It is the job seekers primary marketing tool and can easily work for or against the job seeker. Despite the fact that there are hundreds of books and articles about how to write an effective resume, many job seekers send out resumes that are poorly structured, with spelling, punctuation, and grammar errors, and provide very little evidence that they meet even the basic job requirements.

A resume must effectively market one's skills, expertise, experience, qualities, and professional accomplishments in a manner that convinces the employer that the job seeker meets (or better yet, exceeds) the minimum requirements of position. If an employer receives 100, 200, 300, or more resumes, how does the job seeker ensure that he or she stands out? They do their homework on the employer, create a cover letter and resume that clearly details their understanding of the position and employer requirements, and delineate exactly how their education, expertise, and experience are a perfect match.

In the *Job-Hunter's Survival Guide* by Richard N. Bolles, a longtime expert in career development and job search field, the author discusses the new focus of posting

resumes online. He points out that there is a new purpose for carefully developing a resume. When posting a resume online, it must concisely and clearly delineate what job seekers most want a prospective employer to first see about them. When filling out online profiles, he advises job seekers to complete all questions (if at all possible) and keep these profiles current. Readers are encouraged to review at least one or two job search books by Bolles, as many have found his advice valuable. He also has a website that offers free guides to the entire job search journey at www.jobhuntersbible.com.

D. Customized References

Every job seeker will need to develop a current list of references comprised of co-workers, supervisors, or colleagues who have a good working knowledge of the job seeker's professional experience, expertise, and qualifications. It is advisable for the list to have a minimum of four professional and two personal contacts that are relevant to the last three to eight years of professional experience. For each reference, it should include the full name, degree(s), license(s), job title, and contact information—including a phone number and e-mail address.

Once it is apparent that an employer will be calling references, it is crucial that the job seeker prepare these individuals by providing them with information about the position, the employer, and a few key "talking" points. In other words, ensure that the references are prepared to give pertinent and accurate information when they receive a call from a prospective employer. When a written letter of reference is required, it is advisable to ensure that it is current and written within the last year. It is best not to wait for a request, but upon initiating the job search asking for a couple of letters of reference from well-known individuals. This allows the job seeker to have more flexibility in choosing the most appropriate letter.

E. Job Search Plan

A job search plan will include a variety of activities, such as researching and developing the latest job search strategies, researching labor market trends and salaries, participating in networking activities, regularly viewing listing of jobs (online, print, etc.) researching and applying for positions, researching and preparing for interviews, and following up to networking activities and interviews by writing thank you notes. An example of a job search plan is provided at the end of this document. As with most goals, having a well thought-out plan of action tends to make one more successful. Job seekers have to contend with many factors, such as isolation, rejection, financial worries, etc. and having a plan can assist them in staying on track. Time management (the ability to organize and manage one's time and set priorities) is completely left up to the individual job seeker because (unlike a real job) there is no supervisor and few external deadlines.

F. Networking Plan

An effective networking plan will include a variety of activities that allow job seekers to meet and inform others about their qualifications and desired job goal. There are numerous books on the subject and the key is to find strategies that are not only appropriate and successful, but fits the unique job seeker. Extroverts may network differently than an introvert, but both can learn successfully strategies. A networking plan might include e-mailing a resume to professional acquaintances along with a short note explaining the type of job one is seeking. Another example

would be to attend meetings, events, or conferences, and being prepared to share a 30-second summary (highlighting experience and job goal) with everyone you meet. As with any skill, networking usually takes practice and persistence. While it may seem obvious to some readers, it is important to point out that job seekers should *never* discuss the difficulties they encounter in the job search when networking. The best strategy is to always be positive, enthusiastic, and concise about what it is that you offer and what you wish to do. An example of a networking plan and related activities is provided at the end of this document.

G. List of Job Search Related Websites

It is important to create a current and updated list of job search websites and other resources specific to the desired job and geographic area. While some job search websites list jobs related to all professions, many are specific to the social work profession. For example, while www.monster.com and www.careerbuilder.com offer job listing for nearly all occupations, including social work, there are many websites dedicated to social work jobs, such as the NASW Career Center found at <http://careers.socialworkers.org/>. For additional information about job search websites, read *Social Work Job Search Resources* found at www.naswca.org under the "Career Center" tab. This document lists pages of valuable websites and more.

H. Copies of Important Documents

It is important to be prepared with copies of university transcripts, copies of credentials, licenses, and certificates; recent letters of recommendation (written within one to five years), and recent professional writing samples. Depending on the job and employer, some or all of these may be required.

I. Computer and Internet Literacy

Given that the vast majority of job opportunities are now advertised on the Internet and employers generally require job seekers to apply online by e-mailing the cover letter, resume, application, and other documents, it is critical to have access to a computer, have a valid e-mail address, and be computer literate. There are employers who do everything by e-mail or online, including notifying the applicant of an interview and even making a job offer. Due to all of the recent changes, there are numerous books dedicated to how utilize the Internet to find job listings, post resumes, create PDF files (in e-mailing cover letters and resumes, it is advisable to send documents as PDF files rather than Word documents), research salaries and labor market trends, network through social networking sites (Facebook, LinkedIn, etc.), and advance one's career.

J. Free Comprehensive Online Guides and Resources for Job Seekers

www.jobhuntersbible.com

www.job-hunt.org

www.jobstar.org

www.rileyguide.com

www.quintcareers.com

www.cacareerzone.org

Section 4: Identifying and Overcoming Obstacles

Whenever a person sets a goal there are almost always obstacles to identify and overcome; a job search is no exception. For example, some job seekers have difficulties when it comes to performing well in interviews, while others may not feel comfortable networking or “marketing” themselves. It is very important for job seekers to identify potential obstacles and create strategies to overcome these obstacles *prior* to implementing the job search. Interestingly, social workers and other job seekers are often hesitant to seek help and feel that they “should know how to do it,” even though highly effective and successful job search skills aren’t taught in most universities and require a great deal of time, effort, and practice.

Strategies for Overcoming Common Obstacles

1. Develop Effective Marketing Tools

Create well-written, customized cover letters and resumes that effectively market the job seeker’s education, skills, experience, and accomplishments and result in interviews. Many job seekers have difficulty in creating well-written, effective, dynamic, and concise cover letters and resumes that effectively promote their qualifications. If this is the case, it would be wise to consult with an expert or obtain help through other avenues. There are a huge number of books and online resources specific to writing cover letters and resumes. One suggestion is to spend a couple of afternoons in bookstores or local libraries reviewing books with current resume samples for specific professions. Another suggestion is to have several other professionals review these documents and provide comments and suggestions. If at all possible, find someone in human resources and a hiring manager to give feedback.

While it may seem simple to create effective marketing tools, the fact is that employers and recruiters constantly complain about the grammar, punctuation, and spelling in cover letters, resumes, and applications, not to mention the content. For example, one hiring manager reported that seven out of ten resumes included a “professional objective” that was completely different than the job for which the applicant was applying. These resumes landed in the wastepaper basket. When a job seeker is completing three to six sets of applications per week; there is definitely room for error. Therefore, it is critical that every document be checked for errors prior to being sent (e-mails, attachments, cover letters, applications, resumes, thank-you notes, envelope labels, etc.).

2. Implement Effective Networking Strategies

Job seekers must learn to network in a manner that is professional, appropriate, and optimizes the number of people who are aware of the job seekers’ qualifications and career goal. Networking may be difficult if the job seeker is an introvert, has recently moved to a new geographic area, or is new to the social work profession. For example, upon graduation, a recent MSW graduate sent a humorous greeting card to everyone she knew. This card included a short note explaining her recent MSW degree and move into a new career. Within five days of mailing this information, she followed up with a brief telephone call, answered questions, and requested that they keep her in mind if they heard of a job or knew someone that might be helpful to her. She also attended three to five networking events a month and was prepared with business cards that highlighted her qualifications, job goal, and contact information.

Many job seekers find that professional associations, alumni groups, etc. offer great networking opportunities. Of course, it is important to choose groups that are closely associated with the job seeker's goals. Many professional associations, such as the National Association of Social Workers (NASW), provide listings of job openings on their website or in their newsletters. However, a job seeker should look for every opportunity to network, whether at church, the gym, hair salon, grocery store, etc. The keys to networking are to be creative, flexible, polite, considerate, enthusiastic, innovative, and persistent.

For those who are introverts, check out resources such as the following e-book addressing networking for introverts www.job-hunt.org/guides/Job-Hunt-job-networking-for-introverts.pdf.

3. Prepare Effectively for Interviews

Preparing for interviews must include researching the employer and being prepared to answer the most frequently asked questions. The following two questions (in some form) are very common, "What do you know about our organization?" and "Why do you want to work for this organization?" Knowing about the employer's mission, goals, programs, services, and culture is paramount to being able to answer questions and demonstrate that you are the right person for the job. Just like any other skill, interviewing takes preparation and practice. Over the years, the types of questions asked during interviews have changed significantly and job seekers need to keep abreast of the most common questions and suggested answers. There are many online resources, books, etc. that job seekers can utilize to keep abreast of this information.

Today, many of the questions are behavior specific. For example, "Describe a situation in which you disagreed with your supervisor regarding a policy that you had to implement and how you handled it?" Another example is, "Describe a time when you failed to meet a goal and how you dealt with it?" One of the most effective strategies is to have someone video tape one or two "mock interviews." This provides the job seeker with a wealth of information regarding important, but often overlooked factors, such as facial expressions, eye contact, body mannerisms, verbal habits (long pauses, repeating words or phrases, etc.) and overall appearance of confidence and calmness.

4. Develop and Utilize Support Systems

Develop support systems and strategies for handling the common emotional aspects, such as rejection, disappointment, uncertainty, etc. that are generally inherent in any job search. Even under the best of circumstances, a job search can be challenging. Given the recent statistic indicating that the average job search in California can take nine to 12 months, those who are unemployed will need to find strategies for dealing with feelings of rejection and isolation. While sharing one's experiences and challenges with family, friends, and colleagues can be helpful, it is often more helpful to have support from other job seekers, who better understand the challenges and difficulties involved in being unemployed and searching for a job.

For example, the California Department of Employment Development offers both support and help with job search at www.edd.ca.gov/Jobs_and_Training/Experience_Unlimited.htm. Readers can also

find a list of support groups at www.job-hunt.org/job-search-networking/job-search-networking.shtml.

Whether the job seeker is unemployed or employed part or full-time, it is often difficult to consistently dedicate sufficient time each week to the job search. Setting goals and having a support system that keeps the job seeker accountable can be very helpful. For example, having to report weekly to someone (friend, coach, colleague, support group, etc.) regarding whether weekly goals were met or not, can be helpful in keeping job seekers on track. Most job seekers underestimate the impact of common emotional factors generally inherent in a job search, especially if the search lasts longer than three or four months. It is advisable that job seekers develop viable strategies for handling these emotions in healthy ways.

Section 5: Creating a Viable Job Search Plan

Once the job seeker is assured that everything is in place and they are ready to implement job search strategies, it is a good idea to determine the following factors:

1. The number of hours per week that will be dedicated to job search activities and how this time will be scheduled into one's calendar. Just as with many goals (like exercising regularly), it requires making a commitment, setting aside specific times, and holding oneself accountable. Consequently, it is always best to set specific goals with measurable outcomes. An example would be setting a goal of 25 hours per week for job search activities with measurable outcomes as follows: (1) visiting a minimum of 20 online job listings three times; (2) applying to two to five positions per week; (3) networking with a minimum of ten individuals per week; (4) attending at least one networking function every two weeks; and (5) sending thank-you cards or following up with potential contacts.
2. It is also advisable to create a document that lists the job seekers favorite online job sites; one that is easy to access and revise. Determine which online websites are the most valuable and visit these often—up to three times per week. Others may only require a visit once every two weeks. There are so many resources online that the job seeker must determine how to best use these resources to their advantage and not become overwhelmed or waste time on websites that generate few leads and/or little information regarding effective job search strategies.
3. Job seekers are highly encouraged to join related professional associations, alumni groups, etc., because associations frequently offer job listings, networking opportunities, events, etc. Becoming a volunteer can build on job seekers expertise, expand connections, and provide multiple networking opportunities.
4. Treat the job search as if it were a job—an important job. Almost every job seeker has heard this, yet few find it easy to follow the advice. However, in considering the average amount of time spent at work and the importance of enjoying the job, it makes sense to commit time, determination, and resources to the process. Finally, for many job seekers in today's economy, treating the job search as if they were employed to do it, can impact how long they spending searching.
5. Every job seeker needs to be able to clearly articulate what they wish to do and why they are qualified to do it. While many job seekers believe that it is better if

they are willing to “do anything,” research indicates this is not true. Employers are looking for candidates who are clear about: (a) what they want to do; and (b) how their education, experience, and expertise support this goal. In the majority of cases, employers are looking for candidates who have a proven record of doing the same (or very similar) job in the past. Consequently, it is strongly advised that job seekers develop one or more specific job titles that are supported by their experience. For networking purposes, it is sometimes difficult to target a specific job title such as “medical social worker in a clinic or hospital” and, if this is case, it is advisable to clearly define up to three areas of expertise. For example, if the job seeker’s expertise is in employment and training, workforce issues, and case management, it is advisable to focus on these areas when networking.

6. It is also advisable to delineate one to three primary geographic locations as the priority. As with many things in life, focusing on one priority at a time tends to render more results. Determining what you want to do and where you want to do it is critical in making the job search more effective. Even with a defined job goal and one geographic location, job search is challenging and time consuming (for example, a school social work job within the greater Los Angeles area). Job seekers who attempt to look for a job throughout the entire state of California will face more challenges (and generally be less effective) than someone who focuses on a 50-mile radius from San Francisco and, if this garners no results, expanding it to a 100-mile radius. Clearly there are more challenges if job seekers try to effectively network out of state or in multiple locations at one time.
7. While most job seekers focus on their education, professional experience, and skills, research indicates that it is equally important, if not more so, to delineate one’s professional accomplishments. Please see the following examples for clarification.

A. Example of Expertise

Clinical Social Worker in Gerontology (NASW Certificate)

B. Example of Experience

Case manager in adult protective services for five years with Marin County.

C. Example of Skills

Speak, read, and write Spanish. Advanced computer skills including Microsoft office, Excel, PowerPoint, and customized programs.

D. Example of Professional Accomplishments

- Invited to be the keynote speaker at the 2010 American Society on Aging Annual Conference.
- Promoted to section supervisor after six months on the job for demonstrating leadership skills.
- Created an innovative and dynamic orientation and training programs for new employees that were highly rated by management.
- Recognized as the most valuable employee and given agency’s annual award.

- Wrote a grant that garnered the agency over \$50,000 a year for three years.

Section 6: Sample Job Search Plan

Job Seeker: 24-year-old female living in Oakland who is a recent MSW graduate.

Qualifications: Two years of professional experience and two years of internships.

Job Goal: Case manager with children or adolescents.

Location: A 50-mile radius of San Francisco city.

Volunteering: 15 hours per week with high-risk youth at community center.

Hours per week: 20 or more hours per week dedicated to job search activities.

Measurable outcomes:

1. Create and expand list of websites, journals, newspapers, etc. listing jobs.
2. Customize cover letters and resumes for one to four positions per week.
3. Obtain two to four interviews per month.
4. Create a *Networking Plan* detailing specific strategies and timeframes.
5. Attend three to five networking events per month.
6. Make at least ten networking calls per week.
7. Attend EDD job search "club" or support group twice a month.
8. Become active in NASW or one other related professional association.
9. Regularly attend a local NASW region (or unit) meetings or events.
10. Research social work salaries in San Francisco County.
11. Read a minimum of two books on salary negotiation within 60 days of implementing job search.
12. At least once a week, meet with a friend or colleague for lunch (minimize isolation).
13. Apply to social work staffing agencies within the first month and follow up once per month.
14. Research how to best use social networking sites to assist job search.
15. If unemployed at the end of 90 days, begin to explore potential part-time, temporary, or "survival" employment.

SAMPLE of a Week's Job Search Activities

Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday	Sunday
8am-12pm	2pm-6pm	8am-12pm	9am-1pm	10am-5pm	10am-12pm	7pm - 10pm
Visit websites, journals, and newspapers, etc. for job listings—make follow up calls	Complete applications, customize resume and cover letters for new jobs	Prepare for interview, practice answering common questions and research company	Do a mock interview, follow up on networking activities, and view job listings	1:30pm Interview. Write thank you notes for panel and call to prepare references	Research networking strategies and attend networking event. Research SW salaries	Plan next week's activities and research how to best negotiate salaries and benefits

Section 7: *SAMPLE* Networking Plan

Job Seeker: 36-year-old female living in San Diego County.
 Qualifications: MSW, ten years as a case manager, and two years in a clinic.
 Job Goal: Social work case manager within a medical facility.
 Location: 40-mile radius of San Diego County.

1. Create and continually expand a list of contacts.

Create a list of all friends, family, colleagues, and acquaintances before determining how to best contact each person—by phone, mail, e-mail, or social networking site. Update and expand this list by adding to it on a regular basis. Every person the job seeker comes in contact with may be able to provide potential lead. When utilizing written communication, the job seeker might create a brief note (similar to the sample note below) that outlines his or her job goal and minimum qualifications. Some job seekers send greeting cards, postcards, etc., which are meant to grab readers' attention and stand out. Just keep in mind that whatever is sent should be professional, appropriate, and leave the reader with a good impression.

Sample Note

Hello Patricia,

As you may have heard, I recently received my master's in social work. I'm excited about finding my dream job as a case manager within a hospital or clinic here in San Diego. My recent MSW degree, the two years I spent as a case manager, and a year-long internship in a local clinic makes me the perfect candidate. Please keep me in mind if you know someone I could talk to about my goals or to whom I could send a resume. I very much appreciate any ideas or potential contacts you might provide. I send my best to you and your family.

Name
Phone number
Email address

2. Attend and/or volunteer at events where there are networking opportunities.

For example, join an association, such as NASW-CA, and attend the monthly Region E (San Diego and Imperial counties) meetings. At each event, make it a goal to meet a minimum of five individuals and give them a business card highlighting the desired position, qualifications, and contact information. Please note that because California is very large, NASW has divided the state into smaller geographic regions and units, so that social workers can attend local meetings and events. Visit www.naswca.org and click on the "Networking" tab to view regional map and find contact information for the local leaders. There are also several NASW-CA councils that bring together social workers around special interests, such as school social work, healthcare, disaster relief, etc. Additionally, social workers can connect through NASW social networking sites such as Facebook, LinkedIn, and Twitter. Visit the NASW national website at www.socialworkers.org.

Another networking activity would be to volunteer with an organization, agency, hospital, etc. that is aligned with the specific job search goal. The right volunteer situation can be very helpful in networking and building connections, especially if one is new to the area or a recent graduate. The key is to choose the right organization and volunteer role, so that job seekers are able to expand their professional skills, while taking advantage of opportunities to build on references and contacts. Additionally, volunteer work can boost the job seekers' confidence and reduce feelings of rejection and isolation that often accompany a job search. Another example would be to volunteer at conferences where the job seeker could meet professionals in the fields of interest and, hopefully, make valuable connections.

3. Create a "Business Card" for Networking Activities

Business cards can be easily created and printed. Job seekers can usually get the first 250 printed for free through several online services. It is always a good idea to have someone else look the card before printing it. More often than one might suspect, job seekers hand out cards, resumes, etc. with errors or missing key information, such as the correct phone number or email address. Just as with every other marketing tool, it must be professional, clean, appropriate, and concise but informative.

Sample Business Card



Section 8: Utilizing Social Media Tools

Job seekers are encouraged to do research on the best strategies for using social media BEFORE doing so. While sites such as Facebook.com and LinkedIn (as well as others) can be used to one's advantage, there are far too many stories about how they have been used to job seekers' disadvantage. So heed the warnings, explore the best options, how to use them, and follow the guidelines.

A sample of the resources available:

- www.job-hunt.org/guides/Job-Hunt-LinkedInEbook.pdf
- www.job-hunt.org/guides/Job-Hunt-job-networking-for-introverts.pdf
- www.job-hunt.org/guides/Tweet-Sheet.pdf
- www.chrisbrogan.com/img/socialwebforwork.pdf
- www.job-hunt.org/social-networking/social-media.shtml
- www.job-hunt.org/social-networking/starting-social-media.shtml
- www.job-hunt.org/social-networking/visible-invisible-web.shtml
- www.job-hunt.org/social-networking/social-media-no-nos.shtml
- www.job-hunt.org/social-networking/linkedin-facebook-twitter-etc.shtml
- www.job-hunt.org/social-networking/linkedin-job-search-basics.shtml
- <http://mashable.com/2009/01/05/job-search-secrets/>
- www.businessweek.com/bwdaily/dnflash/content/jul2009/db20090710_159348.htm
- <http://jobsearch.about.com/od/networking/a/socialmedia.htm>

Social Work Job Search Resources

For a list of websites listings jobs (many specific to social work) and other job search resources, read the document "Social Work Job Search Resources." This document can be used to create a list of online resources that job seekers refer to and expand throughout the job search. It can be found on the chapter's website at www.naswca.org under the "Career Center" tab.