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GET THE RIGHT JOB!



**From Writing an Effective Résumé
to Negotiating a Fair Salary,
a Practical Guide for Confidently
Navigating Today's Job Market**

JEFF MAGNUSON

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Navigating Today's Job Market**

JEFF MAGNUSON

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To all the current and future job seekers

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Why This Book Is Necessary and What It Will Do for You

Searching for a new job, whether you need one or want one, can be stressful and difficult. I want to help you. This book is meant to guide you through the uncertain, oftentimes frustrating, process of looking for a new position.

Times Are Changing

The current professional landscape is not the same as it was in the 1980s, 90s, or even early 2000s. Substantial shifts are happening within companies and the overall job market which continues to make job searching challenging.

Previously, people went out after college and looked for stable companies to work at for 30 to 40 years. Once they were “in the door,” they would then climb the “corporate ladder,” get pay raises, more responsibilities, and then retire with additional steady income from their pensions.

Those days are long gone, except for a small group of people. For almost all of us, the corporate ladder is extinct and company (and employee) loyalty is not valued the way it used to be.

Of course, this does not apply to every single company out there, but it’s rampant enough where you will very likely find yourself in the larger group, if you’re not there already.

A second reason why job searching in today’s world can be taxing is that there is no shortage of advice out there; either in books or articles, from friends, co-workers, parents, and other family members. Within that advice is a lot of conflicting information as well as lingering “old school” thoughts which are not only outdated, but potentially detrimental to you and your ability to job search effectively.

Note: There is one exception which we’ll cover in Chapter 6.

It was after hearing much of this advice, while also personally witnessing the further shift in the job search culture and working with hundreds of clients, that I developed and refined

my own point of view that best captures how job seekers (You) can effectively use your limited time to set yourself up for the best chance of finding the right position.

Yes, the *right* position. You deserve a job that fulfills you, gives you opportunities to grow, and pays you a fair salary.

It's Time to Think Differently

As a career consultant, my number one request from job seekers is how can they stand out from other candidates when applying for jobs. It's a great question and is also the premise of this entire book.

If you want to stand out, **you must think and act differently** from the majority of other job seekers out there. And, as you will soon see as you go through this book, I am not talking about monumental changes, but rather small, subtle shifts that mostly have to do with your own mindset. There are other changes that are more visible but these adjustments are simple and easy to implement and will yield significant results for you.

Who This Book Is For

Generally speaking, this book is for anyone who wants a fresh perspective on the whole job search process with strategies and tactics that work. More specifically, it's for students looking for summer internships, students getting ready to graduate, recent graduates, professionals thinking about making a job change either now or in the future, and professionals currently out of work.

Through a combination of direct advice and intriguing stories¹, the information contained in these pages is meant to *empower* you by giving you a wider understanding of how a lot of the job search scenarios work. This, in turn, will help prevent you from getting hung up on any one sticking point and allow you to stay focused and positive until you find your next opportunity.

Note: Some chapters will include popular questions I receive when I advise people. I have put these questions in bold and italics.

Like this?

Yep, just like that.

Additionally, I wanted this book to be only as long as necessary. I know how time-consuming job searching is, especially when you're working full-time and/or have other responsibilities. Everything contained in these pages is important. I've cut the content down to the bare essentials so you can spend more of your time job searching effectively with the information contained within.

Goals

My goals with this book are to:

1. Help you grow and develop your confidence.
2. Help you understand many different facets of the job search dynamic from multiple perspectives.
3. Tell everything to you straight.
4. Help you watch out for the pitfalls along the way (because there are plenty).
5. Provide you with a blueprint of how to manage your time to find the right job for you.
6. Provide you with all the needed steps leading up to you signing your offer letter.

Topics

Specifically, we'll cover the following topics in this book:

1. How the job market has changed, including post-Covid, and why that matters to you now and in the future.
2. How to write an effective résumé and cover letter.
3. How to optimize your LinkedIn profile and use it to your advantage.
4. How to proactively apply for positions and get noticed by the right people.
5. How to handle third-party recruiters ("headhunters") and what to look out for.
6. How to prepare for phone, video, and in-person interviews.
7. How to negotiate an appropriate and fair salary, and much more.

So far, in my career, I have been an employee, a hiring manager, a job seeker, an MBA graduate, a career switcher, and a career coach (for 5+ years). Career coaching is a passion of mine and there is nothing more satisfying than getting feedback from a client about how these steps gave them the confidence to not only seek, but land the job they really wanted.

I want the same results for you.

I have experienced a lot so far in my career and I stand behind everything I'm about to share with you in these pages.

Writing this book was a joy and I hope you find the same value others have found by both changing your mindset and following these easy steps.

Let's get started.

1. The personal details and scenarios have all been adjusted for anonymity. You can rest assured, however, that all of the stories in this book are true. In fact, I'm sure you have your own stories that would fit into some of these scenarios. My hope is you take comfort in knowing it's not just you who sometimes has to deal with "funny," head-scratching moments when job searching.

You Are in Control

Aside from the general changes to the employment landscape over the last 20 or so years, it's important to understand right away that the job search process is largely inefficient and incredibly annoying. If you've recently job searched for any length of time, you know what I am talking about.

This annoyance creates a larger issue because it gives current and future job seekers hesitation about venturing into this mission, even if it ultimately means improving their professional lives.

If more companies were attentive, they would realize they are doing *themselves* a disservice by making the hiring process much more cumbersome than it needs to be. However, this book is not for them, it's for you. Changing processes across thousands of companies is not going to happen that quickly, so we need to work with what we have and what we know.

Besides, complaining about how broken the system is will not help any of us achieve our goals. However, acknowledging this up front is necessary as many job seekers put a lot of pressure on themselves when many of the causes of their frustrations are completely out of their control.

Why We Dislike Looking for New Jobs

Many people dread the thought of having to look for a new job for a number of reasons. While many of these reasons have merit, the negative mindset that results from these reasons is what really makes the whole job search process seem daunting.

Here are four reasons why people dislike looking for a new job, whether they are forced to or not:

- 1. Uncertainty.** Many companies, and sometimes third-party recruiters, do not provide enough transparency during the process; leaving candidates wondering if and when they are going to hear back on their interview, offer, or candidacy status.

2. Unhelpful, weak advice. Advice along the lines of “work isn’t supposed to be fun, that’s why it’s called work” and “companies are in control, that’s just how it is” exacerbates the negativity.

3. Low confidence. Much of this stems from job seekers not understanding their true value and instead relying on other’s opinions of them, even potential employers who do not know them well, if at all.

4. Complacency. It’s understandable for employees to be content in their current roles and not want to change, yet...

Complacency Can be a Killer

One reason is because many employees still believe their companies will take care of them indefinitely as long as they do a good job (old school thinking). Unfortunately, this is a dangerous assumption to make. I’m not suggesting companies are intentionally trying to harm employees in any way, but what I *am* saying is that when companies need to make tough decisions (usually financially driven), it’s not uncommon for even solid employees to be laid off.

Additionally, it’s comfortable to be comfortable. I get it. I don’t know about you, but I’ve made a lot of great friends over the years with people I first met at work. While that is a wonderful thing, you cannot let your office friendships get in the way of your professional career. If you’re really friends with your co-workers then that will not change. You will still socialize with them outside of work.

Don’t forget that companies are not taking your comradery, however meaningful, into consideration when they need to make difficult decisions. When it comes to your livelihood and working at a deserving company that pays you fairly and treats you well, you need to take any emotional attachment to your current job out of the equation.

Story: There was a 2018 article about a U.S. food manufacturer that laid off hundreds of employees as a cost-cutting measure. The company’s sales were steady but, by eliminating those employee salaries and benefits (expenses), the company could maintain a stable profit margin.

Was this a personal attack on those employees? Of course not. It’s a business, and if companies can look at it that way and let employees go with little remorse, then you can (and

should) do the same thing when it comes time to improving your personal and professional situation.

Remember, your relationship with your company is a **business relationship**—a professional connection where each party has a personal interest to either protect or advance, sometimes accompanied by a formal agreement—treat it as such.

You are the *only* person who can effectively manage your professional life. You must take active ownership over all aspects of your career, whether you are currently employed or not, as you are the only one who ultimately has your best interests at heart.

The Job Seeker/Company Dynamic

For too long, job seekers have been seen as inferior to companies looking to hire. This can be either directly, based on how job seekers are treated, or indirectly, by this unspoken “understanding” that a company has all the power and, therefore, job seekers are to do as they say.

More specifically, I see four main reasons why many job seekers have this *perception* of companies having the upper hand:

1. Companies get large amounts of résumés for whatever positions they post. As we will discuss in Chapter 6, this is meaningless as many, if not most, of those résumés are often not a good fit for the open positions. Additionally, many of the submitted résumés are never even viewed by someone at the company.

2. External recruiters. “Headhunters” have been a part of the job search dynamic for decades. I have devoted Chapter 7 to these folks as it’s important to understand how to effectively work with them. What I will mention now, as it’s critical to know, is these recruiters are paid by the *companies they represent*, not you. Therefore, in order for these recruiters to keep their clients (the companies), they often need to accept whatever the company is demanding of them, regardless of the confusion or inefficiencies it may create for you and/or the job search process.

3. Employees used to stay with companies for decades. As previously mentioned, one company used to be a big deal to an employee and his or her long-term goals.

4. Companies have the money that you need. Your bills and other expenses don't stop just because you're out of work or unhappy in your current role.

Job Seekers and Companies Are Equals

Let me now breakdown why companies looking to hire professionals and professionals looking for new positions are equals.

The technical answer is that the résumé submission → job interview → signed offer process is a **business transaction**. In order for a transaction to work, *both sides* must agree, otherwise nothing will happen; the company will not get its new employee and the job seeker will not get a new position.

The better answer lies in how we look at the job seeker/company dynamic. Job seekers tend to solely focus on the hiring process from *their own* perspective and all the stress and uncertainty that comes along with it. However, as I just mentioned, there are two sides at play here.

Let's look at the hiring process, generally speaking, from a *company's* perspective.

Companies hire based on their **needs**, not their wants. Every legitimate job opening must be discussed and approved beforehand as new hires are a significant expense for a company. Once a position is approved, the company then has the time-consuming task of finding the right candidate.

Finding new employees is often stressful for companies, especially the hiring managers, particularly if they are desperate for help.

For example, if a hiring manager's team is already stretched thin, then a larger attrition risk on his team could be a possibility if the personnel openings are not addressed promptly. If that should happen, then there is another risk of that allotted headcount being withdrawn because of a temporarily frozen or permanently cut budget. If that should happen, and more employees leave, then the department could be at risk as very few managers will want to have to rebuild and retrain a brand-new team while also trying to move their business forward.

Therefore, if you approach your job search with the insight that a company does not hold all of the cards in this dynamic, because of its own needs and potential risks, then you can understand that both sides have a lot to gain from each other.

This is the first of many small mindset shifts I mentioned in the opening chapter. It's simple and effective. *Good* hiring managers are not mythical creatures dangling an open position to whomever they deem worthy. No, they are stressed out professionals who *really* need to find the right person to make their team whole again or perhaps start up a brand-new team with bright and capable professionals.

The Best Time to Start Is Right Now

Note: This section assumes you are currently working. If you are not currently working, fear not, as the content here will still be beneficial to you.

Working a tough day and job searching at night is not an ideal situation by any stretch. However, many professionals make the mistake of waiting to begin their search when their current job starts to negatively impact their daily lives, while others don't start until they find themselves without a job. Neither of those scenarios benefit you because instead of being fully in control, you are now working against time to find something else while the bills keep coming in and your stress level rises.

The best approach for everyone is to start looking when one or more of the following scenarios occur:

1. You find yourself wondering if there is anything better out there.
2. You realize your job is not as fulfilling as it used to be (or as you thought it would be).
3. You don't see any advancement in the near future.
4. You sense a change, or tough times, ahead for the company which could directly impact you.
5. You are stressed out and often dread the thought of going to work.

Let's dissect these.

#1 - #3. If you've been in a role for a reasonable length of time and you're bored, first speak with your manager to see how you can expand your responsibilities and/or try something new. If you're doing a good job at work, you deserve the opportunity to grow. But **you** have to take the initiative. Do not assume your manager will automatically do this. Your manager

is busy with many things as well as focused on her own career and may not realize your situation and how you feel until you bring it up. It's your career. Speak up!

If you get the sense your manager is either unwilling to help or doesn't see much advancement or change for you, politely thank her and then continue doing your job like you were before. Then, at night or on the weekends, update your résumé and LinkedIn profile and start searching around online for other opportunities that may interest you.

The Signs Are Everywhere

#4. Whether you work in an office, on a factory floor, or somewhere else, every location has a structure and a routine that develops over time. Colleagues have their schedules and tend to come in around the same time every day, eat lunch with the same people, and typically leave around the same time. Interactions and banter among co-workers become fairly common. There is an energy that becomes consistent in the workplace, a flow.

Pay attention to when that energy starts to change. For example, when a new manager is brought in, the group dynamics can shift and relationships can change. But what about when the company starts to have mediocre or negative financial results? In rough times, you've seen friends and colleagues suddenly laid off while others seem to "retire" out of the blue.

Story: Several years ago, a company people really enjoyed working at changed dramatically. Led by upper management decisions, many employees noticed several small changes that snowballed into a major office culture change. In one example, goals at the end of the year, which bonuses were tied to, were set impossibly far out of reach. Matching retirement contributions were now being paid in July of the following year. This meant if you were not employed prior to this payment date, then you would not have your company's matching contribution, despite working the previous full year. Routine personal time to pick up children or visit the dentist were now being tracked as vacation time. This all culminated one winter during a dangerous snow storm. Employees were warned they would not be paid for the day if they left early to avoid the traffic. Aside from being plain cruel and unprofessional, especially since employees could easily work from home, this edict posed a safety issue as several employees had difficulty getting home when they left at the end of the day because of the hazardous road conditions.

This is what I'm talking about when I say negative changes. All of the above happened at one company over a period of a year. Things were not always like I just described, but they

became this way because of deliberate choices by senior leadership. Many employees quit and moved on to better and healthier organizations.

If you sense a negative change in the environment and you and your co-workers are not as happy as you once were, or you notice that management is having a lot of meetings you're no longer invited to, or your annual review was blatantly inaccurate or unfair, don't ignore those signs. Pay attention and get your résumé and LinkedIn profile fully updated and be prepared to start looking for a new position somewhere else. If things improve for you at work (new title, responsibility, general environment, etc.) then you can always put your job search on hold for a while.

#5. Your professional situation, and its effect on you, is as important as your physical health. Think about it. When you're really sick for more than a few days, what do you do? You listen to your body and go to the doctor.

If you're in a toxic environment where your confidence is slowly being eroded and you're experiencing symptoms such as loss of appetite, grinding your teeth, constant headaches, bad moods, and/or anxiety, then it's time to assess your current situation and, most likely, make a change. Again, this change could be at your current company or, if they are not willing or able to help you, at a new company. Don't assume things will get better in your current role or that you need to grin and bear it. Your mental health and your professional career are incredibly important and need to be given the same care and attention as your physical health.

Finding Your Next Opportunity Starts with You

Once you decide you're ready to move on to a new position, whether you're currently working or not, there are specific steps you need to take in order to use your limited time effectively and not get overwhelmed and/or discouraged by the whole job search process.

When times are tough, looking for a new job with a positive attitude and a truck load of confidence can seem almost impossible.

It's not impossible.

If you switch your focus and place the extra energy you're spending on stressing out about your current company into finding a better solution, then you, at least, will be taking steps to

make the change you need. The key is to take it slow, one step at a time. Keep the road ahead manageable by doing a little extra work each week to set yourself up for a positive change. Start with 20 minutes a day for three days a week; either before work or at night. That's one hour of progress toward improving your professional life. In that amount of time, your résumé and LinkedIn profile can be substantially improved, if not fully updated in 1-3 weeks; an enormous first step.

If your current job has become disappointing, use it for what it has been reduced to—an income source—while you use your free time to learn about other options and begin taking steps to see what else may interest you.

Four Questions

Every six months, take a few minutes and ask yourself the following four questions:

1. Where am I in my professional life?
2. How do I feel about my situation?
3. Where do I want to go next?
4. How do I go about achieving this next step?

The answers to these questions are specific to **you**. You don't have to share them with anyone. It's your life and your career and you get to decide how you feel about your present situation without any outside opinions.

Something as simple as taking stock of where you are and how you feel at any moment is incredibly powerful. I recommend doing this at home, on the weekend, when you're relaxed and not distracted.

Regardless of whether you've received positive or negative feedback at work, you are still entitled to make a determination about your current employment state by taking everything into account including your:

1. Work
2. Manager
3. Salary
4. Benefits
5. Commute
6. Co-workers

7. Happiness

8. Future

You have to understand where you are and where you want to go *before* putting a plan in place to get there.

Tip: If you are unsure about what you want to do next, use job search websites and start reading as many job descriptions as you can. Type in some search terms (i.e., marketing, retail, accounts payable, communications, etc.) and see what populates. Read the descriptions and if you see something interesting within in the postings, then enter *that* new word or phrase into the search field and see what new jobs populate.

Note: Don't worry about salary or location for this exercise. Just focus on the various jobs to see what resonates with you and what doesn't. Keep running lists and your next step will start to come into focus.

Keep in mind, no one will know you're searching; nor should they. Don't mention your job search to anyone unless you trust them completely. The last thing you want is for the wrong person or people to find out, possibly putting your current employment at risk.

Confidence

Before we wrap up this chapter, there is one topic I need to touch on more closely; confidence. Confidence is the secret sauce to this entire process. Confidence is a tricky thing because it's dynamic and falls on a long spectrum between having a mountain of conviction at one end to feeling completely useless at the other end. Confidence also triggers emotions in us that directly impact our daily lives.

Many job seekers, especially those who are unemployed, can quickly find themselves in a low confidence state of mind. It's important to understand that job searching takes time as companies often move very slowly which is, of course, out of your control. Furthermore, your skills and self-worth are not diminished during the period in between jobs, even though it may feel like it at times.

You have an enormous amount to offer a company whether you've been searching for a day, a month, a year, or more. Stick with me here and realize these insights and recommendations were written based on my discussions with hundreds of job seekers, as well as my personal experiences, over the years. You are not alone in how you feel.

Confidence is power and when you approach job searching from a place of power, your mood will improve, your attitude will improve, and the positive energy you bring to interviews will shine through.

You need to take control of your career starting *right now* and that includes taking stock of your professional life while you are still employed, even if things are going well. Taking control, and then realizing you're in control, will keep your confidence strong.

In the next chapter, we will get into the nuts and bolts of this book, beginning with the cornerstone of the entire job search process, your résumé.

Thank you for reading these first two chapters. You can view additional information here:

<https://pensight.com/x/jeffmagnuson>

The entire book, both in paperback and eBook form, can be found here:

www.amazon.com/dp/B07WMDVT73

For more information, including how to schedule a 15-minute consultation, please visit my services page, website, and social media channels.

Services: <https://pensight.com/x/jeffmagnuson>

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Instagram: <https://www.instagram.com/askjeffmagnuson>

Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/askjeffmagnuson>

My services include:

- ✓ Résumé development
- ✓ LinkedIn optimization
- ✓ Cover letter creation
- ✓ Interview preparation
- ✓ Career coaching
- ✓ Salary negotiation strategies
- ✓ Presentation skills

If you (or someone you know) are considering a job switch, please feel free to reach out. We will begin with a free consultation to first understand your situation and then I will tailor a program specifically for your needs.

Thank you,
Jeff