

12 Steps to Targeting Success in Your Career or Job Search

By [Cheryl Lynch Simpson](#)

Is your job search sagging? Are you still looking for that ideal next job? Or are you about to begin looking for new work and are not sure of the best way to go about it? What you need is a way to evaluate your job search strategies to see whether or not they are working effectively for you.

Ready to get started? Here are 12 building blocks to a successful job search and the goals that will help you get to where you really want to be in the world of work:

- 1.) **Making networking phone calls:** Effective job searches begin and end with networking. Start by making a list of everyone you know: family members, extended family, friends, present & past co-workers, faith community colleagues, barber/hairdresser, dog groomer, neighbors. Even list the clerks who work in your favorite grocery or video store, bank tellers and gas station attendants. Everyone! Call or talk to each person on your list (most people can easily produce a list of 50-100 people). **Target:** Make 3-5 new networking phone calls weekly.
- 2.) **Contacting employers before openings occur:** The process of applying for a job before an opening is known to be present is referred to as "accessing the hidden job market" - and doing so is critical for job search success. By using a great on-line tool such as Reference USA to access employer information, you can mail targeted resumes and cover letters to companies that match your size, focus and sales criteria. **Target:** Mail 5-10 targeted but unsolicited resumes with cover letters weekly.
- 3.) **Responding to online postings:** There are literally hundreds of sites like Monster.com, and you can pour hours and hours into searching them for job opportunities. Remember to search on multiple titles or portions of titles and to post your resume at every opportunity. **Target:** respond to 3-5 postings weekly.
- 4.) **Responding to newspaper help wanted ads:** This is the favorite job seeking strategy of searchers everywhere, but guess what? Out of every 100 resumes an employer receives, they will throw away 92-95! **Target:** Submit only 3-5 resumes and cover letters weekly in response to help wanted ads.
- 5.) **Identifying new employers to contact:** Find employers the old-fashioned way: in phone books, through networking leads, through word-of-mouth, in reference sources and online databases (such as Reference USA, mentioned above), through articles in local papers and through the Yellow Pages of your local phone directory. **Target:** Identify and research 5 new employers weekly and use them to fill your quota for #2, above.
- 6.) **Contacting recruiters and employment agencies:** It's not appropriate for every job seeker to contact recruiters and employment agencies, but if this strategy makes sense for you, then by all means make use of them. **Target:** Contact 1 new recruiter or agency weekly.
- 7.) **Making follow-up phone calls & sending thank you letters/cards:** Sending out resumes and cover letters is only the first step in the process of developing relationships with employers. About 1 ½ to 2 weeks afterward, call them to verify they received your materials and to inquire about next steps. Always follow-up on interviews and make it a habit to send thank you letters or cards afterward as well. **Target:** Make 5-10 follow-up phone calls weekly and send a thank you letter or card for every job interview or informational interview you participate in each week.
- 8.) **Managing your references:** How do you "manage" references? Supply each one with a copy of each version of your resume. Keep them up-to-date on what is happening in your job search. You don't need to call them weekly, but you should generate news every few weeks at least. Give your references a copy of all the references you're using so each one can refer an employer on to someone else on the list if asked. Prepare your references by giving them background information, adjectives and descriptive words that

"sell" your best stuff. **Target:** Contact each reference at least once per month during your active job search and contact everyone when that perfect opportunity comes along to prepare them.

9.) **Practicing interview answers:** Don't just practice the night before an interview. **Target:** Practice your interview answers and questions at least 1 time per week.

10.) **Practicing the salary negotiations process:** Ditto with salary negotiations. **Target:** Practice your strategies and responses at least 1-2 times per week.

11.) **Staying socially connected with employed others:** Job searching is extremely lonely, so make sure you stay socially involved with family and friends. **Target:** Get out of the house at least 2 times weekly to see friends or extended family.

12.) **Managing your attitude and energy:** This is the most important building block of all, because without a positive attitude and high, focused energy, you won't achieve the result you want. **Targets:** Do at least 1 fun and creative thing outside your house weekly.

Why not take Fridays off (if you're unemployed) and enjoy! Absolutely, categorically don't job search on weekends. Exercise, take care of your body, and journal. Feed your mind good books and your spirit hope.

Strengthen or do more of what works. Adapt, replace or fix what does not work. Reevaluate your search progress every 30 days for as long as it takes for you to find the work you really want. And, if your job search results do not markedly improve within 45 days, see a career search professional for individualized assistance.

Cheryl Lynch Simpson is a *Spiritual Director* and *Solutions Coach* who helps women discover and create the life they've always wanted to live. Cheryl is the author of over 30 print/Internet articles and the founder of **Coaching Solutions For Women**, a coaching website that produces and showcases career, business, and life solutions that improve the life balance of today's busy women. For a complimentary copy of her latest e-book, **Ten-Minute Stress Zappers for Women Service Business Owners**, visit <http://www.coachingsolutionsforwomen.com>.

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