



A BEST
IMPRESSION



HOW TO PREPARE FOR YOUR JOB SEARCH

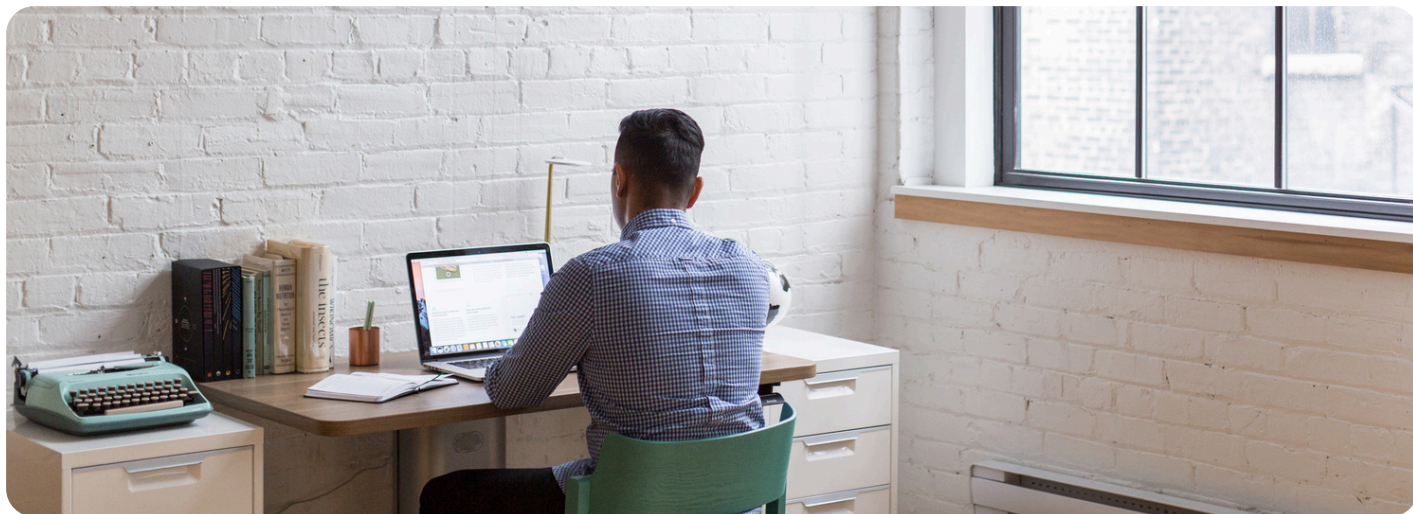
WHAT EVERY PROFESSIONAL NEEDS TO KNOW

The job search process has changed dramatically—and permanently. Every method that worked a decade ago has evolved into a digital-first, human-second process. To succeed in today's market, you need to understand how software, systems, and strategy now dominate every step.

1. KNOW WHAT YOU NEED FIRST

By now in your career, you know the kind of environment where you do your best work. So flip the script.

- Start your search by identifying **your non-negotiables**, like title, salary, and work/life balance, and then continue with important, nice to have, and not necessary.
- Write down why you assigned those and determine what exactly you're willing to compromise on, in what order.
- Hypertarget your search at the start around those criteria of want vs. need. If a job description isn't within that range, it's not a match, regardless of the company.



Remember: Jobs are transactional. You're being paid to solve a problem. Choose a problem you care about solving, ideally for a product you use or a mission that aligns with your values.

2. TARGETED STRATEGY BEATS MASS APPLICATIONS

Effective job search does not include applying to hundreds of jobs—apply strategically, only to **the ones that fit your needs**.

- Build a list of **40 companies you want to work for**.
- Focus your networking, research, and engagement efforts there.
- **Remember:** Senior-level roles are often in development for *months* before being posted.
- By the time the job goes live, there's already a shortlist.



If you wait for the posting, you're already behind. Get on the radar **before** the job is posted.

3. THE EVOLUTION OF LINKEDIN: FROM GROWTH TO MONETIZATION

LinkedIn is no longer just a professional network—it's a search engine, a recruiting tool, and a digital marketplace. With over a billion profiles and constant changes, it's now in "user value mode," meaning:

- The platform makes **frequent updates** to features to benefit paying companies and nudge its free users into buying premium plans. Features that were free are quietly disappearing. If you don't stay up to date on those changes, you risk being left behind.
- **Job postings are expensive**, and with no barrier to application, LinkedIn Easy Apply floods listings with hundreds of unqualified candidates.
- As a result, companies are **moving away from job posts** and instead identifying candidates directly and inviting them to apply.

That means you must be discoverable. Treat your LinkedIn profile like a **product page on Amazon – from the photo to the description to the user reviews.**

- Use **SEO best practices** to tailor your profile to who you want finding it.
- Position your entire profile for the **role you want, not the jobs you've had.**
- Position your profile to show how you've been preparing for this role for **your entire career.**

4. LINKEDIN: ONE STORY, TWO AUDIENCES

Your LinkedIn profile must be designed to serve two audiences:

1. **New connections** and **your existing network**—demonstrating your professionalism that they both can get behind.
2. **Recruiters**—ensure your profile is easy to scan and consumable.



A strong strategy combines:

- A **passive search** with a discoverable, optimized profile.
- A **proactive search** targeting companies and roles you want.
- Make sure your profile **communicates** the type of employee you will be if you are hired – **concise, self-curating, consistent, with attention to detail**. That's all implied with your presentation.

5. DISCOVERY IS THE NEW APPLICATION

Instead of just applying to jobs, aim to be discovered. Recruiters now prefer to find great candidates and invite them to apply. To be in that pool:

- Make sure you show up in the **smallest possible Recruiter search bucket** (e.g., you follow the company, have mutual connections, engaged with content, applied before, etc).
- **Remember:** They don't review everyone. They start at the top of a filtered list and stop once they've found enough good candidates.
- The best thing you can do? Get to the top of that list.



6. OPTIMIZE EVERY DETAIL

Your success is in the details:

- Optimize your profile's **back-end settings, headline, skills section, and endorsements.**
- Re-order your skills and get 25+ endorsements for top skills related to your target role. These affect search rankings and rank you as 'Highly Skilled'.
- Revisit your past Work Experiences and Skills. Make sure every part of your profile says: "This person is ready for this exact job."



7. NETWORKING STILL WINS —BUT WITH A NEW PLAYBOOK



The most effective strategy today is networking—but it looks different:

- Companies pay referral bonuses for a reason: these hires cost less, fit better, and stay longer. **They want them.**
- If you don't know someone, make a new connection. Treat it like a requirement to apply for the job.
- **Internal referrals** can help overcome application challenges.

PRO TIPS:

- When networking on LinkedIn, remember: you're writing to a **stranger, unsolicited**, on ***their personal social media page***. Use an appropriate tone and don't start with an ask.
- If you want to break into a company, start by connecting with the **CEO or other senior leadership** —more people may accept your request if you're already connected to the top because they won't know how you may know them.

8. UNDERSTAND THE ROLE AND THE COMPANY BEFORE APPLYING

Before you apply, ask:

- Objectively, can I *do* this job?
- Do I *want* this job?

Apply only to jobs you want. It takes the same time to apply for a job you don't want as one you do. Don't waste time or energy chasing roles that don't excite you.

Know the difference between companies, too:

- Companies no longer have to settle for “**can do.**” They want “**has done.**”
- **Big companies** typically hire specialists and due to demand, can wait for the right candidate.
- **Smaller companies** want generalists who wear multiple hats, get less applicants , and are more likely to ‘take a chance’ on someone pivoting their skills.



9. THE DIGITAL GATEKEEPERS: SOFTWARE BEFORE HUMANS

Your job search will almost always be filtered through software before a person ever sees your name. Applicant Tracking Systems (ATS), LinkedIn search algorithms, and internal recruitment platforms all work together to determine whether you're a match before a recruiter ever reads your resume or profile.

Companies now identify and track talent using software. Recruiters—overworked and under pressure—are focused on getting 12 qualified candidates scheduled. Once they reach 12, they move on.

That means:

- **Timing matters** – Get your resume in early.
- **Clarity counts** – You have seconds to make an impression.
- **Make their job easy** – Your resume and LinkedIn should **effortlessly** show you understand the goals this role is meant to reach and you are **qualified** to reach them.

Consider the job description as a prioritized list of problems. Your resume should demonstrate your prior experience solving similar problems.

Don't make the recruiter connect the dots—do it for them.

10. “WRITE FOR THE NOD” AND KEEP IT NODDING



When a recruiter scans your profile or resume, you want them **nodding in agreement** with each line: “Yes...yes...that’s what we’re looking for.” When you **capture** their attention, you need to **hold it**.

- Only include your relevant experience that directly matches the job description.
- Every bullet point should **show** how you solve their exact problems, not just **tell**.
- If they start shaking their head because what you’ve included isn’t relevant? You’ll lose their attention.


FINAL THOUGHT: YOU'RE NOT LOOKING FOR A JOB

You're Marketing Yourself as a Packaged Product to an Interested Buyer.

You are the product. And your job is to make it **easy** for the buyer to find you and say "yes."

WANT HELP PUTTING THIS INTO ACTION?

I'm Colin Murphy and I help mid-to-senior level professionals turn intimidating and overwhelming job searches into clear, and targeted strategies that get results. I provide the instruction, the resources, the support, and the accountability you need to understand how to do this right the first time.

 **Book a free discovery call** to find out how I can help you get interviews for jobs you actually want—faster.

Let's talk! Book a time to chat more with me today!



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