

CareerSMARTZ (CS31)

A highly effective career success strategy built around “Find a need and fill it.”



Task 6: Apply for Employment

Note: All underlined words are hyperlinks to Internet websites and will only function when viewing this document on your computer.

Objectives

The objectives of this guide are to:

1. Direct you in applying for employment with the employers on your target list.
2. Instruct you in how to present yourself as a valuable candidate – one that should be given serious consideration as a new hire.
3. Improve your chances of being invited in for interviews.

What this guide is NOT about!

Many people have the misperception that the main objective when applying for employment is to be offered a job. *It's not!* The true objective is to be granted an interview where you can discuss how you can be of value to the employer, and then that, hopefully, will lead to a job offer. This misperception is often the reason why many people fail to be called in for an interview – simply because when applying for a job, they sent the wrong message.

When applying for employment, the wrong message is “Please hire me!” The correct message should be “Here’s how I can be of value to you – shall we discuss it further at an interview?”

Rationale

Why is the message that you send so important when applying for a job? To illustrate, consider trying to sell dog food to someone who does not own a dog. It would be very difficult, if not impossible, as they simply don’t need any dog food. **Bottom line = Sending the wrong message to an employer can result in the employer concluding that they don’t need you!**

Caution

Do not attempt to complete this guide if you have not yet completed Checklists:

- CS22 (My Talent Profile)
- CS26 (My Target Employers)
- CS28 (My Employment Value)

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- CS30 (My Employment Obstacles and Solutions)

These above steps should be completed before you apply for employment.

Which job-seeking strategies COULD you use?

Listed below are 7 of the most common strategies used by individuals when seeking employment. For example, you could...

1. **Blindly inquire about available positions** by visiting, calling or sending a letter or email directly to employers asking about possible employment opportunities (when no help-wanted ads for your desired position have been publicly posted by the employer). What you are looking for here are “hidden” (from the general public) position openings.
2. **Respond to help-wanted ads** by visiting, calling or sending a letter or email in response to a help-wanted ad posted publicly by an employer.
3. **Complete an application form** made available from an employer (either in print or online at the employer’s website). This could be done for an advertised position or simply to submit your credentials for future consideration.
4. **Attend a Job Fair** where you could speak directly to potential employers and present your resume (or CV). This could be done for an advertised position or simply to submit your credentials for future consideration.
5. **Post your resume (or CV) online** with any number of Internet resume banks and hope employers will find you and contact you to discuss employment.
6. **Register with an employment service** such as a public employment service, private employment agency or recruiting firm, or your college Career Center to learn about employment openings and opportunities.
7. **Ask the people you know for referrals or personal introductions** where your family, friends, and acquaintances refer you to employment opportunities known to them or are willing to walk your resume (or CV) into their place of employment.

There are other strategies that you could use, some very creative or unusual, such as posting a “Position wanted” ad on a roadside billboard indicating that you’re looking for employment. However, these options are seldom used and, in some cases, are risky as some employers may see you as an odd character.

Which job-seeking strategies SHOULD you use?

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In theory, the more strategies that you use, the more interviews you can expect to generate. However, this rule doesn't always work. For example, some employers have very strict procedures for applying for employment. Therefore, if you use a strategy that is not recommended by the employer, your application may end up in the trash or never seen at all.

Fortunately, many employers will tell you how to apply. Such information is usually stated in “help-wanted ads” posted by employers or at the employer's website. ***However, the best way to determine how to apply is to call the company and ask.*** Typically, the call center operator knows the answer. If not, simply ask to speak to the Human Resources department.

Bottom line = Follow the employer's recommendation. If a potential employer has not posted their preferred application procedure, then you can assume that you can apply using any strategy you wish.

Materials needed

To complete this guide, you will need the following materials:

- CS31 (the document that you are reading now)
- CS22 (My Talent Profile) – completed as instructed
- CS26 (My Target Employers) – completed as instructed
- CS28 (My Employment Value) – completed as instructed
- CS30 (My Employment Obstacles and Solutions) – completed as instructed
- A blank copy of CS32 (My Employment Application Logbook)
- A resume
- Sample employment cover letters (letters of application, inquiry, follow-up, etc.)
- A computer with print capability

You may also need:

- A Curriculum Vitae (CV). A curriculum vitae (CV) is like a resume. However, a CV typically contains far more information about a person's academic background than what is typically listed on a resume
- A list of references
- Copies of degrees, diplomas and certificates
- Copies of your military discharge papers
- Proof of US citizenship
- Business card

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- An elevator speech
- A printed, electronic or online career portfolio

Completion time

Applying for employment is an “open ended” activity, meaning there is no clear end date in sight, or no standard time for completion. For example, it might take you just a few days to receive your first interview invitation, and, then again, it could take weeks or months. Typically, invitations to interviews start arriving within days or weeks after your application is received. Also, in many cases, you may not hear back from an employer and have to follow-up with a phone call – more about this later in this guide.

Stop! Before you begin!

Before you make your first contact with any of your target employers, there are several matters that should be taken care of first that, if left undone, could spell disaster. ***Complete as many of the following items as possible before you start applying for employment.***

- **Update (or create) your online career portfolio.** Make sure your online career portfolio is up-to-date. See CS23 (Promote Your Talent) for directions regarding how to develop an online career portfolio.
- **Prepare an Elevator Speech.** An **elevator speech** is a brief description of your career goal and mission and how you can benefit a company or organization. It's typically spoken and designed to engage others in a conversation about your talent and career interests. It's your “sales pitch,” one that you will use when you meet someone for the first time who you think may be able to help you achieve your career goal and mission. Check Google.com and YouTube.com for examples.
- **Alert your family, friends, and acquaintances** that you are about to start looking for employment. Describe the type of position and employer that you prefer. Give them a brief idea of your career goal and mission. Ask them to forward any suggested employers or actual position announcements that they may know about or come across in the future.
- **Hire a job-hunting coach.** Don't try to seek employment alone! There are too many pitfalls in seeking employment. Find a local or online job coach that you can meet with once per week or twice monthly to mentor you through the process.
- **Join a local support group.** Check around town to find a local job-hunters support group. They are typically run by job search experts and offer job seekers an opportunity

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to meet (usually once per week or every two weeks), to support and motivate each other, and to share suggestions and resources. Start your research with your local public employment service. Also, if you prefer, or if you can't find a local group, use [Google.com](https://www.google.com) to look for an online support group.

- **Clean up your social media sites.** Employers typically look at social media sites of applicants to learn more about each candidate. Don't get caught posting some controversial statement, photo or affiliation. Scrub your social media sites clean of all possibly offensive material.
- **Fix your credit score.** Check out your credit score. If it's less than desirable, take steps to improve it. Check [Google.com](https://www.google.com) for credit score agencies and suggestions regarding how to repair your credit rating. Many employers make decisions regarding the character of their applicants by viewing their credit scores.
- **Repair any “burnt bridges.”** If possible, reconnect with previous colleagues that have fallen out of favor and offer to mend fences. You never know who potential employers may chat with regarding your character. Don't leave your career landscape strewn with people who can do you harm.
- **Purge your criminal record.** Past mistakes don't always have to follow you into the future. Search [Google.com](https://www.google.com) for steps that you can take to purge or restrict your criminal record from public view.
- **Dress for success.** Learn how to dress for success. Spend a few minutes online with [Google.com](https://www.google.com) and [YouTube.com](https://www.youtube.com) to learn which type of clothing is appropriate for a job search. Dressing for success also means sporting a proper hair style and using appropriate make-up. A poor first impression can eliminate you from all further consideration!
- **Hide your tattoos and body piercings.** Many employers are not supportive of tattoos and body piercings and some discriminate against people who have such markings. If possible, hide your tattoos and body piercings – they are not worth losing a job.
- **Have your immigration papers ready.** If you are a legal immigrant to the U.S., or are here on a proper work visa, have your papers ready. U.S. employers are under great pressure to avoid hiring illegal immigrants.
- **Arrange for transportation.** While applying for employment can typically be done from home, there may be times when you must travel to a location to, for example, fill out an application form. If transportation is going to be an issue, plan for solutions before you begin to apply. Check with friends and family about getting a ride. Consider services

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like Uber or a rental car. The last thing you want to say to a potential employer is, “I can’t come in as I have no transportation.” This can kill your application!

After completing as many of the above items as you feel are possible, you are then ready to begin applying for employment. Note that completion of some of the above items may take time and may be “on going” while you are involved in applying for employment.

Follow the steps below to complete this guide:

And remember, your objective is to demonstrate how you can be of value to each employer and your goal is to gain interviews where you can discuss in detail your employment value!

1. Pick your preferred job-seeking strategies:

- 1.1 Get a copy of CS32 (My Employment Application Logbook). Note that it contains a separate section for each of the 7 job-seeking strategies defined above – sections where you can record your progress with each employer.
- 1.2 Review the 7 job-seeking strategies above. Note that some strategies contain options. For example, with strategy 1 (Blindly inquire) you can employ this strategy in person by visiting an employer’s place of business, by calling, or by sending a letter or email.
- 1.3 Decide which strategy or strategies you want to use to apply for employment. Select the ones that you are most comfortable with – you can always add more strategies if needed. While you can use all 7 strategies, most job seekers rely mainly on strategies 1, 2, 3, and 5 above. **However, our experience has taught us that strategies 2, 3, 4, 5 and 7 are the most productive.**
- 1.4 Follow the directions below for those strategies that you have selected.

2. Strategy #1: Blindly inquire. If you elect to use this strategy, do the following. If you prefer NOT to use this strategy, ignore it and move to the next strategy.

- 2.1 Select the employers on your target list CS26 (My Target Employers) that you want to inquire about employment. List their names in the “Employer name:” column in the “(1) Blindly inquire -” section on CS32 (My Employment Applications Logbook).
- 2.2 Prepare a resume (or CV) and a letter of inquiry for each employer. See “Suggested Resources” below for help writing these documents. If you prefer, use [Google.com](https://www.google.com) to find other sources of information regarding how to prepare these documents.

Suggested resources: (click to access)

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[How to write a resume](#)

[How to have your existing resume professional reviewed and revised](#)

[How to write cover letters](#)

With both your resume (or CV) and cover letters, make sure that you clearly indicate how you can be of value to each employer – see your comments on CS28 (My Employment Value) for clues as to how to draft this information. Make sure you indicate the benefits that the employer will gain by hiring you!

2.3 Decide how you want to contact each employer (see below). Record your preferred strategies next to each employer listed on CS32 and follow the directions in the items you select below:

- **If by personal visit** - visit the employer and ask to speak to someone regarding possible employment. Be properly dressed and prepared to provide a copy of your resume and discuss which position you prefer and how you can be of value to the employer. Ask for an interview. **Log your results under “Notes” on CS32.**
- **If by phone call** - call each employer and ask to speak to someone regarding possible employment. Indicate which position you prefer and be ready to discuss how you can be of value to the employer. Ask for an interview. Be ready to forward a copy of your resume (or CV) (in person, via mail or email) if requested. **Log your results under “Notes” on CS32.**
- **If by mail or email** - prepare a letter of inquiry for each employer and forward your letters (each with a copy of your resume (or CV)) to each employer. State clearly in your cover letters the type of position that you prefer, why you are qualified, and how you can be of value to the employer. Ask each employer for an interview. **Log your results under “Notes” on CS32.**

2.4 Move on to Step 9 below to follow up each application and, if you wish, use any of the additional job-seeking strategies.

3. **Strategy #2: Respond to help-wanted ads.** If you elect to use this strategy, do the following. If you prefer NOT to use this strategy, ignore it and move to the next strategy.

3.1 From your list of target employers on CS26 (My Target Employers), select the help-wanted ads (employers) that you want to respond to. List the name of each employer in the “Employer name:” column in the “(2) Respond to help-wanted ads -” section of CS32

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(My Employment Applications Logbook). Also, list the position desired for each employer.

- 3.2 Prepare a resume and letter of application for each employer. See the “Suggested Resources” below to create these documents. If you prefer, use [Google.com](https://www.google.com) to find other sources of information regarding how to prepare these documents.

In both your resume and cover letters, make sure you clearly indicate how you can be of value to each employer – see your comments on CS28 (My Employment Value) for clues as to how to draft this information. Make sure you indicate the benefits that the employer will gain by hiring you!

Suggested resources: (click to access)

[How to write a resume](#)

[How to have your existing resume professional reviewed and revised](#)

[How to write cover letters](#)

- 3.3 Apply for each posted position. Note the application procedure as stated in each help-wanted ad. Record the employer’s preferred method of application for each employer on CS32. If no procedure is stated in an ad, then check the employer’s website, or use the procedures below that you prefer. Follow the directions in the options you select below.

- **If by personal visit** - visit each employer and ask to speak to someone regarding the posted position. Be properly dressed and prepared to provide a copy of your resume and discuss how you can be of value to the employer. Ask for an interview. **Log your results on CS32.**
- **If by phone call** - call each company and ask to speak to someone regarding the posted position. Be ready to forward a copy of your resume (in person, via mail or email) and discuss how you can be of value to the employer. Ask for an interview. **Log your results on CS32.**
- **If by mail or email** - forward a cover letter and copy of your resume to each employer and state clearly in your cover letter the name of the position that you are applying for, why you are qualified, and how you can be of value to each employer. Ask for an interview. **Log your results on CS32.**

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3.4 Move on to Step 9 below to follow up each application and, if you wish, use any of the additional job-seeking strategies.

4. **Strategy #3: Complete an application form.** If you elect to use this strategy, do the following. If you prefer NOT to use this strategy, ignore it and move to the next strategy.

4.1 From your list of target employers on CS26 (My Target Employers), select those employers for whom you would like to complete an application form for employment. You could use this strategy to apply for positions advertised or for consideration when future positions become available. List the name of each employer in the “Employer name:” column in the “(3) Complete an application form -” section of CS32 (My Employment Applications Logbook). Also, list the position desired for each employer.

4.2 Contact each company to determine the preferred procedure for completing an application form. Options include in-person, online, via mail or email. Note, the proper procedure may be posted on the employer’s website or in a help-wanted ad posted by an employer.

Use these resources below for information on how to fill out a job application form.

[How to complete a job application form](#)

[How to complete an online job application form](#)

If there is a section on the application form where you can enter information about your qualifications, make sure you state how you can be of value to the employer – use the information you posted on CS28 (My Employment Value) to word this information.

Follow the stated procedure and complete the application form. **Log your results on CS32.**

4.3 Move on to Step 9 below to follow up each application and, if you wish, use any of the additional job-seeking strategies.

5. **Strategy #4: Attend a Job Fair.** If you elect to use this strategy, do the following. If you prefer NOT to use this strategy, ignore it and move to the next strategy.

5.1 From your list of target employers on CS26 (My Target Employers), decide which employers you would like to meet at a Job Fair.

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5.2 Contact each employer and ask if they plan to participate in an upcoming Job Fair. If so, get the details regarding when and where the Job Fair will be held, and what job seekers should do to prepare for the fair, such as dress code, documents, etc.

If the employer is not scheduled to participate in an upcoming Job Fair, select a different strategy of applying for employment.

5.3 Prepare for the Job Fair. Use the resources below to prepare for each job fair:

[How to prepare for a Job Fair](#)

[How to write a resume](#)

[How to have your existing resume professional reviewed and revised](#)

[How to write cover letters](#)

5.4 Attend each Job Fair. Meet with each employer and be prepared to discuss how the employer can benefit from hiring you. Ask for an application form if qualified for the position. Complete the application as directed. **Log your results on CS32.**

5.5 Move on to Step 9 below to follow up each application and, if you wish, use any of the additional job-seeking strategies.

6. Post your resume online. If you elect to use this strategy, do the following. If you prefer NOT to use this strategy, ignore it and move to the next strategy.

Note: this option is for job seekers who prefer to post a resume online and wait for employers to contact them. It’s an indirect way of applying for employment. It’s not the best or most successful strategy, but sometimes it does work.

6.1 Visit several online resume banks (see sample list below) and upload your resume. Record your activity on CS32 (My Employment Application Logbook) under section “(5) Post your resume online.”

[CareerBuilder.com](#)

[Glassdoor.com](#)

[Indeed.com](#)

[Monster.com](#)

[ZipRecruiter.com](#)

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In your resume, make sure you clearly indicate which type of position you’re looking for, and how you can be of value to employers – use your comments on CS28 (My Employment Value) as clues to the wording of this information. Clearly state the benefits the employer will gain by hiring you.

Note: there are other resume posting services that you may wish to use, including services dedicated solely to your field of employment. Use [Google.com](https://www.google.com) to find additional resume banks.

6.2 If you receive contact from an employer, follow the employer’s instructions regarding how to apply for employment. Log this information on CS32.

6.3 Move on to Step 9 below to follow up each application and, if you wish, use any of the additional job-seeking strategies.

7. **Strategy #6: Register with an employment service.** If you elect to use this strategy, do the following. If you prefer NOT to use this strategy, ignore it and move to the next strategy.

The following organizations (see below) are dedicated to helping job seekers find employment and often act as an intermediary between employers and job seekers. By using these services, you can often be introduced to employers and employment opportunities that you might otherwise not find on your own, as some employers only use these services when seeking new hires.

7.1 Using the following services find organizations that can help you find employment. List your selected services on CS32 (My Employment Applications Logbook) under section “(6) Register with an employment service.”

- **State employment services**

Visit [CareerOneStop.org](https://www.careeronestop.org) to find state employment services (aka Job Centers) in your area.

- **Private employment agencies**

Visit [BestOfStaffing.com](https://www.bestofstaffing.com) to find private employment agencies in your field.

- **Private recruiting firms**

Visit [OnlineRecruitersDirectory.com](https://www.onlinerecruitersdirectory.com) and [RecruitersConnection.com](https://www.recruitersconnection.com) to find private recruiting firms.

- **Your college Career Center**

Contact the Career Center affiliated with the college(s) that you attended.

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7.2 When an employer or position is referred to you from the use of this strategy, use the application strategy suggested by the employment service or employer to apply for employment. Otherwise, check the employer’s website for application directions. If no strategy is suggested, use the strategies you prefer. **Log your results on CS32.**

Whichever strategy you use, make sure you indicate to each employer the position you desire and how you can be of value to each employer – refer to the information you recorded on CS28 (My Employment Value) for clues to drafting this information.

7.3 Move on to Step 9 below to follow up each application and, if you wish, use any of the additional job-seeking strategies.

8. Strategy #7: Ask your family, friends, and personal contacts for referrals and personal introductions. If you elect to use this strategy, do the following. If you prefer NOT to use this strategy, ignore it and move on to any of the other strategies.

8.1 Contact each of your family members, friends, and personal contacts and ask them if they would be willing to refer you to employment opportunities with which they are familiar (that match your career goal and mission) or may become aware of in the future. Also, ask them if they would be willing to personally walk your resume into their company (if their company hires the kind of position that matches your career goal).

Make sure you share with each contact how you can be of value to employers!

Record your activities on CS32.

8.2 If you identify potential employers from the use of this strategy, use the application strategy suggested by the employer to apply for employment – don’t forget to check the employer’s website for application directions. If no strategy is suggested, use the strategies you prefer. **Log your results on CS32.**

Whichever strategy you use, make sure you indicate to each employer the position you desire and how you can be of value to each employer – refer to the information you recorded on CS28 (My Employment Value) for clues to the wording of this information. Ask for an interview to discuss how you can be of value.

8.3 Move on to Step 9 below to follow up each application and, if you wish, use any of the additional job-seeking strategies.

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9. Follow-up!

In today’s world, it is common not to immediately hear back from employers when you have inquired or applied for employment. This may be due to the fact that the employer has been flooded with applications and needs more time to respond to each person. It may also indicate that the employer is waiting to see who follows up as a means of measuring the appropriateness of each applicant. And, worst yet, some employers simply do not respond to applications of employment, especially those not suited to their needs.

If you don’t get a response, it is your responsibility to follow up! Typically, wait 3-5 business days for your inquiry or application to be processed and then call the employer to ask if your inquiry or application has been received, and whether any action has been taken on your application. Be ready to discuss which type of employment you prefer and how you can be of value to each employer. Ask for an interview to discuss these details in more depth.

If necessary, repeat this procedure for several weeks after your first contact. Record your results on CS32 (My Employment Applications Logbook). If still no response, consider this employer to be “on hold” or a “dead end” and move on to other potential employers.

10. Accept/Reject interview offers.

When you receive an invitation to an interview, do the following:

- Confirm in writing (mail or email) the date, time, and location of the interview.
- Contact the employer and ask for specifics about the interview. Who will conduct the interview? How many people will be interviewing you? What type of interview will be conducted – in person, by phone, by Internet chat? Get directions if necessary.
- Prepare for the interview – follow the directions in CS33 (Interview for Employment).
- Log your results on CS32 (My Employment Applications Logbook).

11. Evaluate and repair.

If you are not receiving any appropriate interview invitations, it could be because of something that you are doing incorrectly or not doing at all. Consider the following:

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- In your letters of inquiry or application, do you clearly state what position you’re looking for, your qualifications for the job, and how you can be of value to each employer? Are your letters professional looking and free of grammatical and spelling errors?
- Have you used too few application strategies? Are you using the most effective strategies? Should you use more strategies or different strategies?
- Have you not given your search for employment enough time? Remember, this could take days, weeks or even months to produce results.
- Are you not using the power of your personal contacts? Check with each member and ask for their advice.
- Are you making the wrong first impression?

This is where a Job Search Coach or Job Support Group can really help! It’s common for job seekers to not be aware of mistakes they are making, or activities that they are not doing at all. You often need a second pair of eyes to examine and improve your strategies.

In addition to the advice from your personal contacts, consider using a Job Search Coach or Job-Hunting Support Group to raise your success level.

If necessary, repair your strategies and try again!

To find a job search coach or support group, check with the following:

- Local college Career Center
- Local Public Employment Service
- Local Library

12. Repeat until you are successful!

It is a known fact among people who have tasted success, that persistence is a major key to achieving one’s goals – often equally important as talent, contacts, opportunity, or chance.

The importance of “sticking to it” and “not giving up” can’t be overstated. It’s an ingredient that we all can bring to bear as we seek to reach our goals. In your case, if applied continually, it may be the key factor for receiving invitations for interviews.

Don’t give up – keep trying until you get the interviews you desire!

Remember...

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Passion gets you started.

Hope keeps you going.

Persistence gets it done!

What’s your next step?

When you receive an interview invitation, move on to Task 7: CS33 (Interview for Employment) to prepare for the interview. Follow this procedure each time you receive an interview invitation.

Need more help? Visit the [Contact US](#) page at www.CareerSMARTZ.com.