**Here are five habits of successful jobseekers**:

**1. THEY ARE OPEN-MINDED**

A successful job seeker is someone who is open to new possibilities and exploration as part of their search. The benefits of openness can extend to all areas of job search. Effective job seekers evaluate potential employers not just on salary, but for work culture and opportunities for growth.

They take opportunities to network, not just for immediate job prospects, but for the purpose of connecting and learning something new.

Being open, positive and inquisitive in your search can help you find paths you haven’t yet considered or uncover opportunities in the elusive [hidden job market](http://www.youth.gc.ca/eng/topics/jobs/looking.shtml).

If a suggested job search strategy makes you uncomfortable (networking, anyone?), try not to reject it immediately. Give it a try in a low-pressure situation. For example, if the idea of doing [informational interviews](https://www.themuse.com/advice/3-steps-to-a-perfect-informational-interview) makes you break into a cold sweat, start with a networking coffee date with a friend or former colleague and see how it feels.

Speaking of which….

**2. THEY ACCEPT THAT NETWORKING IS PART OF THE DEAL**

Networking is an important part of any job search. And yet, it is still very common to spend several months of conducting exclusively online job search, competing with hundreds of applicants per posting, before turning to networking out of frustration.

Effective job seekers accept and even pursue networking early in the process, and complement their online job search with [building in-person connections.](http://quickbase.intuit.com/blog/i-think-im-networking-now-what)

**3. THEY TARGET THEIR SEARCH**

Savvy job seekers tailor their application materials. I’ve heard many people argue that this is too time-consuming, but in reality, targeting your resumé to a specific position should take less than 10 minutes.

Here’s what to focus on in that 10 minutes:

* **Highlights of qualifications:** this should be a checklist of the posted position’s most important qualifications. Don’t make the employer go digging for this information!
* **Identify**[**keywords**](https://ywcavan.org/blog/2016/02/mastering-art-online-job-application-system)in the job posting and ensure that the majority are included in your application
* Eliminate or **minimize your less relevant experience and education**

And don’t forget about your cover letter. Employers can easily tell if a cover letter is generic. Show your genuine enthusiasm and take the opportunity to show the employer what [makes you exceptional](https://ywcavan.org/blog/2015/08/bringing-heart-your-cover-letters). Show the employer that you want this job, not just any job.

**4. THEY ARE CONFIDENT**

Confidence can be very difficult to maintain during a job search when you are weathering rejection often. But taking time to develop or rebuild confidence is important: successful job seekers feel confident that what they have to potential employers is truly valuable.

Consider:

* Forming a network of fellow job seekers to reduce isolation and remind yourself that other skilled people are struggling with the same issues that you are.
* Volunteering your time to add structure to your schedule and bring back your sense of your productive, professional self.
* Acknowledge your past successes by developing accomplishment statements for your resumé and behavioral interview questions.

**5. THEY ASK FOR HELP**

Looking for work is hard to do alone. Remember that no matter how fabulous you were in your last job, it’s normal to struggle as you flex your skills for interviewing, cover letter writing and networking.

Successful job seekers don’t hesitate to reach out to family, friends, former colleagues and employment professionals for support.

You can find fresh ideas, an expanded network and help in identifying why you’re great (for free!) at WorkBC Centres. [Find your local centre.](https://www.workbc.ca/Employment-Services/WorkBC-Centres/Find-Your-WorkBC-Centre.aspx)

# **Mastering the art of the online job application system**

Monday, February 15, 2016 - 12:00

**By:**

[Chantal Rackley](https://ywcavan.org/blog/author/chantal-rackley)

**Category:**

[Community](https://ywcavan.org/blog/category/community)

**Tags:**

[Employment](https://ywcavan.org/blog/tag/employment)

If you've applied to a large company, then chances are, you’ve met with and had dealings with an online job application system, also known as an **Applicant Tracking System (ATS)** in the HR and recruitment world.

An ATS is software used by employers to help organize applications submitted to them through their website. It often begins with you, the job seeker, setting up a profile, and finishes with your uploading a resumé.

Arguably, ATSs lack the human touch, but recruiters and HR professionals at large companies and organizations say the software makes their jobs much easier. **“Without an ATS a recruiter is lost”,** says Alison Elburn, Recruitment Lead at Providence Healthcare. “In my industry vacancies can reach upwards of 80 per recruiter with each posting collecting potentially a hundred applicants. Imagine having all those resumés come to you directly and then tracking which applicants are qualified which are not.”

If you want to get that interview and meet the hiring manager in person, then the trick is to pass the ATS. Here are a few suggestions how to do just that:

## You did this for me?

Customize, customize, customize. Prepare your resumé and cover letter for that job at that company. Determine the needs of the employer and that specific role and demonstrate over and over again how you meet their needs. Show them how special you think they are.

Don’t forget your skill statements, including action verbs and keywords. Keywords are words that reflect that type of work. For example, if you are looking for an office administration position, keywords may include Microsoft, Word, Excel, typing and computer. Finally, be sure to include a strong Highlights or Qualifications section. I often refer to this section as the VIP or mini resumé section.

## Do your leg work

Doing some preliminary research will allow you to get information that will work for you. Talk to someone who works at the company or in the job itself. They can provide you with keywords and insight into the application process. For more keywords associated with that job title, you can visit the [National Occupation Classification](http://www5.hrsdc.gc.ca/NOC/English/NOC/2011/Welcome.aspx) (NOC) website.

## Time is of the essence

Once you have a fabulously customized resumé and cover letter, Elburn recommends that you set aside a good hour dedicated to the application process itself. Some ATSs want your resumé uploaded as one document, and your cover letter as another, while other systems require both documents uploaded at once. Be prepared for this.

Save your resumé and cover letter together and separate – in both MS Word format (.doc and .docx) and pdf. Many ATSs show your progress in the application and how many steps are left. Sometimes they will indicate which documents should be uploaded and which can be copied and pasted into a designated section.

Using these tips will bring you closer to the next step: the interview. It is here where you can wow them further with your presence. For tips on interviewing, read our guide to  [“How to Ace your Next Interview Using the STAR Formula”](http://ywcavan.org/blog/2015/08/how-ace-your-next-interview-using-star-formula). Now get out there and get hired!

### Final Tips

* On your resumé, organize your work experience starting from your most recent job and working back
* Headers: If you choose to put your contact details in a header at the top of your resumé, be aware that many ATSs cannot read content listed under headers. Include your contact details in the body of the MS Word document
* Use basic fonts and clear layouts (no need to get fancy)
* Complete the profile in its entirety. Without all required information, some ATSs will simply place your application on hold without submitting it, in some cases, unbeknownst to you

Chantal Rackley is a Certified Career Development Practitioner (CCDP) and career advisor at the North Shore WorkBC. She has over 11 years of advising and facilitating experience and loves (mostly) everything about her job.

If you’re looking for services and support in your job search, [*visit one of our WorkBC centres*](https://ywcavan.org/programs/employment-programs-services/workbc) to get started. All our [*employment services*](https://ywcavan.org/programs/employment-programs-services/workbc-menu-services) are FREE.