



Presented by DeVry University

## Executive Summary

### THE CAREER ADVISORY BOARD

# What the Most Successful Job Seekers Do Right

In late 2014, the Career Advisory Board's Job Preparedness Indicator study revealed a startling fact: only 7 percent of hiring managers feel that most job seekers have the right combination of skills and traits needed to fill open positions. This means that while the market is robust and candidates are flooding pipelines, a company might interview 25 people and hire no one. It's very rare that a candidate applies for whom hiring managers can check all the boxes.

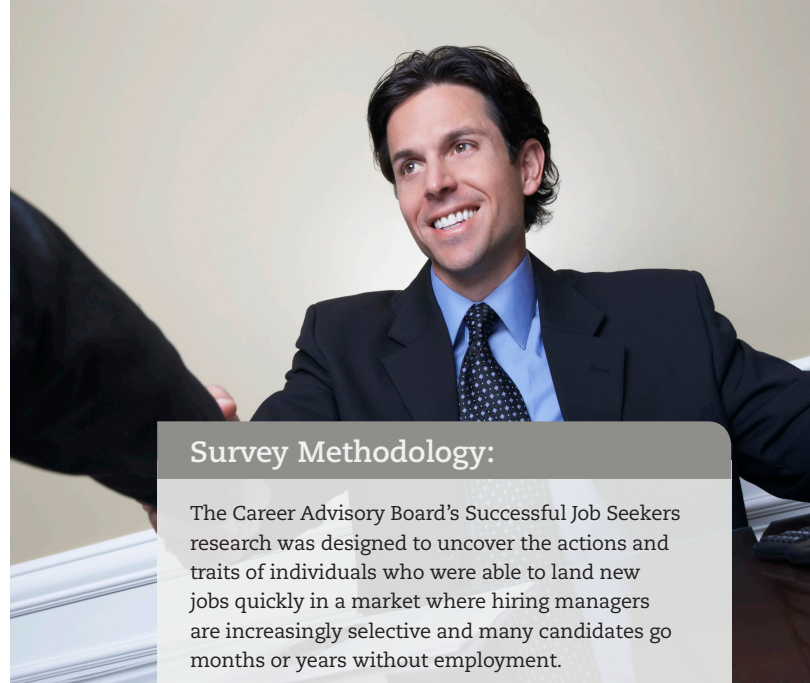
In the interest of providing actionable advice to job seekers, the Career Advisory Board set out to discover what candidates who are perceived as the "complete package" are doing in order to secure a desirable job offer. In our Successful Job Seekers research, we surveyed over 550 professionals of varying ages and in different roles and industries. Our respondents had one thing in common: they were either recruited by a desirable company and received an offer without having to search for a new job at all (referred to as passive job seekers), or they received an interview for a job they ultimately accepted less than six months after starting a search (referred to as active job seekers).

#### Career Advisory Board

Established in 2010 by DeVry University, the Career Advisory Board is comprised of leading representatives from business and academia, and recognized career experts who deliver valuable insights on today's most important career trends and provide actionable advice for job seekers. The Career Advisory Board generates original research and commentary, and creates tools, insights and resources to prepare job seekers for success. Its members include executives from DeVry University, Google, HP, IBM, and LinkedIn, as well as nationally recognized career experts.

For more information, visit <http://careeradvisoryboard.org/members>

The following report highlights the results of the research, including that the most effective candidates target, customize, and are organized and realistic about their opportunities. Now that we've learned from the best, we aim to educate the general job seeking population on improving job search efficiency and outcomes.



#### Survey Methodology:

The Career Advisory Board's Successful Job Seekers research was designed to uncover the actions and traits of individuals who were able to land new jobs quickly in a market where hiring managers are increasingly selective and many candidates go months or years without employment.

The research was conducted online within the United States by DeVry University on behalf of the Career Advisory Board in March 2015. Survey respondents included 589 U.S. professionals who had accepted a new job in the last year, and who received an interview for that role within six months of being recruited or starting a new job search.

#### ACTIVE JOB SEEKERS:

Received an interview for a job they ultimately accepted less than 6 months after starting their search.

#### PASSIVE JOB SEEKERS:

Received an interview for a job they ultimately accepted less than 6 months after being recruited internally or externally.



### Successful Job Seekers TARGET

A short and fruitful job search is apparently not the numbers game that many think it is. Active job seeker respondents, on the whole, did not apply to dozens of positions and hope to get lucky. Instead, they targeted individual companies and applied to open positions very selectively. Fifty-one percent of active job seekers applied to five or fewer positions and 66 percent applied to 10 or fewer. Ninety percent of active job seekers wanted to be at least 75 percent qualified before applying, and 41 percent wanted to be more than 90 percent qualified before applying. This discerning attitude works, as **nearly a third of active job seeker respondents received an interview for more than half the positions to which they applied.**

**51%**  
applied to 5 or fewer positions

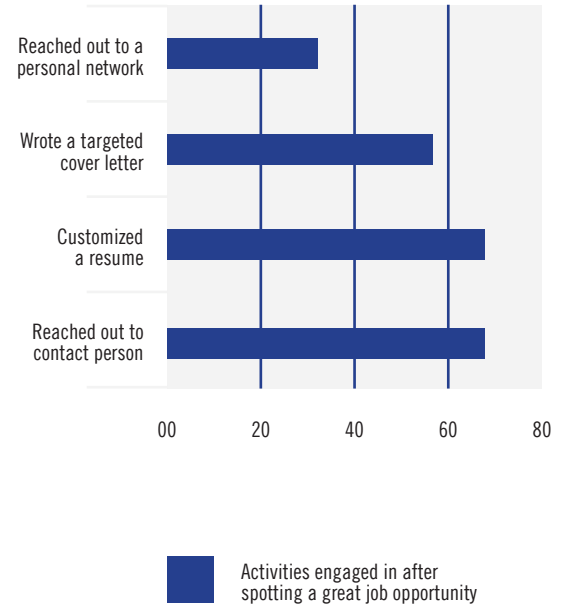
**66%**  
applied to 10 or fewer positions

**90%**  
wanted to be at least 75% qualified before applying

**41%**  
wanted to be at least 90% qualified before applying

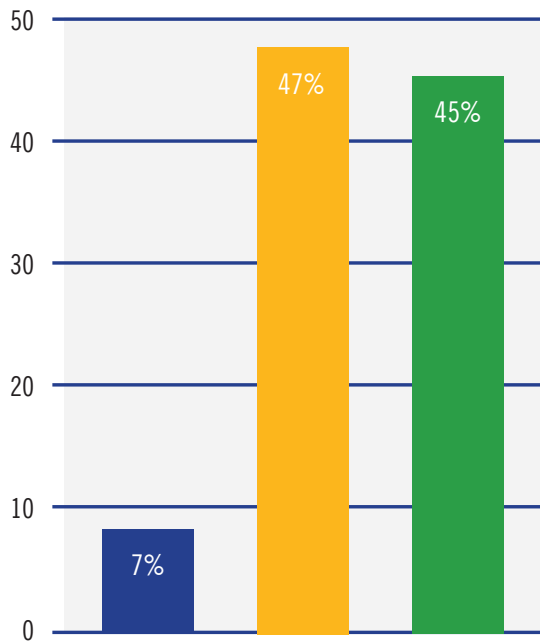
### Successful Job Seekers CUSTOMIZE

An essential tool in our respondents' arsenal was customization. Before applying, 67 percent of active job seeker respondents reached out to the contact person to inquire about the position, and 32 percent reached out to their network to get inside information on the role and company. Alongside their applications, 67 percent included a resume containing the keywords and skills listed in the job description, and 56 percent wrote an email or cover letter pertaining specifically to each open position. Once an interview had been secured, 84 percent of both active and passive job seekers updated or created a new resume for that opportunity. In preparing for individual interview conversations, 63 percent reviewed the company website, 52 percent Googled the company, 46 percent brainstormed concrete examples of how the job description matched their skill set, 28 percent talked to current employees at the company, and 26 percent Googled the interviewers.

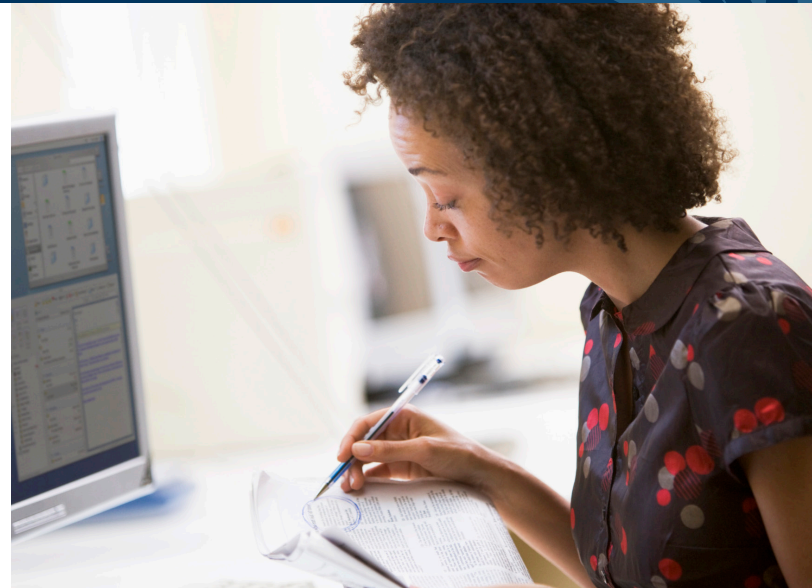


## Successful Job Seekers ORGANIZE

Organization is important to successful active job seekers: 73 percent kept files on each opportunity, 64 percent stuck to a weekly to do list, and over 50 percent used an online calendar or smartphone app to manage appointments. As one might expect, **timely follow up was critical** to securing an offer. Sixty-five percent of both active and passive respondents emailed thank you notes after an interview, 17 percent mailed hard copy thank you notes, and 16 percent called to thank the interviewer(s). They didn't follow up too much, however. While 64 percent of respondents followed up after the interview at least once, only 6 percent followed up frequently. Finally, successful seekers managed their time carefully. Though many career advisers suggest treating a search like a full-time job, most of our respondents didn't. Only 7 percent spent more than 3 hours a day on their search, 47 percent spent 1-3 hours a day, and 45 percent spent less than an hour each day.

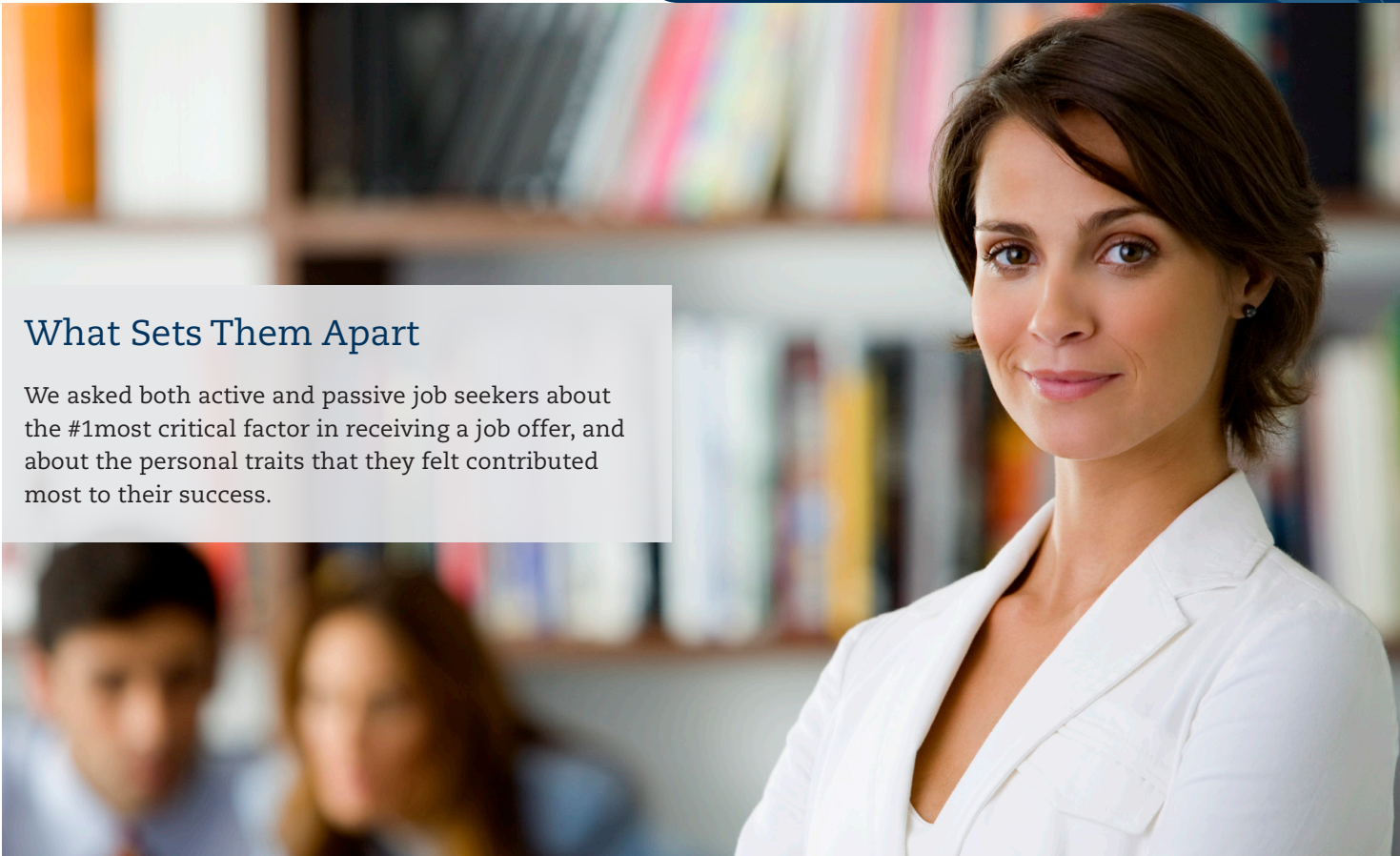


Daily hours spend on job search



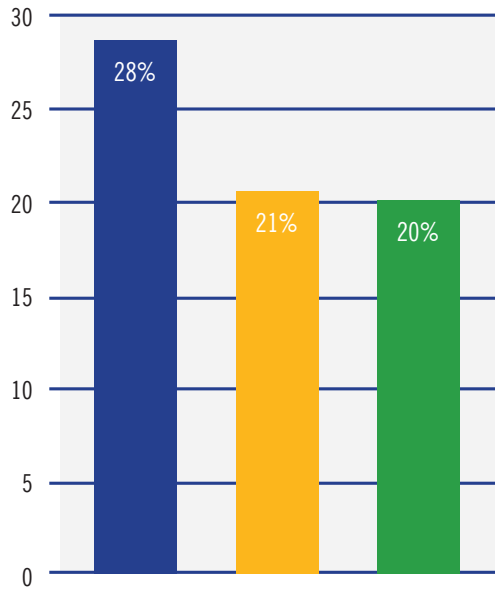
## Successful Job Seekers ARE REALISTIC

The most successful active and passive job seekers were willing to settle to some degree. **Most accepted jobs that were superior in only a few ways** (role, industry, company, geographic location). Sixty-three percent accepted roles they felt were desirable, 55 percent accepted a role at a desirable company, 51 percent accepted a role in a desirable location, and 46 percent accepted a role in a desirable industry. Only 21 percent felt they received an excellent offer, 61 percent thought the offer was good enough, and 19 percent thought the offer was not good, but they wanted the work.



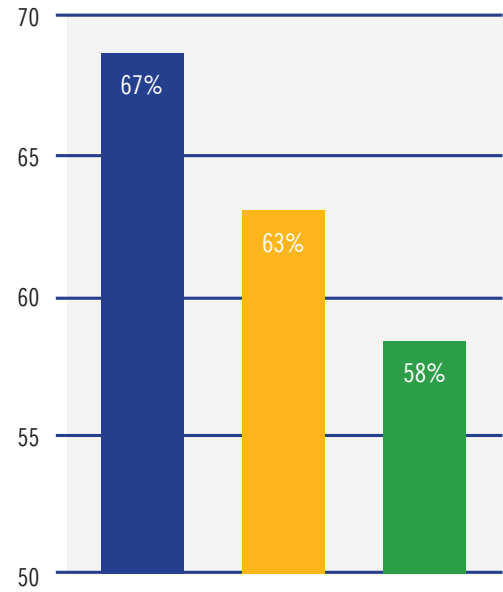
## What Sets Them Apart

We asked both active and passive job seekers about the #1 most critical factor in receiving a job offer, and about the personal traits that they felt contributed most to their success.



#1 Success Factors

- Communicated what they could offer a company
- Were willing to be flexible
- Had very marketable skills



Critical Success Traits

- Willingness to learn
- Adaptability
- Confidence

## Does Age Matter?

We were curious if older successful job seekers used different approaches than younger ones. We hypothesized, for example, that younger job seekers would make more effective use of social media, and older job seekers would be more skilled at “working the rolodex.” This was generally not the case. Successful job seekers were remarkably consistent regardless of their age or years spent working. There were, however, a few variations worth noting:

- The youngest respondents (18-26 years) spent much more time per day on job search activities as the oldest respondents (over 41 years). About 50 percent of successful seekers over age 41 spent less than an hour per day on their search, while only 23 percent of 18-26 year-olds spent this little.
- As might be expected, the youngest respondents were the most likely to jump online immediately to prepare for an interview. Nearly 62 percent of respondents ages 18-40 Googled the company while only 41 percent of respondents over age 41 did so.
- Mid-level careerists ages 27-40 were more likely to engage a coach or therapist than the youngest and oldest respondents (12 percent versus 2 percent of 18-26 year-olds and 0 percent of over 55 year-olds).
- As seekers get older, a willingness to learn becomes less of a factor in securing employment. Eighty-four percent of the youngest job seekers cited this quality as critical while only 59 percent of the oldest job seekers did.



Our respondents represented a cross section of industry and job roles. Eighty-eight percent were employed full time, while 12 percent were employed part time. Seventy-two percent were actively applying for new jobs and the remaining 28 percent were not looking when they were recruited within or outside their current company. Ten percent of respondents were ages 18-26, 45 percent were ages 27-40, 35 percent were 41-54, and 11 percent were over age 55. In terms of salary, 15 percent earned \$25-49,000 a year, 38 percent earned \$50-99,000 a year, and 32 percent earned over \$100,000 a year.

## Advice for Job Seekers

Based on the findings of the 2015 Successful Job Seekers survey, the Career Advisory Board offers the following strategies to help candidates enhance their marketability and land a desirable job more quickly.

- » **Put in the time:** Although most successful job seekers don't spend more than a few hours a day on search activities, they are meticulous in how they research, identify, and contact promising organizations. You will have better results if you concentrate on a few choice opportunities and understand what's most important to each hiring organization. Then, customize your application materials and "study" for each interview so that it's apparent that you've done your due diligence and know exactly what you can bring to the position.
- » **Use multiple touchpoints:** Our respondents employed a mix of job search techniques, ranging from occasional use to frequent use. Sixty-five percent queried their family, friends, and mentors about target companies, 60 percent Googled companies, 47 percent tapped contacts in their business networks, 42 percent attended in person networking events like one-on-one meetings, conferences, and industry gatherings, and 28 percent leveraged industry associations. The key? Spread your influence around so potential employers are more likely to hear about you and what you have to offer.
- » **Beware of a slow hiring process:** When you are waiting to hear from an employer, realize that no news is usually bad news. Our respondents' experiences showed that if employers are serious, they tend to move quickly. Seventy-five percent of successful seekers had an offer in hand less than a month after their first interview.
- » **Understand that it won't be perfect:** As we mentioned, most respondents did not accept a job that fulfilled 100 percent of their criteria. Your goal should be to secure an offer in which you generally enjoy going to work every day and have the opportunity to develop professionally and acquire new skills.
- » **Don't focus too much on social media:** Somewhat surprisingly, most of our respondents did not find opportunities directly through social media, and only 33 percent used professional network LinkedIn occasionally or frequently. The type of engagement on social networks was fairly limited as well: 43 percent used social networks to talk with employers or recruiters and 39 percent used it to research employers. Only 11 percent used social media as a vehicle to present a strong personal brand and only 8 percent used it to participate in industry-related discussions. So, social media is not a panacea for your job search woes. You should certainly have a presence, but spending hours per day on Twitter will not bring in the bulk of your interviews.
- » **Balance "going with the flow" with selling yourself:** In an interview situation, you should employ a happy medium between too informal (as if you're talking to a stranger on an airplane) and too formal (as if you are sticking to a script you prepared in advance). In terms of what they did most often in interviews, 60 percent of our respondents paused thoughtfully before answering questions, 43 percent adopted a conversational style, 39 percent listened more than they talked, and 30 percent made sure their agenda was covered in addition to the interviewer's.
- » **Be willing to improve:** Even though they are clearly doing a great deal right, successful job seekers recognized that there's always room for improvement. They were on the lookout for constructive feedback, and when they received it, 82 percent looked for ways to incorporate it into future efforts. Remember that recruiters or hiring managers who share areas for improvement are only trying to help you, so don't get defensive or shrug the comments off as one person's opinion. The most effective professionals learn from others and from their own experiences.



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