

JOB HUNTING FOR BEGINNERS

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Whether you recently graduated or have been a ICC professional world for just a little time now, establishing a strong personal brand and marketing yourself for your first or next career opportunity requires diligent planning and execution, as well as an open mind.

Personal branding in your field of endeavor means your resume, cover letters and other personal marketing materials are specifically tailored to each job you apply to and clearly explain how you are uniquely qualified. You are one of the future's technical and management leaders of the compliance and code enforcement industry. The profession you are joining as an ICC member is incredibly diverse in both scope and scale. Your early experience, training and certifications has not only prepared you as a technical professional, but as a creative enhancer, a problem-solver and professional bridge between many associated vocations and trades.

While this is a time of great optimism, it is also a time to be aware of workforce considerations and some specific challenges you will potentially face. Currently about, 36 percent of the workforce is made up of new and emerging professionals (Millennial's) like yourself. This number is expected to jump to nearly 46 to 48 percent of the workforce over the next six years. Meaning, you are emerging career-wise into a workforce of great opportunity, but also incredible competitiveness.

So in a time economically where new opportunities are often in shorter supply you will be facing a greater level of competition from other applicants. This means that job hunting and personal branding needs to be undertaken in a systematic, energetic and professional manner – one that's both creative but also directed as strongly and organized as you would carry out any planning project effort.

Marketing Materials

Let's start with the basics and get your personal marketing materials up-to-date. Review your resume and make sure it's current and presents you very professionally. If you're not sure it represents you well, ask a more senior mentor to help you or seek out a professional resume writer like those at www.sequenceresumes.com.

Your resume should be eye catching in the sense it's well laid out, includes all of your contact information at the top, it's easy to read, and incorporates key words related to the position you are applying for. Employers on both the public and private side are increasingly

using databases to store resumes and use key search terms through their Applicant Tracking Systems (ATS) related to the job they are seeking to fill to pull up resumes. Using those key words will enhance the chance your resume will pop up and be seen.

If you haven't already, develop a project list or work examples which can be incorporated into your resume at this point in your career. Just like your resume, your projects (even college completed projects) tell a story. So tell it compellingly. Include the name of the project, location, dates, your job title and role, a general description of the project (10,000 foot overview), what you specifically did, what the outcome was / the achievement, and how it contributed to the final result. Use tangible numbers and figures whenever possible. You could also include links if the project is listed online or embed/insert the link.

As for cover letters, write a specific one for each job you seek aimed directly at the position and the organization's requirements. Your cover letter is intended to complement your resume in selling your professional background and experience so it will entice the employer into calling you for an initial interview.

This is an age where more and more employers are looking for strong writing skills and written style from code compliance and enforcement professionals. A well written cover letter will tell the employer where to look in the resume that highlights your experience, knowledge and skill set that specifically matches up to the job. It will also demonstrate your writing skill and indirectly, communication abilities.

This is also the time in your career to begin putting together a portfolio that includes your notable projects list and illustrates the work you have performed thus far in the early stages of your career. In fact, the project list and portfolio, like your resume, should be constantly updated so you can send it out on a moment's notice. Think of them as living documents.

As a new professional, employers are looking for future leaders. Key attributes to being a well rounded code compliance and enforcement professional are presentation and interpersonal communication abilities. Prepare a 60-second to three minute introductory story that defines you as a brand. At Sequence, we have branded this Statement as your MVP (My Value Proposition) and have spent years perfecting the art of helping individuals develop and deliver them. These describe who you are, what you do, what you have achieved, and what your career plans entail. Practice it so when you meet new people you can recite it naturally and with ease.

Target Marketing

Make a list of the organization's you are interested in joining. Research these, getting to know the nature of their business, the key leaders, and all other relevant facts and details about the organization. Then prioritize your targets and develop a plan on how you will get your resume into the hands of the right person(s). This can be accomplished by reviewing the organization's website and through your networking contacts.

You will find a higher degree of success speaking with someone in the organization if you send your materials directly to a specific person through your networking activities. After

you send your materials, follow up within a day or two by calling that person and to see if you can find an opportunity to meet in person.

Treat your job search as a full-time occupation and / or long-term career long activity. Do your homework. Know the organization you are targeting. Be prepared and practice your introduction and your interview skills. A successful job search can't be viewed as a short-term endeavor. You need to plan for the long haul and carefully research and select the organizations where you wish to work.

As much as you are focusing on specific target organizations, also keep a certain openness should an unexpected opportunity arise. Be open to explore these because sometimes just getting your foot in the door is the change to grow into the organization. As an emerging professional, key often is to get some experience initially under your belt and establish yourself in the industry.

A solid job, even if it's not your ideal position, is better than no job because you are building experience in your field. Most entry-level or more senior professionals don't land their dream job right away. You might have to struggle and work your way up to the ideal position. Strive to learn the ropes in your present position and/or how the organization deals with situations. Also, take the opportunity when possible to learn how the organization or business operates and the processes of your chosen profession in your niche works. Eventually, the job you want will come your way.

Online Job Postings

The International Code Council host the industry's leading Job Board for postings related to the field. So viewing the site should be your first stop in looking for a potential new career or seeing if industry employers are hiring.

Job seekers can often come to overly rely on online job boards. While jobs are plentiful and easily found, competition is fierce as more and more people apply for the same position. Online job searching can be a powerful tool, but don't limit your efforts. While using online postings to find opportunities has its place, and many people do get jobs from these postings, establishing a strong personal brand and marketing yourself online and through strategic networking can prove more successful.

One reason people place so much emphasis on job hunting online is that job boards are easily accessible, postings are plentiful, and applying digitally is relatively easy. However, the big problem faced is that your resume can seemingly feel like it is going into a large black hole. There is no human interaction. Too often you don't even receive acknowledgement of receipt and you don't have anyone you can contact directly to follow up on your application.

That is why you need to take a more pro-active role in personal marketing. You need to do this both online and offline.

Marketing Online

As a ICC Member you have a powerful tool available to you through the use of the organizations website at www.iccsafe.org. Here you can create and edit your personal profiles and network with other members locally as well as nationally and internationally. It is a incredible resources to helping you network to industry peers and colleagues.

Beyond the ICC, most of us use LinkedIn, Facebook, Google+, Twitter, and perhaps other social and networking sites. Professionally, using LinkedIn is currently the most visible mechanism for building your online identity and is a valuable resource used by recruiters for organizations of all kinds. Employers are often perusing this website to actively reach out to prospective employees to recruit to their firm. So it's very important to develop an online presence to market your brand.

Create a professional profile on LinkedIn that defines your brand. While you can post your resume and list accomplishments, you can also write a profile that tells a more compelling story about yourself, and key skills and experience. There are also many other sections you can use to list skills and expertise, certifications, courses, honors and awards, languages, publications, as well as advice on how others can connect with you. Also, ask others to "recommend" you. This enhances your brand.

A note about Facebook. Though not generally viewed as a professional network like LinkedIn, employers and recruiters will look you up. Take time to consider if you should be restricting access to posts, photos and timeline events, you can control who sees what. That crazy picture from that fun night out may be funny among you and your friends, but could tarnish your brand as viewed by employers. So be thoughtful.

This also goes for tweeting. Tweets are also found on searches. Rather than tweet about what you just ate, consider tweeting about your profession – industry news and add your opinion. Also, Twitter has job postings, aggregated lists and industry-specific opportunities.

Creating a website to promote your brand is another idea to consider. There are free templates available online, free CMS sites including WordPress and Joomla make updates easy, and even Google offers a new web-based design facility which is growing quickly in popularity. With your own domain you can upload a resume, project list, portfolio and other marketing materials as well as produce an in-depth profile that puts light on your knowledge, experience and skill set.

Networking Online

LinkedIn also provides excellent online networking opportunities. Rather than submitting your resume to a job board, consider searching for people connections on LinkedIn to see who works at the company you are targeting. Then reach out to them to and invite them to connect with you. The ICC also has an active ICC Networking Section and resources on its site to help industry professionals connect online.

You can network and connect with everyone you know professionally, from friends, colleagues and associates to clients, vendors, suppliers, and others you may have in your list of contacts in your phone and computer. Connect (re-connect) with former classmates, colleagues and clients so you can build a strong, viable network that can be a valuable assistance in your job search efforts. Keep in touch with them; let them know what you are doing as well as your plans. It also provides an opportunity to get together again and touch bases. Also, use your contact settings so others will know what you are interested in and are available for, such as new career opportunities.

Email Etiquette

While you may have mastered the use of acronyms, emoticons and abbreviated words on your mobile devices, using these in professional emails is a huge mistake. When you correspond professionally via email, the use of more proper etiquette is important. It requires more formality. As does an email address. If you don't have a professional email address, get one. Doing so will polish your brand.

When corresponding, use the correct salutation rather than "Hey." Make sure you spell names correctly. For that matter check for spelling, grammar and punctuation errors. Use complete sentences. The use of a professional signature that includes your name, title, organization, address, and phone number with a professional voice mail is a good idea too. It makes it easier for the reader to communicate with you. And in this age where a missed call or inability to find contact information can lead to you being passed over for a job, it's important to provide numerous communication methods.

Networking

Don't underestimate the power in-person interaction. Individuals with strong personal networks are often never unemployed and have access to the best opportunities. In addition to networking online, you must also network personally with your peers and other professionals. These relationships can easily be developed by actively participating in professional activities, especially through professional associations. Get active in the local and state ICC chapters, and attend meetings regularly. In fact, take on leadership roles and volunteer for committees and other activities as these will bring you into more regular contact with peers.

Getting to know others and spending time with them is the most valuable networking you can develop. You can never have enough friends. You need to work at developing contacts and relationships. That's why being active in organizations is so helpful to your efforts.

Commenting in online blogs and forums can be useful, but in-person communication is often the "gold standard" for networking. At every professional gathering, take the initiative and introduce yourself to others. Make a point to meet new people at every meeting; get bold and sit with people you don't yet know so you can make new acquaintances. Exchange business cards. But remember, simply exchanging business cards is not networking. After meeting a new person for the first time, follow up in a day or two by sending an email, making a quick phone call, or even invite out for coffee or lunch.

Networking is a career lifetime activity and requires a committed effort and nurturing. Start this early in your career and it will pay off handsomely as you progress professionally. Start building your network now before you even think you might require one. It's like a savings account; when you need it you're glad you invested in it.

Get Prepared

When you are called for an interview, take time to prepare for it. Review the research you conducted on the organization, key personnel and the individual(s) you will be meeting. Where are their offices located? Who are their clients? What is their reputation in the marketplace? Where do you expect to fit into their organization? Doing what, where? Especially read the job description so you can intelligently address the qualifications and requirements. What questions should you be prepared to ask them in the interview that would demonstrate your knowledge and interest in the organization?

Modify your MVP by dissecting the job description. Write out how you specifically match up to the position and why you believe you would be a valuable addition to the team. Read it aloud so you can refine it; try to make it as short, clear and succinct as possible. Practice it so you can easily and naturally recite it. When the time comes to talk about yourself it will be second nature and you will be ready to hit a home run.