



Job Search: Looking Creative

Channel your inner creativity for job search success.

"Why do I need to be creative in my job search? I'm not an artist or designer."

In a fiercely competitive job market, job seekers often opt for unconventional methods to capture a recruiter's attention. Just Google the sandwich board job hunt, the billboard résumé, the coffee mug résumé, or the cookie résumé. While some inventive tactics do land candidates a job, there's no shortage of damaging gimmicks that lack good sense, hint at bribery, or are just plain creepy. Not surprising, many experts advise job seekers to be creative in other ways that focus on skills and substance rather than on sensationalism.

Today, blindly following the status quo will not work in a job search. Design a plan. Be "creative." "Imagine something new from something existing" to present a better "you." A fresh approach will help you do things differently, navigate your job search strategically, and go above and beyond to stand out positively and be noticed. Instead of stunts, focus on strategy. You want to avoid looking cheesy or desperate—both toxic to a job search. Incorporate some simple but effective creative approaches to stand out in the right way:

Résumés

Creative Don't: Send scented résumés with confetti

Creative Do: Find a creative approach to highlight your skills and build on your merit

Example: If making a career transition or just starting out, emphasize your relevant skills in a Summary of Skills section, or consider a skills-based résumé instead of a chronological one.

Job applications

Creative Don't: Apply 100 times to the same position; employers seek quality, not quantity

Creative Do: Create a targeted résumé and cover letter message tailored with job-pertinent specifics

Example: If you apply for a Laboratory Technician Internship and don't have a lot of work experience, write a personal cover letter summarizing a recent research project along with your findings. Present information or activities germane to the role.

Networking

Creative Don't: Play "elusive" to "stand out" and wait for someone to contact you

Creative Do: Look for new ways to meet people

Example: Volunteer; mentor; leverage your social media connections to attend or host (for example, as part of a group) industry-relevant events; invite professional contacts to meet for coffee to develop relationships.

Technology

Creative Don't: Contact a hiring manager through their personal email or social media accounts

Creative Do: Use technology creatively

Example: Create an online portfolio to showcase your projects and work; create a professional online blog or website.

Interviews

Creative Don't: Ask the employer very personal questions

Creative Do: Answer questions creatively

Example: When asked out-of-the-box interview questions like "if you could be any type of animal, what would it be?" take a new approach: use your creative mind to answer the question in a way that relates to the job. Employers ask these types of questions to assess *how* you think and *if* you can think creatively to solve a problem. Prepare: gather and save creative answers for future obscure interview questions.

Interview follow ups

Creative Don't: Camp outside of the employer's building waiting for the hiring manager to exit (can you say "stalker?")

Creative Do: Go the extra mile to keep in touch respectfully

Example: A sincere handwritten thank-you can really help you to stand out as a candidate.



i n a nutshell:

Creativity can play a major role in career success by helping you approach a job search in new ways. Ask yourself if your actions will help:

- Highlight your skills and knowledge of the industry
- Create connections and foster professional relationships
- Convey your qualifications and relevancy for the position
- Showcase transferable skills
- Demonstrate good sense and applicable originality
- * Communicate your enthusiasm and professionalism

Creativity can be subjective, so focus on tactics, not antics. When used appropriately, creativity can help you be remembered as a job search standout rather than a statistic.