

## Five Tips for the 21st Century Job Seeker

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Digital technology is already having a profound impact on how people live and work, and it's only just getting started. Not least, the world of job seekers is changing drastically. The ways in which people can discover jobs of interest, and the ways in which they can put their names forward to be considered for them, are evolving and growing at an unprecedented rate.

When I found my first job following my studies, things were simpler. A friend asked me to attend an event run by McKinsey at the Science Museum in London, very close to where I lived. The company gave a talk on careers and encouraged applications. I typed up a resumé and cover letter and sent it in by snail mail. I was invited to do some interviews and I was given a job offer. Before I attended the event, I had never heard of McKinsey. If I hadn't attended I may never have heard of them.

Organizations back then only had as much reach as they could achieve through events and print media. Talent could only interact with them in a small number of ways. Not so today. Technology has enabled companies to have almost unlimited reach to talent, and it offers multiple channels of communication between an employer and a prospective employee.

Why, then, do I see so many job seekers behaving like it's still the 1990s, banding around static resúmes direct to handfuls of employers, and waiting hopefully for that invitation to interview? With all this technology available to job seekers, there is a greater opportunity to own the entire process.

Here are my top five tips for the 21st-century job seeker.

## 1. Build a persona

For an employer, a resumé is a pretty weak insight into most people. Basically, it's an itemized list of education and employment. It's often uninspiring in format, and it doesn't convey a sense of what kind of a person you are. What engages your interest? What do you value? How do you work?

The emergence of professional social media will eventually sound the death knell of the resumé. For me, it already has - I no longer keep an updated resumé and always point people to my *LinkedIn* profile. Professional social media like *LinkedIn* allows you to communicate so much more about yourself to prospective employers - you can share content and points of view, you can participate in discussions, you can share examples of your work.

Job seekers should be focused on building their online persona via professional social media, and invest less (if any) time in writing resúmes. For more experienced job seekers, sites like *LinkedIn* are the primary source of talent for headhunters, and those who are not investing in building their professional persona are, quite simply, losing out on opportunities.

## **2. Foster a community**

Virtual communities have exploded thanks to technology. Professional communities thrive online, allowing those with common roles and interests to share experiences and opportunities irrelevant to their location.

Don't be a stranger. The bigger your community, the greater your opportunity. New roles are shared and recommendations are exchanged. Knowledge is built through learning about the latest updates or methods. Don't be shy to foster your professional community and connection. When you meet with someone of common professional interest, make sure you connect with them online. Make an effort to attend professional events or conferences where you can. You can even organize your own informal meetups or webs.

Perhaps the one thing that has been enabled by recent technology more than anything else is connected. Embrace this and seize the opportunity it provides.

### 3. Share your work

One of the most important things that employers want to determine is the quality of your work. Many of them set tests and exercises during the interview process so they can get some samples of what your work might be like. This is particularly true for careers that require an element of technical knowledge or expertise.

Not enough people share examples of their work for employers to see. If it's possible to share work you have done that is not subject to non-disclosure or confidentiality restrictions, you absolutely should. Coders can put their code on Github, writers can set up a portfolio on Google docs, thespians can load videos onto Youtube.

There is nothing more compelling to an employer than seeing cold hard proof that you do good work. Faced with this, they find it much easier to forgive interview slip-ups or to discount other reasons for dinging you. Get your content up for them to see. It's your best asset.

## 4. Be efficient

Job seeking is now one big global marketplace. Jobs are now visible to anyone anywhere. Increasingly, jobs themselves are becoming virtual, with collaboration technology allowing many jobs to be done from any connected location. In a world like this, it's becoming increasingly limiting to focus solely on direct approaches to employers.

The reality is that there's more competition for every position, but equally, there's also more opportunity to find other positions. Job seekers need to take an efficient approach to navigate this complex, global employment marketplace.

Embrace aggregation technology - job boards like *Monster* or *ZipRecruiter*. Find ways to get your persona seen by as many potential employers as possible. Job hunting can be a numbers game.

## 5. Protect your brand at all costs

Everything I have said so far adds up to one thing: build and market your personal brand. But you also need to protect that brand. Ensure that your name appears only in contexts that you are happy to be associated with. Be careful not to dilute your brand, making it harder for employers to see what you are known for and what your interests are,

Keep your personal and professional activity separate - use different forums for personal interests and communities. Google yourself regularly to ensure that any personal online activity is not getting confused with your professional identity. Finally, exercise judgment in who you get involved with professionally. Interact with others based on the quality of their persona and reputation - as they say, you are only as good as the company you keep.

Like with most things today, technology offers a massive opportunity for job seekers. Those not taking full advantage are selling themselves short. Those who are seizing the opportunity should do so carefully and with good judgment, protecting their personal brand identity above all else.

*I lead McKinsey's internal People Analytics and Measurement function. Originally I was a Pure Mathematician, then I became a Psychometrician. I am passionate about applying the rigor of both those disciplines to complex people questions. I'm also a coding geek and a massive fan of Japanese RPGs.*

*All opinions expressed are my own and not to be associated with my employer or any other organization I am connected with.*

**The post "Five Tips for the 21st Century Job Seeker" was first published by Keith McNulty here <https://www.linkedin.com/pulse/five-tips-21st-century-job-seeker-keith-mcnulty/>**

***About Keith McNulty***

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