CUSTOMLIVING SOLUTIONS

The Successful Job Seeker's Toolkit

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Table of Contents

Introduction

This document was created to help you with your job search by giving you a framework and set of templates for your communications and interview preparation. Something I've found time and again in my productivity and organizing work with clients is that when they have the right tools, getting their tasks completed is much easier than if they don't have the right tools at their disposal. The same is true with a job search – when you have easy communication templates, it's easy to send consistent emails, leave consistent voicemails, and thereby increase your chances of landing the job you want.

Of course, the templates included here are just at starting point – I encourage you to customize them so they fit you – your style, your language, and your delivery.

This document is broken down into several stages of the job search process:

- **Basic Tools** – Gathering your essential documents together
- **Research & Recommendation** – Getting a great online profile, and filling it with testimonials
- **Lead Generation** – Creating a list of people and companies for you to contact
- **Introduction and Cold Contact** – Getting connected with the people you need to talk to
- **Interview Preparation** – Making sure you have everything you'll need for a great interview
- **Interview Follow-up** – Giving thanks where thanks is due and leaving a great impression

In addition to the resources listed in this guide, I encourage you to check out the **Custom Living Solutions Productivity Toolbox** – it's filled with helpful online tools that can assist you in your job search, and keep you organized and productive once you've found the job you want! You can access the toolbox by going to http://bit.ly/cls-toolbox

I wish you great success on your search!

Best,

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Basic Tools

In this stage, you're not actively applying for positions. Rather, you're gathering all your tools and laying a solid foundation for your job search.

You'll want to make sure you have a great Resume and Cover Letter to share with people who you are approaching for potential jobs. In addition to standard .doc (Word 97-2003) format, I strongly suggest you also have a plain text (.txt) formatted version, along with one that is stored online at a site such as www.box.net, which provides free online storage for your documents. By storing your Resume online, you'll be able to avoid having to attach documents to email, and instead you can simply point interested parties to a specific web link for your Cover Letter and/or Resume.

In addition to your Cover Letter and Resume, you'll need to complete a detailed Employment History. A Resume is for sending out to the world, an Employment History is just for you. It lists private details about your various prior positions, including salary, employment positions and dates, and other essential information you'll need during the job search and negotiation process. An Employment History includes the following:

- Prior Employer Name
- Date of Hire
- Date of Completion
- Your Position/Title (at date of hire)
- Your Position/Title (at date of completion)
- Your Salary/Wage (at date of hire)
- Your Salary/Wage (at date of completion)
- Your Duties
- Your Key Contributions and Accomplishments
- Reason for Completion
- Notes

Take some time to fill out your Employment History Template as completely as possible. The idea behind this is the more information you have consolidated here, the easier it will be for you to update your resume and fill out your LinkedIn profile.

Finally, you'll want to gather a list of people who are willing to act as references for you. Include their name, title, company, and contact information. Create this list and upload it to your box.net storage area. This will make it easy for you to send it out via a web link after you've gone on your interviews.

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Research & Recommendation Stage

LinkedIn - Build Your Profile

To network effectively on LinkedIn, it's essential that you've fully completed your profile. You'll want to make sure you have the following:

- An attractive, recent headshot for your profile photo
- A fully completed employment history
- A list of contacts from your previous companies

Use your photo and employment history to completely fill out your profile. Take note of your special web address under "Public Profile" - you'll need this address later when you're sending people emails.

After you've completed filling out your LinkedIn profile, you'll want to take some time to remember the people who you know from each position and fill out your Database of Contacts with their names and contact information (at least as much information as you have).

LinkedIn - Ask for Recommendations

One of the goals of fully filling out your LinkedIn profile is to make it easy for you to get recommendations. Having recommendations on your LinkedIn profile adds credibility to your profile and makes you more attractive to potential employers. Make sure you have every single position and company that you worked at (well, at least the ones you want to share with the world) listed on your profile.

Using your list of contacts that you generated from each company in your Database of Contacts, search for each of those people on LinkedIn and ask to connect with them. Once a connection has been made, you can them ask them for a recommendation and offer them one.

Use the script "LinkedIn - Template for Asking for Recommendations" if you have trouble finding what to say.

Hi NAME,

I hope you are doing well! You and I worked together at XYZ COMPANY, when I was a NAME OF YOUR POSITION and you were a NAME OF THEIR POSITION. I really enjoyed working with you there!

I'm wondering if you wouldn't mind writing a brief recommendation for me about my work at XYZ COMPANY. Of course, I'd be happy to do the same for you. As a reminder, some of my key contributions to XYZ COMPANY were:

- CONTRIBUTION / KEY ACCOMPLISHMENT
- CONTRIBUTION / KEY ACCOMPLISHMENT
- CONTRIBUTION / KEY ACCOMPLISHMENT

Please let me know if I can be of any help, and I thank you in advance for yours!

Sincerely,

YOUR NAME
YOUR EMAIL ADDRESS
YOUR PHONE NUMBER
YOUR LINKEDIN PROFILE ADDRESS

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Lead Generation Stage

At this point, you've hopefully reconnected with some of your old colleagues and co-workers, and have added a bunch of recommendations to your LinkedIn profile. Now it's time to start researching the companies you're interested in and generating lists of contacts at these companies.

Some resources to help you research companies (and there are many, many more online:

http://www.crunchbase.com/
http://www.company.monster.com/
http://www.hoovers.com/

Additionally, you can use a tool like the free Evernote (www.evernote.com) to keep track of information you collect about each company and position that you're interested in. You'll need this information later as you go on your interviews.

Once you've found some companies you're interested in, you can use your LinkedIn network to try and make connections with people. At this stage though, your main task is to just generate your list of potential contacts at these companies. You'll make the connections in the next stage. For now, just use your Database of Leads document and fill out the spreadsheet with the companies and positions you're interested in.

Introduction and Cold Contact Stage

So you've spent time building out your LinkedIn profile, you've done your research on different companies, and you've built your list of contacts. You're now ready to get in touch and start generating some interviews! As you connect with people, update your Database of Leads document with information about the status of each lead.

Reconnect with Old Colleagues and Connections

One great source for access to the "hidden job market" - unadvertised jobs that haven't yet been posted - is to connect with your network and let them know what type of positions you're looking for. It's critical to let people know that you're looking, even if you haven't connected with them in awhile. Getting back on their radar is critical. Use the "Reconnection Email" to rekindle those relationships, particularly for the people who you haven't already connected with on LinkedIn.

> Hi NAME,
>
> I hope you are doing well! You and I worked together at XYZ COMPANY, when I was a NAME OF YOUR POSITION and you were a NAME OF THEIR POSITION. I really enjoyed working with you there!
>
> I want to let you know that I am currently looking for TYPE OF POSITION at TYPE OF COMPANY. My qualifications are QUALIFICATION, QUALIFICATION, QUALIFICATION.
>
> Please keep me in mind as you're interacting with any of your collogues throughout the day, and feel free to connect me with anyone you think would be helpful for me to chat with. Also, if you'd like to chat a bit more about what I'm looking for and the value that I offer, please feel free to contact me.
>
> Thanks in advance for your help, and let me know if I can help you in any way!
>
> Sincerely,
>
> YOUR NAME
> YOUR EMAIL ADDRESS
> YOUR PHONE NUMBER
> YOUR LINKEDIN PROFILE ADDRESS

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Ask for Referrals

When you want to be referred by one of your connections to someone at a company that you're interested in, you'll need a process for doing so.

First, you'll want to send an email to your contact and ask for the referral. You'll use the "Referral - Introductory Email" to make the initial connection. In this email, you'll be giving them the tools they will need to properly introduce you, including your contact information and why you'd be a good fit at the company you're interested in.

> Hi NAME,
>
> I hope you are doing well!
>
> As you know, I'm currently looking for TYPE OF POSITION. One of the companies I'm exploring is XYZ COMPANY. I noticed that you're connected with/know NAME OF PERSON at XYZ COMPANY, and am hoping you'll introduce me to them.
>
> I think I'd be a perfect fit for TYPE OF POSITION at XYZ COMPANY because REASON, REASON, REASON. By introducing me to NAME OF PERSON, you'll be helping me connect to a position where I can add real value.
>
> Thanks in advance for your help, and let me know if I can help in any way!
>
> Sincerely,
>
> YOUR NAME
> YOUR EMAIL ADDRESS
> YOUR PHONE NUMBER
> YOUR LINKEDIN PROFILE ADDRESS

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Thanking Your Referrer

Once someone has made a connection for you - regardless of how it turns out, you owe them your thanks. You'll also want to update them as to the status of your referral. It's best to send a handwritten note or card, and in addition you'll want to send them an email. Use the "Referral - Thank-You Email" script for the email that you'll be sending.

> Hi NAME,
>
> I hope you are doing well!
>
> Thank you so much for introducing me to NAME OF PERSON at XYZ COMPANY. I really appreciate you taking the time to make the connection!
>
> Currently, NAME OF PERSON and I are DESCRIBE THE CURRENT STATUS OF THE CONNECTION.
>
> Thanks again for your help, and I'll keep you posted!
>
> Sincerely,
>
> YOUR NAME
> YOUR EMAIL ADDRESS
> YOUR PHONE NUMBER
> YOUR LINKEDIN PROFILE ADDRESS

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Following-up with Your Referrer

It's essential to good networking and just being polite that you update your referrer as to the outcome of the introduction they made for you. Use the "Referral - Follow-Up Email" script for the email that you'll use to update your referrers.

> Hi NAME,
>
> I hope you are doing well!
>
> Thanks again for introducing me to NAME OF PERSON at XYZ COMPANY. I want to let you know how everything turned out.
>
> Currently, NAME OF PERSON and I are DESCRIBE THE OUTCOME OF THE CONNECTION.
>
> I really appreciate your help and taking the time to make the connection for me. Feel free to let me know if I can be of any help to you in the future.
>
> Sincerely,
>
> YOUR NAME
> YOUR EMAIL ADDRESS
> YOUR PHONE NUMBER
> YOUR LINKEDIN PROFILE ADDRESS

Cold Introductions

It's ideal to have someone to refer you to a contact at a company that you're interested in, but of course that won't always be possible. You'll need a different approach when you are contacting a "cold" lead - that is, someone whom you don't know at all and have no connections to.

> Hi NAME,
>
> I'd like to introduce myself to you and express my interest in the NAME OF POSITION at XYZ COMPANY.
>
> I think I'd be a perfect fit for TYPE OF POSITION at XYZ COMPANY because REASON, REASON, REASON.
>
> I'd love the opportunity to chat with you about how I can add value to XYZ COMPANY. I'm available to talk at DATE, TIME and DATE, TIME. If you have other times that work better for you, please let me know.
>
> To review my resume, please visit YOUR BOX.NET RESUME LINK.
>
> Thanks in advance for your time, and I look forward to connecting with you!
>
> Sincerely,
>
> YOUR NAME
YOUR EMAIL ADDRESS
YOUR PHONE NUMBER
YOUR LINKEDIN PROFILE ADDRESS

Connecting Via Phone

Once you've made a connection with a contact at a company (whether through a cold introduction or a referral), it's time to set up an appointment for an interview. It's likely that you'll run into one of the following three scenarios - their voicemail, their gatekeeper, or reaching them live.

Tip - Sometimes the easiest way to reach someone live is to call outside of business hours, when their gatekeeper isn't around to answer the phone.

Tip – If you do reach someone live, never assume that it's a convenient time for them to talk with you. Instead, your goal is to set another appointment or interview time with them.

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You reach their voicemail:

Hi NAME,

My name is NAME, I'm contacting you regarding how I can add value to XYZ COMPANY in the NAME OF POSITION.

I'd love the opportunity to chat with you. I'm available to talk at DATE, TIME and DATE, TIME. If you have other times that work better for you, please let me know.

You can reach me at XXX-XXX-XXX, again that is XXX-XXX-XXX. Please provide a couple times when I can call you back, or if you prefer NAME, you can respond to the email I'm sending you.

Looking forward to speaking with you, and I hope you have a great day.

Bye.

You reach their gatekeeper (secretary, assistant, office manager):

Hi, I'd like to speak to NAME OF CONTACT.

[They will probably ask you if you have an appointment or if your call is expected, and will likely rebuff your request.]

I'm calling in regards to the NAME OF POSITION, and I'm following up on an email I sent to NAME OF CONTACT.

Here are three times when I'm available to speak with NAME OF CONTACT, DATE, TIME and DATE, TIME, and DATE, TIME. If none of those work, when might they be available?

[Hopefully they'll give you an appointment]

NAME OF CONTACT can reach me at XXX-XXX-XXX, again that is XXX-XXX-XXX. Thank you, and have a great day.

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You reach them live:

Hi, I'd like to speak to NAME OF CONTACT.

Hi NAME OF CONTACT, I'm calling in regards to the NAME OF POSITION, and I'm following up on an email I sent to you on DATE OF INITIAL EMAIL.

If now isn't a convenient time for you to chat, when might you be available? Here are three times when I'm available: NAME OF CONTACT, DATE, TIME and DATE, TIME, and DATE, TIME.

[Hopefully they'll give you an appointment]

Would you prefer to chat in person? I'd be happy to come to your office.

[Hopefully they'll want to meet with you in person, if not, try to set a phone appointment]

Thanks NAME OF CONTACT. I'll look forward to meeting with you / talking with you on DATE/TIME. You can reach me at XXX-XXX-XXX, again that is XXX-XXX-XXX. Thank you, and have a great day.

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Interview Preparation Stage

Congratulations! You've secured an interview. Now you need to get ready to do your very best when you actually meet the people who are going to be conducting it.

Remember in the Lead Generation Stage where you collected all the information on the companies that you were interested in? This is where you start really putting it to use. For each company that you have an interview with, you'll want to make sure you have all of your research collected in the Interview Preparation document, which will include the following information:

Company Summary (One Page for Interview)

Background information on the Company
- Date of founding
- Mission statement
- Main products/services
- Types of clients/customers
- Company policies/work environment

Background information on Board / Key Stakeholders / Staff
- Team members
- Team you'd be working with

Financial Documents & Reports
- Annual reports
- Financials from company's website
- Financials from news sites (if relevant)

Follow-up Questions / Research
- What are your unanswered questions?

By taking the time to fully prepare your background research, you'll go into the interview confident and ready to not only answer questions about yourself, but ask questions about how you can best help the company reach its goals.

In addition to having prepared your Interview Prep document, you'll also want to make sure you bring a several copies of your Cover Letter and Resume with you to the interview. Although it's likely that the interviewer will have your electronic resume, it's a nice touch to bring your printed information, especially if it's on nice paper. It's these extra things that people remember.

It's also a good idea to have prepared a written list of references, and have a printed copy (also on nice paper) and bring that with you to the interview. You can prepare these from your LinkedIn recommendations, showing not only the recommender's name, but also their title and position. Your list of references is essentially your own personal testimonials page.

If you have references who are willing to be contacted, you can also prepare a list of those people, along with their contact information, to give to your interviewer. Of course, you'll probably also give these in an electronic version, but the nice printed version can add a touch of class.

Interview Follow-up Stage

Once you've completed your interviews, regardless of how they went you'll want to thank both the people who interviewed you and the people who referred you to the interview (if applicable).

In addition to a nice handwritten note or card, which you should ALWAYS do, you'll want to follow-up via email, first to the people who interviewed you and then to the people who referred you.

For the people who interviewed you, you'll want to reiterate (briefly) why you're interested in and qualified for the position, as well as what you have to offer. You'll also want to make sure you point them towards your online resume, as well as your list of references.

To the interviewers:

> Hi NAME,
>
> Thank you so much for meeting with me and helping me learn about how I can add value at XYZ COMPANY. I really appreciate you taking the time to chat with me!
>
> As we discussed, I think I'd be a perfect fit for NAME OF POSITION at XYZ COMPANY because REASON, REASON, REASON. I can see myself helping XYZ COMPANY reach its goals by POTENTIAL CONTRIBUTION, POTENTIAL CONTRIBUTION, and POTENTIAL CONTRIBUTION.
>
> If you'd like to review my resume, you can access it online at BOX.NET RESUME LINK
>
> And to view my list of references online, just go to BOX.NET REFERENCES LINK
>
> Please let me know if there's any other information you need.
>
> I'm looking forward to continuing our conversation!
>
> Sincerely,
>
> YOUR NAME
> YOUR EMAIL ADDRESS
> YOUR PHONE NUMBER
> YOUR LINKEDIN PROFILE ADDRESS

To the referrer:

Hi NAME,

Thank you so much for referring me to NAME OF CONTACT at XYZ COMPANY. I really appreciate you taking the time to make the connection!

I have recently completed my interview process with XYZ COMPANY, and am looking forward to hopefully joining their team! I will keep you posted as to my progress.

Again, I really appreciate your support. Please let me know if there's any way I can support you!

Sincerely,

YOUR NAME
YOUR EMAIL ADDRESS
YOUR PHONE NUMBER
YOUR LINKEDIN PROFILE ADDRESS

When you do secure a position, a very thoughtful thing to do is to send the referrer a thank-you gift, along with a handwritten card. This is a token of your appreciation, as without them, you may never have been able to get this position!

Conclusion

Hopefully, by staying organized and methodically generating and following up on leads, you'll be able to land a position that you're excited about and where you can really shine. But that's just the beginning.

If you've completed the steps outlined in this Toolkit, you've made many new connections and have reconnected with old colleagues that you may not have been in touch with in some time. I strongly encourage you to keep those connections alive – and now that you have a solid network on LinkedIn, it should be pretty easy to do so. Stay in the conversation with your network – you never know when someone might ask a question that you have a perfect answer for, or when you could add value to someone else's job search!

Please feel free to add me to your LinkedIn network – I'm at http://www.linkedin.com/in/joshuazerkel

To your success,

Joshua Zerkel, CPO®
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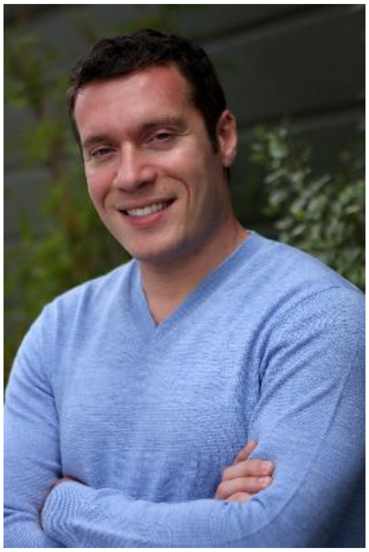
About the Author



Joshua Zerkel, Productivity Strategist, is a Certified Professional Organizer® and the founder of Custom Living Solutions, the San Francisco Bay Area's premier productivity and organizing consulting firm. Josh was also the 2008-2010 President of the San Francisco Bay Area Chapter of the National Association of Professional Organizers. Josh specializes in helping entrepreneurs and small businesses find easy ways to get control of their space, information, time, and technology so they can reduce stress and boost their productivity – and their profits.

Josh has been featured in various media, including CBS News, ABC News, the San Francisco Chronicle and Examiner, Organize Magazine, Online Organizing, and many others, is a regular columnist on the Franklin Covey website, and is a part of the Neat Fleet from the Neat Company. Josh is also a popular organizing instructor in the San Francisco business community, speaking to small and large companies about the different techniques they can use to optimize efficiency and productivity in their work environment so they can serve more clients and make more money.

Although he doesn't consider himself freakishly organized, Josh does admit to spending some of his free time alphabetizing his comic books and fixing the tags on his MP3 collection.

For more of Josh's practical productivity and organizing tips, sign up for the Custom Living Solutions newsletter at http://www.customlivingsolutions.com or call 415-830-6345.

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