



## Things To Do

by Debbie Harper

# Before You Start Your Job Search

*Whether you're actively looking or just want to be prepared when opportunity knocks, this is a great time to review your current career status, document accomplishments and update your resume.*

*To help you get started, we've prepared a list of **7 Things To Do Before You Start Your Job Search**. Some of them are no-brainers and others will require some serious thought.*

### Lay the Groundwork

- Define what you're looking for. What does your ideal next opportunity look like? Determine what's important to you, and the criteria you'll use to make a decision. It's unusual for multiple offers to come in at the same time.
- Have the "career talk" with your current management. Discuss growth options, career progression and future compensation opportunities. Perhaps your best next career step is to stay with your current company.
- Reconnect with your references. Confirm their contact information as well as their willingness to speak on your behalf.
- Clean up your online presence. Anything out there is fair game. Google yourself. Make sure there's nothing on Facebook you wouldn't want a prospective boss to see.
- If relocation is an option, sit down with your realtor and your banker before you search outside the area. Assess your home's salability and likely time on the market. Understand your equity and credit worthiness so you'll be prepared to evaluate your options in other parts of the country. International relocation adds a level of complexity. Spend some time on the expatriot sites and forums to understand those unique challenges and opportunities.

### Build Your Network

- Increase your participation in professional organizations relevant to your industry. Join the board, head a committee, and get your name out there as a player in your industry.
- Update your LinkedIn profile and put a plan in place to expand your network as quickly as possible. Check out your profile on social media. Decide which of the many other networking sites you're going to use.
- Follow and retweet industry notables on Twitter.
- Make it easy for people to find you. Use relevant key words in your profiles and include a means of contacting you.



### Know Your Value Proposition

- Compile documentation that will verify your accomplishments and business impact, recognition awards, promotions and reviews.
- Outline your background from a feature/benefit perspective. How will your experience benefit a new firm? Be prepared to give examples – short stories to illustrate your accomplishments.
- Update your resume. Make it heavy on quantifiable accomplishments. Include examples of times you've made money, saved money or improved a process.
- Save your resume as "Your Name.doc" so the recipient can find it easily. Most resumes are scanned and parsed into a database so keep your formatting simple. Include relevant key words and phrases.

*continued*

*Harper Hewes Executive Search is a trusted partner to companies ranging from startups to Fortune 500 corporations. We are headhunters. We build high performance leadership, professional services, consulting and sales teams for software, technology services and consulting companies. The companies we recruit for – our clients – provide technology based solutions to their customers. We recruit the talent – the people who sell, architect and implement those solutions.*



## Things To Do Before You Start Your Job Search

### Logistics

- Set up a personal email to use in your job search. Think about your image – no cutesy names like Partyanimal@xxx.com and snugglyskibunny@yyy.com. Set up your email account to show your first and last name in the “from” of your emails, not your email address. This makes it easier for the recipient to sort and find your emails easily. Do not conduct a search from your work email address.
- Always use an email signature with your complete contact information, including your email address and preferred phone number. It makes it easier for the recipient to grab the info.
- Use a phone number that rolls to voice-mail if you’re on the phone – you never want a busy signal or call waiting beep. Use the same number on all of your job search documents and emails.
- Re-record your voicemail message. It should be professional and upbeat sounding. No music, barking dogs or kids.
  - Start saving vacation and personal days for interviews. Leave some openings in your calendar for phone screens.
  - Try on your “lucky” interview suit – especially if you spend your life in business casual. Make sure it’s clean and pressed, fits and you still feel like a million bucks when you wear it. And remember to polish your shoes!



### Strategize

- Plan your strategy. Identify target companies and industries, and look for contacts and connections for networking.
- Create job search agents on the big boards and aggregators, so you’ll be alerted to positions that meet your criteria. Don’t post your resume unless you’re already unemployed.
- Research associations and niche boards that focus on your industry. Many have job postings or will allow you to post a blinded version of your resume.
- Set up a system to track your job search –where you’ve sent your resume, who you’ve spoken with, when you need to follow up. It can be a spreadsheet, a database or even a list.

### Rehearse

- Practice your elevator pitch.
- Brush up on interview techniques. Prepare and rehearse your answers to the perennial interview questions: “Tell me about yourself.” “Why are you looking?” “Why should we hire you?” “What are your compensation requirements?”
  - If you’ve been fired or let go prepare a one sentence explanation that is succinct and brief. Practice saying it out loud until you can state it clearly, without emotion or defensiveness. This is important. Nothing derails an interview faster than whining about how you’ve been mistreated.

### Financial Considerations

- Dig out and review your employment agreement and / or non-compete. Understand your liabilities, obligations and limitations. Schedule a review with your attorney if you’re unclear.
- Review stock options and 401K vesting schedules. Review and confirm bonus and commission payout plans and schedules. When you leave a company you’re likely to leave some money on the table but your timing can minimize the impact.
- Check the status of your flex spending and health savings accounts. Maybe you need to have that Lasik procedure before you change jobs?

**And remember to call your recruiter - aren't you glad you've always stayed in touch?**



*Debbie Harper has over 20 years experience in executive search, recruitment and consulting, and is one of the first fifty practitioners in the industry to earn Certified Employee Retention Specialist (CERS) status. In 1993 she founded Harper Hewes Executive Search, [www.harperhewes.com](http://www.harperhewes.com).*

585-321-1700

[www.harperhewes.com](http://www.harperhewes.com)

[linkedin.com/in/harperhewes](https://www.linkedin.com/in/harperhewes)

[twitter.com/debharperhewes](https://twitter.com/debharperhewes)

[debbie.harper@harperhewes.com](mailto:debbie.harper@harperhewes.com)