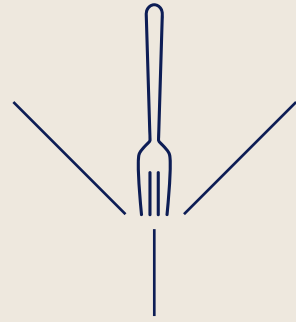


A Fork in the Road

The KennedyFitch guide
to figuring out your next step
in your career



"A FORK IN THE ROAD"

-

A METAPHOR,
FOR A DECIDING MOMENT
IN LIFE WHEN A CHOICE
BETWEEN
PRESENTED OPTIONS
IS REQUIRED

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THE PURPOSE OF THIS GUIDE

In our work, we have daily conversations with people about their careers. And, whilst there is a wealth of information and resources available on how to figure out your ideal job, craft a CV, and prepare for interviews, we have found what people ask most about is the active job search. Once you have figured out what you want, then what are your next steps? How do you position yourself in the job market? How do you find out about opportunities? How do you broaden your network?

So, we decided to share some of our experience and knowledge to help you in exactly these phases – from activating your job search to entering into the interview process. Whether you are looking for a new opportunity out of choice or circumstance, the purpose of this guide is to help find the right approach for you, backed up with advice and recommendations to boost the success of your search.

But before we delve into each of the phases, we'd like to share one key piece of advice that applies to the entire process: **Make sure you have support from family, friends and/or a coach.**

Making that next career move is a combination of hard work (you) and luck (a job opening), which means it can be daunting and frustrating at times. If you are looking for a job whilst working, it can bring a lot of stress to fit it into your free time. And, if you are without a job, financial and reputational worries can keep you awake at night. Add onto that the fact that nobody likes rejection – and it is bound to be part of the process. So, make sure you have the support you need to fuel your resilience during this journey because it is also an opportunity for rich personal growth.

LEAD YOUR JOURNEY TO THE RIGHT PLACE



- ✓ Define Your Job Search Strategy
- ✓ Clarify Your Positioning
- ✓ Leverage Your Network
- ✓ Approach Your Network Strategically
- ✓ Set Clear Goals for Networking Conversations
- ✓ Craft an Elevator Pitch
- ✓ Prepare for Interviews
- ✓ Utilize Online Platforms Effectively
- ✓ Conduct Due Diligence on Potential Employers
- ✓ Maintain and Grow Your Network

WHAT
KIND OF
JOBSEEKER
ARE YOU?

What kind of jobseeker are you?

I am still employed but actively looking

If you are looking to change jobs, think about who you might want to tell within your company. Not being too secretive about it makes it a lot easier and could also open up conversations about opportunities within your company that you are not aware of.

If your goal is to progress your career in a sustainable way, try to think beyond your next step. Think of two steps or roles ahead and analyse how the next step could be a stepping stone on the path to your goal. Your next role needn't always be a formal promotion or lead to something 'bigger' – bigger title, team, P&L, geography, etc.

I am happily employed but curious

Try adopting the mindset that you are always on the (internal and external) market for a job and spend some time on your career every day. And, be open to opportunities when they present themselves if they appeal to you, even if you don't consider yourself to be on the market. If someone approaches you with a job, don't say 'I'm not interested', don't get stuck in your comfort zone! Get out there and explore the opportunity.

I am no longer employed and actively looking

If you are in between jobs, do not feel demoralized! It may not feel like it, but there are advantages to your situation:

1. You have the time and the mental space to find your next one.
2. You are an interesting commodity and you could be more attractive out of a job: you can start tomorrow, you are always available for interviews, and there is no bonus or equity to be bought out.

You may feel a lot of pressure to secure a job, which is fully understandable. We still recommend to go through the steps we outlined in the guide, as it will increase your chances of a successful job search. When defining your strategy and positioning, however, you may choose to focus more on the pragmatic (where am I a perfect match?) than the ideal (how can I make a career pivot?).

Career self-check

Ask yourself these three questions regularly:

- **What's my relationship with my company?**
- **What's my relationship with my job?**
- **What's my relationship with my boss?**

Ideally you should avoid falling below good or great levels in any of these areas and only on a short-term basis.

DEFINING YOUR STRATEGY

Defining your job search strategy

Before starting on any job search, it is important to get clear in your mind what your strategy will be.

If you don't do that, you risk spreading yourself too thinly and leaving people in your network unclear on what you are looking for. This will diminish the chances that they will refer you.

So, take the time upfront to define clearly what you are looking for to make your search efficient and effective. And consider this too: instead of looking for a job, look for work.

A job is just one form of how work can be organized. Work can also come in the shape of an interim, short-term role, or consulting.

What opportunities would you consider?

The more granular you can be as to what job opportunities you would be open to, the better. If you have already done the pre-work of defining what you are looking for, you should be able to answer the seven questions below. If not, then take the time to think them through.

1. Which roles would you like and why?

Job title

Say you want a role in Finance or Marketing, it is worth thinking about the different job titles that you would look for. Manager vs Division Head, Internal Communications vs Marketing & Communications, for instance.

Different companies call the same role different things, so make a list of the various titles you think would fit the role you are looking for. Think about why you are interested in those specifically and the previous experience you can link to them – in other words, what has prepared you for such a role.

Team size

Do you want to manage a team?

Do you want to be part of a team or are you fine with a standalone role?

How big should the team be and do they need to be in the same location as you or can they be dispersed?

Budget / P&L responsibility

What kind of budget would you like to manage?

Level in the organization

How high do you want to be in the organization (CEO minus...) or does that not matter to you?

Travel

What percentage of time would you be willing to travel?

How much time do you want to spend commuting on a daily basis?

2. Which roles would you like and why?

Do you prefer to work in a B2B or B2C industry? For profit or not-for-profit? And why? This is especially important to verbalize when you want to switch industries. Try to also think along the whole value chain of that industry, you can often find interesting players up and down the value chain which you may have never heard of or considered. Lastly, think about the industry from the perspective of your purpose (if you have defined one) – can you stand behind what the company is doing / offering? Does it excite or inspire you?

3. Which companies would you like to work for and why?

Size

Do you want to work in a small, medium, or large company? Or, if you prefer start-ups, in which stage would it need to be? Seed, early growth, expansion, etc? Keep in mind that moving from big to small is easier than the other way around and that once you have moved from big to small, moving back to big can be a challenge.

Entity

Would you prefer to work in a headquarter or in a country/regional office? When working in a headquarter, you often have a much broader perspective of the business, whereas in a local office you will get a more narrow but far more in depth insight into the business.

Culture

What kind of company culture would suit you best? Culture is abstract and so hard to gauge from the outside, but you can look at elements that shape a culture. Some of those elements are:

- Speed: Fast-paced or one with long cycles (e.g. software vs construction)?
- Heritage: Traditional or modern (e.g. banking vs e-commerce)?
- Scope: A global versus a local player?
- Decision making: Centralized versus decentralized?
- Work location: Fully remote working or office based or somewhere in-between?
- Ownership structure: Publicly listed, Family owned, or Private Equity backed?

4. What kind of business situation would you like to be in and why?

Startup, turnaround, accelerated growth, realignment, or sustaining success? Merger, acquisition, or spin off? Each of them requires a slightly different skillset and will have different demands, so it depends on what excites you.

5. What kind of leader are you looking for?

This might seem a bit out there but it's important to have this in mind. We all know what kind of people we thrive under and what kind of people we don't. And, in a selection process, you are evaluating them as much as they are you. So have a think about your previous managers and which leadership styles work best for you.

6. What kind of compensation are you looking for?

What would your ideal base, bonus, LTI, and benefits package look like? What is your minimum requirement?

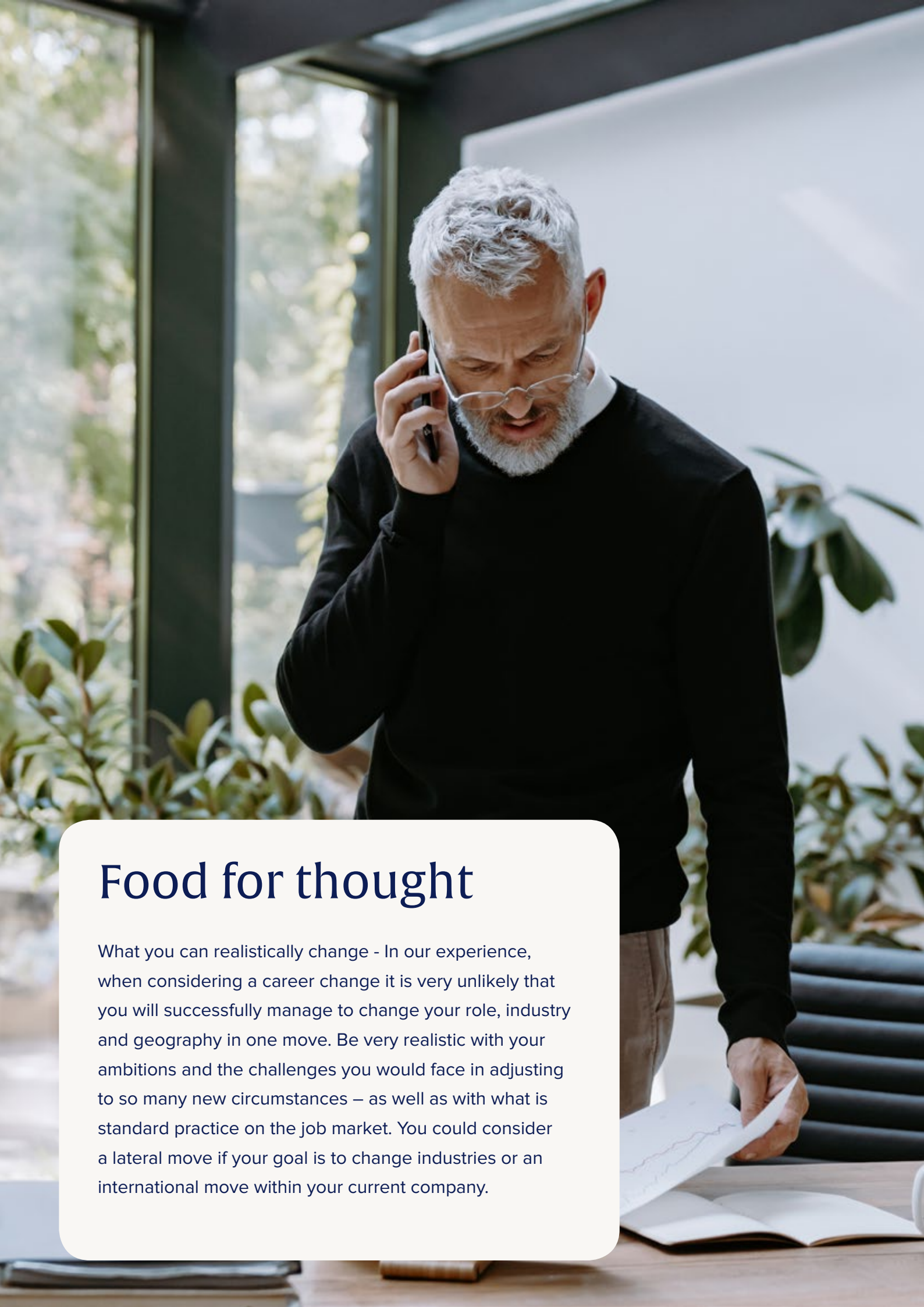
7. What kind of company, role, culture, etc. are a definite NO for you and why?

Knowing what you don't want helps narrow down the list, even if you are still in the process of figuring out what you do want.

Food for thought

Considering a pivot. An interesting strategy, particularly for senior candidates, is to make successful career pivots within your current organization where you've earned credibility, and the appetite from decision-makers to bet on your potential is usually much higher.





Food for thought

What you can realistically change - In our experience, when considering a career change it is very unlikely that you will successfully manage to change your role, industry and geography in one move. Be very realistic with your ambitions and the challenges you would face in adjusting to so many new circumstances – as well as with what is standard practice on the job market. You could consider a lateral move if your goal is to change industries or an international move within your current company.

Which opportunities have priority?

You should now have clarified:

- Your ideal role(s)
- Your ideal industry(ies)
- Your ideal company
- Your ideal business situation
- Your ideal boss
- Your ideal compensation
- What you don't want

These will be the goals in your job search. BUT.....experience tells us that the chances of getting 100% of what we want are not exactly 100%. Depending on how much you are changing - role, industry, geography - it can be more or less challenging. Changing one aspect is not that hard, changing 2 is a bit more challenging and changing all 3...well that takes real grit and determination!

The key is to set your priorities: the most important aspect(s) for you, the one(s) you are not willing to compromise on. And what is more of a “nice to have”? If this is not yet clear in your mind, we recommend to read “What color is your parachute?” by Richard N. Bolles to help you figure out what your priority list looks like. This will help you focus your search and ensure that you are not spreading yourself too thinly by going after everything at once. If you have given yourself a set amount of time to find a new job, you can then also stagger your job search.

For example, if you have given yourself 6 months to find a job, you can agree with yourself that you will spend the first 2 months focusing on your 1st priority. Then, if after 2 months you find you do not have sufficient traction, you can decide to expand your search to include 2nd priority positions and so forth.

Define your search in stages

1. Primary Search:
 - a. Role:
 - b. Industry / Companies:
 - c. Location:

2. Secondary Search:
 - a. Role:
 - b. Industry / Companies:
 - c. Location:

3. Tertiary Search:
 - a. Role:
 - b. Industry / Companies:
 - c. Location:

When looking for vacancies or setting up job alerts, the key search criteria are the role (job title), industry and / or companies, and location. Unfortunately, job sites to date don't allow us to search on the basis of things like company culture or compensation.

Although the best way to find new roles is still through NETWORKING and we will explore this in depth, setting up job alerts is always good. Even though it may not result in your ideal job, these alerts will give you a sense of what is going on in the market or in a particular company.

Even though you cannot search on job conditions, you should still have them front of mind. This information will come into play during networking conversations (to help you explain to someone what you are looking for) and during the interview process.

Consider your preferred conditions



If you are someone who works better with structure and goals, you can also consider making a 'deal' with yourself on how much time you will spend each week on the job search and blocking time in your calendar.

Setting goals on the number of people you reach out to each week is also something to consider. Less feasible is committing to a number of applications each week, as this depends on the availability of vacancies.

Keep in mind though that finding a job can be a fulltime job! So, make sure you manage your time and your energy well in this process.

DEFINING
YOUR
POSITIONING

Defining your Positioning

Finding a new job is all about presenting and selling yourself. A labor market is exactly that – a marketplace – and so we need to look at ourselves as a “product” or “service.”

Which of the needs that buyers (companies) have can I fulfill? What sets me apart from the others? Unless you are a born salesperson, the thought of selling yourself probably makes you feel slightly uncomfortable. If it's been a while since you've been in an interview process, you might feel a bit rusty. The keyword here is - preparation. The more you work on developing a clear and concise narrative around who you are and what you have to offer, the easier it will be.



What are your core skills and competencies?

We often use skills and competencies for the same bucket of ‘things we can do’ but they are not the same thing and it’s good to distinguish between them.

Skills are the specific learned abilities that you need to perform a given job well, sometimes also called technical or functional skills. Examples are accounting, coding, or knowledge of the semiconductor industry. Competencies, on the other hand, are your behaviors that lead you to be successful in a job. Examples of competencies are strategic thinking, the ability to cope with change, or relationship building. In short, skills are ‘what’ you do at work and competencies are ‘how’ you do your work.

Skills

Defining our skills is usually not so difficult. We know what we know. The key is, however, to identify those skills that you not only enjoy but are also transferable, the ones that are important in the new role you are seeking. If you have already identified the type of role(s) you want, take some time to look at the skills that are most often listed. This will give you an indication of what is considered a ‘must have’ in those roles.

Difference between skills & competencies

Skills are the specific learned abilities that you need to perform a given job well, sometimes also called technical or functional skills.

- Coding
- Accounting
- Market knowledge

Competencies are your behaviors that lead you to be successful in a job.

- Strategic Thinking
- Problem Solving
- Negotiating

Competencies

We often struggle more when it comes to defining our competencies because they are more abstract, less measurable. If you need some structure to start thinking about your competencies, you can reflect on how you deal with the following:

1. Leadership / Teamwork
2. Communication
3. Adaptability
4. Reliability
5. Motivation
6. Integrity
7. Decision Making
8. Initiative
9. Work Standards
10. Problem Solving
11. Stress Tolerance
12. Organizing

If you still find it hard to come up with a few ideas, there are a few resources that you can tap into for help:

- **Performance reviews:** Take some time to go through your previous performance reviews. See if you can identify the competencies that are usually mentioned as your strengths or for which you get most positive feedback.
- **Assessments:** If you have ever taken an assessment, privately or through work, go back and reread it. Most assessments will have an indication of strengths / preferred styles of working.
- **Personality tests:** There are a lot of personality tests freely available online. One of the more extensive tests is the 16 Personalities test, which is based on the Myers-Briggs model. The free version already provides a lot of valuable insights.
- **Your network:** Don’t shy away from simply asking people you know what they feel are your key competencies! So ask your friends, partner and colleagues.

You can also find a list of competency examples in [Annex 1](#).



Which needs do your CORE skills & competencies fulfill?

Now that you have your list of skills and competencies, it's time to distil your core ones. They are what set you apart from the rest, the unique combination of what you can do and how you work.

To help define them, think of the times at work (or outside) where you felt very challenged or you felt at your best. What were the skills and/or competencies that made you thrive, made you successful? And what are the most common themes in the positive feedback you receive from others? What is it that they recognize the most in you at work, for which you are often asked for advice or seen as the 'go to' person for?

Ideally, you want to end up with a list of between 3 and 5 core skills and competencies. At this point, we need to start making them as concrete as possible. Especially with competencies, we tend to be a bit fluffy and then we end up saying nothing at all really. And what is most important to a potential employer is which of their needs your skills and competencies can fulfil – in other words which problems you can solve for them. So think about phrasing them through the lens of a "buyer" – what would a company gain by bringing you in?

Most important to a potential employer is which of their needs can your skills and competencies fulfil – in other words which problems can you solve for them.

For example: you might have identified good leadership skills as one of your core competencies. This is great, but it says little about the kind of leader you are. Compare that to "I am an inclusive leader who focuses on enabling my team to be the best they can be." This is much more descriptive, it paints a clearer picture of how you operate.

In [Annex 2](#), you will find a worksheet where you can note down your core competencies and skills.



What is your equity?

Another important element of what makes you unique is what we call your equity and the more experienced you are the more weight hiring managers put on your equity. Your equity, as we see it, is the sum of your total know-how: industry expertise, organizational and business understanding, functional know-how, leadership experience, geographical exposure, languages, network and so on. All the wisdom you have gathered over the years.

Hiring someone from outside the company is always a risk and not every hiring manager is willing to bet on potential. So the more you know about a role, industry etc. the smaller that risk is for companies. It is therefore important to list out / summarize your equity through the lenses of the hiring managers of your preferred job targets.

Food for thought

Include as much of your equity as possible in your personal summary and don't forget to describe yourself on LinkedIn though the equity lens. When applying for roles, be specific about how your know-how equity matches the challenges the company is facing – mention your knowledge and experience of post-merger integrations, business transformation, culture change, leading successful turnarounds, leading a startup to scale up, to name just a few.

Telling your story

STAR Stories

Just saying that you have a core skill or competency will often not be enough. In interviews and networking conversations, your audience will expect you to back up your statement with examples. The next step you should therefore take is to build a story around each skill and competency. The easiest way to do this is using the STAR method.

For each skill and competency, pick one concrete example in which you applied them at your best. Write out that situation using the following structure:

- **Situation:** Set the scene of what the situation was
- **Task:** Describe what your responsibility was in that situation
- **Action:** Explain what actions you took and why
- **Result:** Share what the result was of your actions

When you have written down your STAR examples, test them out on your partner or a friend. This will help you check if they are easy stories for you to tell and if they are easily understood.

In [Annex 3](#), you will find a STAR story worksheet.

Food for thought

You can also work shortened versions of your STAR stories into your LinkedIn profile. It helps others to get an more in-depth understanding of your profile.



Elevator pitch

An elevator pitch is normally something you develop when you are trying to sell an idea, service, or product. But in a job search, you are essentially trying to sell yourself so it's worth having your own Elevator Pitch. The easier you get at telling people who you are and what you are best at, the easier networking and interviews will become.

Key components of a good Elevator Pitch

Brief

Try to keep it under 30 seconds.

Easy to understand

Don't use a lot of specific industry/functional jargon, company acronyms etc. Keep it simple.

Compelling

It needs to make your audience want to hear more, to pique their interest. So more storytelling, less rattling off a list of your accomplishments.

Relevant

It needs to clearly communicate who you are and what you are looking for.

Differentiated

It needs to reflect YOU, clearly set you apart from others.

Authentic

You need to believe in what you are saying, otherwise your audience won't.

Your elevator pitch should contain certain key information. You can play with the structure, but when someone you have spoken to walks away, he or she should walk away knowing these things:

Who you are

It's not easy, but try to condense who you are into at most one or two sentences. Look, for example, at your value proposition on your CV, this is often a good start.

What you do

One or two sentences on what you do, but try to word it around goals and needs that companies typically have (drive business performance, sustainable growth, etc.) rather than function (CFO).

Who you serve

One or two sentences on the industries or type of companies that you have worked for or want to work for. If possible, try to work in why you like those industries. Play on passion rather than experience alone. See if you can work in who are normally your 'clients' – C-Suite? Boardroom? Regional Management?

What makes you different

How do you stand out from the crowd? This is where your core competencies, skills and know-how equity know-how come in.

The hook

What do you want to get from your audience? The elevator pitch should be the start of a conversation, so how can you engage with your audience to start that conversation? Think of a grabbing question, one that will make them want to start sharing. In the job search setting, it's usually about getting information from someone – a new contact, information on a vacancy or a company – but you can't make that your first question.

The first one needs to be about them, to give them the feeling that you are genuinely interested in them rather than just looking for what they can do for you. You can think about making two different hooks, based on the situation in which you would use them – interview or networking. In [Annex 4](#), you will find an elevator pitch worksheet.

The key is to practice your STAR examples and elevator pitch – the more you practice, the more natural and authentic they will come across. You can practice in front of a mirror, your friends or record yourself with your phone. It's awkward at first but you will get used to it.

LEVERAGING YOUR NETWORK

Leveraging your network

The most effective way to find a job is through networking. Here's why: The majority of jobs (4 out of 5) are not actually advertised.

Around 80-90% of job seekers make their applications following the 'traditional' route – in other words, they find themselves competing for that 1 job in 5 that has been advertised.

It would therefore make sense to put yourself in a less crowded space and focus on those 4 out of 5 jobs that are not advertised, where you are in competition with far fewer candidates. Referrals are an incredibly powerful tool to get you on the radar of companies – that's why your focus should be on networking to success. That's not to say that you shouldn't apply to vacancies – if you see a vacancy that matches what you are looking for, go for it!

But you should be spending at least 50% of your job search time on networking and there are ways to do it in a very targeted manner. So, let's start by mapping your network.

Food for thought

When following the ‘traditional’ route and applying for advertised jobs, be patient, don’t be frustrated when you don’t get immediate results.

Here are some factors to take into account that will ease you through the process:

- Applying to different posts and sending a CV can still make sense, particularly for an active job seeker – but please remember this is a high numbers game. Unless you have a very sought-after or niche skillset or experience, the response rate resulting in an invitation to interview is around 5%. Keep this low yield in mind if sending 20 CVs brought no outcome.
- In many job ads the role is not always perfectly described. So do some research! Try to look deeper, find more details to understand if your USP fits and where you can bring value - and if possible find a contact within the organization.
- Stay close to the industries you are coming from or where the value chain of the product or service is quite comparable, the seniority level is similar, or if you have experience in the geographies where the company operates.
- If you see a job ad, try to get in touch with the hiring manager to express your interest and suitability, or someone related to the role, team and department, or who knows the work environment.

Mapping your network

The easiest way to get an overview of your network is to put all your contacts into one big Excel file. It can be a cumbersome exercise, as they may be spread out over different sources, but it’s worth spending time on.

Basic data

Typical sources for contact names are:

- LinkedIn: This [link](#) shows you how to export your contacts from LinkedIn
- Phone & Email Contacts, both work and private

Most of them allow you to extract data to CSV files, which you can then easily merge into 1 file. You may also want to consider downloading your contact information from other Social Media sources (Facebook, X etc.) but the challenge here may be that you lack critical information, such as where they work or what they do.

Once you have downloaded the data, you will most likely have to clean it up a bit – remove duplicates etc. You should ideally end up with a basic file that contains the following information:

- First and Last Name
- Title
- Company
- Email

Note: Due to GDPR regulations you are no longer allowed to download email addresses from LinkedIn so it may require a more manual approach unfortunately.

Categorization & prioritization

The second step is to start categorizing and prioritizing your network. For categorization, you should identify those people in your network who work in the industry / companies that you have identified and in the department(s) / function(s) that you are looking for. You can then start prioritizing your contacts.

1. Your primary contacts are those who work both in the industry and department that you are aiming for, as they will be the ones who will be best placed to advise you on how to approach opportunities with the company and when they appear.
2. Your secondary contacts are those who work in the industry of choice, but in a different department or function. They will be able to give you insights into the organization and connect you to colleagues in the relevant department.
3. Third in line are those individuals who work in the type of function you are aspiring for, as they can give you insights into trends and developments within the field and can potentially connect you with peers who are closer to or in the industry of your choice.
4. Lastly, there are those contacts who neither work in the industry nor the functional area that you are targeting. It would be easy to simply dismiss this group but don't jump to that conclusion! There still might be a number of people in this category who can be good to connect with, as you can see below.

You may want to add additional categories (e.g. location) you find relevant. However many you choose, in the end you should end up with a matrix similar to the one below that allows you to prioritize your contacts.

	Industry / Company	Department / Function
1	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes
2	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> No
3	<input type="checkbox"/> No	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes
4	<input type="checkbox"/> No	<input type="checkbox"/> No

Priority 4 contacts

The majority of your contacts will most likely be “priority 4” contacts. They don't work in the companies you are targeting, nor do they have the type of job you want. But they can still be good sources of advice so take the time to go through the list and see if you can identify people who fall into one or more of the categories below:

- **HR professionals:** Consider reaching out to them for open advice on the career transition you want to make. It can also be a way of finding out if they have a connection in one of the companies you are targeting.
- **Connectors:** Some people are natural connectors and have built incredible networks over their careers. If you know one of them, there is no harm in reaching out to them and asking for advice on how to build your network where you feel it's a bit weak. They might know just the right person you should be talking to!
- **Change makers:** Has someone made a career change like the one you want to make? Or led the type of business transformation you want to lead? Ask them about their experience and if they would have any advice for you.
- **Fellow alumni:** An alumni network can be a powerful tool when job hunting. Let them know that you are looking to make a change and if there is a local Alumni Club, consider reaching out to them to ask if there are other members you could talk to. Most schools also have some form of career support for alumni so it's worth reaching out to them.

Expanding your network

Once you have mapped out your network, you may realize that it is not as strong as you would like it to be in certain areas. You may have no contacts in one of your top companies or you lack connections in the geographical area you are looking at. That means that you will have to put some effort into building new connections.

One way of doing this is through your existing connections but there are also other ways.

Executive Search Companies

As part of your job search, you will inevitably contact or be contacted by a variety of Recruitment, Executive Search or Headhunting companies – one of the so-called Big Five / SHREK (Spencer Stuart, Heidrick & Struggles, Russel Reynolds, Egon Zehnder, and KornFerry) or one of the many boutique specialists. It's good to manage your expectations around what you can expect from an executive search company or consultant.

The one thing you should always keep in mind is that executive search companies earn their money by solving a hiring need for a company, which makes the company the client and not you. That dynamic can play out in a number of ways:

- If they have a search and you are a qualified candidate, you will most likely never be the only one that they introduce to a client. No matter how qualified you are for the role.
- If they tell you that you are a great fit for the job, they will tell the same to possibly 3 or 4 other candidates. It doesn't mean it's not true, but you may be the ideal number 2 and they don't know if number 1 is going to accept the offer - so they don't want to lose you until they know what happens with number 1.
- If you are one of the 3-4, then they will be focused on this role for you and you will be off the radar for any others until the process is complete (which could be up to 3-4 months), during which time you will not be proposed for other roles. So make sure you are really interested in that role.

In general, a search company will be interested to speak with you for one of these reasons:

1. They have an assignment for which you are an interesting prospect.
2. They know the needs of the hiring company or manager so well and your profile is so interesting, that they are willing to introduce you without having a formal assignment, sometimes for a need that they know will emerge, sometimes to help a client meet interesting longer-term prospects.
3. They do not have a project and also do not know of a specific need, but your profile is so interesting that they want to get to know you, possibly as a future candidate, or (from a sales point of view) to develop you as a potential future client, as they know you will land at some point in a new role and may have hiring needs.
4. Your profile is so interesting, that they can 'use' you to open the door with a prospective client. This typically happens more with opportunistic search companies.
5. You have a long-term relationship with the search consultant.

The intention is not to paint a negative picture of the industry here, but rather to say that if a search company or consultant does not have time for you, it is never about you personally. It's a question of supply & demand and timing and at that point in time, you probably do not fit in any of the categories. Also, search consultants are just like you, human beings who are best when there is reciprocity in the relationship and saying 'no, I don't have anything for you' can get uncomfortable. For both parties.

So certainly, invest in building and maintaining a mutually beneficial relationship with those search consultants whom you feel are trying to do the same. Ask around in your network who has had good experiences with which search companies and try to find the right person to contact (most consultants have a specialization in industry and/or function). Just don't expect that they suddenly are 'at your service' when you need them.

LinkedIn

LinkedIn has what is called the “Social Selling Index” (SSI). It is a unique LinkedIn metric that determines your profile’s rank. You can find [your SSI here](#). The index is made up of 4 pillars:

- Establish your professional brand
- Find the right people
- Engage with insights
- Build relationships

Establish your professional brand

This measurement looks at the extent to which you have leveraged LinkedIn features such as a profile picture, a banner image, custom summary, experience filled in, unique recommendations, etc. Posting regularly on LinkedIn can boost your profile and get you noticed. You could produce your own content with pictures or videos, run a poll, share a job opening, or recommend people you know are all ways of increasing this score.

Find the right people

Here LinkedIn looks at the relevance of your network – how much are your contacts really related to your background, industry, role, etc. You can expand your LinkedIn network by asking your connections to hook you up with their own contacts who could help you with their insights and advice. You can also see who is following you, who you follow and start to follow those whom you feel could be relevant to your job search.

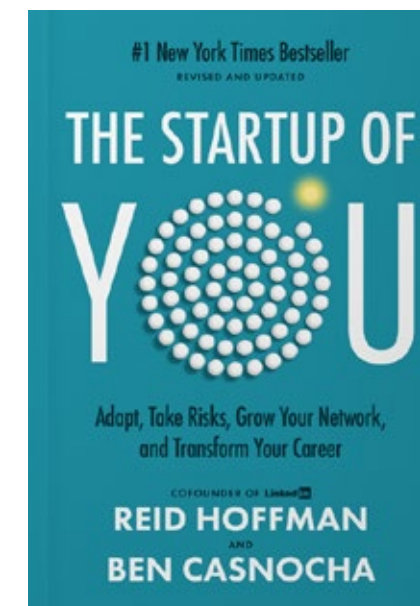
Engage with insights

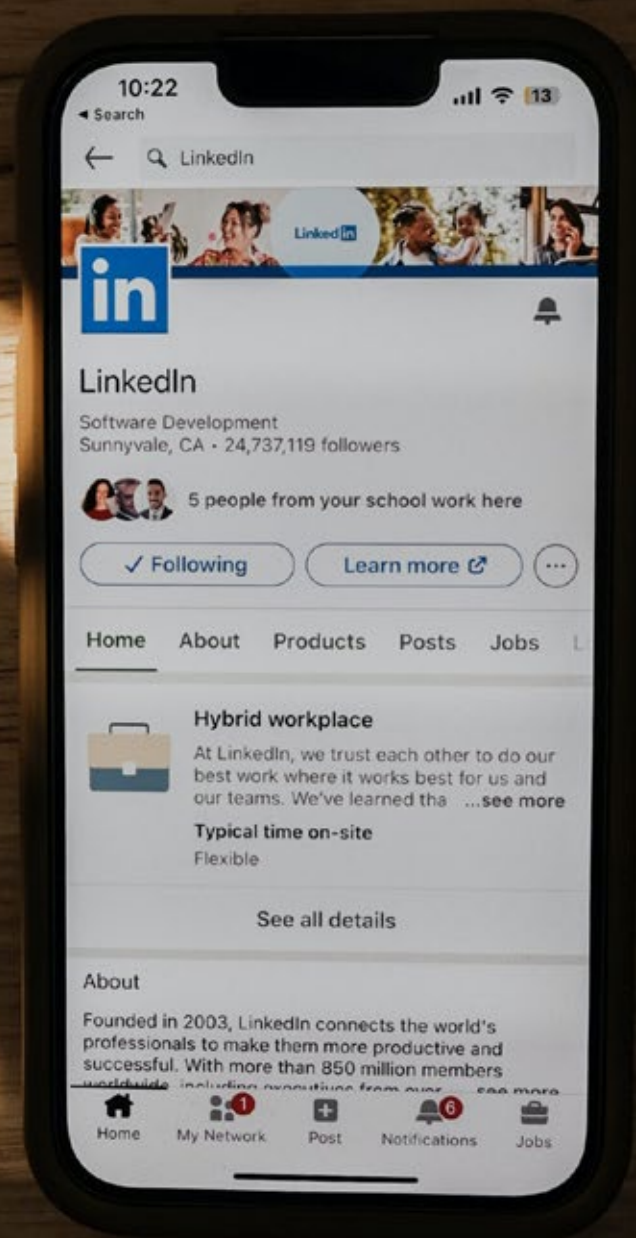
This LinkedIn SSI pillar measures your engagement – in terms of shares, likes, and comments your posts are receiving. What can help to increase your engagement scores is to engage more actively with the content of others.

Food for thought

Here’s a book recommendation to explore networking in greater depth. *The Startup of You: Adapt, Take Risks, Grow Your Network, and Transform Your Career* by [Reid Hoffman](#), co-founder of LinkedIn. It’s not new but has recently been revised and updated and is still one of the best books on networking.

<https://www.startupofyou.com/>





Build relationships

The final measurement looks your ability to strengthen your network “by finding and establishing trust with decision-makers and other thought leaders in your niche.” To grow your connections on LinkedIn, it is worth considering to pay for LinkedIn Premium. You can usually try it out for free for one month.

The advantage of LinkedIn Premium is that it allows you to search people more effectively. Let’s say you have determined that you want to become a Marketing Manager at Coca Cola in New York. You will be able to get better search results and see who you know that knows someone at Coca Cola. This allows you to then ask your contact for an introduction to the person you have identified. And, if you don’t have an indirect contact, you have the option to send a direct in-mail to this person.

It’s a long shot, but always worth a try! You will also be better equipped to carry out due diligence, to research any recruiters, HR and other people you may be about to meet, and look at their connections.

Networks & associations

Networks and associations can be a bit hit and miss. Many of them ask you to pay a membership fee purely for a monthly newsletter or get-together. That won’t be the best use of your money or time, as it doesn’t offer genuine opportunities to develop yourself and your network.

What you want to figure out is if there is a network related to your industry/function or an alumni club of one of your schools that offer interactive events in which you can both learn something and meet people. On their website, they will usually showcase past events, so have a look at the topics and who the speakers were. Look at who is in their Board to see if this is the calibre of network that you are aiming for.

APPROACHING YOUR NETWORK

Approaching your network

Once you have mapped and prioritized your network, the next step is to start reaching out to your contacts. A key thing to keep in mind when networking is that it's about creating and building a connection, not making a hard sell.

Always check with your contacts that they are happy for you to use their name in career or networking conversations and don't worry about bothering people - let them be the judge of that!



Defining your goal

It is very rare to get a job lead in the very first conversation, so you need to set different goals for yourself as to what you want to get out of the conversation. The goal needs to be realistic, something you think the person is both willing and able to give you, as this will increase the chances of that person agreeing to speak to you. Such goals are usually related to tapping into the knowledge that the person has.

Calls or meetings should aim at tapping into the knowledge of your contact such as information about their company, department, team, challenges, and goals, or gaining market insights on key players in other businesses where your contact may have connections. It's also about establishing a level of trust through smooth, pleasant conversations that leave an opening for a follow up in a few month's time. And ensure that you maintain these new contacts over time so that they become part of your supportive network to help you navigate the job market in the future. Make sure that the relationship works both ways – that you are an available and valuable source of information and contacts for them.

Most people are happy, if not flattered, when asked to share their knowledge.

Examples could be:

- Insights into trends within the industry or function (How do you see the future of...)
- A better understanding of the company: the culture, its strategy, key projects, key talent gaps etc. (Where do you see the company in 5 years...)
- General advice for your job search (What would you do if you were me...)

Remember that asking about job openings is not one of the goals. If you make clear to the person that you are reaching out to them because you are considering a career change, this will be implicit anyway. If there is a job opening, they will tell you without prompting. If there isn't, then asking them about it will only put them in the awkward position of having to say 'no.' Nobody likes saying 'no' and it is often a conversation killer.

There is one goal that should be fixed - yet unspoken - in all your interactions and that is to get recommendations on other people to connect with. If all you walk away with after a call is a new name of a person to speak with, you are winning!

Reaching out

Reaching out to your network might feel a bit like 'cold calling' and anyone who has done that knows it's not the most fun thing to do. It takes a lot of (emotional) energy, which is why we often procrastinate in this area. Understandable, but that's why it's good to set yourself a goal of how many people you will reach out to per week. It can be just 1 or 2, it doesn't matter. What matters is that you start because as soon as you start, you will see that getting a positive response (yes, I'd be happy to have a coffee with you!) will give you lots of positive energy!

When you reach out to make the initial contact, leverage your elevator pitch. Make it clear who you are, why you are reaching out to them and what you would like to get out of the conversation (your goal). Ask them for a 30-minute call, a coffee, or, if you know them reasonably well, a lunch or dinner. Keep the bar low for them to say 'no'. Remember, this is the first step of building a connection so if they only have 10 minutes for you, take it and set arranging a second meeting as your goal.

The meeting

If you have done work on your USP, then you should already be prepared when it comes to what you want to share about you when the opportunity presents itself. You have also defined your goal for the meeting. But don't forget to do some research on the person you are about to meet so that you have some ice-breakers.

Things to look for

- Things in common: Do you have people or interests in common? Have you lived in the same countries or do your kids go to the same school?
- Career history: Is there something unique about their career you can ask questions about?
- Company activities: Has the company they work for done something interesting lately? Is there a big project or transformation going on in the company that you can ask about?



Showing a genuine interest in the other person and not just what they can do for you is key to making a connection. Nobody likes it if they feel they are being 'used' and when they do, they tend to clam up. If, on the other hand, you feel that the person sitting opposite you is genuinely interested in you and what you have to say, you are more than willing to share and to help.

A common pitfall of networking within a job search context is being negative about the process. If you have been searching for a long time and experienced a lot of rejection or no responses at all, it is very normal to feel deflated, frustrated, or demotivated. These emotions are justified and should come out - just not in a networking conversation. Find a friend to whom you can vent, go for a run, or listen to loud music. Do whatever it takes to put the negative feelings aside before you enter into a networking conversation. It is simply not the place and it will leave a negative impression on your contact, lessening the chances that they will help you out in the future.

Try and formulate a response to the question 'how is your job search going?' that is both realistic (e.g. it's not easy – cause it's not!) and optimistic (e.g. you are grateful for the number of people who have taken time to speak to you – because you are!) before going into such conversations, so that you are not caught off guard. A good way to close the meeting is to ask the person 'Is there anything I can do for you?' Most people won't expect this question and will be positively surprised by it. It's another sign that you want to build a reciprocal connection and it shows confidence – after all, you do have a lot to offer!

Show a genuine interest in the other person, not just what they can do for you, is key to making a connection.

After the meeting

If one of your contacts has referred you to someone else or sent you a job opening, make sure to let them know how the meeting or application went. Even if the contact was not useful or the application didn't work out, let them know and show appreciation for the effort they made. A good way to maintain the connection, even if you didn't make any fixed agreements, is to follow them on LinkedIn and comment or like their posts. You can also send them articles that you think might be of interest to them or relate to a topic you may have discussed.

When you have found your new job, it is also important to let everyone know who has helped you along the way and to thank them for the role they played, no matter how small. You should never stop networking as having a strong network is an important tool, wherever you are in your career. And when someone asks you for help in return, remember to pay it forward. You know what that person is going through so show them the kindness that others have shown you.

**Remember to
pay it forward
and show the
same kindness
that others have
shown you.**



PREPARE
TO SUCCEED

Prepare to succeed

You've arrived at that decisive moment and here is some final advice to help you secure your future role.

It goes without saying that for any interview you should be fluent and knowledgeable about yourself, the role you have put yourself forward for, and the company you would like to work for. You should also have questions you would like to ask them. After all, as with any relationship, both parties need to get to a "yes." So prepare for the interview and, if you haven't had an interview for a while and are rusty, ask a friend in HR or someone who recruits for positions on your level to do a run-through with you. Practice makes perfect, as they say.

Do your homework

Due diligence on a potential new employer is critical and often neglected. You should understand how the company makes money, what its culture is, how decisions are made, what its current issues are. Try to find out what kind of person your potential new boss is, how long they have been with the company, and what makes them successful. Get in touch with your connections to find out what's going on in the company or use our friend Google.

In today's world, many companies are undergoing a transformation and this takes on many forms: growth or downsizing, acquisition/integration, expansion, new market entry, spin-off, a changing business model, adding a digital layer, a culture change - to name but a few. When companies are searching for candidates, the vacant roles are always in some ways related to their ongoing transformation.

Additionally, there may be a more specific issue affecting the team/function or its capabilities.

So, research the company to seek this out and it will help you understand what is behind the job. What issues is the hiring manager trying to solve? If, as a candidate, you understand this then the connection will be more effective – because you will know what solutions you can bring to the table for their specific challenges. This is the space where those very concrete conversations start.

Manage the conversation

Let's begin with a hard fact: recruiters will typically see 5-10 people a day. You need to make yourself stand out because a week after they have met you, they will have seen 50 people.

It's not as daunting as it sounds! You can make an impact by researching the person you have an appointment with (on social media as well as on professional platforms) to find an initial hook: people or interests you have in common for instance. Your goal is to start with a meaningful conversation (not a recital of your CV) to build a relationship so that you become interesting to them. Take the first moments of any interview to let them get to know you and remember: it's not just about what you do or say, but how you make people feel.

Once you've got started, try to steer the conversation around areas where you can shine, around that USP you defined earlier. As we've said, many people struggle with the invitation 'tell me about yourself.' But if you have done your due diligence, then you know where their challenges and opportunities lie. So after 2-3 sentences, you should try to address their challenges, hit the nerve! Then you can refer to a challenge that you overcame that touches on ones the company is facing and show them that you are the solution.

An ability to articulate well the match between your own experience and the challenges the company is focused on, is one of the most powerful ways to differentiate from other candidates. By doing so, you suddenly become a solution – in other words, a great fit with a vacant role.

And lastly, don't wait too long to talk about numbers. It shouldn't be the first thing you talk about but also not the last. It is important to create trust and be transparent earlier on in the process around all components that are relevant for a possible offer (pay, notice period, etc.) to make sure you are not wasting each other's time. So don't be afraid to bring it up to see if you have the same / similar expectations.

CLOSING WORDS

Before joining KennedyFitch, each and every one of our Partners had a career behind them of at least 15 years as a practitioner. And, so we have all experienced the highs and lows of job and career changes. We hope that we have been able to convey that understanding and empathy in this guide, and that it has helped you to feel more in control of your process.

We are also all where we are today thanks to the helping hands and words of wisdom of others, which is why we are passionate about paying it forward through initiatives such as this guide. We hope that it has offered you some concrete tips that will help you in your search and, more importantly, we hope that you encounter similar helping hands and words of wisdom on your journey.

When you do find that next role, next career step, we would like to ask something in return from you and that is that you too pay it forward. To pay it forward by showing empathy and giving time to others who are navigating the world of work and looking for their next growth opportunity. To remember how you felt when someone took your call, met you for a coffee or introduced you to someone new and pass on that feeling to someone else.

SMALL ACTS, WHEN
MULTIPLIED BY MILLIONS
OF PEOPLE, CAN
TRANSFORM THE WORLD

Howard Zinn

ANNEXES

- Annex 1: Competency Examples
- Annex 2: Worksheet Core Skills & Competencies
- Annex 3: STAR Examples
- Annex 4: Elevator Pitch
- Annex 5: Additional resources

Annex 1

Competency Examples

- Energy
- Integrity
- Loyalty
- Interviewing
- Communication skills (verbal)
- Customer-oriented
- Problem analysis
- Results-oriented way of working
- Perseverance
- Situational awareness
- Cooperation
- Entrepreneurship
- Responding flexibly
- Stress resistance
- Discipline
- Organizational sensitivity
- Creative thinking
- Critical thinking
- Organizing
- Coaching
- Ambition
- Motivating
- Tactical behavior
- Judgement
- Networking
- Communication skills (written)
- Acting innovatively
- People-driven management
- Sociability
- Determination
- Attention to detail
- Independent learning
- Leadership
- Financial awareness
- Showing initiative
- Conceptual thinking
- Confronting
- Planning and organizing
- Impression
- Accuracy
- Analytical skills
- Managing conflict
- Adaptability
- Responding sensitively
- Presenting
- Vision
- Group-oriented leadership
- Delegating
- Independence
- Listening
- Courage
- Understanding of the environment
- Self-knowledge
- Ability to learn
- Persuasiveness
- Assertiveness
- Negotiating
- Flexibility
- Monitoring progress
- Self-development
- Anticipating
- Decisiveness

Annex 2 - Worksheet

Core Skills & Competencies

My Core Skills

Skills	Description

My Core Competencies

Competencies	Description

Annex 3

STAR Examples

- Situation:** Set the scene of what the situation was
Task: Describe what your responsibility was in that situation
Action: Explain what actions you took and why
Result: Share what the result was of your actions

Skill / Competency	
Situation	
Task	
Action	
Result	

Skill / Competency	
Situation	
Task	
Action	
Result	

Annex 4

Elevator Pitch

Who you are...

What you do...

Who you serve...

What makes you different...

Your hook...

Annex 5

Additional Resources

Books



“What Color Is Your Parachute?: Your Guide to a Lifetime of Meaningful Work and Career Success”

by Richard N. Bolles (2021)

This classic is known for its practical advice on career exploration, job hunting, and finding one's purpose.



“A Job to Love”

by The School of Life (2017)

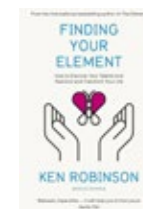
A wonderful guide to figure out how better understand yourself and locate a job that is right for you.



“Dare to Lead: Brave Work. Tough Conversations. Whole Hearts.”

by Brené Brown (2018)

Brené Brown explores the qualities of effective leadership and encourages readers to embrace vulnerability and authenticity in their professional lives.



“Finding Your Element: How to Discover Your Talents and Passions and Transform Your Life”

by Ken Robinson & Lou Aronica (2013)

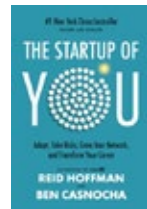
Building on Robinson's TED Talk, this book encourages readers to identify their passions and align them with their natural talents for a fulfilling life and career.



“The 5 Second Rule: Transform your Life, Work, and Confidence with Everyday Courage”

by Mel Robbins (2017)

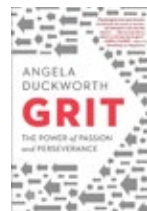
Mel Robbins introduces a simple rule to overcome hesitation and take action, offering practical advice for making decisions and pursuing goals in both personal and professional spheres.



“The Startup of You: Adapt, Take Risks, Grow Your Network, and Transform Your Career”

by Reid Hoffman & Ben Casnocha (2012)

Co-founder of LinkedIn, Reid Hoffman, shares advice on adapting to the evolving professional landscape and treating your career as a start-up venture.



“Grit: The Power of Passion and Perseverance”

by Angela Duckworth (2016)

Duckworth explores the importance of grit—the combination of passion and perseverance—in achieving long-term goals and success in various fields.



“Drive: The Surprising Truth About What Motivates Us”

by Daniel H. Pink (2009)

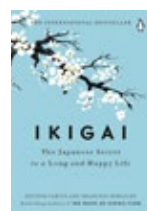
Pink examines the science of motivation and how individuals can find purpose and fulfilment by tapping into their intrinsic drives.



“The Four Agreements: A Practical Guide to Personal Freedom”

by Don Miguel Ruiz (1997)

While not focused on careers, this book provides a code of conduct that can guide individuals in achieving personal freedom and happiness.



“Ikigai: The Japanese Secret to a Long and Happy Life”

by Francesc Miralles & Hector Garcia (2016)

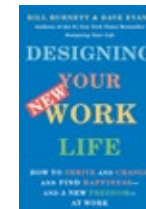
Exploring the concept of Ikigai, this book helps readers find the intersection of what they love, what they are good at, what the world needs, and what they can be paid for.



“Knock 'em Dead Resumes: A Killer Resume Gets MORE Job Interviews!”

by Martin Yate (2016)

A comprehensive guide on creating effective resumes to stand out in the job market.



“Designing Your New Work Life”

by Bill Burnett & Dave Evans (2021)

<https://designingyour.life/>

Reports/Articles:

“Resume vs. CV (Curriculum Vitae): Key Document Differences”

by Jennifer Herrity (Indeed)-Website (2023)

Organizations/Companies:

[Mind your step](#), DACH region

[Not Actively Looking](#), United Kingdom

Video/Podcasts:

Podcast on “[Dare to Lead](#)” by Brené Brown

Video on “[Finding Your Element](#)” by Ken Robinson

Spotify Podcast on “[Hidden Potential: The Science of Achieving Greater Things](#)”

by Adam Grant

TedTalk on “[Grit: The Power of Passion and Perseverance](#)” by Angela Duckworth

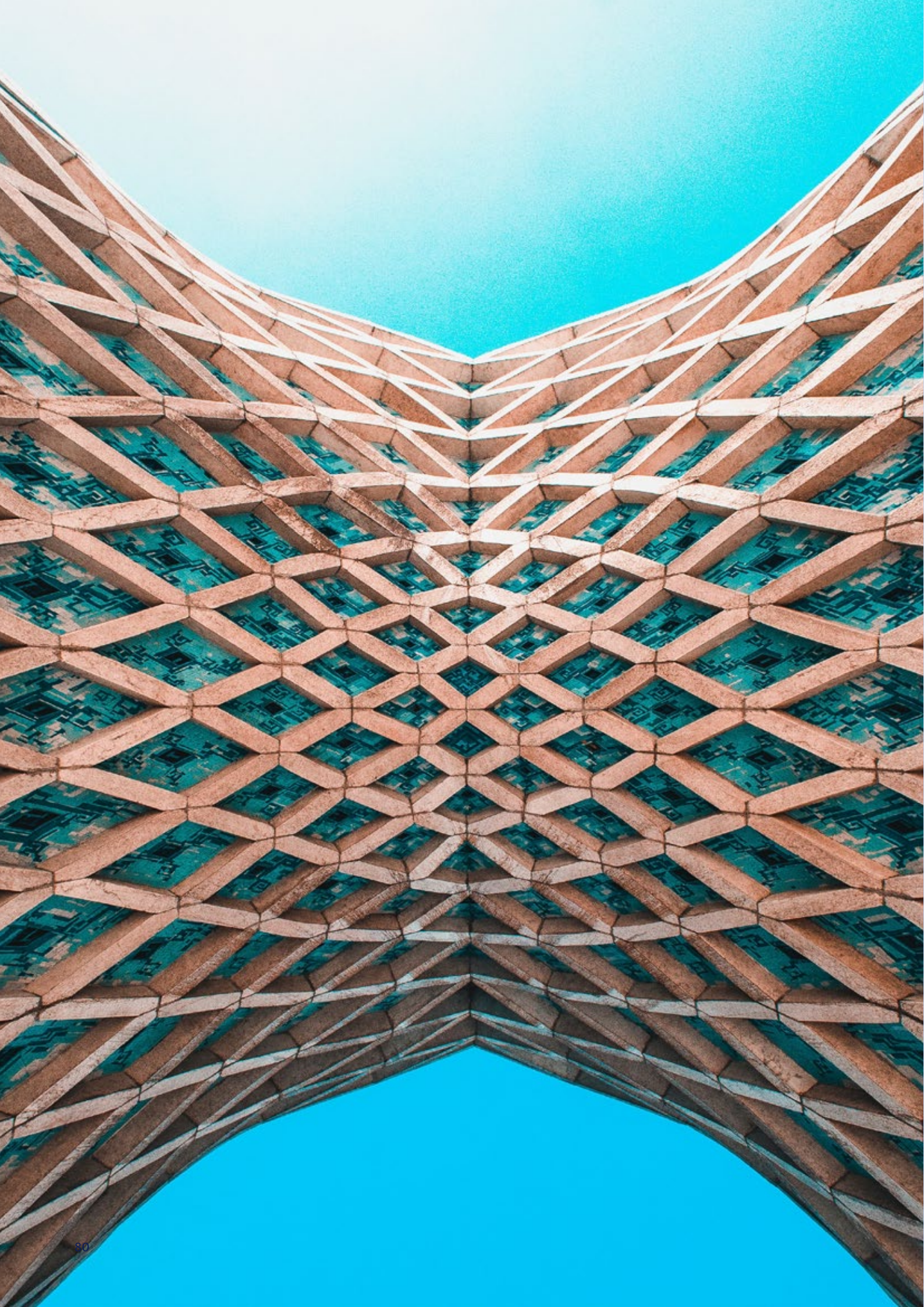
Others (Courses/Online Tools/Websites):

[Writing a Resume, LinkedIn Learning](#) – Course (2020)

[Writing a Cover Letter, LinkedIn Learning](#) – Course (2023)

[Purdue OWL: Job Search and Professional Writing](#), Website

[Jobscan](#) - An online tool that helps optimize resumes by comparing them to job descriptions, ensuring alignment with applicant tracking systems.



About KennedyFitch

At KennedyFitch we help organizations to hire for fit for the future rather than fit for now. Through our Executive Search practice we have built a track record in search for senior HR roles and we focus on search for future leaders in different industries. Through our People & Organization practice we bring the human back into Human Resources and create truly human-centric organizations where we focus on HR Consulting, Capability Building and Coaching.

Besides our Executive Search and People & Organization practices, we are also Community Builders and Knowledge Sharers. We are rapidly moving towards “consumerized careers”, whereby we will be fully in charge of our own career paths. That is why we bring together experts and professionals in a number of communities and networks, to help HR colleagues become masters of their own careers at all levels. And we not only have a stake in the future of work but we also have an opinion on it, which we share in our research-based publications, webinars and events.

www.kennedyfitch.com



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