



Job-Hunting: Getting the Basics Down



June 25, 2025



Today's discussion

01	Let's talk about you
02	A little about me
03	Resume and LinkedIn: Your calling cards
04	Answering the dreaded question: Tell me about yourself
05	Yes, you have to network.
06	Artificial intelligence; real tools
07	Resources



Here's what I know about you



Data

- Average # of years of experience: 6
- Number of job searches performed: 3
- Fields you work in: Nonprofit Management,
 Environment/Sustainability, Data Science / Fintech,
 Quant Trading, Software Engineering, Consulting,
 Finance, Policy Analysis & Program Management, Art
 Auctions, Fintech, Software Engineering, Legal
 (currently pre-law), Investment Banking, Tech





Tell me more: let's do a few short polls

Polls

- Who is looking for a job?
- What's one thing that's more fun than networking? (please respond in the chat box)
- How many coffees do you drink on a typical day?





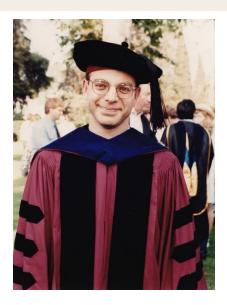
02	A little about me
03	Resume and LinkedIn: Your calling cards
04	Answering the dreaded question: Tell me about yourself
05	Yes, you have to network.
06	Artificial intelligence; real tools
07	Resources



I've had a three-part career (so far . . .)

- 1. **Academia**: Haverford College B.A., University of Chicago A.M., Université de Poitiers D.E.A., University of Chicago Ph.D.; teaching at Princeton, U.S.C., Pomona College (associate professor), books, etc.
- 2. Business: Wharton M.B.A. (strategic management); McKinsey, Google, Standard Chartered Bank, Booking Holdings, APL Group (mostly in and around HR)
- 3. Executive coaching: Hudson Institute of Coaching; International Coaching Federation Professional Certified Coach (in progress), Allen Strategies LLC

Academia



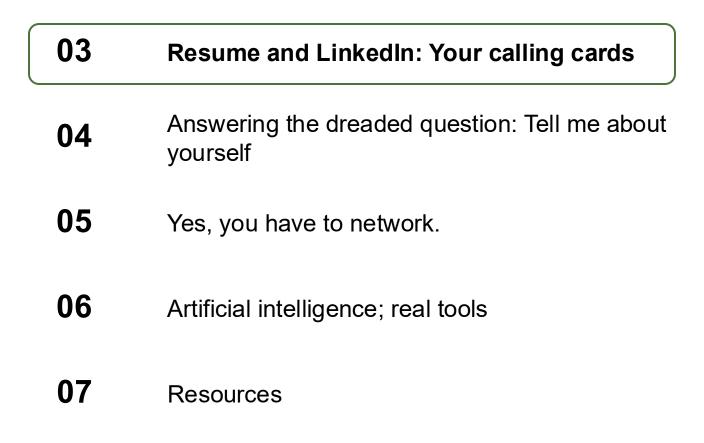
Business



Coaching client industries

Asset management
Advertising
Academia
Accounting
Consumer products
Private equity
Software
Venture
Etc.









Your resume and LinkedIn are calling cards; what's the difference?

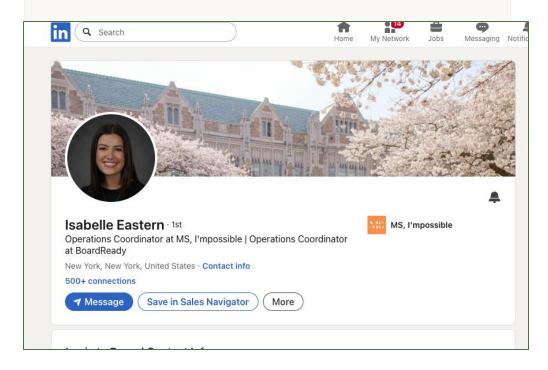
Resume

- Private
- Can be tweaked to meet the requirements of each particular job
- Is something you send out in the middle of your application process
- Dry black-and-white format



LinkedIn

- Public
- You can modify at any time, but it is visible to everyone, so needs to be more generic
- Is the beginning of your job search, so it helps people find you
- Graphics make a difference





Construct a resume that is easy to scan . . .

Principles

- It's a resume (summary), not a curriculum vitae (your whole life story)
- Select items this way: "Is it relevant? Is it helpful? Is it easy to understand?"
- You need to be chronologically complete; if you have a gap, note it (e.g., parental leave)
- Be generous with white space to make the document easy to scan
- Use a template if you have one (e.g., University of Chicago template)

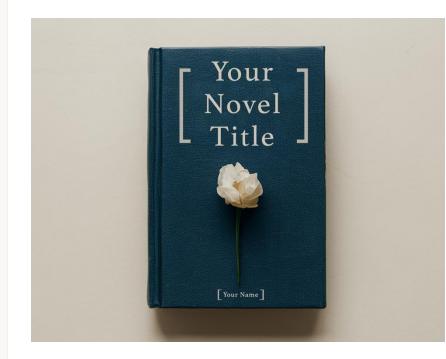




... and tells your story to your audience

Content

- The top paragraph can be customized to match the requirements of a specific job; use relevant key words
- The resume should illustrate 3-4 key messages about yourself, e.g.,
 - Technical/financial expertise
 - Leadership/management/working with people and teams
 - Sales or product experience
 - Research and development
- Anything over ten years old can go under "Additional experience"
- Include a section at the bottom with "Personal information"; this can include
 - Certifications and technical skills
 - Languages
 - Personal interests (common: sports, travel, hobbies, sometimes family)
 - If you are international, address possible concerns (e.g., U.S. citizen / green card holder)





And some tips for your LinkedIn page

Principles

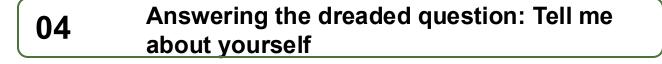
- Your Linkedin page is your storefront. Make it attractive, relevant, and easy to understand
- The Sales Navigator function can be useful, though it's expensive
- Ideally, spend **5-10 minutes every day** on LinkedIn to make friends with the algorithm
- Posts and articles are great; comments count more than "likes"

Elements

- Your picture: full face, professional, right size, smiling, clear
- Banner image: Yes, you need one; it gives a message about you.
 - Common options include images related to your career; location image for where you are or want to be; nature photo
 - Canva has a LinkedIn banner creator: https://www.canva.com/create/linkedin-banners/
- Fix your URL! Good: www.linkedin.com/your-name-723588294/
- Headline: OK to use some qualifications (e.g., University of Chicago M.B.A.), but don't inundate people
- Your "About" should include your key messages—1 to 3 paragraphs
- Jobs: you can copy and paste information from your resume
- Skills:
 - You're allowed up to 50
 - Applicant tracking systems will search these for key words
 - Look for postings for jobs you would like and use those you can legitimately lay claim to
- Recommendations: Do get some; they carry credibility and make you more findable







Yes, you have to network.

Artificial intelligence; real tools

Resources





Face it, you're going to hear "Tell me about yourself," so get ready

Remember

- You need a very short version for casual conversations and informational interview calls
- You need a more formal version for job interviews
- People may have seen your LinkedIn or resume, but this is your chance to tell your story live
- You're telling a story to an audience. **Connect** with them

Structure

- A good length is 1-2 minutes, with about 90 seconds ideal
- First line:
 - Name and one-sentence overview of who you are,
 - e.g., "Hi, I'm Sara. I help software companies use pricing to become more profitable," or "I'm Ricardo. I'm a data scientist who speaks English."
 - This is important: It helps people know who you are, which is as important as what you've done.
- Then use the past / present / future framework:
 - What you've done (selectively; ok to drop some names; include a story and a few results; % better than \$)
 - What you're doing now
 - What you want to do in the future (obv. should align with the opportunity)
- Last, lob the ball back into their court: remember, it's a conversation





Yes, you have to network.

Artificial intelligence; real tools

Resources

Networking: what's it all about?

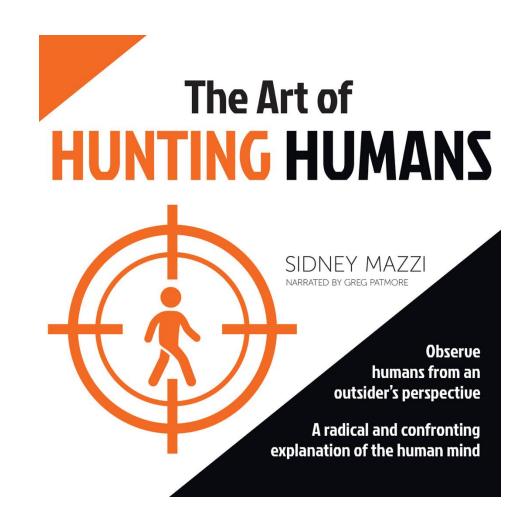


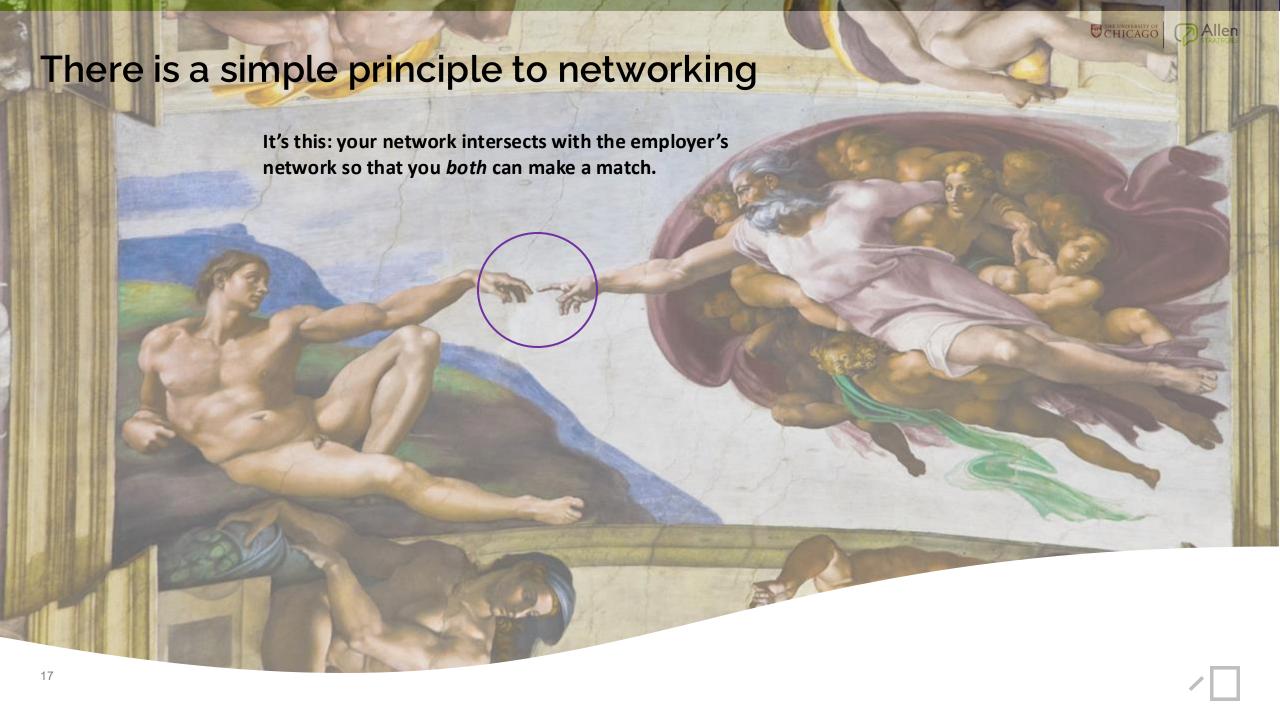


Look at hiring from the employer's point of view

Surprisingly, it's as hard for employers to find the right person as it is for you to find the right job:

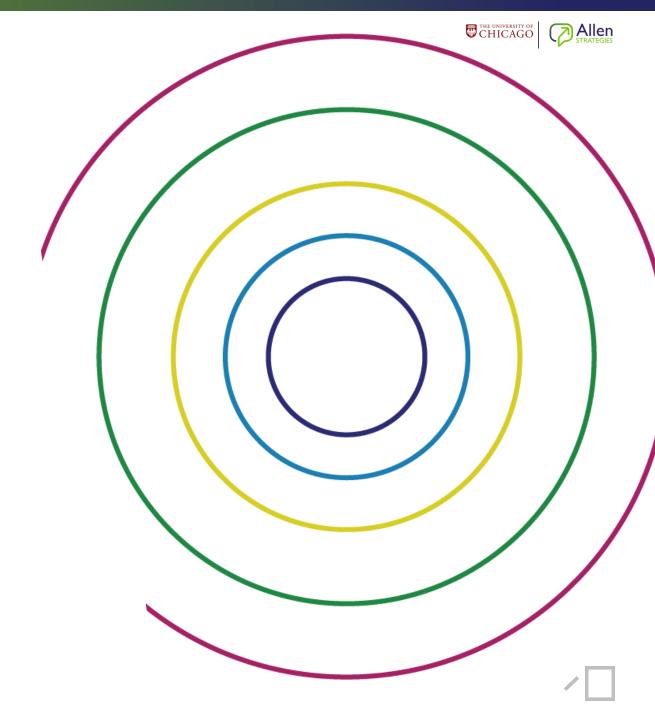
- Too many applicants
- Too few are qualified
- Almost all are unknown
- Hiring strangers feels very risky





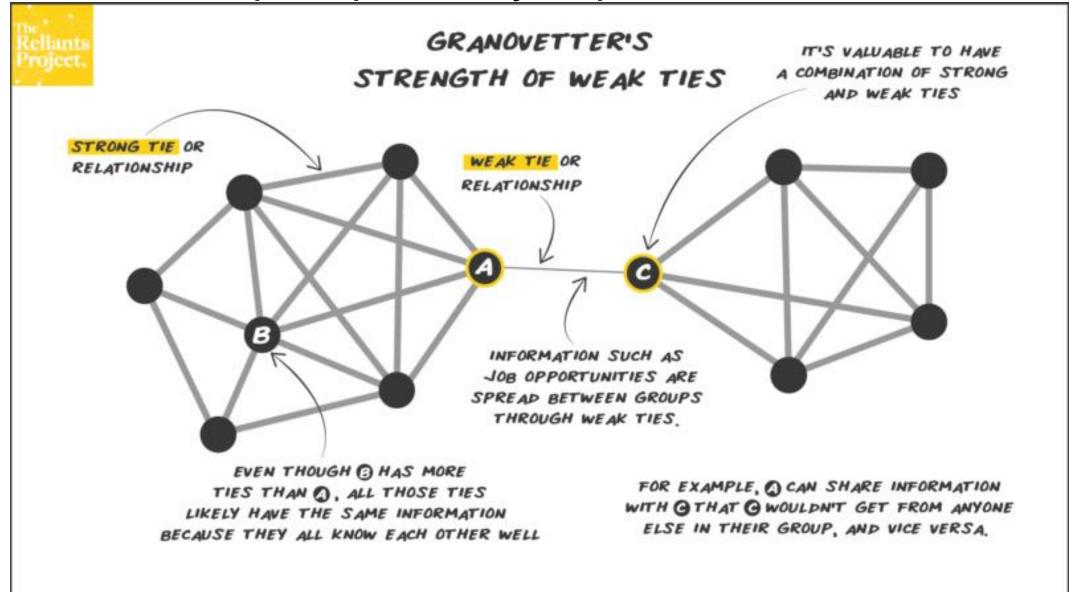
Think of networks as a series of concentric circles

- •The innermost circle is people you know personally
- •Next: people who know people you know
- •The circle outside that is people who have something in common with you—e.g., Chicago alumni
- •And the next circle out is people you don't actually know—but who work at organizations you might want to work at and who are connected to people you do.



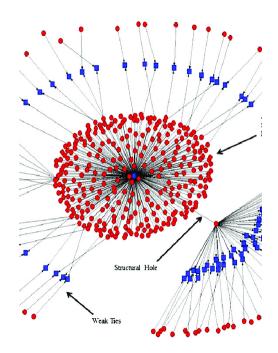


The "weak ties" principle is very helpful in job searches



Weak ties can be more powerful than strong ties

- First, it's a numbers game. You might know a fair number of people. But you "kind of know" a lot more. The larger size of the weak tie network can lead to more information and more opportunities.
- Second, your weak ties have different information than you. People in your immediate circles—in your job, school, and community—often have the *same* type of information as you do.
- Third, weak ties can be supportive of the ways you want to grow and change. They are not attached to a preconceived notion of you. Your strong ties may believe in your strengths, but they also know your weaknesses, or think they do. They can love you, but they can also pigeonhole you.
- Fourth, weak ties can be safer. If I sit next to a stranger on a plane and mess up when talking about my book idea, who cares? After we change planes, we'll never see each other again. There's less performance anxiety.
- In most cases, it's easier to refer a person with a weak tie than a strong tie for a job. "Check out the résumé of this cool person I met at the conference" is less weighty than "Check out my brother-in-law's résumé." When you introduce a weak tie, you are offering rather than selling."





Be aware of Melcher's six rules of relationships



1.Relationships are connections between two people with a reciprocal beneficial exchange.



2.Relationships are the intersection of needs.



3.Relationships **start and grow through "bids."** A bid is a specific effort to take the relationship further.



4.Relationships deepen through transparency and curiosity. You don't know how the other person will respond to what you are sharing or asking. Take small risks.



5.Relationships can be built with people quite different from you. You need flexibility to adapt to difference, but the underlying code is the same.



6.Relationship problems are often caused by a breakdown or change in the "your needs, my needs" equation."

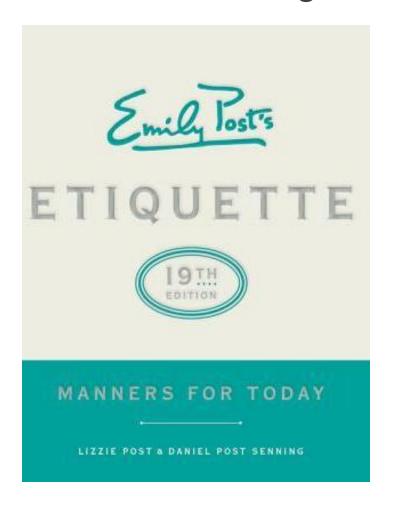


Here are some networking dos and don'ts, starting with the dos

- **Do research carefully**, reaching out to people who may have something to offer, who have some relevance to your job search
- Do start with a written communication (email, LinkedIn, etc.) (unless you're a big extravert and prefer the phone!)
- Write carefully and well
- Keep it short
- Here's a template (vary as you see fit):
- Hi Mr/Ms/Mx XYZ:
- (*Don't* say "I hope this finds you well"--so cheesy!)
- I'm writing because **we have a connection**:
- Name a person (your referrer or someone else you have in common)—or Chicago
- Explain why you're interested in talking to them, e.g.,: their company, their industry, their career trajectory



More about making the connection: Be clear; ask for what you want; be polite!



Explain your purpose, e.g.,

- I'd love to learn more about your company/your career/your industry
- I'm educating myself as part of my career development/job search

Make the ask!

- I'd love to talk to you for 15 minutes
- Would you be available within the next two weeks?
- Ask for a convenient time

Express gratitude. Remember—you're asking for a favor, and they have no obligation to do it

Generally, it's ok to follow up once (after a suitable interval), but no more than twice.



Here are some suggestions on handling meetings

- Try for high-quality interactions: In person>Zoom>phone>email
- Have a one-sentence introduction about yourself; that's all you need. Remember: the call is genuinely about *them*, not about you
- Do your research in advance
- Have your questions prepared
- If it goes well, **ask for another name or two**, someone they can connect you with or refer you to
- Keep building your network!
- Keep to the time you've specified unless they tell you explicitly that they can go a little longer. This shows you respect their time and you're not going to take advantage of them
- Say thanks
- Write a follow-up note later that day or the next day (not immediately: looks desperate; not weeks later; looks like you don't value them)





O6 Artificial intelligence; real tools

07 Resources

Increasingly I've been using AI to help career clients

- Lately I've found <u>Claude.ai</u> to be the best—more adult, more intelligent, less prone to hallucinations than ChatGPT
- I do not use it to write and ALWAYS check carefully what I get
- But these tools can be very helpful
- 1) in synthesizing information
- 2) In suggesting companies to look at
- My experience is that a very detailed prompt is super helpful





Not this Claude!



Here's what I asked for in a sample prompt

Hi Claude,

Today you're a first-class career coach who works with very high-caliber clients to help them find the right companies to network with. You specialize in clients who are graduates of top business schools and who find senior-level jobs at firms that value premier talent.

Today your client is a University of Chicago M.B.A. with three years' experience in fintech. She is looking for a new role in product management that builds off her education, her working experience, and her strong combination of technical and people skills.

She's looking to find an array of firms to network with. She has a preference for firms that are growing fast, are already profitable, but not too large--not over say 500 employees; that are known for being innovative; and that are located in the greater Chicago area.

Could you come up with a focused list of firms you'd recommend she reach out to, and explain why these particular firms are ones you think are a good match?



And here's what I got (1 of 2)

Based on my research and expertise working with high-caliber MBAs, here's my focused list of Chicago-area fintech companies that align perfectly with your client's criteria:

Top Tier Recommendations:

- 1. Avant A consumer lending fintech with strong growth trajectory and approximately 400-500 employees. They've served over 2 million customers and focus on middle-income financial products. Avant connects middle-income consumers to simple, seamless mobile solutions designed with their economic goals in mind and has helped over 2 million people access financial tools. Their emphasis on data-driven lending and customer experience makes them ideal for someone with her fintech background and product management aspirations.
- **2. Belvedere Trading** A sophisticated proprietary trading firm that's been profitable since 2002 with under 500 employees. Belvedere established their place in the SPX pit on the Chicago Board Options Exchange and has iteratively invested in proprietary technology, building software systems from the ground up. Their focus on technology innovation and risk management systems would leverage her technical skills perfectly.

. . . / . .



And here's what I got (1 of 3)

- **3. Geneva Trading** Another established proprietary trading firm with 20+ years of consistent profitability. Geneva Trading has grown significant capital, developed proven technology over 20 years, and fosters innovation while looking for people who can solve complex problems. They specifically seek problem-solvers who can drive immediate results perfect for a product management role.
- **4. NinjaTrader** A trading software company serving over 2 million traders since 2003. NinjaTrader builds products and services that empower active futures traders to analyze and react to data from financial markets, with an entrepreneurial, employee-centric culture. Their product focus and commitment to innovation align well with her background.
- **5. ErisX** A digital asset trading platform offering both spot and futures markets. ErisX offers a single platform to access digital asset markets by combining professional tools, advanced technology, and sophisticated regulatory oversight. This represents the cutting edge of fintech innovation and would value her technical expertise.

. . . / . .



And here's what I got (2 of 2)

These companies are ideal because they're all profitable, established players (not pre-revenue startups), yet small enough to offer significant growth opportunities and direct impact. They value technical sophistication, which aligns with her Chicago MBA education and fintech experience. Each firm is known for innovation in their space and would benefit from strong product management leadership to scale their operations.

The trading firms particularly value the combination of technical and people skills she possesses, as they need product managers who can bridge complex financial systems with user experience. Her fintech background gives her credibility in understanding their core business challenges.

I'd recommend she prioritize Avant and NinjaTrader for their direct product management opportunities, while using the trading firms for networking to understand the broader Chicago fintech ecosystem.





Then I asked for contacts, and while I didn't get specific names, I got a useful methodology (1 of 2)

1. LinkedIn Advanced Search Strategy:

- Search "[Company Name] + Product Manager/Director" or "[Company Name] + Chicago"
- Use LinkedIn's filters for Current company Location (Greater Chicago Area) Experience level (3-8 years for peers, 8+ for hiring managers) Education (filter for top MBA programs)

2. Specific Search Patterns I Used:

- "Avant fintech Chicago product managers directors LinkedIn"
- "NinjaTrader Chicago product management team LinkedIn"
- These searches help surface both current employees and recent job postings that reveal team structure

3. What to Look For:

- Peer Level: Senior Product Managers, Product Managers with 2-5 years experience
- **Hiring Manager Level:** Directors of Product, VPs of Product, Head of Product
- Bonus Points: Anyone with University of Chicago, Northwestern Kellogg, or other top MBA backgrounds





Then I asked for contacts, and while I didn't get specific names, I got a useful methodology (2 of 2)

4. Additional Research Sources:

- Company websites' "About Us" or "Leadership" pages
- Recent company press releases announcing new hires
- Industry conference speaker lists (many Chicago fintech leaders speak at events)
- Built In Chicago (builtinchicago.org) company pages often list key employees

5. Warm Introduction Paths:

- Check if she has any University of Chicago alumni connections at these firms
- Look for mutual connections on LinkedIn
- Attend Chicago fintech meetups where these professionals network
- The key is to research each company's current product team structure through LinkedIn and then prioritize
 contacts based on shared background, mutual connections, or recent company activity that suggests they're in
 growth mode.

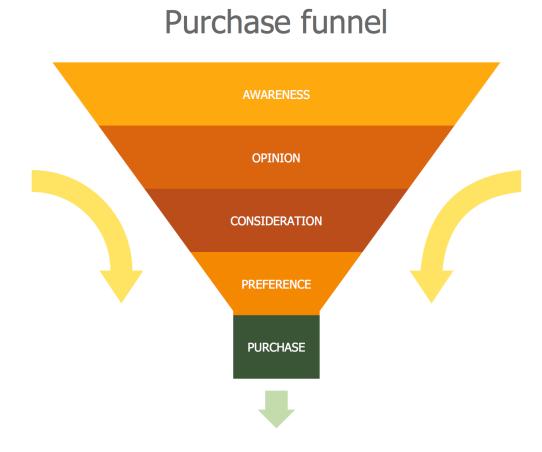




07 Resources

Remember the purchase funnel concept from marketing

You need to introduce a lot of elements into the top to get the results you want from the bottom!





I have found that people who follow these principles are successful in their job search

1. Understand your product-market fit

- Know your strengths and gaps
- Know what jobs in your area expect
- Understand and stand out from the competition

2. Do the work:

- Be clear about your vision and goals
- Make your story clear and understandable
- Get your resume and LinkedIn ready to go
- Network continuously
- Decide whether applying for jobs online is a good strategy for you (sometimes it is; sometimes it isn't)
- If you apply for jobs, do your best to connect with insiders at the organization

3. Remember that time and luck play a part:

- These factors are largely out of your control, but "fortune favors the prepared mind"
- It's a game of numbers: The more contacts you make, the sooner you and your job will find one another

4. Take care of yourself!





And here are some resources to help you

Books

- Richard Bolles, <u>What Color Is Your</u> Parachute?
- Michael Melcher, <u>Your Invisible Network</u>
- Herminia Ibarra, Working Identity
- Daniel Pink, <u>To Sell Is Human</u>

Not books

- LinkedIn Sales Navigator
- Claude.ai
- U of C careers office
- Chicago resume template

Good luck in your search! Peter.L.Allen@gmail.com





I'll try to get this presentation up on my web site in the next couple of weeks.

