

Job Search Action Plan

It's inevitable that you will find yourself in the midst of a career transition. Studies show that throughout the past 20 years, more than 280 million workers have changed jobs, and more than 40 million have been laid off or involuntarily terminated. Job loss can have a traumatic effect on individuals and families, leading to questions such as *"Why did God let this happen?"* It's common – especially with men who take their role of being the "family provider" seriously – that some take job loss extremely hard, especially when a new job is not found soon after leaving their previous position.

Simply put, job loss is a "valley" walk – certainly not a "mountaintop" experience – but many times, God does His best work in a Christian's life during these "valley" experiences. It is important to remember *"... all things work together for good to those who love God, to those who are called according to His purpose."* (Romans 8:28). According to Jeremiah 29:11–13, you can be assured God has plans for you, to give you a future and a hope, but you will need to seek Him with all your heart. The book of James encourages us to remain steadfast, meaning "solid" and "firm" in our belief in Christ during the various trials of this life. This call to being steadfast is tied to a great promise of blessing in James 1:12.

Hit the Ground Running

Embarking on a job search can feel overwhelming, but with a clear plan and faith, you're ready to get started. The following provides actionable steps to guide you through the process, ensuring you stay focused, encouraged and connected.

Never forget: God loves you and promises never to leave nor forsake you (Deuteronomy 31:6). Let's begin this journey with confidence and purpose.

1. Build Your Support Team

Surround yourself with a supportive network to uplift you during your job search. Identify friends, family or church members who will pray for you and offer encouragement. Establish a weekly accountability partner to review your progress and keep you on track. Avoid isolation, as it can lead to discouragement. Engage with people, groups and events that align with your job-search goals, such as networking groups or career workshops. Stay vigilant – discouraging thoughts are lies that can be countered with community and faith.

2. File for Unemployment Benefits

If you're eligible, file for unemployment benefits promptly to secure financial support. Contact the Texas Workforce Commission at **800-939-6631** or visit [twc.texas.gov](https://www.twc.texas.gov) to start the process, which typically takes two weeks for your first check. If you encounter issues, reach

out to your state representative or senator's local office for assistance. Taking this step early can provide a financial buffer as you focus on your job search.

3. Create Professional Business Cards

Business cards are a powerful tool to make a lasting impression. Order cards from online printshops such as Vistaprint.com, Gotprint.com, mmdfw.com, or Zazzle.com, or use Avery micro-perforated stock for short-term needs. Include your name, contact information, a title reflecting your desired role (e.g., mechanical engineer, sales professional), and your LinkedIn URL. A polished card signals professionalism and readiness to potential employers and networking contacts.

4. Plan Your Health Insurance

Acquiring and maintaining health insurance is critical during a career transition. COBRA allows you to continue your employer's plan for a limited time, though you'll pay the full premium within the first 60 days. Explore CobraBusters.com for guidance or check Healthcare.gov for marketplace plans, especially if you qualify for a special enrollment due to job loss. Medicaid may be an option based on your income, and community health centers offer sliding-scale services. And Medicare may be an option based on your age. For additional options, visit healthsherpa.com to compare plans.

5. Develop Your Networking Strategy

Networking is key; studies show that up to 83 percent of jobs are found through connections. It's not just who you know, but who they know. Immediately set up or update your LinkedIn profile (linkedin.com) to showcase your value, referring to resources like the "Key to Higher LinkedIn Profile Rankings." Craft a 30-second value statement to confidently share your skills and goals.

Join a networking group such as Southlake Focus Group (southlakefocusgroup.com) or explore options at careerDFW.org.

Make networking a lifelong habit to open doors to opportunities. In your current job search, consider people throughout your career with whom you had positive work experiences and reach out to them to share your 30-second elevator speech. Ask them if they know of anyone with whom you can connect. If they know of any open jobs, they will likely share such information. But you must make it a point to focus on connecting with people. You should be connecting with at least five to seven people every day!

6. Assess Your Finances

Take control of your finances to extend your runway during your job search. Calculate how long your savings will last and cut unnecessary expenses, such as cable TV or gym memberships. Prioritize paying bills to protect your credit rating. If you can't make a

payment, contact the company to inquire about assistance programs. Seek budget guidance from professionals, such as those at Prestonwood Foundation, to navigate this season wisely.

7. Writing Your Resume

a. Highlight Your Success Stories

Your accomplishments are the foundation of your resume, cover letter and interviews. List success stories humbly but confidently, using truthful examples. Quantify results where possible (e.g., “Increased sales by 75 percent over three years”) using the “so what” technique to clarify impact. For example, instead of “I was the top salesman,” say, “My \$100 million in sales increased regional profitability by 37 percent.” These stories will help you answer interview questions with ease and impact.

b. Identify Your Core Competencies

Understand what sets you apart. Reflect on your exceptional skills, why employers need your expertise, and the industries where you thrive. For deeper insight, explore career or personality assessments at livecareer.com or contact Prestonwood Foundation for a free Career Direct Assessment. Knowing your strengths will guide you toward roles where you can make the greatest contribution.

c. Craft a Flexible Resume

A concise, effective resume is essential. Keep it no longer than two pages, covering the past 10 years of work experience, incorporating success stories and core competencies. Tailor it to each job opportunity, using key words and phrases from job postings. Explore templates at prestonwood.org/careertransitions, Microsoft Word’s resume assistant, or free sites such as Canva.com, Resume.com, Zety.com or Indeed.com. Avoid including a photo – most experts advise against it – to maintain the focus on your qualifications.

d. Use Key Words and Phrases

Many employers use Applicant Tracking Systems (ATS) to scan resumes for key words and phrases. Even without ATS, recruiters quickly skim for relevant terms. Analyze job postings to identify desired skills, often highlighted in the first paragraph. Review the company’s website for brand and value-related terms that align with your own. For detailed guidance, visit indeed.com to ensure your resume stands out.

8. Ace the Interview

Prepare for interviews by understanding the interviewer’s goals: Are you qualified, motivated, a cultural fit and within budget? Practice common and behavioral questions, writing or recording your answers to build confidence. Stay calm, even for unexpected

questions. Arrive 15 minutes early, know the location, and dress appropriately based on the company's dress code. Send a thank-you e-mail hours after the interview and mail a handwritten note the same day to leave a lasting impression.

9. Develop Your Target Company List

Research companies in your area through economic development websites such as planotexas.org for Plano. All cities and even some growing towns have economic development companies whose role is to bring jobs to their communities. Their websites have great information on those companies doing business. Check out the [Plano site](#) as an example by clicking on "Top Clusters" and then select the market segment you want to see.

Local libraries also offer access to tools such as referenceUSA.com or zoominfo.com for company data.

Aim for a starting list of 50 target companies. Focus on organizations that align with your skills and goals to streamline your search and increase your chances of finding the right fit.

Make sure to use [LinkedIn](#) to seek connections with people who are associated with any company on your target list.

10. Leverage Your Network

Enlist help from family, friends and church groups by creating distribution lists. Ask them to share job leads, forward your e-mails to their contacts (not companies), and resend reminders every four weeks. Don't hesitate to ask for help – people want to support you. Clearly communicate your job title, target role and skills to make it easy for others to assist.

11. Utilize Online Job Search Tools

Post and refresh your resume weekly on platforms:

- Careerbuilder.com,
- Dice.com (for IT roles)
- Ziprecruiter.com
- Indeed.com
- Glassdoor.com
- Usajobs.gov for government jobs

Search job boards:

- plano.gov
- indeed.com - Best for networking and career building, with personalized job alerts and recruiter connections
- wellfound.com - specializing in start-up jobs
- otta.com

- trueup.io - specializing in tech jobs
- getwork.org
- JobsinDallas.com
- sayyestodallas.com
- ziprecruiter.com - Uses AI for job matching and one-click applications, streamlining your search
- careerbuilder.com - Offers robust search features and resources for job seekers
- usajobs.gov - The go-to site for federal government job opportunities
- flexjobs.com - Focuses on remote, hybrid, and flexible jobs
- dice.com - IT and Tech jobs
- christianjobs.com offers a job board for Christian organizations, ministries, and nonprofits
- christiantechjobs.io focuses on tech and IT roles within Christian companies
- christiancareercenter.com provides resources like career counseling and resume help for faith-based job seekers
- christianjobfair.com hosts a virtual job fair, perfect for finding church and ministry positions
- Sign up for the Prestonwood Foundation Job Flash at prestonwoodfoundation.org/careertransitions for curated leads.
- Check your college's job board for additional opportunities.

12. Maximize Job Fairs

Job fairs are making a comeback after the COVID epidemic hiatus. These are great opportunities to connect directly with employers. Research participating companies, identify targets, and prepare for interviews on the spot. Bring multiple copies of your resume and business cards. Follow up contacts by sending thank-you notes, reinforcing your interest and professionalism.

Upcoming job fair information can be found at:

- a. wfsdallas.com/events/
- b. careerdfw.org/J/index.php/calendar.html
- c. dallascollege.edu/resources/career-services/pages/career-fairs.aspx
- d. eventbrite.com/d/tx--dallas/job-fair/

13. Strategic Networking for Success

Learn advanced networking strategies by watching the presentation [here](#). Optimize your LinkedIn profile with tips from [here](#).

For personalized guidance, contact Ron Kelley at 972-820-5439 or <mailto:rkelly@prestonwood.org> for a one-on-one session to map out your job search plan.

14. Additional Resources

Explore [rileyguide.com](#) for comprehensive job search guidance, [quintcareers.com](#) for sample documents, and [prestonwoodfoundation.org](#) for support with finances and benevolence.

These resources offer practical tools to strengthen your job search strategy.

15. Enhance Your Search with AI Tools

AI tools such as ChatGPT can supercharge your job search. Use it to craft tailored resumes and cover letters, practice interview questions, research company cultures, and develop networking strategies. For example, ChatGPT can help write personalized LinkedIn messages, identify networking events, refine your elevator pitch, or create follow-up e-mails to keep connections active. Leverage this technology to stay competitive and confident.

16. Trust God's Plan for Your Journey

The most overlooked aspect of a job search is connecting with the Lord. As you navigate this season, thank and praise God daily for the job He has prepared for you. A job search is a journey of faith, trusting in what you cannot yet see (Hebrews 11:1). Whenever we seek the Lord and use faith, only good things can happen, so make sure you praise Him every day for the job He has in store for you!

Embrace this time to learn what God is teaching you, knowing He can turn challenges into something amazing (Romans 8:28). If you haven't trusted Jesus Christ as your Lord and Savior, consider doing so today (John 3:16) and share your decision with us.

God is with you every step of the way!
