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TAKE THE NEXT STEP IN YOUR CAREER

A Collection of Career Insights From
UW Professional & Continuing Education

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PASSION NEVER RESTS

Sometimes the finish line is just the beginning. You've got a job. You're pulling in a paycheck. You've made it. But that's not the end of the story for you.

Whether you're looking to climb the ladder where you are, move up and out, or pump up your skills and your paycheck, you're ready to take your career to the next level. To help you do that, we put together this collection of articles.

In these pages, you'll find expert advice on getting hiring managers to come to you, answers to some of the toughest career questions and insights into what a mentor can do for you.

And if you're looking for more career tips and trends, check out our full Career Insights series on our website at pce.uw.edu/career-insights.

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CREATING YOUR OWN JOB OPPORTUNITIES

A Five-Step Plan to Get Hiring Managers
to Come to You

By: Randy Woods

As a blogger for NWjobs.com and a job search veteran myself, I realize so much of today's career activity is focused on the end-game. Too often, job seekers obsess over writing the Impossible Perfect Resume and convincing hiring managers they're the solitary person brought to Earth to fill a role. Wouldn't it be refreshing to have hiring managers come to you?

It can happen. I call it the Reverse Job Search, or How to Look for Work Without Really Looking. The secret to this approach is to become so good at your profession and to manage your personal brand so well that the rest of the industry would be crazy to pass you up.

Here is a five-step plan that can start you on this journey and help you get off the endless job application merry-go-round.

1 **Act, don't react.**

If you're a hiker wandering aimlessly through the woods and want to find the trail, the first thing you should do is stop and get your bearings before moving forward. The same is true with a job search. Rather than blindly sending out resumes and reacting to job descriptions someone else wrote, figure out where you are and what kind of job you want first. In essence, write your own ideal job description.

[Alexandra Levit](#), an expert on the workplace needs of the millennial generation, says the first step should be to contact people at the places where you actually want to work and establish a relationship with them. "Don't ask them for a specific job, but see if you can talk with them for about 20 minutes about how they got the job and what it's like to work there," she advises.

2 Assess your skills.

Self-assessment is one area where most job seekers have some difficulty, says Louise M. Kursmark, a trainer at the [Resume Writing Academy](#). We've been so well trained to recite buzzwords – trustworthy, dedicated, responsible, creative, honest, etc. – that we forget to describe, or sometimes even consider, what we are actually good at.



To help you start your own skills assessment, ask yourself: “Have I ever saved money for an employer? If so, what skills did I use to accomplish the task? Am I good at brainstorming? Have I ever shown a capacity for leadership? Have I ever taken charge of a difficult project and delegated authority to other team members?” These are

all questions related to qualities most hiring managers want to see in a job candidate.

Another good question to ask is, “Have I ever gone above and beyond my job description?” If so, how much satisfaction did you get out of it? Is it something you would consider doing more in the future?

3 Become an expert.

Today's job market is more fragmented than ever before. Hiring managers want people with very specific skills. The more you can specialize, the better your chances at getting hired.

Cal Newport, author of *So Good They Can't Ignore You*, suggests focusing on output and adopting what he refers to as the craftsman mindset, which de-emphasizes following your passion and encourages doing the hard work of acquiring expert knowledge.

Become a member of an association that represents your chosen field and earn as many certifications in that area as you can afford. Look to local colleges, universities and continuing education classes to help you sharpen your skills and pick up new ones.

4 Get your name out there.

Once you have decided on the skills and certifications you need, it's time to broadcast your expertise to the world. One of the best ways to get your name out there is to develop a personal brand – to cultivate how people perceive you.

Boston-based branding consultant [Dan Schawbel](#) recommends creating a unified message about you and your abilities online, synching up your profiles on LinkedIn, Twitter, Facebook and other social media sites. Sites like WordPress can give you a decent website for your professional information and your own blog. Keep your online presence professional, while still letting some of your personality come through. If you share your opinions, you'll likely develop a following, which may include hiring managers.

You must also keep up with the blogs, Twitter feeds and other social media posts of your peers. List the top five companies you

want to work for and start following the tweets of their top executives. Join in their social media conversations multiple times a day and “re-tweet their messages as much as you can,” Schawbel says. “Show how you can help them, not the other way around.”

Video podcasting is another emerging personal branding trend. All you need is a computer, a hands-free USB headset, a Skype account and an interesting colleague to talk to. “If you set up an informal meeting over coffee with a hiring manager, you’re asking them for a favor,” says podcaster Michael Surkan, manager of the Linked:Seattle group on LinkedIn. “But by making that person the subject of your podcast, suddenly you’re the one doing a favor.”

With all of these online tools, though, the cardinal rule is: Thou Shalt Not Promote Thyself. Make sure that you volunteer helpful information to others with no expectation of reciprocation.

5 Meet like-minded people.

You can do a lot of branding work from behind a computer screen, but there’s still no substitute for face-to-face interaction.

Join a professional society or LinkedIn group and hit the in-person meetings on a regular basis. Unlike job fairs, these networking events are not meant for you to actively look for work. Go out of your way to offer help to others in your network so your name sticks in their minds.

Taking part in continuing education programs is another great way to build your network. By taking classes, you immerse yourself in a collaborative environment with people searching for the same professional knowledge you are seeking.

Nick Corcodilos, author of the syndicated [Ask the Headhunter](#) column, sums it up: “Be worth knowing. This is what headhunters do, and it’s what they get paid for. It’s also the way to manage your own career – it’s what you’ll get paid for.”



Guest writer Randy Woods is a writer and editor with more than 25 years of experience in trade magazines and business journalism. To date, he’s written nearly 450 articles on a range of career-related matters as a weekly contributor to the [Work Life Blog](#) for the NWJobs section of The Seattle Times online.

For more career tips and industry trends, visit the [Career Insights section](#) of our website, and sign up for our monthly newsletter. To learn more about UW Professional & Continuing Education certificates, degrees and courses, [explore your options](#) or [contact us](#).



FIVE TOUGH CAREER ADVANCEMENT QUESTIONS ANSWERED

With Expert Advice From Lisa Quast

How do I get the salary I deserve? Pursue another position in my company? Get recommendations that will help land me a job? Questions like these can seem challenging. But finding the answers can make the difference between stagnating and achieving your career goals.

Here, [Lisa Quast](#), Seattle-based career coach, mentor, business consultant and former Fortune 500 executive, offers her expert advice on some of the toughest career advancement questions.

1 **How do I get LinkedIn recommendations that will help get me noticed?**

To avoid garnering general, one-size-fits-all LinkedIn recommendations, help your references help you. For the next job you pursue, Quast said, look at the job description and requirements, see how well you stack up and then identify key skills for that role. "Pick three skills," she suggested, "and go out to different people and ask them to write recommendations that focus on your ability related to those three skills." This way you're not writing the recommendations for them, but you are helping guide them in the direction you need them to go.

2 **How do I negotiate a starting salary at a new job?**

If you have a screening interview with the HR representative, that's the best time to start the salary conversation; find out about the pay range and see if your expected salary is in the right ballpark. "Don't wait until the final interview with the hiring manager only to find that what you want is way outside of their price range," Quast said. But be sure to do your research before you talk numbers.

To prepare for salary negotiations, Quast suggested using websites like [salary.com](https://www.salary.com), [payscale.com](https://www.payscale.com), [indeed.com](https://www.indeed.com) and [glassdoor.com](https://www.glassdoor.com) to help you figure out a fair salary based on your job category, title and geography. Then, if you're offered the job, you'll have a grounded understanding of an appropriate salary you might negotiate toward.

3 How do I ask for a promotion or raise at my current company?

"Be proactive," Quast emphasized. "A mistake a lot of people make is that they don't take ownership of their career development." Create a career development plan with goals for the next year, two to three years and five-plus years, she advised. That way, you and your manager can track where you are, where you want to go in the near future and what your long-term ambitions are. If you're reviewing the plan with your manager regularly and meeting your goals, the path to promotion is being paved.

Quast also suggested gathering evidence that shows why you deserve a promotion or a raise. Look at your performance reviews and make sure you're meeting the minimum requirements, at least. "If your work is viewed as superior or excellent, you'll have a much better chance of getting the raise," she noted. Speak to your accomplishments and prove why you should earn more. And, like with negotiating a starting salary, research comparable salary ranges if you're preparing to ask for a raise.

One last piece of advice: "Never ask for a raise on a Monday. It's a bad day. Everybody is super busy. I would do it on a Friday, right after lunch," Quast said. As the weekend approaches, people are more likely to be in a good mood, and asking for a raise then just seems to work out better.

4 What's the best way to pursue a different job within my company?

Pursuing a job within your current company is a great career advancement strategy because companies often prefer to hire or promote from within. However, Quast noted, "Most hiring managers actually treat internal candidates tougher than external candidates because their expectations are higher. A candidate who's internal should know more about the company, the competition and the job." So be sure to take the process seriously.

Quast recommended getting the support of your manager. "So many people are hesitant. They don't want to talk to their manager about it," she said. "But, you should have already created a career development plan. Every year you should be working on improving yourself. And you should already be having discussions at least once or twice a year with your manager." If you have that career plan in place, it shouldn't come as a surprise to your manager when you bring up pursuing another position that will help you further your career.

She also suggested contacting the hiring manager before applying. "Let the hiring manager know you're interested," she said. "Ask them to coffee. Sit down and chat to make sure you fully understand the job expectations and requirements. And so they can learn more about you."

5 What if I'm ready to move into a management role, but the position is already taken?

"There are two ways you can move," Quast shared, "you can move up or you can move out." In a lot of companies, you might not be able to move right into a supervisor or manager role, she explained, but you can move into a different department to learn another area of the company or grow in the role you currently have. Take initiative, show leadership and seek out professional development opportunities. Gaining more breadth of experience can help qualify you even more for moving into a management position.

Looking to change jobs or advance your current career? Consider making a UW Professional & Continuing Education certificate, degree or course part of your career development plan. [Explore your options](#) or [contact us](#) to learn more. For more career tips and industry trends, [visit the Career Insights section](#) of our website, and sign up for our monthly newsletter.



MENTORSHIP TODAY

Finding a Professional Guide in an Age of
Do-It-Yourself Careers

By: Randy Woods

Many readers of my job search blog at NWjobs.com say one of the hardest parts of pursuing the right career path is the loneliness of the pursuit. From deciding a profession to crafting a resume, most of the work is done individually, with little or no outside help other than friends or family.

But you don't have to go it alone. You could seek out a mentor – an experienced worker within your company or profession who can show you the ropes and dispense advice about major career decisions.

While mentorship can seem like an antiquated notion – something that went out of style decades ago – having a mentor remains an incredibly valuable practice. And there are still plenty of professionals who would be happy to share their knowledge. So let's talk about what the role of a mentor is and how to find one.



WHAT A MENTOR SHOULD AND SHOULDN'T DO

Mentors can be an invaluable resource, but they are not miracle workers. Nor do they exist just to serve your needs. Here's what you should expect from a good one.

A mentor should ...

Introduce you to the right people. One of the fastest paths to success involves finding the right person to talk to. A mentor can often provide you with those all-important introductions to decision makers.

Warn you of pitfalls ahead. Benefiting from 20/20 hindsight is a rare gift that mentors can give. They've been where you are before and can help you steer clear of obstacles and dead ends along the way.

Act as a sounding board. A mentor can help you get through rough drafts of presentations or play devil's advocate for new ideas you may have, which can help prepare you for the tough questions from your real boss.

A mentor shouldn't ...

Find a new job for you. Sorry, that's something you'll have to do on your own, but a mentor can at least give you recommendations and introduce you to potential hiring managers.

Be just a friend. Mentors should be objective enough to give you honest criticism if they think you're on the wrong path. You don't want a mentor who's afraid to hurt your feelings now and again; you need some level of professional detachment.

Be a therapist. Consultations with a mentor should be about overcoming problems, not venting frustrations or crying on someone's shoulder. While you can discuss these feelings with a mentor, you must also respect their time and energy and the purpose of your meeting.

What to Look for in a Mentor

Mentoring is about more than someone just giving out advice; it's a long-term, two-way relationship. Before you start looking for a mentor, set yourself up for building the right relationship by deciding what you want out of a mentorship.

Are you looking to break into the business world as an entry-level hire? Are you seeking a promotion within your current profession? Are you ready to shift into a new profession mid-career? Each one of these situations requires mentors with different skills – one needs to emphasize teaching skills, one needs to be an expert networker and one needs the ability to identify transferable skills. Figure out what your situation calls for, and then start your search.

Finding a Mentor

You might find a mentor across town – or even right across the hall. And in today's digitally connected world, you can also broaden your horizons and find mentors well beyond where you live or work. No matter where you look for a mentor, here are a few things to keep in mind during your search.

Seek out people you want to be like. Look for a mentor who has the lifestyle you want to have eventually. Seek out people you admire not just for the knowledge they possess but the work-life balance they've achieved and the core values you share.

Organizations That Can Help

Ready to start looking for a mentor? Here are a number of local and national groups that can help match you with a mentor.

- [Seattle SCORE](#)
- [TiE Seattle](#)
- [Tech Women Mentors Seattle](#)
- [Washington State Mentors](#)
- [MicroMentor](#)

Consider your peers. There's no law that says a mentor must be older than you to have experience you could benefit from. In her 2014 book, *Becoming the Boss*, career consultant [Lindsey Pollak](#) talks about the rise of co-mentorships, which she describes as more of a two-way street, where two cooperative peers advocate for each other's careers. The key is to find someone who knows your strengths and day-to-day challenges but who's not competing directly with you.

Don't limit yourself to just one. If you can't find one perfect mentor for your needs, Pollak suggests developing other professional relationships that require less of a time commitment. Over time, these people can become a sort of personal advisory board you can contact on a rotating basis, she says.

Finding someone you'd like to have as a mentor and then asking that person to be your career guide can be uncomfortable, but it's important to be direct and ask. Invite possible mentors out for coffee and talk about your vision and goals. The investment in time and energy can pay you back many times over.



*Guest writer Randy Woods is a writer and editor with more than 25 years of experience in trade magazines and business journalism. To date, he's written nearly 450 articles on a range of career-related matters as a weekly contributor to the [Work Life Blog](#) for the NWJobs section of *The Seattle Times* online.*

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