

## 5 Steps to Get You Started in Your Job Search

The market today has changed for job seekers! Here are 5 steps to get you started off on the right foot in your job search.

**Example Scenario:** Let's say I'm a claims adjuster looking for work in the San Diego area. I'm willing to consider employment with any size employer, but really only interested in claims positions within the greater San Diego area. (Note – As I move through steps 1-4 below, I would compile a list of San Diego companies that I'm interested in, regardless if they have current job openings. On one side of my list would be of companies and their current job openings and the other side would be companies of interest.)

**STEP 1) NETWORKING:** Network both on-line and in-person with association contacts and co-workers in the industry for leads to claims positions in the San Diego Area. Contact friends, relatives, business associates, and acquaintances to see if they know of companies or persons to speak with. Systematically follow up with each lead, paying special attention in asking questions about their department, upcoming growth, special needs, industry changes, desired skills, and experience that this company looks for in hiring new employees. Be prepared to sell your top skills and benefits in order to generate a direct interview.

**STEP 2) INDUSTRY SEARCHING:** Explore on-line association websites, industry publication's classifieds, and other career sites that specialize in insurance jobs for the San Diego area. Call employment agencies or recruiters that specialize in insurance placements. This will allow you to focus on the industry and see what other companies may be searching for. If you decide to use a staffing company or recruiter to assist in your job search, allow the staffing specialist time to work on the job search for you. Don't try to compete with recruiters for openings. You don't want to flood the industry with your resume coming from multiple sources.

**STEP 3) INTERNET SEARCH TOOLS:** Perform a variety of searches using Google or Yahoo for key phrases such as San Diego Employment, San Diego Employers, or Insurance Claims in San Diego. Add the company names to your list of current job openings or companies of interest. Also search on-line job posting sites like Careerbuilder.com, Monster.com, HotJobs.com, and Indeed.com. You'll find dozens of sites where you can search for job openings and post your resume to potentially reach hundreds of employers. Be cautious. We suggest not posting your resume just yet. Placing your resume online can open up a flood of calls and emails from companies that you may not have considered, but it will also generate contact from companies that you do not want to work for. Be patient. Research each job opening and company and add them to your list.

**STEP 4) IMMEDIATE JOB OPENINGS:** Search San Diego's on-line job classifieds ([www.Signonsandiego.com](http://www.Signonsandiego.com)), the State of California's Job Bank (<http://www.caljobs.ca.gov/>), America's Job Bank (<http://www.jobbankinfo.org/>), Job Central (<http://www.jobcentral.com/>), and Craig's List (<http://sandiego.craigslist.org/>) for insurance claims positions. These sites may provide immediate job openings of interest and can generate fast results. But remember, there will be a lot of competition out there for these immediate openings because these are well known websites. Continue to add these companies to your list to research and contact later.

**STEP 5) REVIEW LIST & FOLLOW UP:** After steps 1-4, your list of companies should be more than you originally started with. Now you should apply to the current positions with the companies on your first list. Your companies of interest list should be contacted as well. Pick up the phone and ask if they work with a particular staffing firm. Contact the staffing firm and apply with them. If the company is not hiring or is on a hiring freeze, they may still be able to use temporary employees. This could be the way to get your foot in the door. When the hiring freeze is over, you'd have the upper edge on your competition. Also, remember to keep track of the companies that you are applying to and to which contacts in Human Resources you've spoken with, so you can follow up with them personally.

To also increase your success rate in all 5 steps would be to research each employer, get past the "gate keepers," and talk with key decision makers before simply sending off your resume. Spend time talking to recruiters about what clients are looking for so you can use this information to tweak your resume and target it to match what you've learned.

While this is time consuming, these steps will make you stand out and help create a resume that makes you look most qualified. The steps encompass the top job search methods of applying directly to employers, networking, and researching want ads using both electronic and traditional methods (in-person or by phone). This is a simplistic example, but does give you a focus to maximize your effectiveness.

\*\*\*\* One last, and very important, tip to remember is you need to be **qualified for the job** before applying. With the flood of insurance professionals out in the job market today, you need to be a perfect (or near perfect) match for a job. Make sure you know your skills and where you want to take them in your next role. Don't waste your time or anyone else's time. Only go after positions that you are **strongly qualified** for.

**Example Scenario:** If you are a customer service representative and a position you're considering requires the following:

- Microsoft Word, Excel and Applied Systems
- Ability to meet deadlines
- Excellent communication skills
- Pays attention to detail
- Personal Lines Insurance experience

You should understand the "core requirement" of the position is "Personal Lines Insurance Experience" because that is the nature of the company's business and something least likely to be trained. The other requirements are skills you either naturally possess or can easily learn. **Don't apply for a position unless you have the core skill(s) needed.** This may mean, you only get to respond to 1 out of every 15 job postings, but your chance of at least landing a face-to-face interview is better if you've got the core skills required.

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