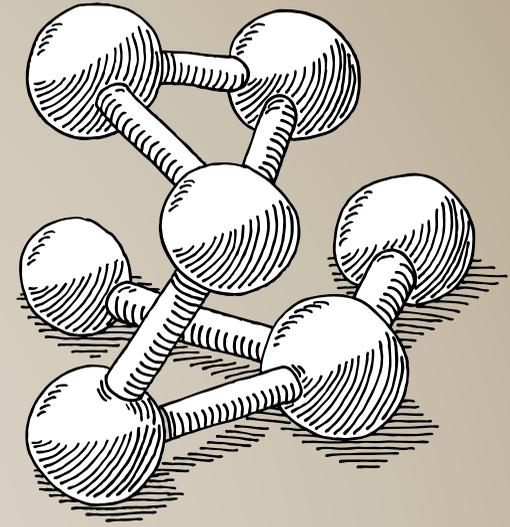


**GET REAL  
WITH YOUR  
JOB SEARCH  
EXPECTATIONS**



# INTRODUCTION

**W**hether you're just starting out in your career, or you're looking for another opportunity in your field, head into the job search knowing exactly where you want to go.

To be sure you're going to get a job that fits your criteria, it's time to reality-test your career goals, job-search tactics and salary expectations.

When setting your career expectations and job search direction, be specific, be determined, but also be realistic. Searches and landing a job is a competitive process. Once you know your competition, what you can offer and what the likelihood of success really is, you'll be able to focus your efforts on achieving your goal.

**The four key areas you need to assess for practicality are:**

- 1 Your salary expectations: what are you worth and what's each opportunity worth to you?
- 2 How long you're prepared to look for the right opportunity
- 3 How much effort you can put into your application to ensure it matches the opportunity
- 4 What you define as a 'job' — you may have more options if you think broadly about the types of assignments you apply for.

## KNOW WHAT YOU'RE WORTH AND WHAT THE JOB IS WORTH TO YOU

You deserve to be compensated fairly for your expertise, but you must be informed about your market if you wish to negotiate.

**G**ranted—it's a tough question to answer under any circumstances. But, when a recruiter or hiring manager asks you what your salary expectations are, be sure to answer with authority and the benefit of research behind you.

If you ask for too much, you can appear over-confident, unrealistic and or even that you're not willing to work hard for a reasonable salary. On the other hand, asking for too little can make you appear uninformed about the industry you're in, and not competitive with your peers.

You may know you're highly qualified for the role, but they don't know that yet. Or, you may know that you still have a lot to learn and are willing to be paid less to be given an opportunity. Either way, you need to be realistic and honest about your salary expectations to ensure you're paid appropriately for the work and skill level you can offer. Equally, you deserve to be compensated fairly for your expertise, so be informed and know what you're really worth.

### Recruiter Tips

The keys to getting the right salary are:

- Knowing what the industry benchmark for your skills and experience levels really are. There are several online resources that can offer general guidelines for salary expectations based on your job title and region.
- Communicating what you can offer an employer that other candidates cannot. Ask yourself, "What sets you apart from your peers?"
- Having sound, evidence-based reasons about why you have the salary expectations you have e.g. Do you have a counter offer? Do you have a skill that other candidates do not, in addition to conducting your salary research?

## BALANCING EXPERIENCE AND EDUCATION

If you're trying to weigh the value of more education compared to gaining more experience, in helping you land a well-paying job, understand that at some point, you'll need both.

**A**lthough practical experience sets you apart from others with the same qualifications at the outset, to move up the ranks in almost any organization you'll need the right combination of both education and experience. Gaining a Masters or PhD will mean more if you have work experience to demonstrate you can apply what you've learned.

According to a 2010 survey conducted by The National Association of Colleges and Employers, college seniors who had completed an internship accepted significantly higher starting salaries than those who had not. In fact, the average salary for those who had completed an internship was \$45,301 compared to \$34,601, a difference of 31%. Although payment during the internship may be relatively low (or there may be no pay at all), the higher starting salaries reflect the value that employers place on experience.

### Do:

- Invest time researching the market and the industry before the interview. Online resources such as salary.com can be a good place to start
- Adjust your salary and compensation expectations in line with company practices/culture
- Ask someone who knows if you're really unsure, such as a specialist recruiter
- Consider the 'total package'. If a lower salary is offered, what benefits would make it worthwhile, including healthcare or vacation time?
- Consider accessing an internship if possible

### Don't:

- Wait for a recruiter or HR manager to tell you what you should earn, do the research
- Undersell yourself
- Say no just based on salary, particularly if it offers longer-term benefits or networking gains



## BE PREPARED FOR THE TASK

Once you've made the decision to look elsewhere, take the task seriously and respond to requests promptly.

The length of time you spend searching for a new job is dependent on many factors, including the overall health of the job market and the demand for your particular skill-set. However, as a broad rule of thumb, most job seekers tend to look for around 4-5 months before finding their next role.

Depending on the role, an opportunity may be filled very quickly. If you're not checking job boards, social media feeds and connecting with your recruiter, often you may miss out. And, if you have a recruiter working for you, be sure to respond to requests for information and paperwork promptly. Job vacancies are often stressful for hiring managers, so if you leave people waiting for decisions or information, it can add unnecessary stress and compromise your application.

By understanding a little about the supply and demand dynamics for your occupation and skill-set, you may be better prepared for focusing your job search in the right places at the right time.

A good recruiter can help you understand how in-demand your skills are at a particular point in time, but these online resources are also a great place to start:

- The BLS Occupational Handbook
- The Conference Board Help Wanted Online Reports:  
<http://www.conferenceboard.org/data/helpwantedonline.cfm>



## TAILOR YOUR APPLICATION FOR EVERY JOB

One size definitely does not fit all in the job application stakes.

**Y**ou must customize your resume (and in fact your entire application approach) to fit the job opportunity—even if you know you have all the required experience and skills required.

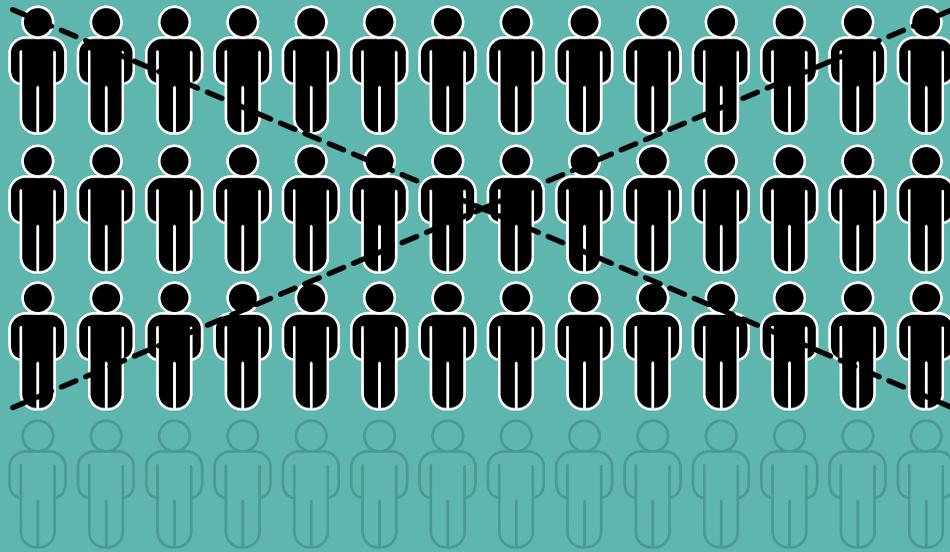
If appropriate, consider speaking to someone about your application to cover off any questions you have before you submit it. Consider what else you can provide to support your application —work case studies, published articles or reviews that position you as an expert in your field.

It won't always be possible to talk your application over. In fact, sometimes your application won't even go straight to a human being—it may be passed through an applicant tracking system (ATS) to sort it first. Unfortunately, these systems don't 'read between the lines' and they tend to rely on fairly basic rules to group and sort information.

### To make sure your resume passes the robot test:

1. Send the right format: word documents are still best. PDFs and other formats can be difficult for the software to import. Avoid other graphic elements too, including tables—text is all that will be imported.
2. Say what you mean: label each section clearly so that the system imports the correct information into the right field. This is key when recruiters search for the right applicant. Title your employment history as “employment history” or “work experience” -- don't be too clever.
3. Be clear about role titles and previous employer names: list things clearly and succinctly—this is very high on the recruiter's priority list so if you get one thing right, make it this!
4. Use the job ad as your guide: take note of the keywords mentioned in the job description and mirror these in your resume or online application.

## ANOTHER REASON TO WORK WITH A RECRUITER



ATSs CAN REDUCE

**75%**

OF JOB SEEKERS' CHANCES  
OF GAINING AN INTERVIEW\*



## RETHINK YOUR DEFINITION OF A 'JOB'

The more broadly candidates think about ways in which their skills can be applied, the more opportunity there is to fulfill longer-term career goals.

Just how flexible are you prepared to be in your job search? Would you consider:

- Relocating to access the right opportunity?
- Using your skill-set in another industry or field?
- Working on a freelance basis instead of in a full-time, permanent position?
- Accessing work as part of collaborative networks rather than directly from an employer? (For more information on these in the STEM fields, see our ["Virtual Workplace"](#) series available at [kellyocg.com](http://kellyocg.com))

Employers are increasingly leveraging flexible workforce models (free agents, contractors, virtual workers, and collaborative networks) to distribute work in more efficient ways. Often, it's in temporary, project settings that the most innovative ideas and specialist skill-sets are utilized. The most challenging and interesting work is often done on a freelance or project basis and these roles often times lead to direct positions.

Often, when we start to think seriously about changing jobs, we immediately imagine going into a similar role, with similar employment conditions at a similar or higher salary.

While all of the above assumptions can turn out to be true, the more broadly candidates think about ways in which their skills can be applied to new fields, new occupations, new industries, new sectors (public or private), or even new business models (entrepreneurial/consulting organizations) the more opportunities that will be available to them.

## GETTING THE RIGHT FIT FOR YOU

### Entry-level

**Compensation:** your aim at this stage should be to gain as much experience as you can so you can reach your financial goals over the medium to long term. Consider all the benefits of a particular role, not just the financial reward.

**Breadth of opportunity:** consider your career broadly and don't be too specific about the role—you want to keep your options open. Remember that you don't have a specialty yet, so even if you take a role that's a little outside of your comfort zone, it can be a great growth opportunity.

**Be proactive:** don't expect that jobs will come to you. The "apply and wait" attitude won't work. Create a job search strategy that you can assess opportunities against.

### Mid-career

**Time:** if possible, take your time to find the right opportunity that fits with your longer-term career plan. Don't assume the right role will come up quickly, and try to be selective to reach your career objectives.

**Narrow your focus:** pick a specialty that reflects your expertise and hones your skills further, particularly if you're out of work and trying to reenter the workforce. Be patient and make sure you're using your networks.

**Up-skill:** Know the supply and demand dynamics for your occupation, and look to up-skill where necessary.

**Review your career strategy:** now is the time to assess where you're at, what you've achieved and if you're making the right choices to build the career you want.

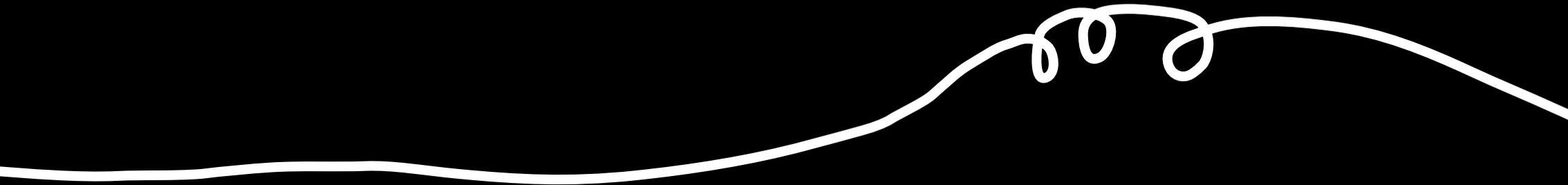
### Near-retirement

**Think flexibly:** don't make the mistake of thinking a full-time role is the only way to access a good salary, benefits and opportunity. Contract roles are great for more experienced professionals with the ability to apply their skills in non-traditional ways.

**Do you plan to retire?** If you are someone that doesn't plan to fully retire, begin identifying the type of opportunity that might fit your future life style—begin networking towards these opportunities now.

**Show you're a team player:** Tailor your resume to show you are a team player—companies want to make sure you can lead or follow (despite your experience) depending on what the project is, and what your new role requires.

**Fill gaps:** if you're moving to a new organization, be aware of any technological or knowledge gaps that you may have been avoiding or were not relevant in your previous role. Try to fill these gaps by participating in additional certificate programs to show that you're willing to evolve to meeting with market trends and technologies.



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or visit **[www.kellyservices.com](http://www.kellyservices.com)** to get started today.

#### RESEARCH

Challenger Gray and Christmas Inc – for outplacement stats

<http://www.collegerecruiter.com/blog/tag/challenger-gray-christmas/>

<http://mcacesblogs.wordpress.com/2013/01/11/get-real-with-job-search-expectations/>

[http://www.forbes.com/fdc/welcome\\_mjx.shtml](http://www.forbes.com/fdc/welcome_mjx.shtml)

<http://www.careercast.com/career-news/managing-your-job-search-expectations>

<http://blog.brazencareerist.com/2012/01/27/do-you-have-unrealistic-job-search-expectations/>

<http://college.monster.com/news/articles/1135-are-grads-realistic-about-finding-their-first-jobs>

<http://career-advice.monster.com/salary-benefits/negotiation-tips/realistic-salary-expectations/article.aspx>

<http://blogs.cio.com/job-search/16731/job-search-how-long-does-it-take-find-job>

<http://blogs.wsj.com/economics/2011/06/08/average-job-seeker-gives-up-after-5-months/>

<http://www.bls.gov/news.release/empsit.t12.htm>

<http://www.forbes.com/sites/jacquelynsmith/2011/01/15/experience-outweighs-educational-pedigree-for-internship-candidates-2/>

#### ABOUT THE AUTHOR

ERIN KISH is the Recruiting Strategist at Kelly Services. Erin's focus builds future talent strategies, developing professional recruiting resources to gain valuable recruits for our customers from multiple sources and build long standing relationships within higher education institutions. She is instrumental in the development and support of building relationships with university contacts to showcase Kelly Services' opportunities and place their most sought after students. Erin holds a Bachelors of Science Degree in Human Resource Development and a Masters of Business Administration with a concentration in Management Information Systems from Oakland University.



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