

A CAREER CLARITY GUIDE

The Clarity Playbook

*What to know before your next job search —
and what to do differently this time.*

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Before You Start: What This Guide Is (and Isn't)

If you're reading this, you're probably somewhere in the murky middle of a career decision. Maybe you were let go and are job searching for the first time in a decade. Maybe you're still employed but quietly, persistently unhappy. Maybe you've started applying and the silence is starting to feel personal.

Wherever you're standing, here's what I want you to know: the job search most people were taught — polish the resume, apply to job boards, wait — is not actually a strategy. It's a hope. And hope is not a plan.

This guide gives you the **what**: what actually matters in a modern job search, what to think about before you pursue the next title, what interviewers are really evaluating, what good follow-up looks like, and what it means to build a network that opens doors instead of just collecting contacts.

A NOTE ON WHAT VS. HOW

Every section in this guide will tell you **what** to do and **why** it matters. What it won't do — on purpose — is hand you a script for your exact situation, rewrite your resume around your specific gaps, or role-play your toughest interview question until it stops rattling you.

That's not a guide. That's coaching. And it's the difference between reading about clarity and actually having it.

Read this cover to cover once. Then come back to each section as you need it — before you update your LinkedIn, before your first interview, the morning after you send a follow-up and hear nothing back.

Let's get into it.

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01

Job Search Basics: The Modern Reality

Why the old playbook stopped working, and what's replaced it.

Job Search Basics: The Modern Reality

Most people search for a job the way they were taught in school: write a resume, upload it to a handful of job boards, apply to everything remotely relevant, and wait for the phone to ring. Then they wonder why forty applications produced two callbacks.

Here's the issue: the job board is the least effective channel in your search, and it's the one most people rely on almost exclusively. Applicant tracking systems filter you out before a human ever sees your name. Postings sit open for weeks after the role is informally filled internally. And you are one of hundreds of identical-looking applicants competing entirely on keywords.

A job search built entirely on applying is a search built entirely on hope.

The Three Channels That Actually Move a Search

CHANNEL	WHAT IT IS	WHY IT WORKS
Warm network	People who already know your work	Trust is pre-built. You skip the resume pile entirely.
Targeted outreach	Cold-but-specific contact with decision-makers	You reach the person who can say yes before a posting exists.
Applications	Job boards and company career pages	Still necessary — but should be the smallest share of your effort.

A search weighted toward the first two channels moves faster and produces better-fit roles, because you're being pulled in by someone who already trusts your work rather than being screened out by software that's never met you.

The Mindset Shift That Matters Most

The biggest shift isn't tactical, it's psychological. Most job seekers approach the search as a supplicant — hoping to be chosen. The professionals who land well approach it as a targeted campaign: they know what they're looking for, they know who has it, and they go get in front of those people deliberately.

1. **Get specific before you get busy.** "Something in marketing" won't move. "VP of Marketing at a mid-size B2B SaaS company" will. Specifics bring clarity.
2. **Build the target list first.** Identify 20–40 companies that fit before you touch a job board.
3. **Activate your network deliberately.** Not "spray and pray" — specific asks to specific people (more on this in Section 5).
4. **Apply strategically, not exhaustively.** A tailored application to a role you're 80% qualified for beats ten generic ones.
5. **Track everything.** Who you contacted, when, what was said, and what's next. A search without a system is a search that stalls quietly.

Common Traps to Avoid

- ✓ Applying to everything "just in case" instead of targeting well-fit roles
- ✓ Treating LinkedIn as a resume repository instead of a relationship channel
- ✓ Waiting for recruiters to reach out instead of reaching out first
- ✓ Going silent on your network the moment you land somewhere new

WHERE COACHING COMES IN

Knowing you need a target list is the "what." Building yours — the right 25 companies, in the right sequence, with the right entry points into each — is the "how." That's session-one work.

02

What to Think About Before You Pursue the Next Role

The questions that determine whether your next job is a real move or a repeat mistake.

What to Think About Before You Pursue the Next Role

Most people change jobs to get away from something, not toward something. That works right up until the new job recreates the same conditions in a different building. If you don't get clear on what you're actually solving for, you'll optimize for the wrong variables — usually title and salary — and end up back here in eighteen months.

How you do one thing is how you do everything. If you don't know what you're avoiding, you'll walk right back into it.

Four Questions to Sit With Before You Apply Anywhere

1. What am I actually solving for?

Money, title, flexibility, growth, stability, culture, purpose — name your top two or three, honestly. Not what sounds good in an interview. What you actually need right now. Most people can't answer this cleanly, which is exactly why the search feels so scattered.

2. What conditions made the last role unsustainable?

Was it the manager, the pace, the lack of autonomy, the mission, the ceiling? Be specific. "I need a better culture" isn't specific enough to screen for. "I need a manager who gives direct feedback instead of going quiet when something's wrong" is something you can actually ask about in an interview.

3. What am I non-negotiable on, and what am I flexible on?

Every real opportunity involves trade-offs. Deciding your non-negotiables in advance — before an offer is in front of you and adrenaline is running the show — keeps you from talking yourself into something you already know isn't right.

4. What does the version of me a year from now wish I'd asked?

This question does more work than it looks like it should. It pulls you out of "will they pick me" and into "is this actually right for me" — which is the frame that produces better decisions.

Green Flags vs. Red Flags to Watch For

GREEN FLAGS	RED FLAGS
Interviewers give specific, honest answers about challenges	Every answer is a polished non-answer
You meet your actual future manager and peers	You only meet HR and a single senior leader
Clear reason the role is open (growth, backfill)	Vague or shifting explanation for the opening
They ask what you need to succeed	The conversation is entirely about what they need from you

WHERE COACHING COMES IN

This section gives you the questions. Coaching is where we actually answer them — unpacking what's really driving your dissatisfaction, naming your non-negotiables out loud, and pressure-testing an offer before you sign it, not after.

03

The Interview Guide

What interviewers are really evaluating, and how to prepare for it.

The Interview Guide

An interview is not a test of whether you can do the job. Most candidates in the room can technically do the job. It's an evaluation of trust: can they picture working alongside you, handing you a hard problem, and trusting you to represent them in a room they're not in.

They're not just asking what you did. They're asking who you are when things get hard.

What Every Interview Is Really Assessing

- **Competence** — Can you actually do this work, evidenced by specifics, not adjectives
- **Judgment** — How you think under ambiguity, not just what you concluded
- **Self-awareness** — Whether you can name what went wrong and what you learned
- **Fit** — Whether your working style meshes with how this team actually operates

The Question Categories to Prepare For

1. **Walk me through your background.** *Not a chronology* — a narrative that connects your past to why you belong in this specific role.
2. **Behavioral questions.** "Tell me about a time..." questions probing conflict, failure, leadership, and pressure.
3. **Situational questions.** Hypotheticals testing how you'd approach a problem specific to this role.
4. **Motivation questions.** Why this company, why this role, why now — and whether your answer is specific or generic.
5. **Your questions for them.** Often the most revealing part of the conversation, for both sides.

A Framework for Behavioral Answers

The STAR structure (Situation, Task, Action, Result) is the industry standard for a reason — it forces a real story instead of a vague generality. The part most people skip is the Result: quantify it, name what changed, name what you'd do differently. A story without a measurable result is a story without a payoff.

Questions Worth Asking Them

- ✓ What does success in this role look like at 90 days? At one year?
- ✓ What's the biggest challenge whoever takes this role will face first?
- ✓ How would you describe your management style, and what does the team need most from this hire?
- ✓ Why is this role open?

Before You Walk In

- ✓ Research the company's recent news, not just the "About" page
- ✓ Know the interviewer's background and role on LinkedIn
- ✓ Have three to five stories ready that flex across multiple question types
- ✓ Prepare your own questions in advance — don't wing this part

WHERE COACHING COMES IN

Knowing the STAR framework is the "what." Building your actual story bank, rehearsing it out loud until it sounds natural instead of rehearsed, and mock-interviewing your specific weak spots — that's the "how," and it's where most candidates go from qualified to hired.

04

Follow-Up Etiquette That Actually Works

Timing, tone, and the fine line between diligent and desperate.

Follow-Up Etiquette That Actually Works

Follow-up is where a lot of otherwise strong candidates quietly lose ground — either by disappearing after the interview and letting someone more persistent take the mindshare, or by following up so frequently it starts to read as anxious rather than interested.

Good follow-up isn't about staying top of mind. It's about proving, one more time, how you operate.

The Follow-Up Timeline

WHEN	WHAT
Within 24 hours of an interview	Thank-you note to each interviewer, personalized to your conversation
If no timeline was given	Ask directly at the end of the interview: "What's the timeline, and is it alright if I check in if I haven't heard back by then?"
At the stated timeline	One brief, warm check-in — not an apology for following up
After a second silence	One final, gracious note leaving the door open, then let it go

What a Strong Thank-You Note Actually Does

Most thank-you notes are wasted real estate — a generic "great speaking with you" that could apply to any interview with any company. A strong one does three things: references something specific from the conversation, reinforces one piece of evidence you didn't get to fully make in the room, and reaffirms genuine interest without sounding rehearsed.

1. **Open specific.** Reference a detail from the conversation, not a template line.
2. **Reinforce, don't repeat.** Add something you wish you'd said better or answer a question more fully.
3. **Close with genuine interest,** stated plainly, without over-explaining.

What to Avoid

- ✓ Following up multiple times before the stated timeline has passed
- ✓ Using the follow-up to re-litigate an answer you wish you'd given differently, at length
- ✓ Going silent for weeks and then reappearing with urgency
- ✓ Sending the exact same note to every interviewer on the panel

WHERE COACHING COMES IN

The timeline tells you when. Coaching is where we draft the actual note — in your voice, calibrated to that specific conversation — and figure out what to say when three weeks of silence turns into a genuinely hard call on whether to move on.

05

Leveraging Your Network: Lead With Help, Not Asks

The most underused move in a job search — and the one that actually builds a network worth having.

Leveraging Your Network: Lead With Help, Not Asks

Most networking advice is really just asking advice with better manners: how to ask for an introduction, how to ask for fifteen minutes, how to ask for a referral. It treats your network as a resource to extract from at the exact moment you need something — which is precisely when your outreach lands worse.

The strongest networks aren't built by people who ask well. They're built by people who help first.

The Give-First Approach

Instead of leading with what you need, lead with what you have: your time, your bandwidth, and your specific expertise, offered toward a real problem someone in your network is actually dealing with right now. This does two things a cold ask never does — it reminds people what you're actually capable of, and it puts you in their orbit during a moment that isn't transactional.

How to Actually Do This

1. **Scan for real-time problems, not just relationships.** In your conversations, LinkedIn feed, and past colleagues' updates, listen for something they're currently stuck on — a hiring gap, a process breaking down, a project needing an outside perspective.
2. **Offer something specific, not vague.** Not "let me know if I can ever help" — that costs the other person effort to translate into a real ask. Instead: "I noticed you mentioned onboarding is taking too long — I've rebuilt that process twice. Happy to send you what worked in fifteen minutes if useful."
3. **Make it low-friction to accept.** A specific offer with a small, bounded ask ("fifteen minutes," "one document," "a quick review") is far easier to say yes to than an open-ended offer.
4. **Follow through visibly and without an agenda.** Deliver the help cleanly. Don't attach a pitch to it. The value of this move comes precisely from the fact that there's no immediate ask attached.
5. **Let it compound.** You're not doing this for a quid pro quo on this exact interaction. You're doing it because a network full of people who've experienced your judgment firsthand is a network that refers you before you ever have to ask.

Why This Works Better Than Traditional Networking

TRADITIONAL "CAN YOU HELP ME?" NETWORKING	GIVE-FIRST NETWORKING
Puts the burden of effort on the other person	You absorb the effort; they get value with none
Only activates when you need something	Activates continuously, independent of your job status
Positions you as a request	Positions you as evidence of your own competence
Easy to ignore or postpone	Hard to say no to a specific, bounded, generous offer

Where to Find These Real-Time Problems

- ✓ Former colleagues' LinkedIn posts about a challenge they're navigating
- ✓ Casual conversations where someone mentions being "buried" or "behind" on something in your wheelhouse
- ✓ Industry group discussions where a specific, solvable problem surfaces
- ✓ Former managers or peers going through a transition where an outside perspective helps

WHERE COACHING COMES IN

The concept is simple. Executing it without it feeling transactional, or forced, or like you're keeping score — that takes calibration. We work through exactly who to reach, what to offer, and how to say it so it reads as generous instead of strategic, because if it reads as strategic, it stops working.

You Now Have the What. Let's Build the How.

Everything in this guide is real, and everything in this guide works — but a guide can't ask you the follow-up question that cracks your situation open. It can't sit with you while you name the real reason the last role didn't work. It can't rehearse your hardest interview answer with you until it stops catching in your throat, or tell you honestly whether the offer in front of you is actually right.

That's the work I do with clients, one on one, starting with a single session.

The Clarity Blueprint Session

A focused, one-on-one session to turn the "what" you just read into a real plan — specific to your situation, your goals, and where you're stuck right now.