

# STEVE DALTON

BY GINA RILEY



*The 2-Hour  
Job Search*



If someone handed you a recipe that would help you enjoy faster career transition success while requiring just two hours of effort up front, would you use it? If your answer is “yes”, you’d be joining the nearly 75,000 people that have bought and read the *2-Hour Job Search* by Steve Dalton.

His book is the culmination of sixteen years of building and refining frameworks that help people network for the purpose of getting interviews. His follow-up book, *The Job Closer*, shares similar approaches for resumes, cover letters, interviewing, negotiating, and more. Dalton’s strategies inform readers specifically how to approach job searching efficiently using recipe-like instructions rather than tips.

I had the pleasure of interviewing Dalton, and you will see many of his insights in the Q&A below.

**The 2-Hour Job Search method is a timed system that helps set up**

**and prioritize where you spend your time. What inspired you to write the book and then the update a decade later?**

I am a rule follower at heart and like to follow formulas and recipes that work. Although I got good at creating resumes, cover letters, and interviewing well while a student – once the college and career center infrastructure went away, I didn’t have the ability to source my own interviews. I realized I wasn’t taught how to proactively network or how to do informationals. It was always reactive. For example, I would go to events and hope a miracle would occur versus being armed with strategies on how to get strangers to talk with me. I didn’t know what I should talk about.

I started looking for a set of instructions.... For example, when you make lasagna, you don’t look for a list of ingredients, you look for a recipe to follow. Then, you modify the recipe to suit your taste. Instead of a recipe, I was only provided tips

and outdated concepts that didn’t work well. I was told, ‘Sell yourself. Put yourself out there.’ These are counterproductive tips when used by the wrong people and simply selling myself had negative results.

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What inspired me to write the first edition was the realization there was no recipe in the marketplace for networking for the purpose of getting interviews. I thought this was unconscionable, so I set out to create that first recipe. After several years of practice, the recipe was ready for publication, and I called it The 2-Hour Job Search after the brief amount of time a job seeker actually needs to go from zero to launching a strategic, efficient, and effective job search campaign. (Sadly, it doesn't mean job seekers would have a job in two hours!) After the initial two hours investment, though, I can give job seekers exact instructions from that point forward.) After a decade of experimenting with that recipe alongside my students, clients, and readers, I found more than enough improvements to make a second edition worth people's time.

**At the leadership level, there are naturally fewer roles, both visible and unadvertised. Sometimes job titles are all over the map. What should more experienced professionals do to uncover unadvertised roles?**

More experienced professionals don't get the straight line between applying to a role online and getting an interview less experienced people often do. Executive level thinking is conducting speculative networking with organizations and professionals to get insights and uncover where they can add the most value. They need to network before the perfect posting shows up because the organization likely has someone in mind for it by that point.

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fishing for lobster rather than fishing for fish. When you fish for fish, you put bait on a hook, fish swim up, and you have dinner. Or they don't and you're right back with nothing to show for hours of effort you put in. Applying to job postings is like fishing for fish in your job search. You don't learn anything. It is like buying lottery tickets and hoping for a hit.

A well-executed job search is like fishing for lobster. Lobster don't swim up to hooks, so you buy cages you bait and drop in the water. You check the cages every day or two to see if you caught anything. You don't know which lobster cage will catch you a lobster, but you do know the more baited cages you have in the water the better your odds. Each networking connection brings you one “lobster cage” closer to employment.

**Why do you think people are hesitant to network this way?**

What people misunderstand is networking feels like a very indirect process, but it's the most direct route I've identified in terms of return on effort. Networking is the least-bad alternative when it comes to the best use of each minute of your time.

Look at the direct correlation between a unit of networking effort and the likelihood of an interview. I would argue an hour of time spent crawling job search websites to find a posting dramatically underperforms an hour of time spent requesting, conducting, and following up on informational meetings – especially as you become more expensive to employ and there are fewer jobs for which you are aiming.

At the undergrad level you can get away with applying blindly for a job because entry-level employees are relatively exchangeable. However, this reinforces bad lessons. You think, OK, applying worked last time so it should work for me again this time, but the odds drop as you gain more tenure, experience, and your salary expectation goes up.

An hour spent networking is not going to feel immediately productive. It's an investment that improves your odds over time in a way the same amount of time spent reacting to job postings simply will not.

People are resistant to networking because they've never formally been trained to network. What they've been taught is lists of uncomfortable, inauthentic, and outdated tips that work only for a fraction of people.

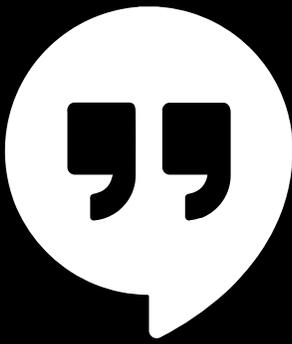
What happens with more experienced professionals who are decades-long experts in their field is they become especially self-conscious about not being great at networking. To do it well, they need to embrace a growth and learning mindset. This is critical when you are expensive to employ and when jobs are scarce at your level. They need to use an advocacy-based job search approach. With networking you want additional sets of eyes and ears looking out on your behalf.

**You say referrals are the most effective way to get in front of decision-makers and the only way to get referrals is through networking. Many people are initially resistant to this effective approach. What would you say to encourage people to get past their hesitancy?**

If a person feels they have a better approach than the rigorous one I present in my books, then I encourage them to pursue that approach! The job

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search at heart is an energy management challenge.

If you're the type who prefers to try building the bookshelf without reading the instructions, I encourage you to do that. If you prefer to follow the instructions, though, I can provide those to you. The catch is that you must follow the instructions exactly. As with a recipe, if you don't add yeast or flour or add it in the wrong amounts the cake doesn't rise. I encourage people to try following the recipe, just once, exactly as I lay it out. Conduct three informational interviews. At that point, I find that people don't need me anymore and become completely self-sufficient.

If you've spent eight hours on independent job search activities already and gotten a good return on that effort, keep doing it. But if that activity has left you feeling less confident, less successful, and more depleted I would say you don't have anything to lose trying out a proven recipe that offers predictable results. If you follow it exactly, I can tell you exactly what results to expect. Acting without a conscious plan or guiding principles sparks decision anxiety and does more harm than good. Imposter syndrome creeps in.

**Some of my clients spend an inordinate amount of time obsessing over the details of their resume and exact word choices. They worry it's not landing with their target audience. One issue is the job title could be different company to company and it is hard to know what the titles and jobs are like elsewhere. I encourage they dive in and learn about nuances by holding informational**

**conversations. Just get on the calls.**

You need to get people who know, like, and trust you to shepherd you in this process. The problem isn't getting your resume RIGHT, it's getting your resume SEEN. Even with a perfect resume, you still need to get someone to like you before they're going to pay any attention to it.

A great study done by TheLadders.com years ago tracked recruiters' eye movements when reviewing resumes and found, on average, people spend about six seconds per resume. 80% of that time, though, was spent looking at where you were employed, job titles, dates of employment, where you went to school, et cetera. Basically, all the things you can't change. But this is not the content that traumatizes job seekers! They obsess over bullet points. But the studies show you'll get a 1.2 second skim for all your bullet points combined.

**This is true. Aside from having a career coaching business, I also conduct executive searches for Talence Group. I'm conducting a CFO search right now. When I go to LinkedIn, I skim past the "About" summary to see if there is relevant work experience in bullet form first and a quick snapshot of quantifiable results.**

I've talked to top tech employers' recruiters about this specific topic. We had been differing within our coaching team about how important it is to update your resume based on a job posting's requirements and keywords, so I asked the recruiters directly "Exactly what words do you search

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resumes for when you do keyword searches?"

In all cases, they said they'd start with the job title they were trying to fill. They were (rationally) looking for people who have done this job before somewhere else, ideally at one of their competitors. Again, your job history isn't something you can change. If I was an employer, I would also be ideally looking for someone who's done the job before so I can plug and play. I want talent who will start at a fast pace. I'm not looking for career changers.

If you're a career changer you need to build advocacy. If you have a job title somewhere on your resume that relates, you might get a look. Otherwise,

you must network, especially as you get more experienced, and the job titles become less formal and more specific or rigid in what they are called. The importance of networking becomes greater and greater.

**The idea of a system and framework is very appealing to analytical and systematic people. Sometimes, I get pushback the 2HJS is not geared toward leadership level people with over twenty-five years of experience. What is the biggest distinction between early and late careerists when it comes to using the 2HJS strategies?**

I've worked with job seekers of all ages, from college students to senior professionals. What I have found is optimal job searching activities don't change over one's career, however, the nature of the anxiety around those activities – networking, most notably – definitely does.

When I'm working with undergrads it's almost entirely fear of the unknown, especially FOMO and wanting the best possible option. When I get to my MBA students who've been out in the world awhile it is less about the fear of the unknown because they know how bad it is out there. Instead, there starts to be this sense of embarrassment and shame. They are at a top business school and have been successful but are still not confident in their ability to talk to strangers and get help finding jobs. (This often leads to an insistence on using any existing connections, regardless of their relevance, because developing new ones is such a daunting prospect.)

When I get to more experienced professionals with twenty-five years of experience and may be at the C-level, though, they know exactly how challenging a job search can be, but



that fear of the unknown is replaced by large amounts of embarrassment, shame, and anxiety over not already knowing how to confidently network one's way through a job transition. For decades their work had spoken for itself, making networking with strangers unnecessary, but suddenly that neglected skill is being called to the forefront. That is incredibly uncomfortable to those who have enjoyed decades of success doing their actual job responsibilities.

I want everybody who feels shame and uncertainty about networking for interviews not to feel bad; they've simply never been formally trained. It's like feeling bad you're not good at playing the violin when you've never been given a violin or trained to play it. Everything you've been taught in terms of networking for interviews has been presented in the form of tips versus a recipe.

People are very good at following the instructions of a recipe, but there was nothing like that for my fellow Gen Xers or prior generations. It was all tips like "putting yourself out there."

**How do you recommend professionals in their 40's and beyond (GenX and Boomers) approach hiring managers and decision makers who are in their 30's?**

If you pursue learning, you get job leads; if you pursue job leads, you get neither. This is a mistake more experienced job seekers make. They feel like they need to show off what they know, which is not a likable thing. This junior person doesn't know you. They might be

less experienced than you, but they're the one who has the job and an open role. Coming at them with all you know would make them wonder if you listen, take feedback, and are able to learn.

There's also the element of ageism – a perception more experienced job seekers can't take feedback or learn new things. The best way to approach a stranger at a target employer is the same regardless of age (with only minor variations). In The 2-Hour Job Search I outline a 6-Point Email for such outreach, and the only change I'd recommend to a more experienced professional when approaching someone junior to them is make it slightly less deferential. Instead of emphasizing the genre of knowledge you are trying to collect from the contact, you'd emphasize instead why your interest in their employer has been piqued and ask them to share their experience there with you.

I ask the more experienced professionals out there to not feel embarrassed or ashamed about not feeling comfortable with networking with strangers or younger people. You've never been formally trained to do this, and shame is a powerful barrier. It strikes your core.

When you're just starting your career, you're equally unqualified and unaware of how to network. There comes a point when you become very qualified and very exceptional at what you do. In fact, experienced professionals find themselves in rooms where oftentimes, they are the smartest or most knowledgeable person. Admitting you don't know how to do something feels like a sign of weakness. Suddenly, you are job

searching and now you need to turn strangers into advocates to help you land interviews. You become a novice at outcome-oriented networking which is out of whack with your functional expertise.

As you grow in your career, you may have been able to insulate yourself from being wrong or where your expertise wasn't challenged often. You must embrace a growth mindset. Networking is scary but it's not your fault. It is the fault of the systems that have brought you up and left you unprepared for advocacy building.

It's ironic that a speech class might have been required curriculum in your college or grad school but not a class on listening skills, building advocacy, or negotiating. You need to do all these things at every stage of your life, more so than giving speeches. Today, it is all about the skill of delivering bite-size communication to get strangers to want to listen and interact with you. If you have not been trained to do these things, now is the time to start learning.

**What questions should people ask when they land informational interviews?**

They should ask questions that are fun and flattering. An example of a question that is neither of those is "What is the corporate culture like at your firm?" You're asking your contact to speak on behalf of their entire company, which is uncomfortable, and their answer will be a laundry list of positive traits that are tedious for them to list and not terribly interesting or helpful to you.



A fun and flattering way to ask that question is “What is your favorite part of the corporate culture at your firm?” This person is the expert on their own opinion of the company’s culture, so they can speak with 100% authority. They’re also likely to pick something that reflects well on them or makes them feel good.

More specifically, in The 2-Hour Job Search I outline an interview methodology called TIARA (for Trends, Insights, Advice, Resources, and Assignments) that help you systematically convert strangers into advocates by establishing likability, priming creativity, and requesting guidance in that order.

This approach maximizes your chance that this conversation leads to an interview. All your questions would be fun and flattering in this framework. Some Trend question examples would be something like “How has this job changed most since you started?” or “How do you predict this space will change most in the next five years?”

### **The 2HJS emphasizes reaching out to alumni. What modifications do you recommend if alumni connections are too far back in the rear-view mirror?**

You are not necessarily going to reach out to people who went to your school. Job seekers can absolutely follow the 2HJS process with zero alumni connections and zero LinkedIn connections. I like approaching strangers for job search assistance because, unlike with alumni or former acquaintances, there’s a lower incidence of what I call obligate behavior where people feel they must respond to you to save face. If a total stranger responds to you, they are doing it out of the goodness of their heart. There’s no face they’re trying to save. They could have just ignored you.

I’m also a fan of networking with people who report to the person with the open position because they are great to ask where they think the industry and trends are heading. There is a big hang-up

about networking with more junior personnel because people feel like they should be selling themselves rather than requesting insight. Reframe your approach by asking smart questions and get out of their way while they tell you why they’re so good at their jobs.

### **Are there nuances between the obligation people who are in a prestigious, engaged alumni network feel versus those who are not? Should a person expect a lower response rate with this lack of obligation?**

It is great to have a network of alumni but that doesn’t make them Boosters [a small segment of contacts who will actively advocate for job seekers they like, but who comprise only about 10-20% of the population]. Non-alumni are much easier to work with since they have no incentive to be Obligates [a segment of contacts who want to appear helpful, but who don’t want to incur the risk and inconvenience necessary to be helpful.]. They are more clearly either Boosters or

Curmudgeons [a segment of contacts who never respond to job seekers under any circumstances] since they have no sense of obligation to you via a shared school.

My goal is not to maximize overall response rate, but to maximize the response rate from Boosters, who are the specific segment of the population intrinsically motivated to be helpful to others who are job searching.

While you may get a higher response rate from alumni, you may not get a higher Booster response rate since alumni have a higher sense of obligation to respond even if they don't want to because they're a part of your ecosystem. This will result in false-positive responses from people want to appear helpful but don't want to suffer the risk or inconvenience to be helpful. Obligates tend to do things like respond slowly or not at all after contact has been established, cancel meetings they set up with you on short notice, or postpone helping you into the future.

In my updated material in the new edition, I now recommend prioritizing functional job relevance over alumni connections when selecting contacts for outreach. The most predictably good informational meeting you can do is with a person doing the job or working in the area you want now or one day. You can really learn and gain insights from these people and you are more likely to build an advocate from that 30-minute investment of time.

**What is a 6-Point Email and how is it different than a cover letter?**

The 6-Point Email is a high-efficiency prospecting message to quickly identify if a stranger is a Booster, Obligate, or Curmudgeon with six elements each designed to dismantle a reason why a Booster might not respond.

Curmudgeons never respond under any circumstances. Obligates respond out of sense of obligation and a desire to save face but who don't really want to be helpful. These folks are dangerous because they give you a negative return on effort, whereas Curmudgeons who ignore you give you a zero return on effort. Curmudgeons, therefore, do you a favor by ignoring you! It's the Obligates who can sap the energy out of job seekers quickly.

In my estimation, only 10-20% of the population are Boosters. Therefore, you'll have to kiss a lot of frogs to find your princes.

**You recommend job seekers look for Advocates either one or two levels above what they are aiming for. Do you have additional tips for those seeking leadership level jobs when the opportunities are far fewer?**

By the time a job posting goes live you're already late to the game. Oftentimes, an internal or referred candidate has already been identified. Chasing postings is a terrible way to go through your job search.

Find one to three sectors of companies and proactively network to get informationals with smart people in those spaces before they have a need. Over time, you'll get better and better at having these conversations. You'll be able to synthesize information, connect

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dots you weren't able to before, and develop your own hypothesis on the market. This will increase other people's confidence in referring you to friends at other companies.

This is a learning-forward approach to job searching. If you are constantly chasing job postings you won't be developing hypotheses and fueling your knowledge. Go ahead and set alerts for new online job postings that might be relevant and pursue those but spend your networking time focusing on what you enjoy learning about so you can get smarter faster.

**I conducted a LinkedIn poll and most people wanted help with how to look past the obvious employer choices and how to get over feeling salesy when networking. What do you say?**

I recommend picking up to three different topics you enjoy learning about. I think it's OK for a reactive search to include dissimilar mega corporations like Google, Facebook, and Amazon simply because they never stop hiring.

However, for a proactive search, I walk people through a very systematic company brainstorming process in the 2HJS. The first step of the brainstorming process is the dream employer method. Do a mental dump of all the dream employers that you wish were actively recruiting you. Then, brainstorm further by Googling or plugging information into Crunchbase, which is an investor database with a free use option to find a list of industries and related companies. It is my favorite tool to break the cycle of writer's block.

Pitchbook is another tool.

This takes research and effort, but not very much – the forty minutes it takes to complete this brainstorm is included as part of the titular “two hours” in the 2HJS title.

Furthermore, the harder you must look to find an employer, the more flattered they are to hear from you. You'll get more traction in less time with smaller employers, and you'll gain interest in and from companies you never even considered as options. This in turn will educate you on that space and help you gain traction with the larger employers, kicking off a virtuous cycle of momentum.

**Some of my clients spent much of their career in business and technology consulting. They've worked on or led projects for upwards of fifteen or twenty industries. They have transferrable skills but don't know where to start when it comes to aligning their talent with companies of interest. It feels open and vast. Any recommendations on how to start?**

My favorite piece of intellectual capital I've worked on since the pandemic hit is a tool called “How Your Talents Add Value” (HYTAV). People know about StrengthsFinder, but few know what to do with it. I cover both StrengthsFinder and HYTAV in the first chapter of The Job Closer.

There are just four buckets of work employers want from you, regardless of sector or role: they want you to solve tough problems, lead, collaborate, and get things done. If you look through job postings across any industry you

will see those four themes come up again and again.

The HYTAV exercise helps people confidently, quickly, and unequivocally explain how their skills add value to an organization. It helps explain your secret sauce for (for example) getting things done based on which two of your top five talent themes (identified using StrengthsFinder) you combine most frequently and prominently in service of that goal. This exercise helps job seekers go from someone who can go a level deeper than a cliché like “problem solver” or “leader” to someone who can describe how they uniquely and effectively have learned to solve problems and lead. This gives them a shocking amount of additional confidence and presence useful for cover letters, interviews, and beyond.

**What advice would you give job seekers who have spent more than 25 years at one company when searching for a job outside that company? Do you believe the strategies from the book apply?**

The one piece of advice I would give is to stay humble. No one can question their qualifications after 25 years, but their qualifications alone are not what's going to get them interviews or considered for new jobs. Rather, it's going to be the ability to turn strangers into advocates on an as-needed basis, which is a universal skill needed at every level – especially for experienced professionals with a long tenure at one company.

While their network is big within that company, they now need to build one outside of it. This is where

the universal life skill of conversing with strangers comes into play that I wish was taught in school.

Recognize this is a unique skill set you've never been trained to do but you must do it. Liking it is completely optional; doing it is not! Take on learning this skill as a new challenge because few people bother to learn it. Therefore, it's a very effective way to show an organization you continue to have the fire to get better every day.

One trap more experienced job seekers fall into is to assume that because they have turned new colleagues on their past teams into allies it means they are proficient networkers. However, there is a nuance to developing relationships and gaining the attention of a stranger, and that is the area of networking that 2HJS focuses very heavily on.

**Many people don't do it well, but when you do, you stand out. As for being a continuous learner, some of my clients will take a class or get a certification to help them stay energized, relevant, and have something to talk about. If someone has spent their career at one place, how do they overcome the perception from potential employers they are a one-trick pony and cannot adapt to a new company or environment?**

Conduct informational interviews using a learning lens rather than a sales lens. The recipe for preparing for informational interviews can be found in the TIARA framework in the 2HJS. Show you aren't a one-trick pony by demonstrating you use people's time wisely, prepare good questions, and get out of their

way while they answer. Listen, because when you're speaking, you're not learning anything. It goes back to humility. It's tough when you've been successful for many years at a company to suddenly put on a learner's hat, but because of that difficulty, it's a very effective way to build advocacy with strangers.

**Listening is a skill! In the interview skills and talent selection training I do for Talence Group, we train hiring managers if you are speaking more than 20% of the time, you will be unable to assess a candidate's skills. You should be listening 80% of the time.**

It is devastating to your ability to improve your listening skills if you speak more than you listen.

**I think some older job seekers would like to hear you don't need to resort to Facebook and Twitter to have a successful job search.**

There will always be one success story that is repeated at nauseam about how someone used a new technology successfully. Then thousands of people try to mimic that success, but it doesn't work because it was at heart a gimmick. I don't do gimmicks. I do predictable recipes.

Why fruitlessly seek out the next gimmick when you could be reaching out to people systematically and learning, which is a timeless skill that never goes out of style. It is much better time spent. I like using technology people are already finding helpful. I'm not high-tech; I'm right-tech. For example, I don't know everything there is to know about LinkedIn, but



I am an expert at the three or four operations within LinkedIn that are critical for job seekers. You just need to know what you need to know so you can get the job done.

LinkedIn is absolutely a must for more experienced job seekers, though. Don't spend time trying to make flavor-of-the-month technology work. I'm anti any investment of effort as a job seeker in being "found" because the data doesn't support this as being a good use of time. A quick way to make, for example, TikTok not fun is to try to make it part of your job search. It will deplete rather than restore your energy. Energy management is so important to the job search process.

**How do 2HJS users start with data and finish with intuition? What does this mean?**

Start with data and finish with intuition means to allow data to suggest to you who your top employment targets should be before factoring in your intuition. Before you spend dozens of hours networking, spend one hour

creating a LAMP list (a List of employers, Advocacy, Motivation, and Postings). I outline this tool in the 2HJS to systematically brainstorm and prioritize employers prior to starting any networking activity. You can decide which organizations to target based on available data. A LAMP list takes just 70 minutes to create, or just 30 minutes of effort beyond the employer brainstorm we discussed earlier. Thus, it's just a drop in the bucket timewise, but it is very tempting to go with your gut and nothing else. However, getting anchored by data first and overruling data with intuition is much more effective than an intuition-only approach.

Part of my frustration that led to the LAMP list was observing people come up with five or ten obvious companies in a handful of minutes. The LAMP list is a list of forty employers plus three pieces of data which are easy to find and predictive of success. These data points give you an initial order of attack and counteracts artificial desperation or feeling like your universe is much smaller than it is.

I regularly get pushback about insisting on a minimum of forty employers in a LAMP list because people would tell me they already knew the five they would approach, but they weren't questioning their assumptions. Had they tried to come up with more than five?

What I find is when you must come up with forty, you must prioritize what's most important to you. Is it company brand name, location, sector, industry, product line? Perfection is an unrealistic expectation in almost any activity, so this exercise helps you identify what you are willing to concede first (and second, and third, and so on). The data will tell you which of your targets the data thinks should be in the top six. Then, you use intuition to overrule the data as desired. When you start with data, you can use your intuition to make educated trade-offs between what the heart wants and what the eyes see.

For example, what if the company you really want isn't actively hiring for the type of job you want right now? Would you rather spend your finite amount of time, effort, and pain tolerance working towards a company you like slightly less but is actively advertising for the job you want over your dream employer who isn't openly hiring now? There is no correct answer there; that is where the job seeker's intuition about what motivates them come into play.

LAMP enables you to make informed decisions about which ones to spend hours networking with and which ones can wait a few weeks. Let data guide your initial perceptions of who you should be contacting first but then use your

finite amount of time and pain tolerance on are the ones that you are most likely to be able to sustain an effort sufficiently long to be successful.

### **What are the top excuses or areas resistance you encounter when it comes to using the 2HJS process?**

There are three main areas.

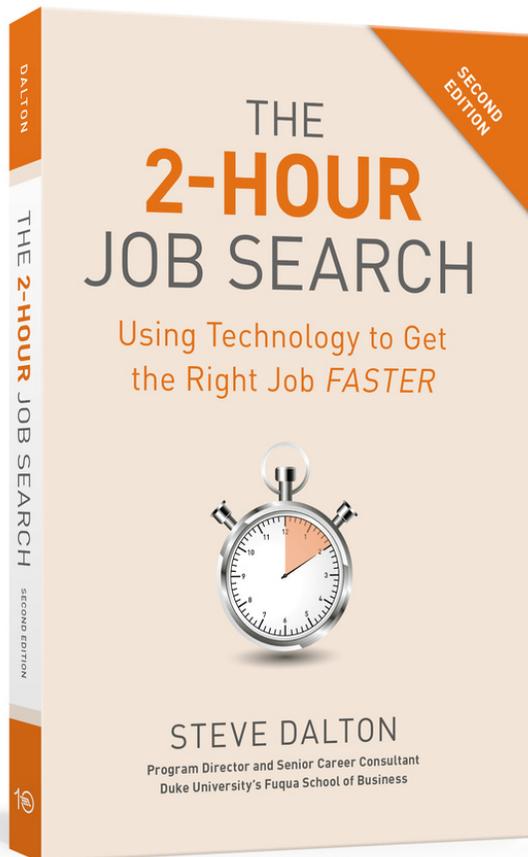
The first is, as we discussed earlier, why do I need to come up with a list of 40 employers if I know the five or ten I want to work for? Everything I talk about in my book is grounded in data, but this one is anecdotal based on thousands of iterations and working with job seekers. Those who start with fewer than forty simply aren't successful. They don't realize the employers are the commodity, not you, of which there is only one in the entire world. Furthermore, a shortcut taken this early in the process means inevitably other shortcuts will be taken later in the process.

Thankfully, you won't need to network with 40 employers – the vast majority of 2HJS users don't need to network with more than ten before they find success. However, the simple act of identifying your alternatives make people more effective at approaching their favorites with an air of confidence rather than need.

The second pushback I get is how could this method be a one size fits all if I am twenty-five years into my career. Just because this works for an undergrad doesn't negate the usefulness for an experienced job seeker. It's the same skill set everybody needs but has never been taught – the ability to turn strangers into advocates on demand. It's the least bad alternative available per hour invested. I can't think of a better use of time than following a 2HJS in terms of predictable return and how it steadily improves your odds over time.

The third pushback is deprioritizing online job postings, as in "I'd like to start networking, but I've got to apply to this job posting because I don't want it to go away, and I might not get a chance to apply later." My answer to this is look at your success rate today. If you are hearing back from 5% or more by applying online, go ahead and apply. If not, though, why be in such a rush to toss your resume into a black hole when you know you won't hear back?

Exceptions are made for referral candidates all the time. Outside the government space, there is no "ticking time bomb" scenario, where a referral candidate would have been interviewed had they only formally applied online before the posting was taken down but now simply can't be considered because the company prefers reviewing strangers' resumes to candidates people already within the organization vouch for.



Furthermore, when you are referred by an internal employee, you have a better shot at getting considered and put forth a better application with the information you gather. If you try to network with two different people over the course of a week (in 2HJS I teach an outreach process called the 3B7 Routine which maximizes outreach efficiency) and you don't get traction, then go ahead and apply. Don't postpone networking to apply for a job. There is no excuse not to network.

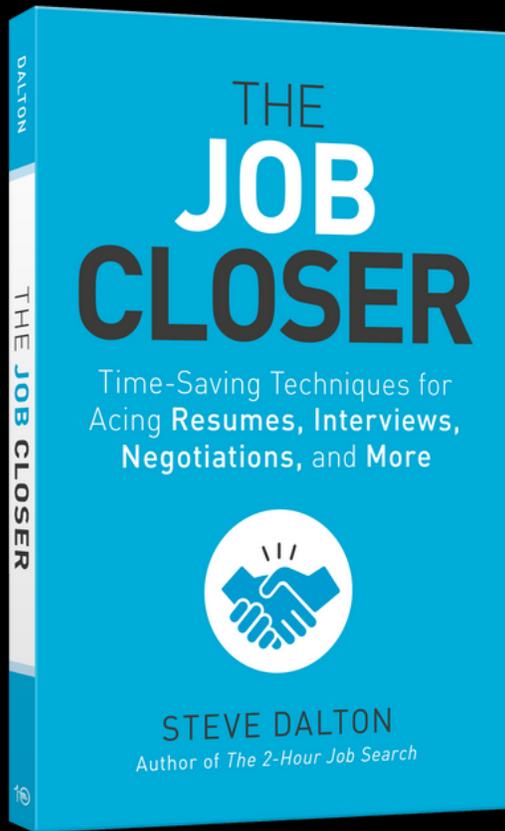
### What would you say to the long-time job seeker who isn't using a system to track their work?

If a job seeker wants a personal trainer-style approach where someone gives you exact instructions and takes all the decision anxiety out of your search, I can give you exact instructions for conducting a more productive and effective job search. But you've got to follow it exactly. You can also lead a horse to water, but you can't make them drink. Sometimes they must be "thirstier" before they are open to changing their approach, which can be a painful process.

As a career coach, I honor that discomfort, but I can't in good conscience enable counterproductive job searches. I'm not going to try to help you perfect your resume if it's already good enough; there are simply bigger fish to fry. Continuing to work on it simply postpones the inevitable, which is reaching out to strangers and asking how they got so great at their jobs.

I believe in an advocacy-based approach to job search, but not everybody is ready for it. If people are not willing to take a more precise approach, I wish them the best of luck and assure them I'll be here and available to help them if they're ready to try a more systematic approach. All I ask is for them to follow it through long enough to do 3 informationals. If they hate it, they can blame me and never use my system again, but most anyone who makes it that far finds they start to like it, especially compared to the alternative of chasing postings. It only takes two hours to get started and it's both the best and only recipe-style solution I know.

I'm not going to try to help you perfect your resume if it's already good enough; there are simply bigger fish to fry. Continuing to work on it simply postpones the inevitable, which is reaching out to strangers and asking how they got so great at their jobs.



**What books do you recommend that complement your job search strategies?**

If you are not sure what you want to do professionally, the modern classic *Designing Your Life* is the best precursor to the 2HJS. *Thinking Fast and Slow* provides a great overview of many of the behavioral psychology concepts I write about in my book. Finally, *Getting to Yes*, to help people prepare for awkward conversations like asking for informationals, following up on requests, and when you need to advocate for yourself during salary negotiation. It is about treating people you negotiate with as partners and not advisories. I do a quick summary of *Getting to Yes* in *The Job Closer's* chapter on negotiating, but it is such a great deep dive into a tricky subject. If these three books didn't exist, writing my book would have been a lot harder.

**What is next for you Steve?**

After years birthing 2HJS and *The Job Closer*, I am experiencing both literal and mental vacations for the first time in what seems like an eternity. I enjoy managing the LinkedIn group and the community I've cultivated around the 2HJS and the questions help the recipe for the model and frameworks to get better. Down the road, I'd love to create a certification process for the 2HJS for coaches to add to their toolkit.

**Thank you so much, Steve!**

**CONTRIBUTING WRITER'S PROFILE**



*Gina Riley Consulting & creator of the CareerVelocity System™. She is a career transition coach who helps leaders customize their career stories to land jobs where they can leave a legacy. She is an Executive Search Consultant for Talence Group.*



**CONTACT  
GINA:**

[ginarileyconsulting.com](http://ginarileyconsulting.com)

 [@ginariley](https://www.linkedin.com/company/ginariley)